CHAPTER 4

ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING (AET) IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

Overview

The broad aim of this chapter is to learn from the applications of numerous adult literacy and adult education and training (AET) approaches in South Africa.[16] The chapter presents an overview of influential AET theories and concepts that have a history or evidence base in South African contexts comparable to that of this study. These are reviewed in order to gain insights that could inform training approaches to H&S in the demanding local mining context. An additional aim is to learn from the recent and unique history of AET policy and planning in South Africa, and assess the impact of such processes on valid approaches to teaching and learning. By fulfilling these aims, the conclusions of the chapter may illuminate the rationale for multi-disciplinary research.

Mine health and safety and AET programmes appear to have much in common, especially in terms of the socio-demographics of target learners. Many target learners are relatively poor migrant workers who have had limited or no formal education. A lack of education is invariably evident among mineworkers, because underground mining provides employment to those who lack the formal education to seek other, less physically demanding, opportunities. Unlike other AET programmes, mine training programmes usually involve only men, although South Africa differs from many other developing countries in that women tend to be slightly better educated than men.

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[16] This study uses the term adult education and training and the acronym AET, because adult basic education or ABET has created a problematic limit in the conceived continuum of adult learning. It is also a very unappealing term. Mine health and safety programmes are usually provided by 'training departments' in mining companies, so simply using 'adult education' could cause confusion.

Within South Africa, the most widely used term for literacy and compensatory education for adults is adult basic education and training (ABET), defined as the 'general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development… applicable to a range of contexts' (DOE, 1997:12). Mine H&S training usually has a more specific purpose, i.e. to develop health and safety efficacy of workers within a defined mining situation or task, regardless of the workers' levels of formal or certificated education. Inevitably, H&S programmes have to be designed in ways which accommodate limited educational skills or offer 'scaffolding' for further training. The assumed role of ABET in providing this scaffolding for mine H&S is discussed in Chapter 5. The two interventions, AET and H&S training, emerge from very different theoretical and political traditions which have not been integrated, thus demanding multi-disciplinary study.

Multidisciplinary study

The issue of locating multi-disciplinary studies within adult education is not new. Chilisa and Preece (2005), with reference to adult education in Africa, note that research studies frequently require a multi-disciplinary approach. Adult education researchers include, for example, nurses, doctors, literacy teachers, social workers, trade union activists and agricultural extension workers, all of whom would focus on a problem related to their work. Such researchers are required to negotiate their positions consciously, in order to ensure that the research is acceptable to the researched, within the African context, while at the same time finding a place in the global knowledge system. The authors assert that the adult education researcher also 'operates within the boundaries of the discipline of adult education' and that the research problem is required to be located within its discipline. Although research problems may be work- or profession-related and the boundaries of the AET field almost elusive, 'there remain some common, agreed-upon strands that define the discipline' (Chilisa & Preece, 2005:74-75).

Organization of literature

The self-efficacy concept does not feature in South African AET research. The sources that were found related to health education, and are reviewed in Chapter 6. AET in South Africa is not generally a professionalized field of practice, and as such lacks serious status.

Practitioners are not registered, have varying qualifications and are employed in many different institutions. The absence of professional bodies and serious forums, coupled with limited tenure of practitioners and continuity of programmes, has inhibited the level of theoretical engagement beyond the few surviving university adult education departments. Over past decades, the dominant theoretical positions diverged according to the institutional location of programmes and the specific type of adult education programme under discussion. The literature reviewed is organized in the following way:

- The history of adult education, mostly *adult literacy*, approaches and provision in South Africa leading up to 1994;

- AET approaches and provision in the democratic era since 1994, dominated by *national education and training policy*, influenced by 'competing social movements and political actors' (Jansen, 1999:4), as well as consultants, the private sector and the trade unions;

- Different *ideological approaches* to adult education*,* drawn from Europe and the United States, and traditionally included in the curricula of university adult education departments.

Each of these is dealt with below.

4.2 Adult literacy in South Africa

Adult literacy approaches

Adult literacy work both around the world and in South Africa has been subject to three mainstream approaches: the *missionary/Laubach, radical/Freirian* and *Functional/UNESCO* approaches (Lyster, 1992:28; Morphet, 1992:99-100). Various writers acknowledge these three as the dominant approaches but use different criteria and words to differentiate them. For example, Scribner (1984:8) uses three metaphors of literacy: literacy as a state of grace (or salvation), literacy as power (Freire), and literacy as adaptation (Functional). According to Morphet (1992:99), all three approaches attempt to assert their terms for taking a learner role as agents of transition, but their definitions of the 'transitional role' and 'key institutions' which sustain the role differ:

- The Laubach approach defines transition as the passage from heathenism to Christian faith. The Church is the key institution and becoming literate is analogous with religious conversion.

- The Freirian approach defines the transitional role as a growing awareness of power relations within society and an active involvement in the making and shaping of history. The key institutions are small groups and political movements.

- The Functional approach sees transition principally in economic and material terms. Modernization is the central term which defines the role of marginal people attempting to survive. The key institutions are the modernizing state or non-governmental organization (NGO) (Morphet, 1992:99-100).

The three approaches are evident in the history of adult literacy provision in South Africa, though agencies embrace elements of each approach at different times. An overview of adult literacy approaches and developments is presented here, since traditional thinking about adult literacy still emerges in local AET debates, although concepts are often not advanced due to limited research capacity and conceptualization.

Literacy and salvation

The missionary or Laubach approach (literacy for salvation) is associated with the extensive work of Frank Laubach, an American missionary active in the 1930s. He emphasized individual salvation in a spiritual sense, the path from heathenism to salvation, although he was also fixated on the 'war between Communism and Christianity'. Over the years, he produced phonetic charts in 262 languages, many of which had not been written down before (Lyster, 1992:31). A concern with preserving and understanding scripture is at the core of many religious traditions, Western and non-Western alike (Scribner, 1984:13). The approach and materials have been criticized for their narrow focus and over-reliance on relatively old-fashioned phonic methods. Literacy efforts of Dutch settlers at the Cape in the 1650s are early evidence of literacy as a tool for both colonial and missionary agendas in South Africa. Prinsloo (1999:1) refers to attempts by Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch governor at the Cape, to instruct indigenous people in his employment. Although this took place long before the actual formulation of the Laubach approach, the conceptual underpinnings are comparable.

Prinsloo points out that the dynamics associated with acquiring literacy and education were never neutral: 'The political and economic circumstances under which groups of people first encounter literacy impacts directly on how they take hold of literacy' (ibid).

> It is not merely of historical interest that the inception of literacy in South Africa was so closely bound up with the dynamics of colonial conquest and missionary work, from the 17th through to the 20th centuries. Rather, this has bearing on the facts of literacy today (ibid).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Christian missionaries came to South Africa from Britain, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and North America. Missionaries created grammars, spelling systems and orthographies in order to translate the scriptures and create primers and readers in African languages. The missionaries were undoubtedly the major purveyors of literacy in South Africa (ibid: 2).[17] During the latter part of the 19th century, the discovery of diamonds and gold and consequent development in Kimberley and Johannesburg led missionaries to increase educational and religious efforts in these locations:

> Black migrant workers from all over Southern Africa converged on these industrial sites. Separated from the tight controls of their home communities, they were seen by the missionaries to be more susceptible to conversion. ...Small literacy groups proliferated in the worker compounds and nearby mission halls of the Kimberley diamond fields and on the Witwatersrand gold mines. Most worked under the guidance of church elders, but many were run by the migrant workers (Prinsloo, 1999:5-6).

Literacy and repression

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[17] The first book of the Bible which appeared in a South African language was the Gospel of Luke, translated into Setswana by the missionary Robert Moffat and printed in Cape Town in 1830. In 1857 the complete Setswana Bible was published, the first in a South African language. Source: Bible Society of South Africa 12 April 2011.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the South African Communist Party (SACP) organized night schools, mainly concerned with English and politics, for workers around Johannesburg. The surviving texts of one of the leaders of this movement, Eddie Roux, reveal a thoughtful concern with concept and curriculum for adult learners (French, 1992:56). Again, these programmes were offered before the work of Paulo Freire but had a comparable conscientizing approach to the adult learner's situation in society. A point made by Prinsloo (2008) about the reshaping of literacy practices in KwaZulu-Natal in the 17th century could apply to what was happening in the programmes of the SACP nearly 300 years later:

> Print literacy came to Africa embedded in a range of specific practices, relationships and artefacts rather than as a unitary package. Shaped by European experiences and interests, these practices were subject to interpretation, translation, recontextualization and re-embedding in a range of localized ways by indigenous people as well as by relocated Europeans (Prinsloo, 2008:114).

These programmes for workers continued until the early 1950s, when they became a victim of repression (French, 1992:56). At the same time, there was an energetic quest for the establishment of Afrikaans as an official language. A powerful alliance of Afrikaner political, financial and intellectual interests led to the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans in 1933[18] and the publication of poetry and popular novels. Although not primarily a literacy campaign, it was an unusually successful drive to promote widespread -albeit sectarian- literacy (French, 1992:55). Such enormous effort has never been made for any other South African language. In 1945, the recommendations of a state Committee on Adult Education, with input from the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), were supported by the United Party government of the time. According to French, although the terminology has dated, the planning still looks sensible and enlightened. But history intervened and plans for state-led adult education programmes were to remain unfulfilled for more than 50 years (ibid:56).

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[18] Source: Bible Society of South Africa. Downloaded 1 May 2011 from http://www.bybelgenootskap.co.za/index .

In 1955, the Freedom Charter of the South African Congress Alliance called for a mass state plan to end adult illiteracy.[19] However the National Party government, which came to power in 1948, undermined adult education work in all sectors by neglecting or refusing subsidies to state night schools, banning the SACP, the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC), and enforcing legal restraints and the inhibitions of the Group Areas Act and security legislation (ibid:56). This kind of repression continued and intensified into the late 1980s.

Until 1986, when the National Literacy Cooperation (NLC) was formed in Cape Town, progressive literacy agencies operated in isolation from one another, which made them especially vulnerable to official and incidental harassment. Communication about approaches, methods and materials improved after the formation of the NLC. Yet even in this tense context of poor material and theoretical resources, there were wonderful innovations in terms of African language literacy methodologies, the bridge to English language for migrant workers, family literacy, easy reading for adults, and sustained community-based provision in very isolated places.

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[19] The **Freedom Charter,** the statement of core principles of the South African Congress Alliance, was officially adopted on June 26, 1955 in Kliptown. The Congress consisted of the African National Congress and its allies, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress. Downloaded from http://wikipedia.org 12 April 2011.

Sadly, much of this work is not prominent in the current democratic dispensation. [20]

Functional approach

The de Lange Investigation into Education, undertaken in 1981 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), advocated a form of non-formal education, preferably financed by employers, intended to make up for the neglect of formal education suffered by most people in South Africa. As a result, the apartheid state began to take more interest in AET during the 1980s. My own research for NEPI suggested that this interest was underpinned by the functional literacy approach of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), promoted from 1960 onwards. Functional literacy (literacy as adaptation, for modernization and development) emphasizes its survival or pragmatic value and the concept has a strong commonsense appeal (Scribner, 1984:9). UNESCO-supported research suggested a role for adult literacy in addressing unemployment, primary health communication, higher infant mortality and lower fertility rates of women (NEPI, 1993:22-30).

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[20] These developments are too numerous to mention. However, a few are listed below in no particular order:

- *Project Literacy* applied the syllabic literacy method of Paulo Freire using each learner's own name or a word special to him/her, rather than a generic or politically correct key word or Freirian code.
- *Learn and Teach* in Johannesburg supported many isolated adult literacy projects for many years, such as *Bula Mahlo* outside Tzaneen. The project also published an easy-to-read magazine for workers, titled 'Learn and Teach'.
- *Use, Speak and Write English* project consistently applied the concept of learner-centredness in teaching English to adult workers, which enabled learners with immediate use of the language and self-expression in English.
- *English Literacy Project* produced superb, relevant materials for migrant workers dealing with problems of urban life.
- The *New Readers Project* at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban produced many easy-to-read publications in English and Zulu to support newly-literate adults.
- *Learn with Echo* was an English and Zulu educational supplement for adult learners inserted into the Natal Witness newspaper every week, produced by the Centre for Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- The *Family Literacy Project* in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands reached many isolated young mothers and their children.
- Practitioners of the Lembede Mda *Literacy Foundation* worked in Soweto hostels under harsh and often dangerous conditions, yet they tirelessly sought out new methods and materials from colleagues in other projects.
- The same can be said for literacy activists from *Rising Sun,* of the African Independent Churches, and *LUCPO*, from the Vaal Triangle.

By 1990, tens of thousands of South African adults were enrolled in official programmes and night schools of the 'blacks only' Departments of Education and Training, National Health and Population Development, and Manpower, as well as the South African Defence Force and the South African Prisons Service (van Heerden, 1991:17-18). Most of the adult learners enrolled were completing their secondary schooling, especially 'second chance' matriculation.

Paulo Freire and radical adult literacy

During the anti-apartheid era, and especially during the 1980s, a range of agencies allied to the African National Congress (ANC), the black consciousness movement and many churches were involved in adult education and literacy work. The most influential theorist across these agencies was Paulo Freire, whose *radical adult literacy* approach emerged from his work in Brazil in the 1960s but inspired adult education in sites of struggle all over the world. 'Of all thinkers in the field of adult education in general and literacy education in particular, Freire's ideas have had the most potent and rallying appeal' (Lyster, 1992:37-38). Historically, literacy has been a potent tool in maintaining the hegemony of élites and dominant classes in certain societies, but in Freire's framework, expansion of literary skills was viewed as a means for poor and politically powerless groups to claim their place in the world (Scribner, 1984:11-12). Briefly, the Freirian listening-dialogue-action approach is based on a key problematic situation, which is then developed into a curriculum; this in turn triggers group dialogue on strategies to address the problem (Wallerstein, 1992:752) The approach offered an appealing alternative to what Freire termed the *banking system* of education, which resulted in passivity and dependence (Freire, 1972). Freire's concepts of conscientization, dialogue, reflection, action and a communal focus on a germane theme or 'code' resonated in the apartheid context of struggle and poor resources. Conscientization is achieved through dialogue, a dialectical process between learner-teacher and teacher-learner. Dialogue, reflection and action ideally harmonize into higher-order practices or action, which Freire termed 'praxis'. The syllabic literacy method, which involves breaking down a key word or code into syllables and then using those to build new words, was initially advocated in Portuguese. It also worked extremely well in local, syllabic African languages. Freire's approach made political sense, encouraged collective action, and could work with limited resources. Yet much of the provision was marginal and not

of the quality deserved by adult learners. Essential needs, such as for paper, pens, chairs, tables, reading matter, even light, and especially for safe transport, were not met. Many adult learners expressed a longing for a proper place to learn, real books, the chance to attend a university, and especially for the best possible learning opportunities for their children (van Heerden, 1990:23-49). Even now, the work of Freire retains a moral appeal, but has been subject to criticism as an approach to practice. The method is extremely demanding on facilitators, who themselves need an advanced level of critical consciousness, rendering the approach difficult to implement on a large scale (Lyster, 1992:39). The method/approach is especially demanding on people who have themselves only been exposed to a very authoritarian education, such as in apartheid South Africa. Freire has also failed to explain how conscientization translates into action, or how understanding oppression leads to transformation (ibid:39). Perhaps the essential limitation of Freire is the primary conscientizing agenda itself and its place in the new South Africa - a topic for another thesis. Nevertheless, even if Freire's work does not provide a complete approach for AET, it continues to enlighten practice. The concept of praxis is an accessible tool for encouraging connections between theory and practice, and for nurturing a regard for theory, in the training of educators. Secondly, the concept of dialogue, which was an aspect of the work of Plato, was entrenched in AET by Freire.

Dialogic processes

Notions of dialogue or dialogic processes have become central to adult education practice. Followers of Freire continue to advocate a process of engagement, much like dialogue, not only between people but with established subject matter as well:

> Rather than to view knowledge as static and objective, or as something that exists out there, it must be conceived of as an active process of engagement and involvement between the learner and that which is being learned. ...It must be related to the categories of understanding which learners bring to the learning environment (Goduka, 1999:45).

Gravett (2001:36) describes an optimal process of 'dialogic teaching' for local adult educators which 'is neither content-, learner-, nor teacher-centred, but *learning-centred*, with the teacher serving the agreed-upon role of guide, facilitator and

mediator.' The educator retains an authoritative voice: 'However the tone of teacher utterances can either elicit dialogue or silence learners,' (ibid:37). Dialogue and the analysis of the multiple *dialogic identities* that people bring into multi-cultural situations are advocated in multicultural study (Rogers & Tan, 2008:15-16). Another contribution, *dialogic space,* also contextualizes the concept in local AET. Rule (2004) characterizes emancipatory adult education projects as *dialogic spaces* - social and educational sites that enable dialogue **-** because they feature dialogue at a number of related levels: between different people, institutions and disciplines; between the programme and broader society; and between the past and the future (Rule, 2004:325). Dialogic space is distinct from the more Utopian notion of a *dialogic site,* following the work of Habermas (Rule, 2004:326):

> I prefer to see it as a process that involves conflict, tension and growth; an unfolding of selves within particular contexts. This unfolding or 'breaking through' is enabled by learning spaces that provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds (Rule, 2004:326).

Learning new content does not displace dialogic space: 'The projects, as sites of dialogue, reflect the interests and accents of their different participants, and these are recast in the specific discursive practices of the projects, generating new meanings that reflect the contestation and co-creation of project participants' (ibid:325). Conversely, the notion that dialogue represents the purest learning ethos is also problematic. It makes two assumptions: that all necessary content knowledge is present in the learning group, which is simply not true, especially in formal disciplines; and that a balance of dialogic efficacy exists across a group of individuals, automatically generating productive outcomes for all. Nevertheless, the concept has wide possible applications. Within the mining industry, 'technology transfer' is viewed as an unresolved challenge, i.e. that training and innovations are not carried into the workplace (Willis & Hamilton-Attwell, 1998 and 2002; Macfarlane, 2001; van der Heever, 2002). Many research reports are available on the website of the Safety in Mines Research Advisory Committee (SIMRAC) on the transfer of specific

technologies and innovations. The concept of dialogic space could be valuable in invoking a collective sense of ownership of the technology or idea at stake. Such engagement is critical as no programme plan can anticipate what every adult brings or elects to bring to training, or what barriers he/she anticipates facing in the workplace after training. Dialogic space provides an opportunity for individual workers to engage with content and all other issues related to the programme or H&S generally. Gravett (2001:13) argues that the accumulated experiences of adult learners provides a frame of references that be both a resource and yet also obstruct learning: 'Consequently, learners' existing knowledge and experience play a crucial role in learning' (ibid). She outlines a dialogic approach for the actual adult learning classroom which suggests exploring learners' existing knowledge, linking new learning to such knowledge, acknowledging existing knowledge that may impede learning and addressing the need for immediacy of application of learning (ibid:14-16). The challenge lies not in embracing the idea, but in maintaining the conditions required. The process demands time and trust. I have been present when adult learners turned to a zealous new 'facilitator' who was insisting on 'their input' and asked, 'If you have nothing to tell us, why are you here?' Rule suggests the following conditions:

> These conditions included: a basis of trust (there can be no dialogue without trust); an attitude of openness towards learning from one another; a physical place where participants could meet in relative safety; a project ethos that encouraged participants to express themselves; and a commitment to solving problems through meeting, discussion, reflection and consensus rather than coercion (Rule, 2004:330).

4.3 National adult education and training (AET) policy

A section on policy is introduced here because of the critical and pervasive effects of national education and training policy on AET approaches in South Africa over the past two decades.

Prior to 1994

As shown in the previous sections, until 1994, AET approaches in South Arica were generally based on conventional and universal approaches. There was no national vision of AET in South Africa until 1945 and the state-supported Committee on Adult Education, which was soon abandoned when the Nationalist government came to power in 1948. However significant developments took place during the 1990s.

Adult education, policy and democracy

The lead-up to and birth of democracy in South Africa in 1994 was an exciting time, especially for adult educators. After decades of being a marginal, voluntary, after-dark type of activity, the practice of adult education was finally legitimized and adult basic education acknowledged in South Africa's new Constitution as a basic right of all individuals:

Everyone has the right:

> To a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible (Education: 29(1), Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 108 of 1996).

Over the years, the terminology shifted from adult literacy to adult basic education (ABE), then to adult basic education and training (ABET). Changes in terminology were supposed to represent deep policy and practice reform, but their effect on enhancing practice and provision is open to debate.[21]

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[21] The concept of ABET is uniquely South African. In the English-speaking world, ABE means *Adult Basic Education*. South Africa added the *T* for *Training* in the policy initiatives of the early 1990s. The reasons for adopting the term fell into two main groups.

- One of the deepest critical perceptions of education (including adult education) in South Africa, especially on the part of labour unions and business, was that education had little application in life and work, while training meant drilling in routine jobs with no attention to underlying knowledge and values. Adding the *T* showed a commitment to the *integration* of education and training into ABET.
- ABET grew out of adult literacy work. In spite of fine achievements of adult literacy work in the struggle, literacy alone was not considered adequate to support real social transformation. ABET was meant to offer an appropriately adult route to a general education aimed at making a significant improvement in quality of life.

(Source: Parliamentary Monitoring Group. Downloaded from www.pmg.org.za 31 March 2011).

The most concentrated AET developments in terms of conceptualization, policy and planning took place during the 1990s. The first of these was the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which was initiated to develop education policy options for the broad democratic movement, in effect the ANC and its allies. NEPI outlined some key operational areas for future policy attention, including early childhood education, *adult education*, teacher education, educational governance and finance (Jansen, 1999:4-5). I served on both the adult education and adult basic education working groups of NEPI.[22] Adult educators from different sectors presented arguments about the need for long-term compensatory adult and out-of-school youth education programmes and associated institution building. However, their arguments were either not persuasive or were ignored. Some participants believed that the primary adult education intervention in the new South Africa should be a national literacy campaign, 'like Cuba and Nicaragua'. That was the way of new nations. Approaches, methodologies and logistical concerns about implementing these models effectively within a country as large and diverse as South Africa were raised, but did not turn into a productive policy dialogue. The South African government embraced the rhetoric and symbolism, and a national literacy campaign was listed in the early documents of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In fact, the splitting of adult education policy research into two sections (ABET and adult education) was an early indicator that this was the original intention of those in control of policy processes. The low priority of the implementation of adult literacy was evident in the fact that, within the RDP framework, the campaign was dependent on donor funding. According to Jansen (2002:193-4), the tension between high symbolic (a literacy campaign) and low implementation (donor funding) in education policy development was a feature of the political context of the time. His analysis of the policy processes of the era (early 1990s) relies on a conception of policy as political symbolism.

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[22] The work of these two working groups of NEPI culminated in the following two publications:

- NEPI. (1992). National Education Policy Investigation: Adult Basic Education. Report of the Adult Basic Education Research Group. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- NEPI. (1993). National Education Policy Investigation Adult Education. Report of the Adult Education Research Group. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Policy development in the early period of democracy 'was about establishing the ideological and political credentials of the new government' (ibid:193). 'Politicians do not always invent policy in order to change practice. It often represents a search for legitimacy' (Jansen, 2002:205). In South Africa, however, symbolic policy was also significant in signposting the end of apartheid:

> The making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism that would mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society. …Every single case of education policymaking demonstrates, in different ways, the preoccupation of the state with settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in the realm of practice (Jansen, 2002:193).

Signposting new eras has relevance for many obvious reasons and Jansen does not dismiss symbolic policy, but instead faults policy practitioners' inadequate understanding of its role in the context of 'policymaking under conditions of third world transition' (Jansen, 2002:203). This could apply to the many adult educators who participated in policy fora of the 1990s. There may well have been an inadequate appreciation of the need both for a symbolic policy to mark the change of an era and for a feasible policy underpinned by real plans to ensure delivery. There was a lack of a substantial critique regarding policy development processes in the fora in which I participated, which may ultimately have affected practice and delivery. Political credibility is sought not only by the state. Individuals and successive ministers of education have promoted flawed literacy campaign policies in the interests of their own political standing. Since 1994, successive appointees to the position of national Minister of Education have stated to the cabinet, press conferences and other forums that he/she has the will to 'break the back of illiteracy' and address the nation's adult literacy crisis. A number of poorly conceptualized and under-resourced campaigns have been launched and have subsequently failed: Ithuteng, South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI), Ikwelo, Tirisano, and Rivoningo (Aitchison, 2008:3; Baatjes, 2003:191). The trend of this type of approach to AET has resulted in insignificant progress in reducing adult illiteracy since the end of the apartheid era (Aitchison, 2008:1; Baatjes, 2008:206, 224; Aitchison & Harley, 2006:98-99; Rule, 2006:17).

Conceptual confusion

By the mid 1990s, the ANC-led government showed signs of a shift from the symbol of a national literacy campaign to national AET plans, and also a shift from emancipatory literacy to a more functional competency-based approach to AET. The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC, 1994:45-47) lacked detail on AET, but the launch of the National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training (DOE, 1997) was significant. It was the first detailed national programme for AET in South Africa, of the kind which had previously been provided at the discretion of each province.

However, the Plan had three serious problems. First, there was little grasp of financial realities. The chapter on finances cited an unrealistic budget of R19,5 billion, with no indication of the source of funds but a menu of different options for financial advocacy (DOE, 1997:231-235). Only R50 million ever materialized. Second, the Plan made use of symbolic language in a way that was neither valid nor helpful, with phrases such as 'the eradication of illiteracy' (ibid: 9), 'developing the capacity of adults to understand the complex reality in which they live,' and 'creating critical and participative citizens' (ibid: 23). In my years of work with adults who had received virtually no formal education, I cannot say that they did not generally understand their own reality, or that they were always uncritical and passive; these qualities varied, as they do with any group of people. Third, the Plan vacillated between two conceptual positions, which suggested that there was an inadequate appreciation of either. At one extreme, there was emancipatory campaign-speak, such as that mentioned above, while at the other extreme there was an emphasis on learning areas, unit standards, outcomes, level descriptors and articulation with formal schooling (ibid:96-108). The unsatisfactory framing of AET within these dual traditions, instrumentalist (competitiveness, productivity and efficiency) and emancipatory (democracy, redress and human rights), was observed in the later ABET Act (52 of 2000) and continues today (Rule, 2006:121; Baatjes, 2008:207).

In fact, the main focus of the ABET Act is the regulation of centres, mainly state public adult learning centres, which provide formal ABET subjects equivalent to and aligned with the school system. [23]

The labour movement made a massive contribution to the struggle in South Africa, especially after the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. This meant that during the years of most intense struggle, union education programmes prioritized trade union education and mobilization for wider democratic action, with less priority given to adult education approaches and concepts. In 1991, the National Education Officer of COSATU stated that: 'Although literacy has not occupied a high priority on the agenda since the formation of COSATU, there is now a commitment by the federation to begin a programme to address the problem. Literacy is now on the agenda' (Steinberg & Suttner, 1991:136). This did not happen, and may explain why AET policy negotiators representing the labour movement were relatively open to suggestions from the private sector and foreign consultants. During the 1990s, there was surprising rapport and consensus, relative to the times, between trade union and private sector negotiators who had been long and bitter adversaries in South Africa. The common vision may have been due to a shared economic or monetary bias. The private sector was inevitably concerned with profits and affected by the current influences of globalization and neo-liberalism, with the emphasis on competitive markets. The labour movement was naturally concerned with employment and may have retained an historical Marxist concern with the significance of an economic rationale. The two sectors (industry and labour) formed a powerful lobby for outcomes or competency-based education and the integration of education and training. 'Organized labour's vision of a new outcomes-based system was based on the urgent needs of workers for education and training, rather than on the reform of schooling, vocational and higher education' (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:490). There had been no reference whatsoever to outcomes-based education (OBE) in the NEPI policy work, completed in 1992/3, and only broad suggestions

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[23] Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000: Chapter 1: Definitions and Application of Act. To regulate adult basic education and training; to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public adult learning centres; to provide for the registration of private adult learning centres; to provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in adult basic education and training; to provide for transitional arrangements; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

about a coordinated system of education and training (Jansen, 1999:4-5; NEPI, 1992:66-72). Global trends were reinforced by foreign consultants:

> Policymakers, responding to economic and political imperatives to develop a more skilled and flexible workforce, turned to overseas models of integrated education and training systems. This line of thinking was given impetus by international bodies such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which proposed vocationally-oriented, national education and training systems based on a competency education model (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:489).

A competency- or standards-based system became national policy with the passing of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (No. 58 of 1995) on 4 October 1995. Education and training were to be integrated into one national qualifications framework (NQF). The new bias in all education policy was perceived as related to the national macroeconomic Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy: AET policy became subject to new tendencies, with an emphasis on 'global competitiveness and on an effective workforce' (Rule, 2006:120).

The bias was also evident in AET in the West:

> Contemporary versions stress the need to establish or maintain competitive advantage in international trading and attractiveness to investment, and social cohesion and community integration and responsiveness. Active reflection is not expected and the main requirement from people is that they rise to the challenge of change and modify and adjust to reap the potential benefits for all (O'Sullivan, 2008:19).

Outcomes-based education and training (OBET)

By the late 1990s, policy change was so rapid and dramatic that the underpinning development processes may have been equally hasty. The adoption of both propositions - an outcomes-based system and the integration of education and training - resulted in new acronyms (OBET and ABET) and new confusion. With reference to these developments, a leading adult educator observed that:

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'The system is so complex that an industry has emerged in South Africa purely to explain the bewildering array of level descriptors, unit standards, learning programmes, critical cross field outcomes, etc.'(Lyster, 1997:7). In theory, OBE specifies beforehand, in terms of performance, what learners should be able to do at the end of a course of study and what they will be required to demonstrate. Curriculum, syllabus and timeframes vary according the inputs required by each learner to demonstrate the prescribed performance outcome. Of course, this is rarely feasible in practice with formal programme and assessment timetables. Real integration of education and training is also rarely seen in practice, but defaults to arrangements such as learners attending literacy on one day and welding on another. The facilitation of any valid form of OBET (or ABET) would require exceptional skills, not readily available in the poorly-resourced adult education sector:

> While ABET facilitators are not a homogenous group, it has been noted that those who come from a schooling background prior to OBE sometimes bring with them modes of teaching that may not promote this approach. In addition, ABET facilitators are a fairly fluid group of professionals, in the sense that most of them are contract workers who are not institution-based: this makes it difficult to build up the necessary communities of practice that are so central to the teaching profession. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that there may be gaps in both the subject matter expertise and the education, training and development experience of many ABET facilitators (King, 2008:41).

The National Qualifications Framework Act No 67 of 2008 Act replaced the SAQA Act, but the system and framework are still largely in place for AET. The framework is presented in the next table.

Table 12: South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF)			
NQF LEVEL	**BAND**	**QUALIFICATION TYPE**	
8	HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING	Post-doctoral research degrees Doctorates Masters degrees	
7		Professional Qualifications Honours degrees	
6		National first degrees Higher diplomas	
5		National diplomas National certificates	
FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE			
4	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING	National certificates	
3			
2			
GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATED			
1	GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	Grade 9	ABET Level 4
		National certificates	

Adult educators in South Africa have always raised concerns about the structure and levels of the NQF because AET is marginalised; and so many South African adults are consequently excluded from the framework and unit standard aligned training options. Qualifications and skills programmes for adult workers are largely aligned to public, registered unit standards. However all unit standards are assigned a NQF level, the lowest of which is NQF level 1 or Grade 9 which equates to some secondary schooling. NQF level descriptors apply to all unit standards based training programmes, whether they are full qualifications or skills programmes.[24] The current level descriptor for the least educationally demanding level of the framework, NQF 1, demands sound reading and writing skills (See Appendix A sourced from SAQA).

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[24] I contacted the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for confirmation regarding the application of level descriptors in RPL processes by telephone and email on 15.8.2011. I was assured by the help desk that the information above is accurate, but the operator asked me to confirm the details with her superiors. I have received no reply to my emails.

Theoretically, recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes can be conducted by training providers in order to offer less educated workers access to training programmes, which are pitched at NQF levels higher than their formal education. However the application of the level descriptors excludes many people because they lack both the formal education and the informal skills to cope with RPL processes which would facilitate their inclusion. Other observations of experienced practitioners are that level descriptors are not really applied during industry-based RPL processes and that the theoretical aspects of training are often simply ignored by providers (le Roux, 2011: Personal Communication). Adults can endeavour to attend the few ABET programmes that offer subjects almost identical to those offered by schools. Yet nationally recognised certification is offered only for Communications and Mathematics by the Independent Examinations Board or the Department of Education, below NQF level 1. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests the six or seven subjects required for a nationally recognized ABET level 4 or NQF 1 General Education and Training Certificate can involve an adult learner in seven years of part-time study. The reward is negligible compared to the effort. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5 in the context of ABET in the mining industry. In terms of serving the interests of less educated adult workers, the levels of the NQF provide quite flawed policy. The interests of these adults have not been successfully advocated in post-apartheid South Africa by any group. The low priority of adult education among important stakeholders and the low status of adult education and adult educators generally have all exacerbated the continuing and unaddressed problem.

When the NQF Act replaced the SAQA Act, the role and functions of different bodies in the system changed. Currently, there are three quality councils responsible for the development and quality assurance of qualifications. Umalusi is the quality council for General and Further Education and Training, including AET. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for Higher Education, and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations is the quality council for occupations and consequently for the mining sector. Opportunities for employed adults who lack formal schooling remain largely unregulated. Their preparation and training for the world of work (H&S and other) is thus left to the discretion of employers and the training providers

appointed by sectoral training authorities.[25] The future of unit standards is generally unclear, but remains the choice of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, the quality council under which the mining industry training is usually accommodated. The future of standards-generating bodies as the authors of unit standards is equally unclear:

> In terms of the new NQF Act the operational responsibility for the generation of qualifications will be the responsibility of the Quality Councils, and they will decide how best to utilise the expertise of SGBs. It seems likely that the new landscape will still need the expertise that characterised the SGBs and thence will develop new communities of practice to cover all sectors (SAQA, 2011:n.p.).

The lack of clarity regarding the authorship of unit standards is a concern as it is central to the quality and validity of the system. Initially, unit standards were written by standards-generating bodies (SGBs), comprising individuals with expertise in the subject of the qualification. The qualifications and unit standards would be approved by national standards bodies (NSBs), made up of representatives of stakeholder groups. This arrangement, however, did not last. In 2005, the NSBs were disbanded and their function was taken over by specially convened consultative panels. Unit standards can enhance practice by facilitating consensus regarding common goals across sectors in encouraging practitioners to formulate precise, overt goals for programmes. Such practices would be essential to mine H&S. Other experiences of unit standard-based approaches in local AET have been found to fragment knowledge and learning into trivial specific outcomes which do not necessarily integrate into a productive curriculum. Teaching adults to read has suffered particularly under OBET due to the misunderstanding of prescribed outcomes; the limited view of literacy is due to its functional uses and political correctness (non-racism, non-sexism etc.), and the fact that the reading of fiction - essential for fluency - is not embraced (Lyster, 2007:n.p.).

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[25] I checked the accuracy of this statement with the Umalusi Quality Council on 19 August 2011, but my informant wished to remain anonymous. The Department of Labour offers programmes for unemployed adults, but these are not within the focus of this study.

As Cretchley and Castle (2001:499) observe: 'There is nothing about outcomes-based education itself which guarantees that learning outcomes will be relevant or meaningful to the learner, nor is there anything that guarantees that they will not be relevant.' It depends to a large degree on the clarity, coherence and appropriate level of detail in the unit standards produced. Yet the maintenance of the quality of all of the unit standards across so many sectors of education and training is not always evident. Overall, the history and achievements of OBET may have been no better in fundamental adult education, such as literacy, numeracy and language, than they have been in schooling. In 2009, after years of crisis, the Minister of Basic Education announced to parliament that '…there is no longer OBE. We have completely done away with it... we need to focus attention on dedicated, inspired teaching based on a curriculum that is teachable' (Motshekga, 2009:n.p.). The policy of OBE has been verbally rejected for education in South Africa, but is still legislated in AET practice. Consequently, its use across the spectrum of AET requires much more interrogation. The debate over the integration of education and training appears to have been suspended.

The state and the rights of adult learners

Tracking the history of policy and related implementation decisions, it is clear that the choice of approaches and associated methods to be used in AET (and other sectors), while never entirely logical, is political. Nor is choice based on the proven merits of an approach or on valid research. Recommended approaches and concepts are misinterpreted, distorted and chosen for a variety of reasons other than their researched value in teaching and learning. The careful modification for local conditions is often overlooked. The past 15 years have been disappointing in terms of AET developments. The current NQF levels provide a flawed policy in serving the interests of less formally educated adults. It has also been argued that current adult literacy provision amounts to a constitutional violation: 'A variety of statistical sources indicate that the adult literacy rate in South Africa has not improved significantly over the last ten years and that the government is therefore not fulfilling its constitutional obligation to make ABE available and accessible' (Rule, 2006:130). As each set of South African census figures is published, the actual numbers of adults in each category - such as literate, illiterate, some schooling, schooling complete - grows, suggesting that the trend is not improving:

The record over the last decade raises grave doubts about whether there will be any significant reduction of adult illiteracy in the next ten years – an untenable state of affairs for a country of South Africa's resources, democratic character and leadership profile on the continent and internationally (Rule, 2006:119).

Denis O'Sullivan (1993:103) theorized about legitimacy in adult education and how different forms of legitimacy (charismatic, normative, traditional, rational) change and dominate in the course of a programme's history and development. His observations may be relevant to the changing context of South Africa. Charismatic and traditional (historical) legitimacy are self-explanatory; normative legitimacy is established by association, by virtue of shared values and beliefs; while rational legitimacy is based on legally or professionally defined roles (O'Sullivan, 1993:103-129). Programmes are rarely confined to any one of these appeals, and legitimacy is not a constant but needs to be maintained:

For example, at the early stages of a programme's operation charisma is a distinct asset. Charisma, however, will rarely sustain legitimacy as a programme evolves and systematises. Operationally, established programmes will supplement charisma, where it exists, with other bases for the legitimatory claims of their message (O'Sullivan, 1993:105).

Both Jansen (2002:204) and O'Sullivan (1993:104) agree that legitimacy has a role in the interaction between policy, programme and people or participants. In terms of O'Sullivan's analysis, state efforts for AET in South Africa may yet develop more mature sources of legitimacy, such as those described as normative (shared values) and rational (professional) legitimacy. These would be valuable for ongoing policy and practice developments in the future.

4.4 Ideological approaches to adult education

Malcolm Knowles and andragogy

Adult education departments in South African universities generally include a range of theoretical perspectives in their curricula. Adult educators enrolled in these programmes are drawn from all AET sectors, including the state, industry, non-

governmental and church-based programmes. Consequently, these perspectives have been widely disseminated across the AET field over the years. This study, which seeks a more intelligent and theoretical approach to H&S training, may sound like a quest for an adequate pedagogy, which in turn could lead to the suggestion of Malcolm Knowles' concept of *andragogy*. Besides the work of Freire, andragogy has been the most influential, most persistent and best-known theoretical construct of the field of adult education for over three decades (Rachal, 2002:225; Jarvis, 1995:93). 'Andragogy became part of the mainstream of adult education in the Anglophone world and has acquired the status of established doctrine in South Africa' (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:494,487). Knowles (1980:43) defined andragogy as 'the art and science of helping adults learn,' though it has also been described as both a philosophy and a method (Rachal, 2002:219). Essentially, andragogy was premised on two main features: the difference between adult and child learners, adults requiring a different pedagogy (andragogy), and the capacity of each adult learner to define his or her unique learning requirements by drawing on his/her life experiences (learner-centredness). Knowles' assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners, which distinguish them from children and demand a different pedagogy (andragogy), summarized over time, are presented below:

1. *Self-concept*: As a person matures, his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.

2. *Experience*: As a person matures, he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

3. *Readiness to learn:* As a person matures, his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.

4. *Orientation to learning:* As a person matures, his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centredness to one of problem-centredness.

5. *Motivation to learn*: As a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal. (Knowles, 1984:12).

Common sense dictates that the distinctions are questionable or at least over-emphasized. Children are also unique, have different experiences, and move from dependence towards independence. The assumptions above could apply equally to comparisons between any two different developmental stages of children or adolescents. This distinction between andragogy and pedagogy is based on an inaccurately conceived notion of pedagogy (Day & Baskett, 1982:150). There are behavioural, experiential and inter-personal differences between learning groups comprising children and those made up of adults who may wish to be treated differently, but this does not logically constitute an entirely different pedagogy.[26] In fact, anecdotal evidence from South African 'night schools' indicates that the best day school teachers of children are also the best night school educators of adults, because they have certain qualities. These include being knowledgeable, diligent, prepared, organized, communicative, patient and empathic. In its purest form, andragogy would mean that the role of the educator is not to teach, but to facilitate a process of self-directed enquiry, in which adult learners determine the parameters and objectives of their own learning by drawing on their prior experiences (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:493; Rachal, 2002:219). For Knowles, the adult's experience is primary: adults enter new learning situations with a rich reservoir of experience from which to draw - indeed it is their accumulation of experience that chiefly distinguishes their learning needs from those of children (Cretchley & Castle, 2001: 493). The focus on negotiating the entire learning experience with an individual or a group of learners is known as *learner-centredness*. However, it has proved to be idealistic and unrealistic in South Africa:

> The implication that curricula should be constructed through negotiation with each group of learners has been taken up by many adult educators in informal contexts unconstrained by formal certification, yet attempts to empower groups of adult learners in this way have all too often led to muddle, frustration and the waste of resources (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:493).

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[26]Discussion with a respected colleague suggested that the term andragogy, which was current in the 1970s and 1980s, is now regarded as a 'curiosity'. The term pedagogy is now used in both adult and children's education. Some universities have used the term 'didactics' as similar in meaning to education and training approach, though often referring to practices and plans, rather than higher-order assumptions and frameworks (French, 2011).

Knowles' regard for the contextual experience of the adult learner has value, such as the concept of dialogic space discussed earlier (Rule, 2004). Any workplace application of new learning would be dependent on accessing and activating the 'rich reservoir of experience' that workers have of underground mine practices. The concept of andragogy is accessible and useful to university-based programmes in alerting adult educators to think about their practice and consider more responsive attitudes to adult learners, but it has been thoroughly criticized over time. While Knowles focused on something quite significant to adult learning, his formulation is rather weak, not based upon extensive research findings, nor is it the total picture of adult learning (Jarvis, 1995:92). While most adult educators would be sympathetic to the spirit of andragogy, it remains an unstable theoretical foundation upon which to prescribe practice (Rachal, 2002:224). The past appeal of the concept has been attributed to its timing. Critiques of andragogy point out that its humanist conception suited certain eras, such as the romantic 1960s of the West and the brutal constraints of apartheid South Africa (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:494):

> The andragogical approach offered an alternative to education dominated by the goals and philosophies of an undemocratic state which had a firm grip on formal education at primary and secondary level. Adult education and higher education provided at least some space for resistance by empowering the individual (Cretchley & Castle, 2001:494).

Participatory, empowerment and transformational learning

An ongoing development influenced by the work of Freire, as well as by humanist psychologists such as Carl Rogers, is a cluster of approaches variously referred to as participatory, as empowerment, or, more recently, as transformational learning. The primary aim of these approaches is to develop the individual learner within an educational framework, the achievement of which can only be evaluated by non-educational criteria (Jarvis, 1995:99). O'Sullivan (2008) acknowledges a great many theoretical resources, which include:

> Hogan and Habermas on communicating a programme's intentions; Weber and Lukes on power and legitimacy; Hirst, Habermas and Phenix on the forms and functions of knowledge; Brim, Berger and Luckmann, Freire and Giroux on personal change; Mezirow, Goffman and Garfinkel on the social context of personal change; and Wittgenstein, Bourdieu, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard on language, discourse and power (O'Sullivan, 2008:15).

Jack Mezirow is considered to be the major current developer of transformative learning theory, but many other perspectives about transformative learning are emerging (Gravett, 2001:23; Cranton, 2002:65). These are far too numerous to explore here. Summarizing his writing over time, Mezirow regards primary change as occurring in the psychological 'perspectives' of the learner. Change occurs in cycles that start with a disorientating dilemma, continue through many stages or steps of assessment, meaning making and reflectivity, and end with reintegration into society or a restored equilibrium (Cranton, 2002:66; Jarvis, 1995:95; Imel, 1990). The main difference between Mezirow and other empowerment theorists is that he does not overtly promote social change, but changes the learner's perspective of and role in society. Social change and redistribution of resources are core objectives in other empowerment approaches, such as participatory appraisal and participatory rural appraisal. Theoretical endorsement for such approaches in AET and H&S training is found in both local and international literature (Wallerstein, 1992; Brookfield, 1998; Goduka, 1999; Taylor 2000; Lippin, Eckman, Calkin, & McQuiston, 2000; Cranton, 2002; Easton, 2005; Kiggundu, 2005).

Active participatory methods and techniques are usually associated with these approaches, and any number of them can be used to provide opportunities for adults to share feelings and personal/communal relationships, overcome inhibitions and creatively identify solutions (Guevara, 2002:25). The assumption is that learners or workers *know* how to respond to critical problems but require facilitation in assertiveness and collective action. This may apply to some workplace safety issues, such as claiming benefits or reporting faulty machinery. However, other H&S safety issues will naturally require new content input and learning. Many mineworkers work long shifts and live in hostels with the same people, and are consequently eager to gain new information, new insights and exposure to new people from training

programmes. Actual implementation of pure empowerment approaches presents overwhelming challenges (Guevara, 2002; Lyster, 1992:39; Cretchley & Castle, 2001:493). Various stages, facets and strategies are advised, and the learning process is extremely time-consuming.[27] Ultimately, transformative learning is described as being conditional upon critical challenge:

> There are no particular teaching methods that guarantee transformative learning. A provocative statement in a lecture, a story told by a fellow student, or an argument set out in an article are just as likely to stimulate critical self-reflection as is the most carefully crafted exercise. ...It is this environment of challenge that underlies teaching for transformation. Although this challenge must be combined with safety, support, and a sense of learner empowerment, it is, at the center, a challenge of our beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives that leads us to question ourselves (Cranton, 2002:66).

According to Cranton (2002:66), critical challenge can be initiated by 'creating an activating event' which engages the attention of adult learners (not to be confused with an ice-breaker activity). Challenge takes different forms, however, and intellectual challenge is not the same as the challenge of existing perspectives or

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[27] Cranton (2002) proposed strategies for transformative learning:

Creating an activating event- Films, documentaries, novels, short stories, etc., portray unusual perspectives in dramatic and interesting ways, discrepant with learners' own.
Articulating assumptions - Questions are crafted so as to encourage students to describe what they believe and how they came to believe it.
Critical self-reflection- Consider the consequences of holding certain assumptions. Critical self-reflection may take place in the classroom, but it is perhaps more likely to take place outside it.
Openness to alternatives - Create safe and enjoyable ways for people to try on different points of view
Discourse- This requires having accurate and complete information, being free from coercion and distorting self-deception, weighing evidence and assessing arguments, being open to alternative perspectives, critically reflecting on presuppositions, and having equal opportunity to participate.
Revision of assumptions and perspectives - When students actually revise their assumptions or larger frames of reference, there is little we can do, aside from giving support and encouraging students to connect with each other.
Acting on revisions- Often, such action falls outside the learning programme. Field trips or site visits, keeping a log or journal, or other follow-up activities are required

(Cranton, 2002:66-70).

beliefs. For example, South African workers have cultural or other beliefs that cannot be challenged in the course of one training event or programme. The challenge of working with, around or against such long-held beliefs is discussed in Chapter 6. Intellectual challenge could apply to good material, or the way in which information is organized and presented. New learning may also be essential, but is under-emphasized, even ignored, in empowerment approaches:

> Clearly, the academic disciplines appear to be less significant than the immediacy and relevance of problems and experiences, although there is a need for considerably more research into effective adult learning of academic disciplines, which occur as adults are gaining more opportunities to study for academic and professional qualifications on a part-time basis. For instance, there may be a relationship between experience and the disciplines being studied, etc. which requires more exploration (Jarvis, 1995:99-100).

The value of building on adult learners' experiences, knowledge and perspectives in a nurturing environment is universally endorsed in the literature. Participatory learning experiences within a programme provide space for significant processes: developing a sense of ownership of an issue among learners, processing and challenging new ideas, and reinforcing learning. However, participatory, empowerment and transitional approaches do not add enough to the work of Freire and Knowles to inspire the confidence of this study. While the approaches have strengths, they also have inherent problems:

- the conceptual confusion between empowering approaches and participatory methods;
- the intense demands made on facilitators who are required to provide group or learner-specific curricula;
- the assumption that all problems can be addressed without the introduction of new content;
- the amount of time consumed by the processes, especially in formalized situations such as the workplace.

Moral tendency

Education and training is never neutral, and of course the whole person is relevant in AET programmes. Moreover, there is a presumptuous aspect to most of the approaches discussed. The underlying tendency is to assert a kind of moral superiority over adult learners, whether the ultimate goal is salvation or raising the level of consciousness for the purpose of political change or their own H&S. Many of the advocated approaches aim not simply to address a problem, but to transform the person, his/her perspectives, interaction with society, or society itself. OBET is certainly less subject to this criticism, while self-efficacy in its original conceptualization is task- and context-specific. The wider the focus of the proposed transformation, the more this tendency is exposed, attempting to transform the whole person, rather than simply providing a whole person with a valuable and additional skill. Adult learners in South Africa certainly lack specific skills, but this does not render them generally oppressed or ineffectual in all aspects of their lives. Each adult will choose what he or she brings to bear on the learning situation. In my experience, adult learners in South Africa are sensitive and resistant to any training underpinned with messages that can be interpreted as: 'I will sort you out,' 'You need to change,' 'The way you are is not good enough,' or 'It's your fault, you should do more to fix things.' Chilisa and Preece (2005) caution about comparable covert tendencies in adult education research in Africa, in which researchers use their own informed 'ways of perceiving reality and values as standards against which they view, name, label, describe, write and make conclusions about the researched' (ibid:236). They go on to describe such ideological bias as 'the most resilient, pervasive, traumatising and damaging unethical practice in research (ibid). In the very tough, cynical and direct culture of mining, such tendencies will be unwelcome. A softer but related redemptive tendency has been observed in Irish adult education:

A constraint on turning theory on ourselves in facing this challenge lies in the dominance of redemption in Irish adult education thought and practice, the aspiration to 'put things right', be it in terms of skill deficiencies, limited perspectives, inappropriate beliefs and feelings or a flawed social order. This is done in the interests of the student, but from the standpoint of the adult educator. In this, the function of the adult educator to variously expand, develop, re-skill, lead and enlighten is unquestioned. Students are construed as beneficiaries and not without justification. Yet, the effect can itself be limiting and restrictive (O'Sullivan, 2008:29).

4.5 Conclusions

Much can be learned from experiences of AET in South Africa alone, insights and hindsight. Policy decisions are invariably political and affect the selection of approaches and associated methods to be implemented in AET (and other sectors). The political context of the early 1990s led to the development of certain symbolic policies for AET, which logically sought to enhance the legitimacy of the government and mark the end of apartheid. However current national education and training policy marginalises AET processes and adults who lack formal schooling. Unit standards-based policy has had a critical and pervasive effect on approaches to AET as it places precedence on accredited training over advocacy and awareness programmes. Countless adults in South Africa lack the educational scaffolding for NQF linked qualifications and skills programmes; or the informal skills to be included in such programmes via RPL processes. Research has shown that policy and provisioning of AET have been inadequate in the post-apartheid era and the current NQF levels provide a flawed policy in serving the interests of less formally educated adults.

As in the past with missionaries and tyrants, the political and economic circumstances of learning continue to have an effect. Relevant variables will differ in each learning site but could involve selection and grouping of learners, with an effect on work record and earnings. Only real engagement and acknowledgement of all the participants will uncover these issues. The very significant issue of learning new content is not productively dealt with in any of the approaches covered in this chapter.

The utility of outcomes-based approaches is open to debate, but is highly dependent on the quality of the unit standards produced, while empowerment approaches allow for minimal assurance of curriculum and content. The assumption that adult learners possess adequate knowledge to respond to critical problems may apply to some workplace safety issues, such as reporting faulty machinery. Most mine H&S issues, however, require new content learning, especially in a context of ongoing technological development and low levels of formal education that result in limited knowledge of pertinent subjects, such as lung diseases, geology, chemicals, and electricity.

Information is more effectively communicated if associated with some form of cognitive or intellectual challenge, starting with an activating event. Many AET approaches make use of the concept of dialogue. The most pragmatic of those reviewed, with regard to mine H&S, is the concept of *dialogic space*. It does not discount new content learning, but acknowledges the real challenge of critical engagement in the diverse South African context and points to the demands made on and responsibilities of all participants in the process. There is a *presumptuous* or *redemptive tendency* in many of the approaches discussed above, whether the ultimate goal is salvation or raising the level of consciousness of adult learners for the purpose of political change or their own H&S. In spite of the wealth of ideas in the AET debates and rich experiences of past years, this study requires additional input from *other disciplines*, a dilemma that has been articulated before:

> I can only speak of my own dilemmas as an adult educator and my search for theoretical resources to engage with them. Far from resolving them, at most I find myself with accommodations, holding positions and bracketed issues, all of which are necessary if nihilism and disablement are to be avoided. Inevitably these are products of my own individual positioning and cultural biography. Yet, the issues involved go to the heart of educational and social life and include communication, meaning-making, culture, social action, individual and social change, human agency and social justice. As I have indicated, I have come to regard these as even more complex than I had imagined and, accordingly, demanding a more elaborate and interdisciplinary theorisation (O'Sullivan, 2004:30).