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# The role of trade unions in adult basic education and training : a case study of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa.

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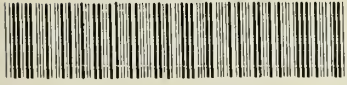
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THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN  
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Dissertation Presented

by

MENZI M. MTHWECU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1996

School of Education

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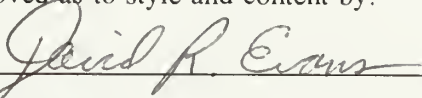
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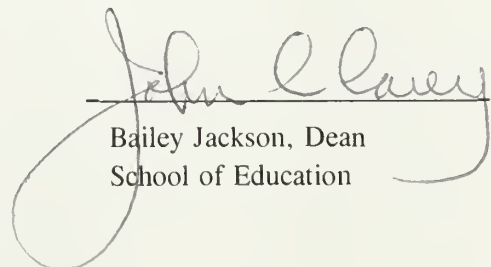
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DEDICATION

To my sons, Sabatha and Menzi, Jr.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Union members because this study constitutes one of mineworkers' contributions to knowledge and freedom.
- Union leaders for their belief in the importance of basic education and training in the struggle for working people's rights; shaft stewards, at the frontlines, who organize workers and negotiate with employers; a gentle revolutionary secretariat, Kgalema Motlanthe and Gwede Mantashe.
- Union educators at NUM and COSATU, in particular Meryl Plasket whose cooperation and hard work made it happen. Xola Williams, Dan Mashaba, Joseph Nkosi, Jacob Babuseng and others have enlightened me on trade unionism.
- ABET managers who participated in this study and in national policy forums, in particular Leslie Pitse and Brian Phillips.
- Peer advisers my classmates, in particular Joan Dixon, who coordinated the Literacy Support Initiative. Several South African adult educationists gave me very valuable feedback, in particular Elizabeth Burroughs and Caroline Kerfoot; members of the ABET Working Group at CEPD, who put together a vision and a plan - with special appreciation for the coordinator, Judy Favish.

International experts who shared their adult education experience during the South African ABET policy planning process, Agneta Lind, Rosa Maria Torres, Harbans S. Bhola, and Anil Bordial. Adrianus Smaling, an qualitative researcher, and Elsa Auerbach, an English as a Second Language specialist, gave insightful comments on this study.

Faculty advisers for years of guidance in alternative research, education, and social change.

My family from whom I was absent during the course of this study, including my mother Bukelwa, my father Mfundi, and my wife Masabatha.

To you all I say Thank you!



## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The administration of basic education and training in South African mines lacks democratic participation, among other problems. This is because stakeholders like worker-learners, educators, and trade unions are mostly not involved when employers plan, implement, and evaluate programs. Currently, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is exploring ways in which the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) system can be transformed. This case study explains strategies and proposals of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Qualitative research methods were used in data gathering. From 1993 to 1994, on-site, I observed and participated in NUM and national ABET activities; interviewed labor and liberation leaders and educators, managers, worker-learners, and NGO adult educators; and analyzed union resolutions, an agreement between NUM and the Chamber of Mines, and national ABET policy proposals.

Through workshops, NUM is in the process of building the capacity of mineworkers to participate in the running of programs. Through negotiations with management, an ABET framework has been agreed. Through COSATU and the African National Congress (ANC), NUM contributes in national efforts for reconstruction and development.

The defining characteristics/principles of the new industry and national ABET framework are: ABET qualifications will be equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory schooling, leading to a General Education Certificate; both general education and technical training will be certified in a common integrated framework; a national core curriculum, in a competency-based modular format, will allow for assessment and recognition of prior learning and experience. Negotiations are continuing between unions and employers about paid education and training leave, and how education and training can relate to job grading systems.

ABET provision, within a national qualifications framework, is intended to: redress the apartheid legacy, and respond to economic and social needs by offering both technical and social skills. Consequently, the ABET framework more than combines the formal, functional, and Freirean adult literacy models. In conclusion, the study highlights some major labor accomplishments, challenges, and questions of this transitional period. It is recommended that, in implementing the ABET vision, joint workplace partnerships/forums be pursued as viable vehicles for learner empowerment.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ABET** Adult Basic Education and Training is a proposed basic education and training framework for adults in South Africa. ABET would be equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory formal schooling, a GEC. ABET would integrate general education and technical training as a part of a common national qualifications framework (NQF). Language Literacy, and Numeracy would constitute modules on a four level continuum.
- ANC** African National Congress is the biggest political party in South Africa (62.7% in 1994 elections), currently led by President Nelson Mandela.
- CEPD** Center for Education Policy Development is a think-tank that developed the ANC education policy framework, and accompanying implementation plans.
- COM** Chamber of Mines of South Africa, or 'the chamber', is a federation of mine owners or employers. It is currently composed of six mining houses or groups. However, not all mining companies are members of the chamber.
- COSATU** Congress of South African Trade Unions is the biggest of three labor federations in South Africa. It is politically aligned to the ANC and the SACP.
- COSATU PRP** COSATU Participatory Research Project is an inquiry into education, training, and job grading policies. It was conducted by COSATU between 1991 and 1993.
- GEC** General Education Certificate is a proposed primary education qualification in South Africa. School children would obtain it at the end of ten years free and compulsory education. Adults would obtain a GEC at the end of a fourth level in an ABET framework.
- GNU** Government of National Unity is a South African transitional coalition government, consisting of three parties, i.e. ANC, NP, and IFP. It is expected to be replaced by regular democratic majority rule after 1999 national elections.
- IFP** Inkatha Freedom Party is one of three governing parties in South Africa. It is a traditionally a Zulu ethnic organization, with 10.5% of the vote in 1994 elections.
- ITBs** Industry Training Boards are bodies that are responsible for training in industries. Currently, they do not necessarily deal with all education and training in a sector, nor are they necessarily representative of all sector stakeholders.

MQF	Mining Qualifications Forum is transitional industry forum for education and training, consisting of mine employers, mine employee organizations, the state, and professional associations.
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions is a labor federation in South Africa. It is politically aligned to the PAC.
NECC	National Education Coordinating Committee acted as a mass based organization from 1985 to 1995.
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation is a study into education policy options for a new South Africa. It was commissioned by the NECC, from 1991 to 1992.
NESCO	National Education Sub-committee is an NUM constitutional structure of workers which deals with issues of education and training. It is reproduced at regional and branch levels as RESCO and BRESKO, respectively.
NP	National Party is a political party in South Africa, with 20.4% of the vote in 1994 elections. It is the party which administered apartheid policies.
NQF	National Qualifications Framework is a proposed education and training qualifications structure in South Africa.
NTB	National Training Board is a body constituted by the Industry Training Boards (ITBs). It operates under the auspices of the Department of Labor.
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers, or 'the union', is a non-racial employee organization for South African mineworkers. It is affiliated to COSATU. Through COSATU, it is politically aligned to the ANC and the SACP. NUM is different from the Mineworkers Union. The Mineworkers Union is an employee organization for "whites-only."
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa is affiliated to COSATU.
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania is a small political party in South Africa (1.2% in 1994 elections). Traditionally, it is an African party to the left of the ANC.
PETL	Paid Education and Training Leave is a right for workers to be released from work in order to attend education and training programs. The application of PETL is subject to negotiations at various workplaces.

- RDP Reconstruction and Development Program, an initiative of the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance, is an umbrella policy of the GNU intended to build a post-apartheid South Africa.
- SACP South African Communist Party is a political party in South Africa, aligned to the ANC and COSATU. It did not stand for elections in 1994, but some of its leaders are included in the ANC list of MPs.
- SAQA South African Qualifications Authority is a proposed institution that would develop and monitor the implementation of the NQF. As a body that would assure quality in the national education and training system, SAQA is expected to operate through a system of education and training authorities in different sectors and areas.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Research Problem

On Friday, October 07, 1994, a date that will live in labor history, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Chamber of Mines of South Africa (COM) signed an agreement about Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). This is the same year in which a newly elected South African government introduced a draft ABET legislation, a national development with significant implications for workplace education and training. One of the revolutionary "principles" of the NUM-COM agreement is about "involvement". It says that the union, as one of the "stakeholders", will in future be involved in "the planning and provision" of basic education and training in the mines. This study examines the early contributions and impact of trade union participation in ABET issues.

"Management are doing their own thing. They do not involve workers when making decisions about the classes". This statement, made in a July 1993 workshop by a union shaft steward<sup>1</sup>, summarizes the problem-focus of this study. Historically, in South Africa, black workers have mostly not been involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their education and training programs. The non-participatory nature of workplace education and training programs has been a factor in their lack of legitimacy and poor participation.

Problems with the provision of basic education and training to South African mineworkers can be discussed in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Quantitatively, the

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<sup>1</sup>Shaft stewards, or shop stewards, are elected worker leaders.

need for basic education is huge, yet, only a very small number of mineworkers are being reached through current provision. In a research report to the National Training Board, the Business Marketing Intelligence estimates that of the 679 000 workers in the South African mining industry, 422 000 are illiterate (NTB, 1994, p. 153). It is significant that the extent of illiteracy in the mining sector, 62%, is second only to the agricultural sector, 85%, (see Appendix A, Number of Illiterates per Industrial Sector). According to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992, p. 5) about 15 million adults, in a nation of 40.5 million, are estimated to be in need of some form of basic education. According to NTB (1994) and NEPI (1992) studies, the definition of literacy ranges from complete inability to read and write, to high literacy skills. They also do not distinguish between literacy in the mother tongue and functional English literacy. In effect, they refer to people who need basic education and training as defined in the new ABET framework.

On the other hand, it is estimated that, nationally, "less than 1 percent of adult illiterates are currently undergoing literacy training of any sort" (NEPI, 1992, p. 3). Since there are no reliable figures for levels of provision in the mines, basic education provision in the mines, though assumed to be higher than the national average, can be viewed in the shameful national context of "1%".

Problems with the provision of basic education and training for mineworkers go far beyond limited numbers in provision. The quality of education provided to mineworkers is suspect, to put it mildly. According to the following studies, National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992), COSATU Participatory Research Project (COSATU PRP, 1993), National Training Board (NTB, 1994), and according to my own experience as an Adult

Education Officer in the mines, qualitative problems in Adult Basic Education programs can be summarized in the following manner: the curriculum is mostly irrelevant to the needs of adults; is biased in terms of class, race and gender; and poorly imparts knowledge and skills needed on the job. There is also a lack of competent educators. ABE programs do not lead to qualifications which are recognized industry wide or nation wide. Teaching and learning facilities are inadequate. Other stakeholders, like unions, educators, and learners are not involved in decision making. It is now obvious to say that apartheid policies and practices are the root causes for this situation.

According to the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP, 1994, p. 58) and the African National Congress (ANC, 1994, p. 2), South African problems of Human Resources Development are characterized by the following three features, of which the third one is of particular relevance to this study:

Education and training under apartheid is characterized by three features: First, the system is fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, and saturated with the racist, sexist, ideology and educational doctrines of apartheid. Second, there is a lack of access or unequal access to education and training at all levels of the system. Vast disparities exist between black and white provision, and large numbers of people - in particular, adults (and more especially women), out of school youth, and children of pre-school age - have little or no access to education and training. Third, there is a lack of democratic control within the education and training system. Students, teachers, parents and workers are excluded from decision making processes.

"Lack of democratic control" in the national education and training system is mirrored by lack of democratic control in workplace education and training. Consequently, there is a need to investigate how employee organizations, such as the National Union of Mineworkers, can contribute in improving the provision of basic education and training. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), to which NUM is affiliated, has a proud history of fighting

for workplace and national democratization behind them (Baskin, 1991). COSATU unions are beginning to get involved in issues of worker education and training (COSATU PRP, 1993). This study investigates trade union attempts at improving the provision of basic education and training at the workplace, as partly initiated through labor and management negotiations. Through collective bargaining, the union and mine employers are proposing far-reaching changes in industry education and training system. As a result, one wonders how these changes are negotiated, and what they actually mean.

Literature on Workplace Literacy suggest that union involvement in worker education is "possible and desirable" (Sarmiento & Kay, 1990; U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1992). Carnevale, Gainer and Meltzer (1988), whilst writing from a management perspective, suggest that without early involvement of unions and workers proposed programs are doomed to failure. Literature also states that labor participation can take various forms or levels of intensity (Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, 1987). An often celebrated outcome of union participation in workplace education is that worker-learners get to participate in decision making processes.

However, problems associated with union participation include lack of access to information and resources, and consequently lack of capacity to participate as desired. Channels of communication between a union and worker-learners can be ineffective with the result that union officials sometimes act on questionable mandates. In many western countries, unions have experienced set backs and have declined in numbers and influence. This has mostly rendered them ineffective voices for workers on education matters. To the contrary, COSATU unions, because of the significant role they have played in the anti-apartheid struggle, are currently

enjoying a considerable level of legitimacy and popularity. The question is: How does COSATU's position of power translates into spin offs for education and training?

### Purpose of the Study

Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest the following criteria for evaluating the value of a research study: "First, it must contribute to knowledge. Second, the relevant policy arenas should find usefulness and meaning in the study. And third, the study should be useful for practitioners" (p. 31). They add that "one purpose of qualitative methods is to discover important questions, processes, and relationships, not to test them" (p. 43). This study should be useful to policy makers and practitioners who want to understand the newly negotiated, and about to be legislated, ABET frameworks intended for application in South African workplaces and society. This study describes the nature of the policy framework for adult basic education and training, explains the motivations for the policy choices, and discusses the possible implications of the proposed industry and national implementation plans. In this case, policy makers and practitioners may be managers, trade unionists, educators, and worker-learners, or, as literature and this study suggest is ideal, it may be a combination of them all.

Trade unionists and managers who may be planning to, or may already be, working together on education and training issues, would be well advised to consider insights emerging from the relationship between NUM and mine employers. I hasten to qualify this suggestion by pointing out that the history and context of the South African mining industry has some characteristics peculiar to it. However, it is the goal of this case study to throw some light on potential strengths and problems when labor and management collaborate in planning and

providing education and training. Although the concept of a labor-management collaboration for basic education and training in South African mines is still young and fragile indeed, in it there are a number of decisions and outcomes that others may want to try, or more importantly, may want to avoid.

In many ways, both South African employers and the labor movement, are going through a transitional learning curve. Finding themselves in a changing South Africa, employers have to respond to demands for democracy in decision-making at the workplace. Calls for "workplace transformation and restructuring" are made by labor and the new government. On the other hand, trade unions have to respond to an expanded list of worker needs. Beyond traditional demands for wages and conditions of service, COSATU unions are taking up education and training as a new area of collective bargaining.

This dissertation is an analysis of the new ABET vision and its implementation plans. It is not, however, an analysis of implemented ABET programs. I suggest that it is important to understand the ABET policy proposals and plans in order to be better prepared to evaluate their future attainment, or lack of attainment. This analysis, done by someone who has observed the negotiations and policy planning processes firsthand, throws light on background events and motivations. The researcher participated and observed various ABET forums as well as interviewed various role players.

The well known history of apartheid oppression in South African society and workplaces has led to a situation where workers often rely on their trade unions as channels to articulate their feelings, as opposed to relying on management controlled channels of communication. International experience also shows that employee organizations can

contribute a great deal to the education of working people (London, Tarr & Wilson, 1990). In order to improve understanding of the issues, and possibilities to facilitate change, it has become imperative to listen to what mineworkers, through their chosen channel, the union, are saying. The results of this study show that beyond listening to individual worker-learner voices at the classroom floor, there is value in listening to their collective voice. In this sense, this study is a contribution to dialogue about "participatory approaches to worker education", which is "a knowledge area". The literature reviewed in chapter two and my own experience in ABE programs, suggest that generally, learner participation is practiced in the form of one-to-one interactions between a learner and his or her educator. I consider this to be "an individual or classroom learner voice". This study seeks to extend, not to devalue, the notion of learner participation by arguing that "a collective or organizational learners' voice" can be valuable in the education process. This dissertation also explores conditions that are necessary for employee organizations to become effective vehicles for worker-learners' voices, by looking at the case of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

This study particularly contributes to knowledge by critiquing the existing models of adult literacy, and arguing for the need to explore the emerging Adult Basic Education and Training model, which is supported by South African labor and liberation movements. As discussed in chapter two and six, a critique of the shortcomings of the traditional, functional, and awareness-raising models of adult literacy education has contributed to a situation where, in the South African context, it makes sense to explore a new model of adult basic education and training. However, this study discusses how the proposed ABET model reflects or does not reflect a combination of various aspects of the three standard adult literacy approaches.

This study further explains the motivations for the unique principles of the ABET framework. Although strengths and weaknesses of the new proposals remain to be revealed in practice, some possible implementation challenges are raised.

Since education and training is mostly a new area of collective bargaining for COSATU trade unions, sister unions should be able to draw some lessons from NUM's successes and setbacks. This would depend on the extent that they can apply lessons to their own environments. They can compare NUM's strategies with their own. Also, NUM itself could use this report as an opportunity to reflect on its own young experience in this area.

In redefining their practice after the apartheid dispensation, ABET practitioners should be informed by this study's explanation or analysis of: labor's approach to education and training, agreement between management and labor on ABET, and emerging national policy proposals. ABET practitioners would need to familiarize themselves with the new education and training principles because, to a great extent, they reflect worker aspirations, what management and labor intend to do, and proposed policy positions of the new government. Essentially, the ABET framework reflects what practitioners will be asked to implement. By understanding the implications of union approaches, industrial contracts, and national policies, adult educators and trainers can make informed contributions to the processes of workplace education transformation in South Africa.

This study generates some major questions which should, for a long time to come, engage the adult education community as they implement the new frameworks. Also, as they seek answers to the following and other questions, adult educationists should be able to assist ABET program planners and practitioners:



- \* How will active and critical learner participation be promoted in the planing, implementation, and evaluation of ABET programs; and in society as whole?
- \* How effective will joint workplace education and training committees/forums be in addressing the apartheid legacy?
- \* How far will trade unions be involved in issues of education and training?
- \* How strong is management's commitment to collaboration?
- \* What happens in situations where unions are weak or absent?
- \* What role will the new government play in workplace education, if any?
- \* How will ABET curriculum standards combine workplace and social skills?
- \* How can national ABET curriculum standards/outcomes/competencies be effectively applied in response to individual and contextual needs?
- \* How, if at all, will ABET provision contribute to improvements in workplace productivity, and to people's standard of living?
- \* How much of the envisioned ABET framework will actually work?

However, the ultimate goal of basic education and training is to improve the lives of the oppressed masses. Literature on adult education show that people become "empowered" if they can participate in decisions governing their own learning (Freire, 1970). This dissertation reports how a labor organization attempts to democratize decision-making about Adult Basic Education and Training in the workplace.

## Research Questions

The following questions were proposed for investigation through field observations, interviews, and document analysis. They constitute core questions asked to all participants. Their wording and order was, however, adjusted in the field.

The primary/focus question of the study is:

What are the roles, and implications, for trade union participation in Workplace Literacy, as suggested by the case of the National Union of Mineworkers?

Implementing Questions:

1. Context
  - \* Currently, what characterize literacy provision in South African mines?
  - \* What are the main problems for basic education and training in the mines?
2. Trade Union Roles in Education and Training
  - \* Currently, in what ways, if at all, is NUM involved in workplace education?
  - \* Why should NUM get involved in workplace education, if at all?
  - \* How does the trade union become "a voice" for workers?
  - \* In what ways, if any, can employee organizations play a part in running workplace education programs?
3. Issues Raised by Trade Union Participation
  - \* What changes does NUM propose in the provision of basic education in the mines? Which model/s of adult education is NUM proposing or supporting?
  - \* What questions does NUM involvement raise in relation to program design and delivery, e.g. curriculum development?
  - \* How does NUM involvement impact worker-learners, facilitators, employers, education providers, the community, and the union itself?
  - \* Given the historical conflicts and suspicions between labor and management, what are the chances of labor and management working together in the provision of education and training?
  - \* What progress and setbacks does NUM experience in its attempts?
  - \* How do union objectives translate, or not translate, into practice? And what accounts for the discrepancy?

- \* What are possible undesirable outcomes of labor involvement in workplace education and training?
- 4. Possible Future Directions
  - \* What are the relative strengths and limitations of the trade unions for improving education practice in the mines? And WHY?
  - \* What is the future role of the union in Workplace Education?

#### Data Collection Methods

In this section, with the goal of achieving methodological openness, I explain how the problem of this study was investigated. In pursuing answers to the questions of this study, I employed the following qualitative methods: participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. A combination of these three data collection methods was particularly suited for this project because it enabled me to observe and participate in various union activities on basic education and training; interview and interact with worker-learners, worker-leaders, union officials, and managers; and to study relevant documents. These methods allowed sufficient adaptability for me, the researcher, to adjust to emerging circumstances on the field over a period of twelve months. These three methods of inquiry, "triangulated" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305), gave me a holistic picture of the union's involvement in worker education and training. A survey questionnaire, which was used by the union to gather some information, is discussed in this dissertation as part of participant observation activities. The following discussion about how methods were used is not intended to be exhaustive because more specific information is given about them in subsequent discussions.

## Participant Observation

From July 1993 to August 1994, I, the researcher, was based at the headquarters of the National Union of Mineworkers in Johannesburg, South Africa. Appendix B shows that this development followed an understanding between the union and the researcher. I requested the union to let me research their "literacy activities"<sup>2</sup>. I needed access to observe union activities, interview people, and study relevant documents. In my request, I indicated that it would be a different kind of research since I would also assist in the union's ABET efforts. I offered the service of my experience and expertise in the field of adult education as I believe that the union has the potential to contribute to the necessary transformation of education and training in the mining industry.

During initial discussions, the union general secretary stated that they would be glad to, "use any skills we can get" in order to address the crisis of illiteracy/ABET in the mines. He pointed out that the union's commitment to "securing education and skills for workers" was very high, an attitude I found logical, and later found to be true. He indicated that they were already "talking to employers" about working together on education issues, and that these developments needed vigorous follow up. Although he did indicate that NUM involvement in basic education and training was still "young", I was later to find out that it was actually younger than I had assumed. Union officials pointed out that the number one priority should be "to build the capacity of workers on ABE and Training issues". The

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<sup>2</sup>In this study, as according to the South African model, literacy and numeracy form part of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), as defined in the List of Acronyms, and discussed in chapters two and six.

signing of a written letter of understanding between the union and me took place after the study was under way, although the discussions and plans happened over a period of a year.

As stated in the letter of understanding, the union did not control the design and conduct of this research study. In other words, the union did not dictate interview questions, events to observe, or documents to read. However, like any other participant in this study, trade unionists were able to suggest what they thought would be relevant sources of data to meet my research goals. To the extent that participants did not control the design and conduct of this study, although their input was solicited, this study is not a Participatory Research Project. Moreover, though in the course of participation in union ABET activities, the study involved planning, taking action, and reflection, it is not an Action Research Project either. There was no particular group of people who were consciously following a stated cycle of Action Research. However, if one considers Participatory Action Research on a continuum, not a single form, one is able to see this study as a form of Participatory Action Research to the extent that the research project evolved as a direct result of input from trade unionists, educationists, managers, and others as discussed in this study. This study is qualitative to an extent that it employs non-quantitative methods of data collection.

The actual nature of researcher participation was not always crystal clear to the union or the researcher because the issue was new, and the relationship was new too. Generally, participation meant giving a hand to an unfolding vision. The key to it all was found in the fact that I worked together with the newly appointed union educator. As a union staff member, the union ABET educator, took the lead. As a researcher, I assisted in union ABET activities. Together we planned and implemented ideas that were overseen by the head of

Education Unit, elected national office bearers, and a team of workers who are members of NESCO, a union education sub-committee.

I participated in and observed activities of the following nature: planning and conducting of workshops, preparation and commenting on documents, and giving feedback to union officials and shaft stewards. To be able to do this, the union provided me with office space, transportation, a stipend, and use of union facilities like fax, phone, and photocopying machines. This research project became both a big opportunity and a huge responsibility for me. In broad terms and in good faith, the union opened its doors. Drawing the fine lines of involvement was part of the "emergent design" of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1991).

Merriam (1991, pp. 87-102) discusses levels of researcher participation along the following continuum: from being a complete participant, functioning primarily as a participant, functioning primarily as an observer, to being a nonparticipant observer. The fact that I would not be a complete participant was established in the process of gaining entree. The researcher could not represent the union on any issue or capacity since "a researcher is not a union official, shaft steward or member". Further, the researcher's involvement with the union focused solely on ABET matters. As pointed out earlier, I was not a nonparticipant observer. The union expected me to play a role, a "resident consultant." This combined the functions of observation and participation.

I would not like to simplify the uncertainty and tension involved in being a participant observer. Consequently, I continually discuss this challenging but fascinating role in this dissertation. For instance, though the researcher's involvement was focused on ABET

matters, one could not always clinically separate education issues from other workplace issues which the union was addressing. Health and Safety, for instance, a life and death issue in the mines, places demands on basic education for workers. Also, not sitting around the negotiating table with management does not minimize the fact that I participated in negotiations-related activities like union workshops and caucuses.

The manner in which people might have perceived my participant observation role is also revealed in how I was introduced. In union meetings, workshops and other gatherings, the nature of introductions depended on the situation. The following factors led to variations in introductions: whether I was introducing myself or I was being introduced by someone else; whether I was going to participate in the occasion or not; whether it was at the beginning of a session when every body was introducing themselves or later in a session when I was introduced to do something; whether it was in a large gathering or a small one; whether I was introduced in English or in an African language; and who I was being introduced to. The following is a gist of what people often said in the union, "Comrade<sup>3</sup> Menzi is a student in America. He is here doing research. He is helping us on ABET." However, the longer I was in the field the more people got to know about me. People outside the labor movement associated me with the union, although with time and explanation my status became known.

The understanding that the researcher was not an official of the union, but was a university student, who had no authority over anybody or any part of the union, meant that there was some distance between the researcher and the participants in the trade union. A

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<sup>3</sup>Comrade is a common term used in labor and liberation circles in South Africa. It means colleague in the struggle.

contrary attitude strongly projected in our interactions was that: "We are all in this together."

### Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews. This means that there was flexibility in asking research questions. The process of participant observation and document analysis provided a good base of information from which I could not only develop probing questions, but I could rethink the priority and order of questions.

I made a point of sending the list of questions to my interviewees ahead of time. I also attached a two page summary of the study. Only once did I experience a situation where an interviewee had not had a chance to read through the questions and the summary of the study prior to the interview. Interviewees always gave me suggestions on how I could improve the study, i.e. other events to "look at", who else to "talk to", and documents "not to miss". I later provided interviewees with a list of documents which I was looking at. However, this form of interaction with interviewees was only possible with managers, NGO adult educators and researchers, union officials, and shaft stewards. It was not possible with worker-learners.

When I talked to worker-learners, individually or in groups, I could only give them a verbal summary of my study, and they did not receive a list of questions in writing, partly due to their limited literacy levels. Another difference is that discussions with worker-learners were not in English, partly due to my own comfort with different African languages. To a linguistically diverse group of mineworkers, I communicated in Fanakalo<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>Fanakalo is an improvised common language used in the mines. It is not one of the eleven official South African



Discussions with worker-learners took various formats. Within two months of my arrival, I conducted interviews with workers, individually and in groups, at union branch offices. These were union initiated interviews. We were trying to find out what the workers' learning needs were and what changes they thought the union should push for. They were structured interviews, conducted on a uniform list of questions. This exercise was an adaptation of a COSATU PRP (1993) questionnaire. Interviewing workers in union offices was an important moment to be a participant observer in what is an essential part of worker-union interactions. In other mines, by permission of ABE program coordinators and local union officers, I talked to learners as part of my own research study. On one of these three occasions, I was accompanied by a South African ABE researcher who was one of three people who acted as my peer advisers in this study. In classroom settings, I asked learners about their goals for taking classes, their problems in the program, program changes they were hoping for, how they thought the changes could come about, and what they thought should or should not be the role of unions in education.

Some union officials, shaft stewards, managers, and adult educators were interviewed more than once, over a period of a year. Follow up interviews were not a repeat of the initial list of questions. Based on my observations, interviews, and analyses of documents, I pulled out "categories" of what I found to be "themes" in the data or the experience. I put them together as "emerging findings". I sent copies of this six page document to interviewees

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languages. It is generally expected to be dropped partly because it limits the use of skills outside the mining industry.

ahead of time. Consequently, follow up interviews focused on this document. Follow up interviews, or "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 314-316), turned out to be both a form of data collection and data analysis. Besides trying to confirm the information I had, I was also trying to get feedback on my interpretations. We also discussed some new ABET developments. New categories were suggested, and more information and documents were given. During interviews, document verification was also an attempt to make known to interviewees that such documents were under consideration, and to solicit any strong feelings interviewees might have about them. Coming out of these spirited discussions, I had a revised list of themes and categories.

The concept and process of developing "themes" and creating "categories" from research data, in order to "make meaning", is based on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) method of generating "grounded theory". It is based on the research notion of "finding" theory, not "testing" it. Accordingly, information is recycled back to participants so that meaning is constructed to include their reflections. Grounded theory is also in line with the philosophy and practice of Participatory Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Reason & Rowan, 1990; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall and Jackson, 1993), in which the involvement of research participants in "interpreting their reality", and "making meaning" of data, is essential. However, beyond follow up interviews, there were many other interactions where participants expressed their views on developments and issues raised in the study.

Formal interviews were arranged with the following NUM leaders: the union general secretary, who is an elected full-time national office bearer; two educators, one national and one regional, who are appointed union officials; about ten shaft stewards, who are full-time

mineworkers. In classroom situations, I talked to about sixty worker-learners. These numbers about interviewees exclude, and risk to distort, equally valuable interactions with same and other people during events like meetings and workshops. Since the union, not individuals, is the unit of study, non-interview information is equally important. For instance, though I interviewed ten shaft stewards, I actively interacted with well over a hundred of them on the same issues.

I interviewed five mining company officials. Three of them are at the level of company program coordinator, whilst two are group heads of adult education. In this study I refer to them as ABET coordinators and managers although their formal titles may be different. Being located at NUM limited my interactions with management. However, I interacted with them at national meetings and forums dealing with the same ABET concerns. At national forums, they were part of the private sector, whilst I was part of the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team (discussed in chapter seven). My interactions with members of management at the national level gave me more understanding of discussions at industry level, and vice a versa.

The new ABET framework for the mining industry is essentially similar to what other COSATU unions are trying to achieve in other sectors. It is also similar to the framework proposed by the ANC at national level. Consequently, in order to gain a better understanding of the proposed industry and national ABET frameworks, I interviewed two COSATU educators and one ANC/CEPD educator. In chapter four and seven, I trace the role played by COSATU unions in developing the new framework. My interactions with COSATU and ANC/CEPD educators, were not limited to interview situations. As colleagues, we

continually worked on the same ABET issues. In various ways, setting formal interviews was necessary and useful for me, and probably them too. Interview situations were an opportunity to focus on the study and to gain conscious answers.

In order to gain another perspective on the new ABET framework, and the role of labor unions, I interviewed three ABET professionals, not my peer advisers, who were based in NGOs but had many interactions with workplace ABET programs. Information and suggestion from NGO adult educators was appropriately shared with other research participants, and was also used to inform various activities during this project.

### Document Analysis

The process of collecting and analyzing documents related to the union's involvement in basic education and training continued alongside observations and interviews. Document analysis was an opportunity to sit down and study complex arguments and mountains of information. In interviews, participants often referred to discussions already detailed in documents. Documents were used in workshops, negotiations, and policy forums. I had to follow up on interviews and observations by studying documents in order to be able to understand important discussions. It was not possible for people to give me all relevant information and perspectives in the limited time of an interview or other occasion.

Initially, relevant documents were those which had information relating to basic education and training in the mines. Documents were reviewed for union and national policy work. Later, relevant documents were coded according to themes which were emerging from the study. Collecting and analyzing documents was often done in collaboration with the union

ABET educator, and the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator, two people I worked closely with during the course of this study.

The process of document analysis continued when I left the field. Studying the documents whilst away from the field was an opportunity to reflect on the field experience. However, I would like to emphasize that these documents were given serious attention whilst I was in the field because that was part of what had to be done in order to participate in policy processes in the industry and nationally. I was also part of the drafting of some of the documents analyzed in this study.

Documents analyzed range from historical artifacts like newspaper articles, to daily work documents like workshop reports, to formal documents like union policy, union-management agreements, and national policy frameworks. However, since documents are not of equal relevance to this study, some, like the agreement, are reproduced and discussed in their entirety. Whilst from some, like national policy, only relevant sections are selected.

Initially, the process of analyzing documents meant classifying documents according to the implementing questions of the research. Later, information was coded according to emerging themes and categories. In line with the subject of this dissertation, a lot of attention is given to the documents which contain the rationale and nature of the proposed industry and national education and training policies, and the role of unions in them.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

In this section, I describe the steps I took in order to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of this study's results. The following are brief definitions of these concepts: Credibility of data, traditionally referred to as "internal

validity", refers to "the extent to which one's findings are congruent with reality," Merriam (1991, p. 169). Transferability, traditionally known as "external validity" or "generalizability", is about the extent to which findings of a study can be applied to other settings. Dependability of research data, or "reliability", or "replicability", is an attempt to answer the question: if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results? Confirmability, conventionally known as "objectivity", refers to "the extent to which data is uninfluenced or undistorted by the beliefs or biases of the investigator" Borg and Gall (1989, p. 247).

### Credibility - Internal Validity

Here I discuss activities which I undertook in order to ensure that I capture what is there. I used different sources of information. Within the union, I collected information from different individuals and at different levels of the union structure. Outside of the union, I interviewed members of management belonging to different mining houses and companies, and from different levels of company structures. Outside the mining industry, I interviewed ABET educators from COSATU, ANC, and NGOs.

Data credibility is partly ensured by my participation in different ABET activities, like union meetings and workshops. The union ABET educator and I co-planned and co-facilitated workshops of the following nature: national ABET workshops, involving regional worker-leaders; regional workshops, involving branch leaders in a given region; mining house workshops, involving union branches at a mining house. Workshops were mainly aimed at facilitating the unions effort to mobilize workers for education and training rights, and to supporting worker-leaders in negotiations with management. Since workshop proceedings are

recorded and some participants have been interviewed, union workshops ensure the credibility of the data the union was receiving from and giving to workers.

The union ABET educator and I received and prepared various documents for meetings, workshops, negotiations, and other national processes for developing an ABET framework. I hasten to add that all our work was overseen and stood to be approved by the appropriate union constitutional and operational structures. Although I observed that there was a high level of confidence given to us, I also observed that nothing major could really be done without approval by the union secretariat. Union decision-making structures and processes are described in chapters three of this dissertation. However, our individual monthly reports to the union head of education, where daily logs are reflected, constitute a verifiable record of what was done when - an "auditable trail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319). Document analysis further enhances data credibility because minutes of meetings, reports of workshops, agreements from negotiations, policy statements will remain available for verification.

I asked three ABET professionals to act as my "peer debriefers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). These South Africa-based people gave me feedback on my emergent design and emerging findings. One of them accompanied me to some interviews with shaft stewards and learners. One is an independent consultant, another one is a university lecturer, and the other is a researcher with a research institution. It is important that they were not based within the labor movement. Also, they were not members of ANC/CEPD Task Teams, where I participated, although they participated in various forums where an ABET policy was

discussed. Their critical comments encouraged me to prioritize some interview questions, and documents, as well as review categories emerging from of my findings.

For the duration of this study, I worked with members of an ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team on national policy development. Summary versions of this study were given to them. However, the study was never discussed in any of our meetings. Some members were more aware of developments in it than others. Some gave extended written and verbal feedback on my emerging findings. Two international adult literacy experts who twice visited the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team gave feedback on this study. One was a professor from the U.S.A., and the other was a consultant from Sweden. Their feedback was relevant to both my study and policy issues under discussion.

Also, in December 1993 and July 1994, a Qualitative Research expert from the Netherlands conducted national workshops in South Africa. I participated in his December workshop. We discussed this study as a qualitative case study. When he returned in July, he gave me feedback on my emerging findings. Advice from research participants, colleagues, peer debriefers, visiting experts, and my university faculty advisers, ensured that I was constantly thinking about how best to find answers to complex questions.

"Prolonged engagement" can enhance data credibility because the researcher is able to see the "regularity and consistency" of events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 303-4). For purposes of this student-study, I was in the field from July 1993 to August 1994. Relatively, I feel that a year was a sufficient time to build trust, identify main issues, and see the regularity of events and interactions.



I believe that this study was, coincidentally, conducted at quite a unique moment in South African politics and education. This was a period of national transition in South Africa. It was ten months before the first democratic elections, and "hundred days" after the inauguration. During this period, I witnessed the union crisscross the country mobilizing workers for the right to basic education and training, negotiate with employers, and participate in forums developing national policy on education and training. I was able to see ABET negotiations between the union and mine employers start and conclude in various companies. Unfortunately, I left behind, by about a month, the major crowning event of that negotiations phase, that is, the signing of an ABET agreement between NUM and the Chamber of Mines, after sixteen months of hard bargaining and learning.

"There is no ideal amount of time to spend observing nor is there one preferred pattern of observation" (Merriam, 1991, p. 91). Though the period was long enough to see the process move from worker-demands to industry agreements, and a government white paper, it did not permit me to see implementation of programs. It was also not necessarily sufficient for contextual needs, in terms of contributing to the struggle. When I departed, there were still many mines where the training of shaft stewards and negotiations had not yet begun. Issues of curriculum and release time remained contentious with the chamber though partly resolved at some mines. Who could have anticipated that processes of capacity-building and consensus-seeking would take such a long time before piloting and implementing of ideas is begun?

### Transferability - External Validity/Generalizability

In this dissertation I try to tell a story of NUM's early experience in Adult Basic Education and Training. The description is meant to be "thick enough" so that others can make sense of the results (Merriam, 1991). I understand that my duty is to give an understandable report so that others can determine the applicability of the results in their contexts. Since others would know the situations to which they want to apply the results, the burden of proof lies with them to determine if the results are relevant in their situations. In other words, it is not possible for me to tell with any degree of certainty if lessons from NUM's experience can help any other trade union. Still, other workplace education planners and practitioners would be well advised to consider achievements and setbacks in the mines.

Merriam (1991) says that "the investigator should also highlight the typicality of the categories or events of the case or program" (p. 184). The main themes of this rich case study are based on "issues", like release time and curriculum reform, and "activities", like workshops and negotiations, which I think are "likely" to occur in a workplace education collaboration. On the other hand, new propositions, like integrating general education and technical training in a single qualifications framework, are highlighted.

### Dependability - Replicability/Reliability

Here the question is: if another investigator were to participate and observe NUM activities, interview the same people, and look at the same documents would s/he be able to come up with the same results? The traditional notion of replicability of findings is problematic, a "misfit", when applied to a qualitative study like this one. The fact that this case study is "a snapshot of a phenomenon in time" (Merriam, 1991), has several meanings.

The particular activities observed, like meetings, workshops, negotiations, will not occur in the same manner again. Also, since no researchers are identical in their backgrounds, views, strengths, and weaknesses, it is not likely that other researchers would make similar contributions by their participation in the project. All parties who participated in this study are bound to be affected or changed by this and other experiences. It will also be impossible to replicate insights which were captured through informal conversations, "at coffee places". Though documents will always be there for analyses, the difference is that I participated in drafting some of them, such as the union ABET policy as discussed in chapter five, and some national policy documents as discussed in chapter seven. However, since the ABET effort, in the mining industry and nationally, was a collective exercise, I make no attempt in this dissertation to take credit or blame for any particular aspect of it.

### Confirmability - Objectivity

Two aspects are explained in this section, they are, the researcher's stance or values in relation to the issues involved in the study, and the researcher's intervention or participation in the phenomenon under study. Firstly, I explain some socio-educational values I bring to the study, as borne from various aspects of my life history. Secondly, I begin to describe the nature of my participation in union ABET activities. My socio-educational values and my participant role are also revealed in other parts of this study. "How the investigator views the world affects the entire research process - from conceptualization of a problem, to collecting and analyzing data, to interpreting the findings" (Merriam, 1991, p. 53).

As a South African of African descent, I grew up under the apartheid system. As a result, I welcome and support efforts to democratize and develop every aspect of our nation. As a student, and as a formal school teacher, and an adult night school teacher in the townships of Mabopane and Soweto, I experienced the inferior Bantu education system. As an Adult Education Officer at one of the mining houses I gained firsthand knowledge of the massive need for basic education and training on the part of black employees. It was painful to witness the general daily exploitation of African mineworkers, whilst whites enjoyed privileges. As late as 1989, many white women and men still demanded that African mineworkers address them as "Mrs" and "Baas", respectively. Anyway, the discrimination in the mines was a mere microcosm of the national situation. So, the values I bring to this study are those of an anti-apartheid and pro-democracy believer.

The philosophy and practice of Participatory Workplace Education was impressed on me during my graduate studies in the United States of America. According to a participatory approach to education, learners should be involved at all levels of decision making about their learning. Ironically, I first learned about the participatory approach to education whilst I was in South Africa. This was during my studies for a bachelor of education degree. On a bursary from a mining house, I studied alternative thinkers and educators like Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, Malcom Knowles, Jurgen Habermas, Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, and Steven Biko, in courses about the Political Economy of Education, and Adult Education Theory. In the mines, however, application of alternative approaches to education in the mines was not really possible, partly because of the political climate in the 1980s.

Whilst in the United States, I had an opportunity to work as a facilitator in a workplace education program sponsored by both labor and management. That workplace education program is part of the National Workplace Literacy Program (USA Dept. of Education, 1992), which I review in chapter two. In that program, I saw graduate students attempt, with some degree of success, to put theories of learner participation in action. Here, I appreciated the collaboration between labor, management, educators, and learners in program activities. The fact that I was appointed by a group representative of learners, educators, the union, and program coordinator is important to me as an indicator of some transparency in program administration. This experience, however imperfect, brought the following question to my mind: How can the situation in South African workplaces be transformed in such a way that different role players can collaborate in decision making? So, stakeholder participation is an educational value I bring to the study. I however hasten to add that stakeholder participation/collaboration is not a cure all, at all.

A major assumption in this study is that I wanted to understand and to assist the union's efforts based on an assumption that it was a legitimate voice for workers. Firstly, I recognized, mostly out of my own life experience as a black South African, that COSATU unions have a distinguished history of fighting for working people's rights inside and outside of workplaces. NUM, founded in 1982, and COSATU, founded in 1985, are relatively young organizations. Yet, they have a demonstrated commitment in the struggle for workplace and social change in South Africa. This dissertation does not necessarily trace the history of COSATU. However, the fact that the progressive labor movement is a heartbeat for change in South Africa cannot be over emphasized. As a result, I identified the union,

not management, as a viable agent for driving a labor-management collaboration. However, a labor-management collaboration is not a goal in itself. It is a tool, among other tools, for achieving many goals, including learner empowerment.

The fact that I intended to assist the union in efforts to achieve worker empowerment and social change, means that beyond seeking understanding, it was partly the researcher's intent to change the object of inquiry. It is important to highlight this fact because it reveals the conceptual basis of the study. As a "role taking" study, this study's conceptualization or paradigm is that of Emancipatory or Critical Theory (Habermas, 1972; Fay, 1975).

Secondly, by seeking to "understand" the union's role and its implications, this study's conceptual bases are Interpretative or Hermeneutic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, since there was no intention to "control" the object of study, that is, union involvement in ABET issues, this study's conceptual bases are not Positivistic (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall and Jackson, 1993). Union decisions are determined in worker-controlled structures and processes, which are described in chapter three and exemplified in chapters four and six, especially in chapter five of this dissertation.

In a broad sense, my approach and understanding are not value free or neutral to underlying issues of this study. As someone on the receiving end of apartheid, "a victim", with many family members among the ranks of the illiterate and the poor, I have a strong interest in supporting workplace reform and social change at home. I am not an "uninterested observer" who has nothing at stake, or who is "objective" in the sense of being indifferent to the difference between apartheid and democracy. Consequently, the labor's agenda, in this case to struggle for access to education and training for working people, is shared by the

researcher. In this dissertation, I try to unpack what I find that agenda to be, how it is advanced, and to evaluate the extent to which it is realized, or remains unrealized. The researcher's other interest, which was known to the organization, was to study the process of labor involvement in education in order to write a dissertation.

At different parts of this study, I describe the context, motivations, and nature of my participation. My participant observation role, a form of "activist-research", varied from activity to activity. My general approach was that since I would not be with the union for the long run, I needed to have an "empowering style," which meant sharing knowledge and skills, whilst letting local people run their place. Researcher constraints, however, did not apply at national level where I participated as an individual, albeit on union secondment, as discussed in chapter seven. I can only conclude by saying that my participant observer role was a demanding and fascinating experience. It is partly that story which I intend to tell.

### Limitations of the Study

Whilst suggesting that "Qualitative research methods such as case study are probably the best means available to describe the new phenomenon and help develop an understanding of it," Borg and Gall (1989, p. 408) discuss the following "common mistakes" which are often raised about qualitative researchers:

- \* Researchers attempt to use qualitative methods for which they are not adequately trained.
- \* Depend entirely on participant observation rather than using methods triangulation.
- \* Allow preconceived ideas and expectations to influence their observations.
- \* Observe for much too short a time (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 408).

Since this project was undertaken in a participatory context, I never felt pressure to know everything. The ABET project was undertaken in collaboration with other educators in NUM, COSATU, and the ANC's Center for Education Policy Development. Union members and leaders remained in charge of organizational decisions. So, the responsibilities for the ABET project were spread around in such a way that one would talk of organizational, not necessarily individual, lack or preparedness or capacity for the project under study.

Further, how can one claim sufficient preparation for a change process? As a student, I have viewed this study as an opportunity to learn. Based on the amount of course work and projects that I have done, I feel confident about Qualitative Research. Alternative Research, was one of three concentration areas in my graduate studies (the others being Adult Literacy and Third World Development). For masters and doctoral degrees in the United States, one has to take quite a large amount of course work, whilst one would take a minimal amount, if any, in South Africa. However, I have never done a study of this magnitude. I found that using participant observation together with interviews, and document analyses was valuable. The fact that a survey was undertaken as part of participant observation in the field shows how well quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other.

Systematically investigating experiences of other COSATU affiliated unions could have thrown more light on the probable generalizability of developments in the mining industry. However, this case study, a student project, is intended to be an in-depth investigation of the experiences of just one trade union. As a delimitation of the scope of the study, not necessarily a limitation, there were no intentions or plans to survey experiences of a range of unions. However, in the field, there were plenty of opportunities to learn about developments



in other COSATU unions. There were periodic meetings and workshops of COSATU Nedcom, a national education structure consisting of staff and worker representatives from affiliated unions. Though I did not attend COSATU education meetings, written and verbal reports by NUM representatives gave a good picture and update. It is important that two COSATU head-office educators were each interviewed twice in the course of this study, despite the fact that we worked together at different occasions. The interviews I had with an educator from another COSATU affiliate are here reported as a special case, because of the important role played by that individual in COSATU and nationally, not as a comparative study of union roles.

The phenomenon of labor-management collaboration on issues of basic education and training is here studied at its infancy in South Africa. As a result, some issues which are considered priorities and or contentious today may not be so hot in the future. In interviews, participants were invited to speculate on future scenarios. Their "predictions" are important because they are informed by concrete experiences and outcomes like signed agreements.

This study took place at a period of national transition in South Africa, a process which is still going on. Nationally, and in workplaces, the education and training system is undergoing fundamental review. The industry and national policy making processes, which began before this study and continued after it, actually include many individuals and organizations of which trade unions are one. This study is consequently an exploration of proposed plans, emerging issues, and likely outcomes. It is not an evaluation of implemented programs. This can be viewed as a delimitation, if one looks at implementation as the next

step. On the other hand, the fact that policies agreed on paper have not yet been tried on the ground can be seen as a limitation.

A major limitation of this study, in my opinion, is the fact that there is as yet no clear plan of how to communicate its outcomes and insights. Beyond serving to fulfill requirements for my doctoral studies, I believe that this study could inform ABET practitioners, managers, and labor leaders. Since the dissertation can help people to understand what has been achieved so far, what on-going challenges and questions are there, ways of disseminating it may need to be found. This is not meant to imply that this dissertation, or my personal involvement, is the only way in which this project's experience can be shared. My experience tells me that, in the context of South African workplaces, workers, shop stewards, adult basic education and training practitioners, would best be able to access and process the raised education and training issues in workshop settings. However, this study does not set out to answer the question: 'How will NUM's experience be shared?'

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ADULT LITERACY

#### Introduction

In this literature review chapter, I discuss the following conceptual frameworks or models of adult literacy: traditional or formal literacy, functional or workplace literacy, and participatory or awareness-raising literacy. An understanding of strengths and limitations of these models helps to put in perspective the proposed South Africa model of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

According to Kintgen, Kroll and Rose (1988) and Fingeret & Jurmo (1989), adult literacy models are projections of different world views. They are based on different perspectives that proponents have about education and society. Adult literacy programs, in workplaces and elsewhere, are often designed and conducted along the above mentioned approaches. There is, however, hardly a program that can be characterized as a pure form of any one model. Adult literacy programs are often dominated by a practice of one model over others, with glimpses of other models still traceable. Degrees of combining these approaches can vary from program to program, and from classroom to classroom in the same program.

A critical review of the three common approaches to adult literacy shows that a participatory approach to literacy education is more effective in meeting learners' needs than is a traditional or a functional approach to literacy. The emerging South African Adult Basic Education and Training framework, championed and supported by COSATU unions, reflects a particular combination of these three models - and goes well beyond them. To a distinct extent, the proposed ABET framework has unique characteristics, like the proposed

integration of technical training in the basic education phase. However, some aspects of the ABET framework, like its curriculum composition, are still being discussed. Also, some agreed ABET principles, such as the assessment and recognition of prior learning and experience, are yet to be tried on the ground.

Although the language of classifying the different adult literacy approaches differs, there is general consensus in classifying them in the following three categories:

The following is one way of classifying approaches to literacy work, but it is important to realize that this list is not definitive or particularly discrete:

- \* The radical approach (literacy for empowerment).
- \* The functional approach (literacy for modernisation and development).
- \* The missionary approach (literacy for salvation).

These approaches have all influenced each other and none has emerged in a vacuum. Each of them developed in a particular historic context and was a response to particular political, material and social conditions. So each one has its own complex and often contradictory history. No approach has remained static but has responded to various forces and pressures (Lyster, in Hutton, 1992, pp. 28-29).

Lyster (in Hutton, 1992) goes on to discuss Scribner's three metaphors (Kintgen, 1988) by showing how each metaphor describes the central meaning of literacy for each approach:

- \* Literacy as power: here the emphasis is on the capacity of literacy to confer power on individuals or communities. This metaphor is exemplified in the radical approach.
- \* Literacy as adaptation: here the emphasis is on the survival or pragmatic value, exemplified by the functional literacy approach.
- \* Literacy as a state of grace: here the emphasis is on the self-enhancing aspects of literacy, exemplified by the missionary approach.

As with all attempts at classifying, the above distinctions are, to some extent, unsatisfactory. Few examples exist in pure form in practice and most often there is a mix of approaches. So a literacy venture may use the discourse of literacy as power, while motivated at the same time by the ideology of literacy as adaptation. The models are however useful in illustrating the primary motivation of a particular initiative (pp. 29).

In discussing different approaches to Adult Basic Education, Learn and Teach, E.L.P. and Lacom (1991) offer a more immediate characterization of the traditional formal literacy approach, and some examples of functional and conscientization approaches:

### **The formal education approach**

Some proponents of the formal approach see adult literacy as a belated opportunity to provide the education that people never had as children. Department of Education and Training (in South Africa) night schools use this approach to their teaching. The emphasis is on school subjects. The content of lessons and textbooks is often the same as in the syllabi for children. As in the school system, people write exams, and if they pass, they can carry on to the next grade. At various points, they will get certificates (p. 122).

### **The functional approach**

In this approach, literacy is linked with practical ways of improving people's lives. The functional literacy approach was used with some success in Tanzania, where literacy was integrated into a national development plan. The functional approach teaches people things which directly relate to their own living and working situations. So for example, learners in rural areas would learn about possible ways of improving their health and increasing agricultural production, at the same time as learning to read and write (p. 124).

### **The conscientization approach**

In this approach, literacy is seen as contributing to social transformation and giving people the skills to participate actively in a democratic society. It aims to awaken in people a sense of their own power and to build national unity. Nicaragua used this approach as did governments that chose to put resources into a national literacy campaign (p. 124).

Having introduced the above classifications, I would like to introduce the fact that the proposed South African Adult Basic Education and Training framework (COSATU PRP, 1993; ANC, 1994, NTB, 1994) is a unique mix of all these three conceptual frameworks.

Although the ABET framework does contain some formal, functional, and Freirean aspects, it

is has a number of radically new propositions to it. Below here I point out its formal, functional, and Freirean aspects, as well as indicate its unique features.

A number of reasons account for the formal nature of the proposed South African ABET model (see Appendices F and G). Here

- \* Due to the historical apartheid context in which many black South Africans missed out on formal basic education, the ABET framework is intended to redress or compensate for this legacy by offering adults an opportunity, not necessarily a second chance, through which they can acquire basic education and training qualifications equivalent to those provided for children in formal schools, a General Education Certificate (GEC).
- \* Secondly, ABET curricula standards/outcomes/competencies should be developed within a formal National Qualifications Framework (NQF) so that adult learners in different contexts can earn certificates which have national recognition and mobility.
- \* New ABET curricula, which should be designed in a competency-based modular format in order to facilitate the assessment of existing knowledge and skills, will lead to governmental qualifications in various subject areas, and towards different career paths.
- \* The current South African context is such that formal qualifications occupy a prized position in the public mind as an important instrument for personal economic advancement.

- \* Also significantly, it becomes inevitable at this historic juncture that the liberation forces design a formal education and training system as they ascend to state power.

One can also understand the formal nature of our proposed ABET framework by distinguishing it from non-formal education (NFE) programs, and informal learning. Non-formal education programs, like short workshops, are structured and may have some kind of recognition too. The difference is that they are offered outside of a governmental qualification framework. There should continue to be room for NFE projects outside the new national education and training system. For instance, some managers may want to be literate in African language without earning nationally accredited certificates.

Unlike NFE, informal learning, like when reading a newspaper or talking to someone, is not institutionally structured. It is important to note, however, that the ABET framework is only formal to the extent that it will be governmentally sanctioned. It is not formal or traditional in the sense of being based on assumptions of adult education as neutral or childlike in design. The formal nature of the ABET framework has, however, led to criticisms of the following nature: "This is a traditional utilitarian ladder. It is so statist, and World Bank ideology". Such criticisms, partly from non-formal education perspectives, are also contained in the public's responses to the ANC ABET policy framework which are reported in chapter seven of this dissertation.

The ABET framework is also based on strong economic and social motivations. By integrating both education and training in a single qualifications system, it is intended to offer people both general knowledge which will enable them to participate in society, as well as

technical skills which would help them in their job situations. The provision of both workplace and social skills in the ABET framework has become necessary in order to meet the twin goals for reconstructing the economy and building the new democracy. As a result, at each of the four ABET levels, there would be: (a) core modules for general education, (b) common modules for industry training like Health and Safety, and (c) specialized modules for various trades. The number and permutation of modules at different ABET levels is yet to be determined. Appendix C, A sample integrated ABET framework, is inserted for purposes of illustrating this proposal, and is discussed in chapter six. It is, however, not an adopted policy of the union or any institution. Although employers emphasize workplace skills over social skills, a new ABET curriculum is likely to show some combination of both approaches, i.e. functional, in the sense of offering workplace skills, and awareness-raising, in the sense of critically understanding social development issue - at least that is what COSATU unions are negotiating for.

The South African ABET framework introduces a unique paradigm shift from adult literacy, to Adult Basic Education, and to Adult Basic Education and Training. In significant ways, the ABET framework extends the existing conceptions first from language literacy to Adult Basic Education in the following sense:

- \* Beyond language learning, the ABET framework would provide for more subject areas. Though the core subject areas for an ABET framework are still seriously contested, the following are under consideration: Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Development Studies, one's first language,



and a second language of wider communication which will probably be English.

- \* A four level ABET framework would provide adults with basic education and training equivalent to the exit point of ten years free and compulsory schooling.

The fact that adults will be offered more subject areas than language learning, plus the fact that their basic education and training will be equivalent to ten years of formal schooling, introduced a shift from adult literacy as language learning to Adult Basic Education (which is a generic and general education component in the ABET framework).

The 'T' in ABET is added because of the proposal to merge technical training or vocational training into the basic education phase for adults. This would, among other things, mean that the provision of technical training and general education will be certified within the same qualification framework. Essentially, this means one would have to complete a specified number both general education and technical training modules or credits in order to get an ABET qualification at the four exit points. The shift from adult literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training is fully discussed in chapter six of this dissertation. However, it is appropriate to draw attention to the fact that the existing notion of adult literacy is an inadequate definition of the proposed South African ABET model.

Having introduced the ABET notion, it is important to introduce some major questions and concerns raised about it, as discussed in various parts of this dissertation.

- \* First and foremost, one should realize that some major educational principles that are being proposed have not yet been tried in the practice, such as the much wanted integration of education and training, assessment and recognition of prior learning and experience, competency-based curriculum development and modular accreditation.
- \* How the ABET framework would accommodate individual, workplace, and social needs is yet to be determined.
- \* How national standards will be applied to different contexts is still unclear.
- \* Whether the various stakeholders, including unions, will have the necessary capacity to deliver the ABET vision remains to be seen.
- \* Also, the required corps of practitioners has not yet been developed, which is indicative of the fact that, at various levels and in various institutions, there is a general lack of capacity to drive this complex agenda.

I would like to highlight the great possibility of a rush to acquire the General Education Certificate (GEC), which will be issued at the completion of ABET level four. The possible pressure to help learners acquire the GEC may re-introduce a culture of learning for qualifications, at the expense of how learning takes place and what is being learned. The GEC, which will be located within the National Qualifications Framework, is likely to emerge as a psychologically compelling key to individual career advancement, and possible socio-economic upliftment. Unfortunately, a possible race to earn the formal GEC qualification may have some serious exclusionary consequences, since those who will not have education and training credentials may be left out - with some air of putting the blame on them as

individuals. If this happens, which it might, we may essentially be back where we started mainly because opportunities to learn will not necessarily be abundantly available, for example, many workers may not be able to get release time to go to classes, and many women may be stuck with housework. However, one should stress that the labor and liberation movements had to come up with some model of formal education and training as they were taking over the process of government. I should also say that although I continually raise some questions and concerns about the ABET framework and the role of trade unions in this process, I do not in this dissertation mean to distance myself from proposals I supported in the field.

In the discussion below, I critically summarize the major characteristics of the three adult literacy model as an attempt to state what is known about them. I begin to discuss how these philosophical models are reflected in current and proposed adult education programs in South Africa. However, the nature as well as potential strengths and problems of the proposed ABET model for South Africa are discussed in chapter six of this dissertation. Further, I review the U.S.A. National Workplace Literacy Program (U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1992) as an example of how a government can facilitate partnerships in workplace education. Although only a few NWLP partnerships currently involve labor, I note how American trade unions have historically struggled for access to education and training for workers and working people in general - something which COSATU unions are striving for.

#### Traditional or Formal Literacy

According to a traditional approach to adult literacy, literacy is conceived as an ability to read and write in a language (Kintgen, Kroll and Rose, 1988). According to this approach,

literacy means learning to read, write and count, that is "the 3Rs". A characteristic of this approach is that literacy is defined as a mechanical, neutral, pure, and "autonomous" skill (Street, 1984). This means that the process of teaching and learning how to read and write a language is viewed and treated as if it is independent of political, social and economic factors. For instance, a literacy educator trying to teach adults to read and write the letter "a" can use words like "apple," "apartheid", or "ANC" as key words. However, because words like *apartheid* and *ANC* are value-laden or politically charged, and may stimulate feelings and questions that a facilitator may not desire, s/he would avoid them, and use a 'neutral' word like *apple*. In the case of a pure literacy approach, a claim is being made that it does not matter what examples are used as long as people can learn the skills of reading and writing.

The pure literacy approach denies learners opportunities to discuss issues that affect their daily lives whilst learning to read and write. By tacitly assuming the status quo as the norm, pure literacy programs can be faulted for perpetuating the status quo, which is not a neutral position. Transmission of social values in literacy classes is, consciously or unconsciously, manifested through various classroom activities, like picture stories. What is professionally unethical about the pure literacy approach is the obscuration of the fact that in literacy classes choices are made about which social values are transmitted and which ones are not. Instead of making choices for adults, the goal of literacy programs should be to enable participants to make informed value choices themselves by exposing them to a diversity of opinions.

The traditional philosophy of literacy is often associated with the phonics method, of teaching reading and writing. According to the phonics method (Commonwealth Literacy Campaign, 1988), people are first taught a letter, then a word, and later build a

sentence, a paragraph, and a story. Learning is directed at rote memorization of the sounds and script of individual letters and words. Very little goes into analyzing social and workplace meaning of words. Many of the examples used in adult phonics workbooks are similar to the ones used in children's books, for instance, the famous example of an "apple". Fortunately, there is no party that is advocating for the continuation of the current traditional model to literacy in South Africa.

Learn and Teach, E.L.P. and Lacom (1991) give the following balanced discussion of advantages, which can also be achieved through the other two approaches, and disadvantages of the formal literacy approach:

Some advantages of this approach are that people, by and large, like the social recognition of certification and feel a sense of achievement when they move up the ladder. If well done, formal education can also give people a good general knowledge of the world.

Some problems with this approach are: adults spend a lot of valuable time learning things that are irrelevant to their lives; adults are often taught as if they were children; adults are often mocked when they start at the bottom of the ladder; and generally, there is no concern for teaching people to think critically and in an empowering way (pp. 123).

### Functional or Workplace Literacy

UNESCO (United Nations Scientific and Educational Cooperation) is at the center of the long and varied history of the term 'Functional Literacy.' A UNESCO report of the 1965 Teheran World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy reflects a departure from the traditional view of literacy as the acquisition of the 3Rs, to an emphasis on the utility of literacy skills for work. It suggests the following definition for Functional Literacy:

Rather than an end in itself, (functional) literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man (sic) for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing. The very process of learning to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used to improve living standards; reading and writing should lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civil life and a better understanding of the surrounding world, and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture (UNESCO, 1976 p. 10).

In an attempt to test and demonstrate the economic and social returns of literacy, and more generally, to study the mutual relations and influences which exist or may be established or strengthened between literacy and training - particularly among the working population - and development, UNESCO (1976) conducted a ten-year world-wide project called the Experimental World Literacy Program (EWLP). The following are key lessons reported in a critical report of the EWLP. These lessons show how difficult it can be to operationalize the concept of Functional Literacy.

1. The realities in the field proved to be far more complex than had been anticipated from the distant vantage point of UNESCO Secretariat in Paris. A caution against reliance on external specialists and curriculum models.
2. The successful promotion of literacy is not simply, or even primarily, a matter of employing the right pedagogical techniques. A multidimensional approach to both development and literacy is required.
3. The integration of literacy to development initiatives was frustrated by the use of school teachers and volunteers who were not sufficiently familiar with the related occupation fields (UNESCO, 1976, pp. 115-130).

In an article critical of Functional Literacy, Levine (1982) correctly asserts that the definition of the term Functional Literacy is so "elastic, woolly and elusive" so as to justify "everything and anything connected with basic skills for adults" (p. 249-250). He argues that this notion is based on "faulty, unproven, ad hoc and largely mistaken assumptions about literacy's economic, social, and political dimensions" (p. 250). Although basic education and training

is a necessary part of economic development, there is no evidence stating a specific level of adult literacy as required for national take off.

Functional Literacy is a departure from the traditional pure literacy model because it acknowledges that when people read they read something. Functional Literacy proponents suggest that the curriculum which should be used to mediate the process of acquiring reading and writing skills has to be work-oriented. However, Functional Literacy is often faulted for not going far enough because it does not always embrace the use of literacy for radical socio-political change. This may be so because of its governmental origins.

Currently, the term Workplace Literacy is often used in place of Functional Literacy. Workplace Literacy is a broad concept (Sarmiento & Kay, 1990). On the one end, it can refer to a limited exercise of acquiring language literacy skills mostly relevant to a job. At the other end, Workplace Literacy refers to a broad range of learning activities carried out at the workplace (U.S Dept. of Educ. 1992). Consequently, Workplace Literacy can actually become what its designers want it to be. Jurmo (in Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989) suggest that programs organized around learners' needs can avoid many of the shortcomings of traditional programs. Bhola (1979) looks at curriculum development and curriculum implementation for functional literacy from various political environments, social settings, client groups in the following countries: Brazil, Burma, Colombia, India, Iran, Kenya, Mali, Sudan, Tanzania, and Thailand. He concludes that "there is a range of possibilities" in curriculum choices. He notes that one thing is common, and that is, "curriculum development in functional literacy is a political act; it cannot succeed unless it is sensitive to the social, economic and political

configurations which surround programs and projects" (pp. 194-237). However, he points out that most programs are neither hundred percent traditional or hundred percent participatory.

In a "A critical assessment of Popular Views on Literacy and Work", Hull (1993) argues that many assumptions about literacy, work, and workers are inaccurate, incomplete, and misleading. This is so, Hull (1993) argues, because "as we measure reading rates, design curricula, and construct lists of essential skills, not enough attention is paid to how people experience instructional programs and how they accomplish work" (p. 21). Hull (1993) specifically takes issue with the following "popular discourse" of workplace literacy: workers lack literacy skills needed in current and future jobs, and that is why they are locked out of good jobs and cannot participate in the democratic process; illiteracy costs business and taxpayers because of daily low productivity, workplace accidents and absenteeism, poor product quality, and lost management and supervisory time; workers need functional context training, so that literacy training should relate to job tasks (integrate literacy training into technical training); and that it is possible to name all the skills needed by workers. In this regard, the following seven competencies listed by the U.S Department of Labor, and the American Society for Training and Development (Carnevale, Gainer & Meltzer, 1988), are suggested as the basic skills which employers believe are important:

- \* knowing how to learn,
- \* reading, writing, and communication,
- \* listening and oral communication,
- \* creative thinking and problem solving,
- \* self-esteem, goal setting/motivation, and personal career development,
- \* interpersonal skills, negotiation, and team work,
- \* organizational effectiveness and leadership (p. 9).



This above combination of generic and work skills seems to be similar to what is proposed in South Africa (see Appendix D). In South Africa, however, there is a more deliberate attempt to combine social and work skills in a single qualification framework.

In revisiting these dominant views, Hull (1993) amplifies on the work of others including Graff (1979), Heath (1983), Fingeret and Jurmo (1989), and Levine (1986). Although accepting that the Functional Literacy argument is persuasive and logical, Hull (1993) argues that Functional Literacy is mostly a myth because, "alternative research on the consequences of literacy tells us that there are myriad complex forces - political, economic, social, personal - that can either foster or hinder literacy's potential to bring about change" (p. 30). So, suggestions that illiterate workers are responsible for social ills like unemployment, poor performance in global markets, and the rise in the national deficit are too simplistic. Hull (1993) concludes by urging that "before educators rush to steer our ships instead by what corporate and government leaders think they want in a workforce, and by our own enculturated notions of what teaching is about .... we need to stop and listen to "other views, to hear other voices, other stories" (pp. 40-44).

The Functional Literacy theory is not only practiced in industrial workplace context. It is applied in the development sector as well. For instance, in 1992, I consulted for Operation Hunger, an NGO, where we conducted basic education and training classes for women working in income-generating projects. In two rural homelands of South Africa, we spent a month observing and interviewing project participants about how basic education and training could enhance their work. We then trained facilitators who helped design, deliver and document lesson plans in response to felt learner needs in sewing, gardening, art and craft

projects. After a year, we evaluated how participants were applying literacy and numeracy skills in self-help projects. The outcomes about why and how rural women need and use basic knowledge and skills in development projects and generally, are mostly similar to the outcomes of the Experimental World Literacy Campaign conducted by UNESCO (1976). Part of the new South African ABET framework is about integrating general education, like languages and Math, with technical trade training. This seems to be similar to what we were attempting to achieve in Operation Hunger development projects, by designing and incorporating ABE programs into income generating projects like sewing. We, however, designed our own certificates since we were not operating within any national curriculum framework. Some lesson plans on social issues were drawn and delivered using newspapers for neo-literates provided by a supporting NGO as discussion starters. However, the consciousness-raising component of this project was so minimal that it makes for a regular functional literacy program.

#### Participatory or Awareness-Raising Literacy

Paulo Freire (1970, 1987) is a major spokesman for the consciousness-raising model of literacy. According to this approach, literacy is conceived as an "empowering process" as opposed to a "domesticating or banking process". Freire defines literacy education as a "personal as well as a political process" in which the larger goal is social change. According to a participatory approach, learners should take part in decision-making in educational programs, and the curriculum content should be based on their real life circumstances. Consequently, this approach is sometimes referred to as the Learner-Centered Approach.

According to the consciousness-raising approach, educators employ examples drawn from adult real life situations, instead of neutral childlike learning examples. For instance, in a South African context one could use key words like "apartheid and ANC" instead of "apple" to teach about the letter "a". These words would in turn generate an interesting "dialogue" around which learners can acquire both language and "critical thinking" skills. In an egalitarian learning context, participants would learn from each other through a "dialogical process" of give and take. In an "ideal speech situation," learners would be able to raise their awareness of oppressive situations and could together seek solutions to common problems.

There are cases of literacy programs that have been conducted along the lines of a Freirean approach. In the United States, the Highlander Center voter education literacy program is a popular example (Horton, 1983; Gaventa, 1988). Participants of that program not only learned how to read and write, but also raised their awareness about social injustice in America, particularly about racial discrimination. Participants in this and other programs participated in the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. As that history illustrates, this road involves commitment, risk, sacrifice, and care for social justice. In this case, literacy learning was intertwined with human rights issues. For instance, literacy learners in the Highlander Center program chose to use the UN Declaration of Human Rights as their primer (Horton, 1983, p. 21). This case is a good example of what Freire and Macedo call "reading the word and reading the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

In South African history, there are cases where the literacy for empowerment philosophy was practiced with some success but was crushed by the apartheid regime. In the 1920s the South African Communist Party developed grassroots leadership through its literacy

program (Bird, 1980). In the 1970s the Black Consciousness Movement conducted consciousness-raising literacy programs (Biko, 1978). In the 1980s, the "security police" continued to terrorize NGOs which organized alternative adult literacy projects (Simmonds, 1990). The following cross-examination of Steven Biko, a leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, reflects the value placed on the process of the participatory consciousness-raising approach to literacy. (Incidentally, it also shows the need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission which is proposed by the Government of National Unity in order to establish some facts about those responsible for apartheid crimes in education and society):

**Extract from Steve Biko's evidence in the South African Students' Organisation/Black Consciousness Movement trial given in the first week of May 1976. Defence lawyer is Advocate David Soggot, Mr L. Atwell was for the prosecution, and the trial judge was Judge Boshoff.**

- Soggot: Now, Mr Biko, I am coming back to the theme of this questioning namely conscientization, but I just want to divert slightly; were you ever involved in actually monitoring people, ordinary people's conversations?
- Biko: Yes ... [Mr Soggot intervenes]
- Soggot: Whether it was in the street, or [pause]
- Biko: You mean some form of research?
- Soggot: That is correct?
- Biko: Yes.
- Soggot: Would you tell His Lordship briefly what that was?
- Biko: M'lord, this was a research carried out, I think it was 1972; the purpose was literacy. Now the particular method we were using places a lot of emphasis on syllabic teaching of people; you do not just teach people the alphabet in isolation, you have to teach them syllables, and you have to start with words that have got a particular meaning to them, what we called generative terms. Now the preamble to it was some kind of research in a specific area where you are going to work, which carried you to several segments of the community, to particular places where the community congregates and talks freely. Your role there was particularly passive, you are there just to listen to the things that they are talking about, and also to the words that are being used, the themes being important; there we also

used pictures to depict the themes that they were talking about. Now I was involved in this in this with a man called Jerry Modisane and Barney Pityana ... [Mr Soggot intervenes]

Soggot: Was this in Durban?

Biko: In Durban.

Soggot: Who were you doing this research for?

Biko: We were doing it for ourselves. I had been asked to participate in a literacy programme that was drawn up by SASO.

Soggot: Well what ever this was you listened to people?

Biko: That is right.

Soggot: In what circumstances?

Biko: Well we chose available circumstances. Now in this particular instance we listened to women in queues waiting to see a doctor or nurse at a clinic, some of them had babies on their arms or on their backs, we listened to people congregated in sports fields watching sport, we listened to people in shebeens; I did go around buying beer in a lot of shebeens, and we listened to people in buses as well, and trains.

Soggot: What was it that people were saying if anything at all about their condition of life? And the white man, if the white man or the white government came up at all? (Biko, 1978, pp. 111-112).

The following assessment by Learn and Teach, E.L.P. and Lacom (1991) summarizes some of the strengths and weaknesses of the consciousness-raising approach:

This revolutionary approach is clearly positive in that it leads people to a critical understanding of their situation and empowers them to challenge that situation. Also, the progressive methodology of this approach builds democratic attitudes and behavior.

This approach has, however, been criticized for putting too much emphasis on discussion, without imparting hard skills that people need. Also, it works best when people are learning literacy in their own languages. And it is difficult to determine definite beginning and end points to the process (pp. 124-125).

In reaction to the criticism that this approach has inadequacies when it comes to imparting "hard skills" like reading and writing, some people have emphasized that this approach should be understood more as a social movement, and should not be reduced to a technical method. I think it has both elements in it.

In a critical assessment of the Freirean approach, Lind and Johnston (1990, pp. 80-83) say that a major shortcoming of this approach is that it is lacking in practical guidance on how to administer, implement, and evaluate it in large scale national programs. International advisers, who were advising our ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, also spoke to the difficulties of implementing this approach on a large scale. Lack of political will and funding constraints can be major causes of this. Some people point out that Freire himself was unable to institutionalize this approach when he became a minister of education in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the 1990s.

The participatory approach to adult literacy is increasingly getting co-opted to serve non-threatening purposes, often by mistakenly equating "learner-centered" to be synonymous to "consciousness-raising." Without, for example, naming the illiterate and poor people "the oppressed" (Freire, 1970), and without locating the education process within some movement for social change, it is now common to claim that education programs are based on learners' needs. The discriminatory status quo is mostly left unchallenged when adult education practitioners and professionals focus narrowly on what the individual learner says he or she wants to learn, like being able to write a letter home, or being able to read job instructions. In this "customer-service" kind of an approach to responding to learners' needs, one is able to talk about participation and meeting learner-goals without questioning the socio-political context in which needs are collected, and without problematizing existing forms of conditioning. When the educational technique of participation is pulled out of its participatory tradition of social empowerment, learners can be made to participate in the status quo. In an article called, "Putting the P Back in Participatory," Auerbach (TESOL Quarterly....)

observes that participation is sometimes used loosely to describe any approach that claims to involve learners or participants:

The fact that participatory approaches to adult ESL are becoming increasingly popular is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is heartening to see that participatory approaches are coming to be accepted as cutting edge rather than fringe views and that the field may even be on the verge of a paradigm shift. On the other hand, I am uncomfortable when the term *participatory* is used loosely to describe any approach that claims to involve learners in the shaping of curriculum goals or classroom processes. Often, the terms *participatory* and *learner-centered* are equated despite the fact that they have potentially different ideological implications, the former focusing on social transformation and the latter on self realization. Although participatory pedagogy is rooted in a social change perspective, its inherently political nature is often obscured. As Edelsky (1992) says, "Buzzwords and movements not only can promote change; they can prevent it" (p. 161); my fear is that this may be the fate of participatory ESL (p. 543).

I believe that a positive implication of labor participation in South African ABET issues is that some sense of movement for workplace and social change has been brought back into the educational process. In this dissertation, I highlight the need to listen to the collective voice of the oppressed masses, in their various formations, in as much as we should listen to individual learner-voices on the classroom floor.

In South Africa, the bulk of literacy education is conducted in workplaces and governmental centers, whose philosophy and methods are mostly traditional. Simmonds (1990) notes that alternative literacy classes are conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and their capacity allows them to reach a mostly urban minority. However, Simmonds (1990) also reports some classroom problems in applying the Freirean approach: "From visits to the learning groups we have discovered that the Learn and Teach method (a participatory approach) to teaching literacy is not always being correctly applied.

Coordinators frequently lack confidence in handling the discussion component of the lessons" (p. 67).

The South African adult education system is currently undergoing fundamental changes. During the process of developing a new national ABET policy, all parties concur that the existing approach to education, in general, has to go. The debate is about what should replace it. There is a concerted push from the labor movement for a model combining both functional and awareness-raising approaches, whereas employers want more of a functionalist approach and less of a consciousness-raising one. In chapter seven, I discuss how the transition process is still in motion and some questions are still unresolved. It is hoped that a legitimate government, acting in consultation with all stakeholder bodies, would facilitate the resolution of outstanding policy issues like curriculum.

The following is a brief description of the ABET curriculum debate in South Africa. The labor movement proposes (COSATU PRP, 1993, p. 47) and supports (ANC, 1994, p. 90) the following core subject areas for ABET: Languages, Math, Science and Technology, and Social Development Studies. Mine employers propose (Chamber of Mines proposal, June 8, 1993) Language and Math as core subject areas. Also, labor is proposing ten generic competencies/outcomes to underlie all ABET curricula, Appendix D. During the process of developing national ABET policy, for example at the NTB, would not accept competency number seven<sup>5</sup> which is about learning for social empowerment. The two other competencies

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<sup>5</sup>Competency 7: Participating in Civil Society and Democratic Processes through understanding and engaging with a range of interlocking systems (legal, economic, political, social).



that were still in question are numbers one and ten, partly because some people view them as duplicating others in Appendix D. Generally, mine employers resist labor's attempt to include a subject area and a competency which are consciousness-raising in nature. As discussed in chapters four and six, COSATU unions support both functional and awareness-raising subject areas and competencies.

The discourse or language used in the curriculum debate in South Africa is not necessarily that of traditional, functional and awareness-raising literacy models. Everyone expresses dislike of the apartheid education system, without referring to its manifestations as formal and functionalist practices. Management emphasizes a need for job-related skills, whilst rejecting any "politicization of education", without talking about Functional and Freirean models. Labor and others want job skills and more, in order to prepare people for participation in building the economy and the new democracy. However, one could distinctly hear the classic debate of what Giroux and Aronowitz (1985) call Education under siege: The conservative, liberal, and radical debate over schooling. Looking at current power relations, I think that ABET programs are not likely to have a dominant consciousness-raising character. Neither are they likely to focus narrowly on teaching job skills and nothing else. I think that a reasonable compromise would be to set a curriculum framework that would allow for an ongoing process of balancing both the functional and awareness-raising motivations.

#### Participation and Collaboration in Program Administration

The following section is an extended review of common attempts to apply methods of participation and collaboration in literacy programs. An in-depth look at these efforts is necessary here because this dissertation is an investigation of the possibility of applying them

in the South African context. In this section I critically review various ways in which a partnership between program stakeholders can be promoted.

Based on literature about adult literacy , and based on my own experience in adult education programs, the practice of adult education often revolves around the following phases: needs assessment, curriculum development, educator training, evaluation, and post-literacy services. These phases often overlap. Accordingly, all those affected need to be involved in decision making at all these levels.

Workplace literacy programs are not necessarily always collaborative in approach, even in non-apartheid societies. In traditional-non-participatory-top-down workplace programs, planning is often unilaterally done by management. Fingeret (in Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989) describes how the participatory literacy education model "emerged as an alternative to the traditional approaches which did not always place the learner at the heart of the literacy process ... because of falsely assuming that non-reading adults are not capable of actively participating in programs" (pp. 9-10).

The concept of collaboration and partnership in literacy programming means that two or more organizations, or stakeholders, work together in planning, implementing, and evaluating literacy activities. Usually, role players in workplace literacy are business, labor, education providers, including NGOs, and government (U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1992). Participatory programs share decision-making powers among participants. Typical of a collaborative literacy process is the notion of placing the learner at the center of all energy. However, for various reasons, participation by various role players and learners is, in fact, never equal

(Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). Attempts need to be made for 'leveling the playing field,' to put it colloquially. Nowhere is this more true than in South Africa.

The underlying philosophy of participatory programs is to give learners a voice. However, Jurmo acknowledges that, in practice, collaboration takes place on many levels and at different degrees (Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). Learner participation, he argues, can be shown in the following hierarchy: "learners are present (physically or on paper) in the program; learners cooperate with the rules, activities, and procedures developed by program staff; learners are consulted for some input into the instructional and or management process; learners have greater degrees of control, responsibility, and reward vis-a-vis program activities" (pp. 17-18). There are various reasons, including literacy abilities, which lead to a range in the quantity and quality of participation.

Soifer, Young and Irwin (in Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989) report on a case study where a union and management invited the Academy, a project of Eastern Michigan University, to set up a basic skills program for autoworkers (Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). In this workplace program, labor, management, and teachers planned together, "recognizing and building on learners' strengths" (p. 65-71). They learned that, "such collaboration builds on the resources of everyone and sends a loud, clear message to workers and management that education plays a significant part in the manufacturing of quality products" (p. 65-71).

### Assessment of Needs and Resources

Needs assessment projects are conducted for purposes of finding out what potential and active participants want to learn, and already know. Other questions on how to design an effective program are also investigated. There are various methods of conducting needs and

resource assessment, for instance, survey questionnaires, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. In order to keep close attention to learners' needs and goals, needs assessment exercises have to be conducted both at the beginning of the program and on an on-going basis. During interactions with learners, educators can solicit information about their needs and strengths. Education programs vary on how extensively and regularly they conduct needs assessment, and on how they use results of needs assessment in shaping what they offer or do. However, programs should involve participants in conducting needs assessment.

COSATU, through a Participatory Research Project (1993), and NUM through a survey and workshops, involved workers in designing and conducting extensive needs assessment. Workers suggested issues and strategies for the investigations. COSATU and NUM trained shaft stewards to conduct surveys and interviews. Workers systematically collected information from other workers. Workers continued to be involved in the process of developing new policy frameworks out of the results of the needs assessment process. The unions were assisted by education NGOs in this process. I think that the COSATU PRP study, of which the needs assessment process was an important part, not only gave trade unionists confidence, but it also gave the labor movement a decided advantage over other players in the policy process. The COSATU PRP process, its results, and its impact are discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

### Curriculum Development

Collaboration in curriculum development is important to the success of literacy programs. The paradigmatic rationale for a participatory approach to curriculum is partly based on Adult Learning Theories (Knowles, 1980), which assert the concept of "self-directed

learning". Also, it is partly based on Literacy Theories (Freire, 1970; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Gee, 1986; Fingeret & Jurmo 1989), which articulate the dialectical relationship between literacy education and social context. Auerbach (1992) reporting on a case of a participatory adult English as a Second Language Family Literacy project, asserts that "the central tenet of a participatory approach is that curricula must emerge from and be responsive to the particular context of each group of participants" (p. 1). According to this perspective every group of learners is accepted as different in some respects. A descriptive curriculum guide, not a prescriptive curriculum is the advisable approach (Auerbach, 1992).

Salient features of a participatory curriculum process can be highlighted by contrasting it to the traditional approach to curriculum development. According to a traditional approach, "experts identify a body of knowledge to be covered during a specified time period (ends) and provide a plan (means) for meeting predetermined objectives" (Auerbach, 1992, p. 11). Consequently, the traditional curriculum process starts with experts identifying desired competencies and breaking them down into learning chunks. The teacher's role in this process is to transmit skills and knowledge, whilst the learner's role is to receive knowledge and practice skills. So, whilst teachers are evaluated on how much they cover the syllabus, learners are tested against predetermined outcomes. However, because an educator cannot go to class empty handed or empty headed, "waiting for issues to fall from the sky", a participatory approach provides the teacher with a structured process for developing context-specific curricula, involving students at every step of the way" (Auerbach, 1992). This curriculum approach calls for a lot of competence on the part of educators because, in a sense, educators become researchers.

Most of the existing adult literacy curriculum in South African mines needs to be seriously overhauled or to be liquidated outright. Three types of curricula are used in the mines: government primers which are also used in night schools, management developed materials which are also marketed nationally, and a few materials developed by NGOs. None of these materials readily meet the needs of the proposed ABET framework. Consequently, in its "transitional guidelines", the union suggested that mines supplement government and commercial materials with NGO materials "as an interim measure". Complete sets of curricula materials for ABET programs are yet to be in place. In industry agreements, and in the proposed ABET white paper, there is, unfortunately, no clarity on how the new curriculum will be developed.

#### Educator Training and Classroom Practice

In order to make the selection of educators more transparent, selection-criteria need to be agreed, and the selection processes need to be undertaken jointly by program stakeholders as well. Secondly, inclusive processes need to be followed in designing pre-service and in-service educator-training programs. Also, transparency is necessary in the evaluation of educators and trainers. Typical shortcomings of adult educator training programs are: one to two week pre-service workshops are too short, in-service workshops are irregular, and workshops often focus on understanding and delivering a given literacy package, at the expense of understanding the broader theories of adult education and society.

Traditionally, an educator is expected to have information to give to learners. According to a participatory approach to literacy, the role of the educator is redefined to be that of a "problem poser, rather than a problem solver" (Freire, 1970). It is often hard to

find educators with the necessary skills. As a result, an essential component of any adult literacy program is ongoing staff development.

Auerbach (1992) submits the following articles as crucial to "a Practitioners' Bill of Rights: full-time employment, competitive salary and benefits, redefinition of qualifications, staff development time, adequate instructional time for students, autonomy, alternative evaluation, support services, participation in program management" (p. 37). The new South African ABET framework, and the huge demand for basic education and training, make the training of practitioners an urgent matter. There are proposed South African frameworks for the preparation of educators, trainers, and development practitioners (NTB, 1994, ANC IPET, 1994), but they are yet to be agreed upon and implemented.

### Evaluation

Through evaluations, one seeks to find out how various aspects of a program are progressing, if at all. These can be materials development, facilitator training, program administration, post literacy services, and individual learner performance. Results of evaluations should be fed back to participants for their reflection and action.

School-like approaches to evaluation, that is traditional testing, can have negative effects when used with adults (Knowles, 1980). Besides being intimidating and inappropriate, "pre-tests", which are often conducted by people other than teachers, often serve to classify learners and do not inform classroom interactions. Formative evaluations if carried out at all, are often not considered in the overall evaluation of progress. Exit tests, which are often framed in terms of grade levels, are given disproportional value and can be emotionally traumatizing. In a "teaching-to-test approach", one is bound to lose track of learners as whole

beings (Kintgen, Kroll & Rose, 1988). Alternative evaluation approaches are characterized by being: context specific, qualitative, process oriented, ongoing and integrated with instruction, supportive, two-way, open-ended, and done with learners, not to learners (Kinsey, 1978; Patton, 1982).

South African adult education programs, including the ones at the mines, often follow traditional testing approaches. However, according to emerging proposals for the ABET framework, assessment would be "outcomes-based". In effect, the new National Qualifications Framework introduces a shift from norm-based to a "competency-based approach to learning and assessment" in South Africa (ANC, 1994). Part of the motivation or attraction for an outcomes-led approach to assessment is the need to recognize existing knowledge and skills of adults. A critical discussion about a outcomes-led approach to learning and assessment is in chapter six of this dissertation. It includes the fact that a competency-based approach to assessment can lead to a focus on the ends of education while paying less attention to the learning process itself.

### Post - Literacy Services

The question here is: Why is so much effort taken to achieve literacy and so little is done to maintain it? The goals for post-literacy training are many: to sustain the acquired literacy skills or to prevent relapse into illiteracy; to assist the newly literate person in incorporating the newly acquired skills in his or her life, and generally to tie up some loose ends that may have been revealed by summative evaluations (Bhola, 1984b; Gillespie, 1990).

Post-literacy activities can be arranged in the form of learners' reading and discussion groups, without being led by facilitators. Newspapers for neo-literates have been used



successfully in this regard. They reinforce and enhance learners' reading abilities, and can introduce new topics for discussion. Free writing exercises, individually or in groups can produce fascinating stories about the writers' lives. The idea is to create opportunities for voluntary activities meant to let learners have semi-structured use of their newly acquired skills.

However, according to the South African ABET model, learning to read and write in one's first language would constitute only one among other modules at level one. There will be four certificate levels or exit points in the ABET continuum. The fourth level will be equivalent to the end of formal basic schooling, which for children would be after ten years of free and compulsory education. The emergence of a four level ABET framework has practically removed the issue of post-literacy in South African adult education dialogue. The disappearance of the notion of post literacy in ABET dialogue is a significant implication of the ABET model. It is one of major findings in this study.

#### The National Workplace Literacy Program, in the U.S.A.

The concept of this research project relates to various cases of collaborative literacy programs, internationally. However, without implying that all is well about Workplace Literacy in the United States, I have chosen to highlight the National Workplace Literacy Program (U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1992).<sup>6</sup> This innovative program, only begun in 1988 by the

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<sup>6</sup>For about four years in the 1990s, I served as a teacher in one of the NWLP programs. This program was funded by a labor union and a university. Although this "initial experience" does not constitute a pilot study for this dissertation, it did give me motivation to pursue this notion in a South African context.

USA federal government, relates directly to the thesis of this dissertation because it illustrates the need to encourage various role players to collaborate in promoting workplace education. Through this initiative, the USA government gives grants to workplace literacy programs run by more than one player:

The NWLP requires partnerships between businesses, industries, labor unions or private councils, and education organizations (most education partners are community colleges). The mandated cooperative relationship among the partners is designed to be mutually beneficial. In fact, no single organization could receive a grant. Private sector partners were to draw upon the expertise of educators to provide work-based programs. Educators, in turn, could broaden their expertise as they dealt with specific work-based literacy requirements and became more familiar with the culture of businesses, industries and unions (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1992, p. 6).

The four major objectives of the NWLP (1992) are: "improved basic skills for employees, improved employee performance, model curriculums for industries, and institutionalization of programs by the partners and replication at new sites" (p. 14). It is clear that the objective of creating the NWLP program was to improve the productivity of the workforce through improvement of literacy skills needed in the workplace. The following are highlighted as key elements of exemplary projects: "teaching materials drawn from actual materials used in the workplace, instructors with job-related workplace training background, and availability of support services such as educational counseling and child care" (p. 10).

The following cautions about the NWLP (1992) are, however, raised: each project is a unique response to the needs of the community it serves and the partners involved; not all is known yet, for instance, about problems of how to relate literacy to workplace needs, whether projects should remain in the workplace or be encouraged to float to other sites, the intersection between workplace and personal needs, and how to carry on projects after "external

funding" ceases, remain unclear. In the earlier section of this chapter, I also discussed critical reviews of the Workplace Literacy model based on Levine (1982) and Hull (1993). In conversations with Elsa Auerbach, August 1995, she felt that a major shortcoming of the Workplace Literacy model is that it is intended to "assimilate workers into workplaces as they currently exist, rather than transforming them - that is challenging the way workplaces are currently organized." It is true that many workplace education programs in the United States are more functional than consciousness-raising in nature - even though they often refer to themselves as learner-centered.

Even though only 29 percent of NWLP projects involve labor organizations (U.S. Department of Education, 1992), it is important to state that American trade unions have historically struggled for the provision of basic education and training for all. The extract below shows how early American trade unions, regardless of some racist and sexist parts of their history, contributed admirably to the opening up of access to free and compulsory public education. As this study shows, to a considerable extent, COSATU unions are currently grappling with the issues of access to public education for all children just as American labor unions did between 1881 and 1938. The Aronowitz (in London, Tarr & Wilson, 1990) states that, "It has become commonplace to characterize the current state of U.S. trade unions by the term crisis. U.S. unions have suffered substantial losses of membership, and economic and political power" p. 21). Although the strength and influence of American labor has seriously declined, the piece below (AFL, 1939) is revealing of their contribution during the founding years. Their education struggle (between 1881 and 1938), though still on going, is quite similar to what COSATU unions are trying to achieve in the South African transition of

the 1990s. It is important to realize that the role of trade unions in education does, at times, extend beyond the workplace to address issues of basic public education for children:

**Labor and Education (American Federation of Labor, July 1939).**

The interest of American labor in education has been long and continuous. As early as the opening of the nineteenth century, after wage earners had won the right to universal manhood suffrage, their leaders realized that the basis for such a democratic privilege must be in education - that government by the people made necessary education of the people. In union halls, on public platforms, and in labor periodicals workingmen (sic) proclaimed the need for such universal education...

When the first voluntary association of workingmen was formed in the city of Philadelphia in the year 1828, education was made an important part of its program. A year later a workingmen's committee was appointed to study the whole school system of the state. Their recommendations included provision for (1) public schools to be erected in every locality of the state, (2) the popular election of school boards, (3) an "Open Ladder System of Schools" free to the children of the rich and the poor alike.

In 1834, a convention called by all the trade unions in the country to meet in New York City to consider the professional monopoly of education urged "the necessity of equal, universal republican system of education." Labor not only made articulate their demands for an adequate and equitable system of public schools, but also called attention to the defects of the existing free schools of the day ... because of the limitation of their enrolment to paupers and because the instruction was limited to the "three Rs" only.... "Such policies" they added "can never secure the common prosperity of a nation, nor confer intellectual as well as political equality on a people"....

With this conviction as to the necessary foundation of the Republic on a system of universal education, we find American labor in these early days of the Republic interrogating candidates for the state legislature, petitioning the state governments, and championing in every way the establishment of free public schools - sometimes alone, and sometimes side by side with other forces in the community.... American labor's role in the early development of our system of free schools was a creative service of the first importance.... To accomplish this end it carried forward an uncompromising opposition to child labor which it believed constituted a denial to children of their educational birthright. From that position it has never receded.... During the period immediately following the Civil War, labor next advocated a compulsory school-attendance law for all children between 7 and 15 for at least ten months a year, and the furnishing of free textbooks at state expense....

We find also in the early period of our country an agitation for the better education of the mechanic.... There was as well increasing emphasis on a better regulated system of apprenticeship....

It is interesting also to note that in 1869 a colored national labor union was organized, which adopted a platform similar in many respects to the National Labor Union of this period, except that it embodied a vigorous temperance plank, and placed an even greater emphasis on education. This plank read in part as follows: "It is essentially necessary to the rapid and permanent development of the agricultural, manufacturing, and mechanical growth and interests of the Nation that there shall be a liberal school system enacted by the legislatures of the several states for the benefit of all the inhabitants thereof". This convention also pledged its support to a program for the "establishment in every state of a free school system, recognizing no distinction on account of race, color, creed or previous condition"....

At the first convention of the American Federation of Labor there was written into its initial platform as one of the thirteen objectives.... "If the State has the right to exact certain compliance with its demands," reads the platform, "then it is also the right of the State to educate its people to the proper understanding of such demands".... From the first convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1881 down to the last convention at Houston, Texas, in 1938, the record of American labor's interest in education has grown year by year (pp. iii-v).

This dissertation should show 1993-94 efforts by the progressive South African labor movement in fighting for the introduction of ten years free and compulsory education for all children. In South Africa, free and compulsory education has been a right and privilege for white children since 1940. In 1995, an ANC-led government introduced basic education for all regardless of race. I cannot stress enough that the South African model of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is an attempt to "redress" the apartheid denial of basic education to Africans. As a result, the ABET framework, championed by labor, is intended to be equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory schooling. In chapter four and five, I discuss how COSATU unions went about adopting resolutions or "platforms" which state their positions on education and training in workplaces and beyond.

## Chapter III

### THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I begin to describe main elements of the research setting. The following aspects are discussed: the national process of South African transition from apartheid to democracy, which opened up opportunities to negotiate new industry and national systems of education and training; the current nature of industry and national human resources development, in which the need for basic education and training is felt by the majority; the mining sector, a prized national resource albeit with many problems; and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which is the unit of analysis in this case study. The following is a preview of these main features of the research context as discussed in this chapter.

The transition period, which is still going on, has been characterized by "negotiating forums of stakeholders" where the "transformation" of different aspects of society, including the education and training system, are planned. In this dissertation I report and reflect on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) transformation processes in the mining industry and nationally.

In relation to the mining industry, I suggest that the provision of a massive quality basic education and training for mineworkers would make the mining industry an even stronger source of support for the South African economy. Among the benefits of basic education and training in the mines should be the health and safety of workers. I also indicate that there are some transitional policy issues which remain debatable, for instance, whether or not to transfer mineral rights from the few mining conglomerates to a democratic state, and

how to implement programs of Affirmative Action for those who have historically been excluded from the socio-economic mainstream.

In terms of human resources development in South African workplaces, it is important to highlight the problems relating to Industry Training Boards (ITBs) since these bodies bear responsibility for employee skill-building programs. The mining training board's scope of work only cover education and training above ABET levels, despite the fact that the majority of mineworkers are illiterate. The fact that ABET issues are not addressed in the mining training board, creates fragmentation and chaos in ABET provision in the mines because different mines do different things without there being industry-wide standards, nor industry-wide recognition of qualifications. The undemocratic composition of ITBs is partly reflected in the fact that as of 1993, NUM, a stakeholder that caters mostly for the prospective ABET community, was as yet still not involved in the training boards in mining and energy industries.

Finally, I summarize the role of NUM, and its forerunner the African Mine Workers' Union, in the history of the struggle for working people's rights. I argue that the historic role played by South African trade unions within the prior struggles for workplace and political rights should, at the least, persuade one to give employee organizations a chance to prove their willingness and ability to secure the right to basic education and training for all. Also in this chapter, I draw attention to an important background factor, which is that NUM's alliance-relationship with COSATU, ANC, and SACP. It is within the alliance relationship that socio-educational positions of labor and liberation movements are developed and undertaken.

## South Africa in Transition

The South African transitional period from apartheid rule to democratic governance can be said to begin in 1990 and is expected to end in 1999. In February 1990, the then-president, F.W. De Klerk, unbanned liberation organizations, like the ANC, and released freedom fighters including the current president, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. These developments were followed by a process of political-constitutional negotiations which culminated in the first democratic elections on April 27, 1994. The 1994 elections launched a Government of National Unity (GNU), which is a transitional coalition government, consisting of three political parties who each earned more than ten percent of the national vote, they are: African National Congress (ANC, 62.7%), National Party (NP, 20.4%), and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP, 10.5%). According to the transitional constitution which established the GNU, the newly elected representatives, a Constitutional Assembly, are expected to finish writing a permanent constitution within two years, that is in 1996. One should note that according to the current transitional constitution, the GNU is supposed to be replaced by normal majority rule after national elections in 1999. The field work for this study, as will be recalled, was conducted between 1993 and 1994.

The transitional process has been characterized by negotiations. Transformation forums, involving relevant stakeholders, have been set up at various levels, and institutions. During the period of this study, there were various forums negotiating changes in the national education and training system, and the structuring of workplaces. This study discusses two sets of transitional negotiations: the one between NUM and mine employers in order to design



a new ABET system for the mines (in chapter six); and the process of developing a national policy framework for Adult Basic Education and Training (in chapter seven).

The fact that this study was conducted during a period of industrial and national transition has the following significant implications: it is an analysis of the creation of a vision, an analysis of transitional achievements and future challenges. It is not an evaluation of implemented education programs. In other words, it is an attempt to explain the policy process, the motivations for the policy choices, and the nature of the proposed ABET policy framework and its implementation plans. As introduced in chapter two and discussed in chapter six, the proposed ABET framework is a radical departure from the current system of adult literacy education in South Africa. However, it remains to be seen how much of this vision can be translated into reality. Also, the current influence of trade unions, and the popularity of the new government may change in the long run. However, I argue that it is very important to understand the proposed ABET policy framework since it represents the commitments and intentions of various stakeholders including labor and employers. If we now understand what the rationale and nature of the goals and plans are, as well as the context of their development, we should be in a better position to evaluate their future attainment, or lack of attainment.

### Human Resources Development in South Africa

The need for Adult Basic Education and Training should be understood in the national context of Human Resources Development. One of the central concerns in a post-apartheid South Africa must be the systematic deprivation of education and training among the African majority, a result of the social engineering called apartheid. As a result, the provision of

basic education and skills to the adult population has to become part of a national Human Resources Development strategy, which in itself has formed part of a comprehensive strategy for nation building, called the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP, 1994). It is logical that one of four "pillars" of the RDP is Human Resources Development, the other three are: meeting basic needs, building the economy, and democratizing the state and society. Arguably, the mass provision of Adult Basic Education and Training is fundamental to the achievement of all four the RDP pillars. The new government white paper on education and training (1995) is an important document articulating Adult Basic Education and Training as part of the newly adopted education and training policy framework. Both the RDP White Paper (1994) and the Education and Training White Paper (1995) correctly position Human Resources Development as one of several instruments for transformation.

This section is an overview of the huge Human Resources Development backlogs now inherited by all South Africans. It supplements both "quantitative and qualitative problems" discussed in chapter one. First, since the South African situation is characterized by racial imbalances, the majority of those who need basic education and training are Africans.

Among South Africans in formal employment, the lack of basic education is reflected in a National Manpower Commission Report (NMC, 1986) which states that: 30% of the labor force had had no formal education, 36% had had primary education or below, 31% a secondary education, and only 3% had diplomas and degrees. These figures mean that about 66 percent of adults in formal employment are in need of basic education and training (this would be the case if one adds the percentage of those who have no education at all and the percentage of those with primary education or below). Adult literacy, that is an ability to

read and write a language, is only a part of the South African ABET framework, which is intended to integrate education and training, and to be equivalent to the end of primary schooling.

The education and training needs of people in formal employment tend to receive more attention than the needs of adults in other sectors. However, the number of unemployed adults who need basic education and training is also significant. According to the Central Statistical Service (March 30, 1995) the official unemployment rate was 32.6%. The fact that this study investigates strategies to help adults in the mines merely reflects my own background.

The NEPI report (1992) states that "less than 1% of adult illiterates are currently undergoing literacy training of any sort" (p. 3). Significantly, the bulk of literacy education is provided by the government, and by employers. NEPI (1992) summarizes the current literacy provision in this manner:

There are currently less than 100 000 learners across the three sites of provision, the state and industry providing about 45% each and NGOs making up the remaining 10%. Many of these learners are in the Transvaal and Natal, in particular, but are spread across urban, peri-urban and rural terrains. There appears to be marginally more women learners, although industry based learners are mostly male. Only 5% of learners are over 50 while 70% are under 40 years of age (p. 25).

Simmonds (1990) notes that "alternative" literacy classes are conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and their capacity allows them to reach a mostly urban minority.

These figures indicate that although current numbers of learners are not worth talking about, South African employers are significant providers of literacy education. As a result, their programs should be carefully scrutinized. Also, these figures, if we can call them figures,

indicate that South African employers, like the government, are not investing enough in basic education and skills for adults. This outcome reflects priorities of apartheid times. Today's question is: Having adopted the new rhetoric, will the government and businesses direct funds towards Adult Basic Education and Training?

During the course of this study, the union did not have a good enough data break down to work with in the mines. In fact, sharing of demographic information about ABET programs is a continual request of the union to management. To some extent, this may result from the fact that employers may not have kept good records since this has generally not been their priority in the past. For instance, though it would be obvious to assume that the majority of learners in the mines are men, not enough is known about women mineworkers. There are few women who work in the mines. The NUM Collective Bargaining Unit (July, 1995) says: Although the Central Statistical Services stopped collecting gender statistics for employment in 1980, and NUM itself does not collect gender-indicative data of its membership, it is estimated that of the 650 000 mineworkers in 1991 and 560 000 in 1993, only about 3.3% of them are women. This is compared to a 40% female participation in the economy as a whole. The majority are white women who are employed in clerical and administrative capacities in the mines. In 1993, it is estimated that about 8 500 black women worked in the mines. Generally, many NUM women members are employed in mine hospitals.

Vinjevold and Fleisch (1992) describe the historical "context" of the provision of literacy in the mines in the following way:

Prior to the late 1970s, mining houses in South Africa did not themselves provide adult literacy programmes. However, outside literacy organisations were encouraged to provide basic education for mine workers. In particular, the Bureau of Literature and Literacy (BLL) operated in mine hostels. Mine management perceived these kinds of organisations as providing a 'welfare' service (Brown, 1988). By the early 1980s, with the scrapping of job reservation laws, mining houses began actively to promote and finance literacy and numeracy programmes with the specific aim of

developing a leadership corps in the migrant labour force. Interest in literacy promotion faded in the mid-1980s only to be revived after 1989 (pp. 36-37).

South African institutions which govern skills development in various economic sectors are called Industry Training Boards (ITBs). ITBs, however, have many structural and procedural problems which inhibit the promotion of basic education and training in workplaces. An Industry Training Board is a body that promotes, or is supposed to promote, training in an industry. ITBs are central bodies as far as workplace education and training is concerned, because the law states that once established, a training board takes over from the Department of Manpower (now Department of Labor) the total responsibility for the full spectrum of training in their respective industries (COSATU PRP, 1993, Appendix 15). A training board in respect of an industry and an area has to be accredited by the Registrar of Manpower Training. As of October 1, 1993, there were 28 ITBs in South Africa, with plans for a further six to be accredited (COSATU PRP, 1993, p. 33). Significantly, the provisions of the 1990 Manpower Training Amendment Act, which governs the setting up of ITBs, make it possible for employers to establish Industry Training Boards without compelling them to involve unions.

Although the law prescribes that employees can be represented on the training board, only nine of fifteen COSATU affiliates have participated in ITBs as of 1994. NUM is not one of them. During the process of this study (1993-94), NUM was gearing up to participate in both mining and energy training boards. COSATU PRP (1993) identifies the following fundamental problems with regard to ITBs. These problems apply in mining and energy sectors as well:

- the composition of the majority of ITBs is unrepresentative and undemocratic since it does not involve unions, in general, and COSATU unions in particular,
- even when unions are involved, employer representation is greater than union representation,
- where more than one union seeks representation, union representation is not usually proportional to membership,
- no rational demarcation of industries (e.g. Motor Industry Training Board and the Automobile ITB),
- in some cases they are responsible to a single company only,
- there is a proliferation of ITBs which leads to fragmentation, duplication and a lack of coordination in relation to the development of career paths, standards, certification and curriculum,
- responsibility for the registration of ITBs rests with a Dept. of Manpower official, not the National Training Board (NTB) which results in an ad hoc approach to training and little chance of developing a national framework,
- there are no links with other education and training initiatives,
- some boards operate under different legislation such as Law and Order, Health, Defence, etc.
- there is a narrow conception of learning. The major focus of the ITB programs is on narrow functional training and excludes broader educational skills,
- most ITBs have a limited approach in terms of the categories of workers who get structured training programs. Some ITBs provide training for artisans only, whereas those which provide training for workers below artisan level, usually offer short courses in nontechnical training such as 6M, Justice for All, Working Together (pp. 33-34).

A major problem about the mining industry training board is that it does not cater for ABET levels, which are below the artisan level (the last problem in the above list). This means that the basic education and training needs of mineworkers, which are largely organized by NUM, are not catered for by the existing training board. Consequently, a major implication of NUM participation in the mining training board will be the inclusion of basic education and training issues on the agenda of this important industry education and training body, or other such authority that should take its place. In chapter six, I discuss a Mining Qualifications

Forum (MQF), a 1994 stakeholder transitional forum which is set up to negotiate the restructuring of the Mining Training Board, to form a new Mining Qualifications Authority.

A number of education policy forums occurred during the transition period. They are discussed in chapter seven where their relevance to ABET policy formulation is explored. In 1992 the National Party (NP) government produced its proposed changes for education in a document called the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS). It was significant to note that the ERS, with its one or two paragraphs on ABET policy issues, had no impact whatsoever in ABET policy development. In fact, in terms of political parties, the ANC is the only party that has presented a comprehensive ABET policy and plan. It is primarily the employers, not political parties, who have challenged some portions of the COSATU/ANC ABET vision.

In April 1992, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report was released. This important inquiry into "policy options" was commissioned by the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC). In August 1993, COSATU released its "Consolidated Recommendations on Adult Basic Education and Training", a report of its Participatory Research Project. In January 1994, the ANC, having commissioned the Center for Education Policy Development (CEPD), produced a "Policy Framework for Education and Training". In April 1994, the National Training Board (NTB) released a "A National Training Strategy Initiative". The NTB report, came out of a process involving the state, employers, the labor movement, and educational bodies. In September 1994, the new government released a White Paper on "Education and Training in the New South Africa". After some public feedback and consultation, the government white paper was reissued in February 1995. Although it largely reflects ANC positions on education and training, it is a

reflection of emerging consensus around of the new direction. The introduction of new education and training policy by the government technically falls outside the delimited time frame of this study. It is, however, alluded to and is attached to this dissertation as Appendix I.

### The South African Mining Sector

Mining is the backbone of the South African economy. Though not discussed in detail, the following mining contributions to the South African economy are worth highlighting: **foreign exchange earnings**, minerals and mineral- based exports contribute three-quarters of the exports; **state revenue**, in 1990, mineral production contributed R38 billion or 16,1% to the total value of all goods and services produced in South Africa; **employment**, mines employ three-quarters of a million workers, including migrant workers from neighboring countries; **market for mining input industries**, mining provides a big market for the manufacturing industry, and it is a source of input for mineral-based industries, such as iron ore for steel, phosphate rock for fertilizers, chromite and nickel for stainless steel, etc. (Jourdan, 1993, pp. 3-4; RDP, 1994, pp. 99-102).

"South Africa is one of the world's richest countries in terms of minerals. Up to now, however, this enormous wealth has only been used for the benefit of the tiny white minority" (Jourdan, 1993 p. 1; RDP, 1994 p. 99). Besides the fact that the African majority has not fairly enjoyed the mineral wealth of their land, a number of problems have developed in the mining industry. These are: "gold mining is declining in profitability, as costs start to catch up with revenue; declining terms of trade, as a result of the emphasis on the exportation of minerals; and lack of investment in productive assets and human resources" (Jourdan,



1993, pp. 5-9). The fact that there are a number of fundamental problems in the mining industry means that education and training can only be posed as one of a number of solutions. ABET provision cannot possibly cure all the ills of the mining industry. However, its potential contribution needs to be entertained.

A sensitive issue about mining in South Africa is that of mineral rights. Issues of wages, health and safety, hostel reform, education and training, and other conditions of service can shrink into nothingness when the "ownership" issue is raised. The labor and liberation movements want changes in the current system which concentrates mineral rights in the possession of a few large companies. The exclusion of Africans from mineral rights ownership creates a colonial crisis of legitimacy. The state is estimated to be in control of a small percentage (about 10%) of mineral rights. On the other hand, mine owners, and traditionally white political parties, are understandably happy with the status quo.

The Reconstruction and Development Program (1994) and other policy documents of the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance, including the 1955 Freedom Charter, state that:

The minerals in the ground belong to all South Africans, including future generations. Moreover, the current system of mineral rights prevents the optimal development of mining and the appropriate use of urban land. We must seek the return of private mineral rights to the democratic government, in line with the rest of the world. This must be done in full consultation with all stakeholders (RDP, 1994, p. 99).

Nationalizing the mines is currently not a viable alternative. The fact that nationalizing or socializing the mines is currently not on the cards at all is better explained in a policy discussion paper by the Macro Economic Research Group (MERG, May 1993), an ANC think-tank:

A new South African Minerals Policy will primarily have to address the current huge disparity in ownership where people of settler decent (15% of the population) own almost all of the mineral sector. The obvious way to redistribute ownership of the sector would be to nationalize the mines, but due to the negative impact this would have on foreign investment in the economy and the fact that the new state will not have the skilled managerial and professional manpower to run the mines, this is at present not a realistic option. Therefore other policy instruments need to be identified (p. 1).

Despite this clear cut position, South African media, an enterprise whose writers, editors, and owners are predominantly white, continue to portray challenges to the current system of mineral rights as nationalization and socialization. For instance, one day we woke up to the following newspaper headlines: "NUM tells future government: Mines to run on socialist principles" by The Citizen Newspaper, February 17, 1994; and "NUM urges socialist running of mines" by The Star Newspaper, February 17, 1994. Interestingly, these articles mention the unions desire to restructure education and training in the mines within the context of these inaccurate headlines.

Some political analysts/commentators suggest that it may be in reaction to fears of nationalization that President Nelson Mandela allocated the cabinet portfolio dealing with Minerals and Energy to Pik Botha, an MP of the former apartheid ruling party. On the other hand, it is significant that Marcel Golding, a former assistant secretary of NUM, now ANC MP, has been appointed chairman of a parliamentary standing committee for Minerals and Energy. Yet, some people fault the current transition measures as inadequate, suggesting that they may leave most of the economy in the control of a minority. The late Joe Slovo, then SACP chairman, and later national housing minister, is generally associated with the idea of a transitional coalition government as a compromise solution. During the negotiations for a

transitional constitution, Slovo and others argued, correctly or not, that the South African transition needs to be understood and undertaken as a two stage process, starting with national democratic elections, intended to end racial monopoly of political power, to be followed by a socialist change, intended to redistribute economic resources. Frantz Fanon (1963) suggests that a shortcoming of a "nationalist" take over is that colonial elites can be replaced by "indigenous elites" without an effective change in the system. In the new South Africa, it remains to be seen if "the ownership of the means of production" would, in fact, be less racially based. This debate is raised in order to elucidate the larger picture in which educational change is taking place.

It is not far-fetched to suggest that education and training is part of that debate. According to a Marxian critique (Marx, 1984, 1987) a lack of change in the "ownership of the means of production" would leave capitalist class disparities intact, except that they may be less racially based. In that eventuality, education and training would be reduced to a mere tool for providing a productive workforce - "an ideological apparatus" (Gramsci, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Apple, 1982; Resnick & Wolff, 1987). It seems, to me, that some employers fear that an inclusion of "consciousness-raising" elements to workers' education curriculum may be a back door way of promoting some kind of revolutionary thinking. An educational principle is that an awareness-raising approach to curriculum should not prescribe content, impose interpretations, or compel people to act (Freire, 1970).

While the issue of mineral rights remains ticklish with mine owners, the issue of Affirmative Action is rocking ordinary working-class whites. First, it should be kept in mind that many working-class whites have historically identified themselves racially with white

employers and the white regime - instead of associating with working-class blacks. In the mines and in other industries, working-class whites have enjoyed skilled positions legally reserved for them (for example through the 1955 Mines and Works Act). This was an affirmative/deliberate action, not random or accidental action, to ensure their privilege. It becomes imperative that deliberate steps have to be taken to make the racial and gender composition of the workforce representative of society, whether that is called Affirmative Action or not.

Five days after President Nelson Mandela's inauguration, the Mineworkers Union, a union of working-class whites, still came out emphasizing racial solidarity over class solidarity, when it said that, "its role in the new South Africa was to protect its members against policies including affirmative action", (The Star, May 16, 1994, p. 2). The white Mineworkers Union has since followed up on this threat by organizing demonstrations against Affirmative Action programs in the energy sector. In 1993/4 NUM was in the process of developing a policy resolution on Affirmative Action. However, a point of view that we had begun popularizing is that it is vital that traditionally excluded groups be given knowledge and skills so that Affirmative Action programs can succeed.

In response to the crisis in the mining industry, Jourdan (1993), a mineral economist who is a consultant to NUM and is a coordinator of the ANC minerals policy process, explores the following policy strategies for growth in a new South Africa:

- \* mineral beneficiation, which means increasing the value of local exports by processing raw minerals into intermediate or even finished goods,
- \* regional integration and co-operation, to jointly address the colonial set up where Third World minerals are extracted for direct supply to industries in the North,

- \* developing the mineral potential for minerals like platinum in order to enable South Africa to effectively compete in the global market,
- \* developing a small-scale mining sector, to create more employment and to redistribute ownership of mineral resources,
- \* restructuring mining ownership, through nationalization of cross-holdings and through worker equity schemes; a resource-based industrial strategy in our region for South African business to penetrate the regional market,
- \* and a provision of massive infrastructure and basic services like education (pp. 10-22).

The fact that hope for the South African mining and mineral industries lies in processing raw minerals into intermediate and finished goods before export, a national development strategy which requires massive investment in machinery and human resources, is also highlighted by NUM's Collective Bargaining Unit in the following manner:

### **The Future Role and Significance of the Mining Industry**

Mining will remain a crucial sector of the South African economy for the foreseeable future. SA's mineral wealth, if wisely used, can provide the base for further economic growth and development....

At present, far too much of mineral production is exported in a raw or semi-processed state. The transformation of these raw materials into steel, machinery, vehicles, appliances and cooking pots takes place in other countries. And South Africa then has to pay a premium to import these products. The further processing of minerals adds much more value to them than their mere extraction from the ground. Extraction needs to be followed by local beneficiation and downstream manufacturing. This route can be followed to create a minerals based manufacturing economy. The mining industry is thus one of the pillars for the future economic development of South Africa. It is essential, both for economic and for social reasons, that the mining sector is preserved and developed during the transition to democratic rule (NUM Collective Bargaining Dept., October 14, 1993, p. 12).

The level of democratic government intervention in the restructuring of the mining industry remains controversial and undetermined. Although negotiations between labor and employers should be the main vehicle to foster the necessary changes, the RDP (1993) correctly states that, "Democratization of the mining sector must involve new laws to build

workplace democracy for miners by requiring employers to negotiate the organization of work with their employees and their unions" (p. 100).

### The National Union of Mineworkers

The history of the first black miners' union, in the 1930s and 1940s, which preceded NUM, is not widely known - partly because it is not part of any education curriculum. According to an NUM publication, "The National Union of Mineworkers stands on the shoulders of the great African Mine Workers Union led by J.B. Marks" (NUM, 1994, p. 1). While keeping in perspective that the story of mineworkers cannot be told by any one person, I summarize this story of courage as told by Vic Allen (1992, pp. 321-425) in: The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa, Volume 1. In 1930, a union of black mineworkers was formed, called the African Mine Workers' Union. T.W. Thibedi acted as the union secretary. In fact, Thibedi's life offers both a glimpse of how African people lived during that dark era, and shows the contribution which literacy made in the struggle for liberation. For a decade, Thibedi was a principal organizer of African trade unions. He had achieved prominence during the pass defiance campaign in 1919. In the 1920s, he ran the famous South African Communist Party night school in Johannesburg. His brightest recruits and students went on to become Communist Party and trade union leaders.

The African Mine Workers' Union faced many daunting problems, some of which are not faced by NUM today. Allen (1992) relates problems of the following nature:

... any mineworker found by management to be associated with a union was subject to instant dismissal, wages of mineworkers were too low to enable them to pay contributions which could sustain an organization, authorities would not rent the union office space in white and black areas alike, the union had no access into the workers'

living compounds and no right to be in the locations, not to mention general hostility from both employers and the government (p. 333-346).

In order to survive, the union obtained outside financial and practical support from the South Africa Communist Party (SACP). For instance, it was given an office in Communist Party buildings, and it used an SACP post office box for its correspondence (Allen, 1992). The SACP, while espousing democratic socialist principles, was mainly a white party at the time. Incidentally, after its unbanning in 1990, the SACP was housed in the same building with NUM and COSATU. It is currently housed in COSATU's new buildings in Johannesburg.

In 1946, under the leadership of J. B. Marks, the African Mine Workers' Union, despite the Chamber of Mines refusal to recognize it, mounted a big strike. The state and employers collaborated in crushing the strike action, and destroying the union. Mineworkers and union officials were arrested, including J.B. Marks. The Chamber of Mines made no concessions to the mineworkers, and did not improve their pay for three years (Allen, 1992).

During the period between the crushing of the African Mine Workers Union in 1946, and the formation of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1982, history tells us that the oppression, discrimination, and exploitation of black mineworkers continued unabated. It is in a context of hard times that workers organize around common problems. Consequently, trade unions emerge to serve as a means "to restore the dignity of mineworkers". This makes it logical for one to look at NUM as a potential platform to take up the case of basic education and training for mineworkers. Understanding the history of resistance and struggle in South African mines is crucial to understanding why the union should intervene in

education and training issues. However, not only its history, but its future performance will serve to make a case for trade union intervention in education and training.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was founded in 1982. During 1995, the union had a membership of about 325 000, according to NUM Membership Unit. Its membership cuts across all the mining houses. It is important to remember that the majority of NUM members need basic education and training. NUM, though a nonracially constituted organization, serves a mostly African constituency. This is partly because of the nature of racial politics in South Africa.

Arguably, the South African mineworker's struggle is symbolized by the 1987 strike. This industrial strike action, which effectively brought Cyril Ramaphosa, the then-NUM general secretary and now-ANC general secretary, to national prominence, caught the nation's attention in a memorable way. Baskin (1991) records that, "It was also a strike with major repercussions for the union and Cosatu as a whole" (p. 224). NUM (1994) 11 Years of History describes the 1987 strike as follows:

### **21 DAYS THAT SHOOK THE CHAMBER: THE GREAT MINERS STRIKE**

But the watershed in the NUM was August 1987, the Great Miners Strike that lasted 21 days, the largest national industry strike for decades. Over 340 000 miners went on strike on gold and coal mines - for many regarded as the biggest industrial strike on the African continent. The strike over wages and working conditions was a true test of strength against the commanding heights of industry - the mining and finance houses of Anglo-American Corporation, Gencor, Anglo-Vaal, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments and Gold Fields of South Africa. 11 workers were killed, over 600 injured, more than 600 arrested, and over 50 000 were dismissed. It was an industrial war and tough negotiations. But a settlement was finally agreed (pp. 15-19).



NUM, like other COSATU unions, is constituted on the principle of control by workers. 'Worker control', to use a common term, basically means that the decisions of the organization are made by its members. The following constitutional structures are supposed to ensure that NUM remains an organization that is governed by democratic wishes of its members:

At a mine shaft where the union has a minimum of 50 members, a shaft committee is established consisting of no less than five shaft stewards. A branch committee is established at a mine where there is a minimum of 100 union members. Regional committees are formed out of branch committees. The National Executive Committee, and the Central Executive Committee are composed of regional representatives and nationally elected office bearers. The national congress, which meets triennially or on especial occasions, is the supreme governing body of the union. It consists of delegates proportionally elected by each region (NUM Constitution, pp. 6-17).

The offices of union president, vice-president, secretary, assistant secretary, and treasurer are filled by regular democratic elections at branch, regional, and national levels. In chapter five, where I discuss the union policy process and resolution relating to Adult Basic Education and Training, the union's decision making process is exemplified.

At national, regional, and branch level, the union has substructures dealing with various issues, for instance Health and Safety Committees. Union education substructures are constituted in the following manner: at a branch general meeting workers elect from among themselves a Branch Education Sub-Committee, or BRESCO as it is commonly known. Some BRESCO representatives go on to form a Regional Education Sub-Committee, or RESCO. At a union regional education conference branch delegates elect about five office bearers to lead a RESCO. Some RESCO officers, normally a chair and a secretary, participate in a National Education Sub-Committee, or NESCO. At a union national education conference delegates

elect a committee of five workers to lead a NESCO. The NESCO is supposed to meet monthly, in order to discuss and decide on education plans and reports. On a day to day basis, I found the NESCO committee to be an effective worker voice on education and training issues. More than once, I formally interviewed a NESCO member and a NESCO chair for this study, even though we had worked closely together. In interactions, like meetings and workshops, with worker leaders in union education committees, I was constantly humbled by shaft steward sophistication on education issues even when many had little formal education. Perhaps indirectly, this shows that the struggle is education.

In support of the above outlined union constitutional structures, there are full-time union staff members who work in various departments or operational structures. In 1994, NUM had about 118 staff members in its national and regional offices, who specialize in various fields including education. NUM is organized according to pillars and units. A head of a unit reports to a head of a pillar, who in turn reports to an elected secretariat. The five pillars are: Production, Services, Administration, Finance, and Fraternal Pillar. The Education Unit, together with Organizing, Collective Bargaining, Health and Safety, Media, and Membership form the Production Pillar. In 1993-94, the number of educators based at head office changed from five to three. Ideally, every union region should have a full-time educator, based at regional offices. A regional educator reports to the RESCO and the head office education unit. Head office based educators deal with the education of shaft stewards, nationally. Head office educators work with and provide support to regional educators and worker committees. Among educators who are based at head office, there is one who focuses on general or macro education and training. However, because of the amount of work

involved in coordinating issues of both education and training, at all levels, and in both mining and energy sectors, it was being proposed that there needs to be two head office based educators to deal with issues of general education and technical training. Although NUM is the largest trade union in South Africa, there are other employee organizations in the mines. In 1994, Die Mynwerkers Unie, an Afrikaans name for the Mineworkers Union, for whites-only, had a membership of about 22 000. The proposed labor relations law (1995) should do away with the registration of race-based trade unions. Also, in 1995, the Chamber of Mines proposed to do away with the closed shop arrangements it has with white unions, with a sympathetic proviso that "there should be a two year transition period to allow these unions to adjust". It is not yet clear how a change to a nonracially organized setting, for which NUM has campaigned for a long time, will transform labor relations in the mines.

Although there are no firm figures, one should realize that there are other black mineworkers who do not belong to NUM and are also not politically aligned to the ANC. For instance, there are other mineworkers who are politically aligned to Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), one of the political rivals to the ANC. Also, there is another small union in the mines called the Black Allied Mines and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU). BAMCWU is affiliated to NACTU, one of three labor federations in South Africa. NACTU is politically aligned to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Further, there are other mineworkers who come from the neighboring countries (According to 1994 Chamber of Mines Statistical Tables, 47% of migrant workers on the chamber gold and coal mines are from Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, and Mozambique). I found it significant, however, that during the whole process of negotiating basic education and training with mine employers,

and developing national policy, we had minimal contact with non-COSATU unions. However, ABET agreements negotiated by NUM will apply to all worker-learners regardless of union affiliation status or political persuasion. Immediately, this raises the question of "free riders," that is workers who benefit from union efforts without having to pay union dues. According to the NUM Collective Bargaining Unit (July 1995), the issue of free riders is currently a subject of "stalled" negotiations between the union and the mines. The proposed Labor Relations Act (1995) would provide for the establishment of jointly administered funds out of agency fees that would be paid by non-union employees. Beyond this friendly legal provision, it would be in organized labor's strategic interests to actively explore ways of involving non-unionized workers in decisions such as on education and training. Classroom interactions can be one avenue in which non-unionized worker-learners can be engaged in dialogues about workplace and national policy issues.

NUM participates in both centralized industry level negotiations and company level negotiations. In an "Induction Manual for Officials" (October 8, 1992), the union explains its collective bargaining forums with mine employers by distinguishing between chamber mines, which are mostly gold and coal, and non-chamber mines, which are mostly platinum and diamond:

## **The Chamber of Mines Negotiations<sup>7</sup>**

Three quarters of the members of the NUM work for mines that get their labor through the Chamber. The Chamber of Mines was established 100 years ago to recruit cheap labor for the gold mines. Today, this remains its most significant task...

The annual wage negotiations between NUM and the Chamber of Mines directly affect the wages of over 500 000 black mineworkers. This is a totally centralized national forum - except that it applies to unskilled and semi-skilled black workers. White unions have negotiated wages with the Chamber for over 80 years and continue to do so, but in a racially separate forum....

The union has negotiated a list of 23 issues that are negotiated at the "industry level" with the Chamber, and 8 issues that are negotiated at mine level with individual mine managements. By far the most important issues are centralized. In addition, negotiations are held with individual mining houses on an informal basis.

### **Non-Chamber Negotiations**

In addition to the Chamber of Mines negotiations, the union negotiates wages and conditions of employment individually with seventy four mines and plants. The most significant of these are Impala Platinum, the Rustenburg Platinum Mines, De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines, and Eskom, the electricity company. The majority of these negotiations, like the Chamber negotiations, take place mid-year (NUM Collective Bargaining, date, pp. 1-2).

Adult Basic Education and Training is regarded as important enough to be handled at the chamber/industry level. This also means that the union has to arrange for separate sets of ABET negotiations with companies that negotiate outside the chamber. Some independent mines are really small. For instance, in 1993/94 the union supported slow ABET negotiations

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<sup>7</sup>The Chamber of Mines consists of the following six mining and mining finance houses: Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, Anglovaal Ltd, Gencor Ltd, Goldfields of South Africa Ltd, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments Ltd, and Randgold Ltd. In 1993, there were 896 mines and quarries in South Africa. 68 percent of 617 147 mineworkers are in chamber affiliated mines (Chamber of Mines Statistical Tables, 1994).

at an independent mine of about 300 employees, four hours away from Johannesburg. On the other hand, the union could not begin to intervene in chamber mines before an agreement was signed. The issue of centralized negotiations is discussed in chapter six.

NUM's social and educational plans and actions are developed and undertaken in the national context of a COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance. In 1994, NUM was one of fifteen unions affiliated to COSATU. COSATU, founded in 1985, had about 1, 5 million members in 1990. In chapter four, I discuss how COSATU's principles and recommendations on education and training form a basis for NUM's approach to education and training. Indeed COSATU's policy recommendations are a basis of ANC policy frameworks on education and training which are now a major part of government proposals.

At a press conference, in December 27, 1993, COSATU's new general secretary, Sam Shilowa, stated what is generally understood within labor and liberation circles, that, "There is no conveyor belt system between COSATU and the ANC". This means that it cannot necessarily be assumed that a COSATU policy position will be adopted and implemented by the ANC, and vice-versa. In short hand, however, people continue to refer to COSATU as a labor wing of the ANC, alongside its women and youth wings. Without getting into the intrigues of the COSATU-ANC relationship, it is significant that COSATU unions are currently in alliance with a majority party of government. It is nevertheless significant that twenty of COSATU leaders, including its general secretary, Jay Naidoo, became national ANC MPs. There are other COSATU leaders who became ANC provincial parliamentarians (COSATU Shopsteward, June/July 1994). In chapter seven, I discuss how NUM supported COSATU and the ANC during the processes of negotiating and developing a

national education and training policy. It is in the context of a "non conveyor-belt alliance" that NUM's support for COSATU-ANC positions needs to be understood.

On the other hand, it is common knowledge that the majority of private sector leaders are not comfortable with the relationship between COSATU and the ANC. In a telephone survey of a hundred leading business executives, done by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) commissioned jointly by the South African Chamber of Business (SACOB), the Weekly Mail and Guardian newspaper, and the South African Television Agenda Program, it was found that 63 percent of executives responded "NO" to the question: "Should the ANC/COSATU Alliance continue?" The responses are further broken down to 71 percent whites say no, and 39 percent of black business leaders also say no (Mail & Guardian, May 5-11, 1995, p. B2). Baskin (1991) says the following about the political persuasions of COSATU's membership: "The alliance undoubtedly reflects the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of Cosatu's membership. The rank-and file have deep sympathy for Nelson Mandela, for the ANC and, to a lesser extent, the SACP" (p. 433).

As an organization, the National Union of Mineworkers is a growing teenager. During the period of this study, I observed some of its significant developments. NUM opened its multi-million rand training center or workers' college, in Johannesburg, named after Elijah Barayi who was NUM vice-president and founding president of COSATU. This fully equipped facility can accommodate 40 residents. It is run semi-independently, and is hired to other organizations. The head office also moved to new buildings, because the union bought about three quarters of a block (six floors high) in downtown Johannesburg. The Education Unit now has a head, and an administrator. Educators have their own offices, cars,

and personal computers. The union, now poised for the information age, has an Internet home page where its mining and education policies can be found (<http://www.anc.org.za/num/num.html>). A study loan program to help staff members who want to undertake part-time has been introduced. A big industrial photocopying machine, and its operator, gives one some piece of mind, and a sense of a solid and sophisticated organization. I was there at a time when people were happy to see the many years of struggle begin to bear fruit.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS AS A VEHICLE FOR WORKER-LEARNERS' VOICES

#### Introduction

The fact that COSATU unions are "exploring" new approaches to basic education and training "with a view to securing black advancement" is already known to followers of the change process in South Africa. The following excerpt, from a report by a Commonwealth Expert Group (1991) for a Heads of Government Meeting at Harare, is a case in point:

Trade unions have been at the forefront of the struggle for a new South Africa. A number of COSATU unions, such as National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), are exploring innovative approaches to mass literacy and vocational training with a view to securing black advancement (p. 57).

To put the above statement in perspective, it is important to understand three things. First, COSATU unions are not the only organizations or institutions pursuing the goal of black advancement. Secondly, education and training is not the only change instrument explored by the labor movement. Lastly, the advancement that is being pursued by COSATU unions and others is not limited to blacks. It includes all disadvantaged people, especially women. Still, it is important to acknowledge the central role that COSATU unions play in Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa. This is also observed by French (in Hotton, 1992): "During 1990 and 1991, a team of adult educationists in COSATU emerged as one of the most powerful influences on policy development for adult literacy and basic education in South Africa (p. 74).

## Motivations for Labor Involvement in ABET

Why should trade unions get involved in Adult Basic Education and Training?

Responses to this initial research question were pursued through studying the COSATU Participatory Research Project report, NUM workshop reports, NUM survey questionnaires; and through interviews with trade unionists, managers, educationists, and worker-learners. However, as the union was deepening its involvement, for instance, through shaft steward training workshops and negotiations with management, this question broadened to include the question: What do you hope to gain out of union participation in ABET? I found that labor participation in Adult Basic Education and Training is based on both educational reasons, like "getting rid of illiteracy in the mines", and broader reasons, like "to enable workers to change the country."

For the record, I would like to start off by pointing out that, to some extent, some trade unions became involved in education and training issues as a response to management initiated programs. "There was a need for COSATU Education Department to develop principles to guide unions in responding to ABE and Training Programs in their workplaces", a COSATU PRP ABE Coordinator stated at NUM's ABET workshop in July 1993. This statement is true for the situation I observed in the mines. In early discussions with the union general secretary, even before I arrived at NUM, he informed me that there were "management initiatives that were awaiting union response". In union ABET workshops that we conducted, worker leaders reported some approaches made to them by management. During the period of this study, some shaft stewards telephoned or faxed management proposals to the union education unit at head office asking for advice on how to respond.

One management proposal was written in Afrikaans, which some of us could not read. At one mine, an ABET manager appeared to be getting a little impatient with union criticisms when he had been "calling all the time". It is my impression, based on a different pieces of information, that management started calling the unions in the 1990s.

In interviews for this dissertation, two COSATU educators, and an ANC/CEPD educator suggested that the COSATU PRP (1993) report constitutes the clearest statement of the rationale for labor participation in ABET issues at the workplace, and beyond. The COSATU PRP study draws its significance from the fact that it was compiled from feelings drawn from the grassroots, collected with the participation of about 50 shop stewards, from a range of sectors, including the mines. Let us listen to how comrades kick off a case for labor involvement in ABET issues:

Historically, trade unions have been important agents of social change. Particularly in South Africa, it has been the union movement which has played a central role in the struggle against apartheid. This struggle has borne fruit in the move to non racial elections.

Trade union intervention in education and training negotiations is appropriate for a number of reasons. First, for reasons of **equity**, it is crucial that all members of the community have the right of access to higher skills and better paid jobs. Secondly, because education enables people to participate in **democratic** processes and structures. Thirdly, because training will improve the skills base of the workforce and contribute to **economic development** and higher standards of living (p. 13.).

The COSATU PRP report (1993) goes on to demarcate areas of "negotiations", and to call trade unions to action: Unions must engage in negotiations with the state, employers, and the education and training providers to achieve outcomes in the following areas: access, governance, standard setting, curriculum development, certification and assessment, accreditation,

and educator/trainer development (pp. 73-78). The above COSATU PRP goals were echoed by mineworkers and NUM leaders in different workshops and documents.

On July 26-30, 1993, a date to be marked, NUM held its first workshop on Adult Basic Education and Training. The following workshop objectives, as outlined by the union ABET educator during the workshop, can be interpreted as revealing of the union's objectives on ABET issues:

- \* to locate education and training within the political and economic context, including the reconstruction program,
- \* to share information on existing provision of ABE and Training within the industry and more broadly,
- \* to begin to discuss some of the key policy issues on ABE & Training emerging from the COSATU PRP,
- \* to discuss national initiatives aimed at developing an integrated education and training system for the country,
- \* to begin to develop a strategy (short and long term), for NUM, which includes engagement, policy development and research, involvement of membership, building NUM's capacity, and strategic initiatives like pilots (NUM ABET Workshop Report, July 1993, p. 4).

This union workshop was attended by 36 worker representatives from fourteen regions of NUM. There were seven regional and national union educators. Other union staff came from the following departments: collective bargaining, health and safety, media, membership, and development projects. There was a representative from the Southern Africa Miners' Federation. The union assistant secretary (who is now an ANC MP and chairs a parliamentary committee on Minerals and Energy) attended some parts of the workshop. There were four COSATU PRP coordinators who led some of the workshop sessions. The minutes of this workshop also reflect my presence as "a researcher".

In this ground-laying workshop, the then-union national organizer and now-union assistant secretary enunciated the rationale for labor participation in education and training. Copies of the report of that workshop, which includes the paper he delivered, were later circulated to union regional offices. We later included his paper in other workshop packages. Having had an opportunity to hear this trade unionist address worker gatherings, especially when speaking in a Xhosa language, I can say that a lot of emotive content and charismatic delivery is lost when his presentation is reduced to print:

Key to the policy system of apartheid as designed by the National Party and the Broederbond (*a secretive Afrikaaner male think-tank for the National Party*) was deprivation of Black communities in general and African communities in particular, in all aspects of life. Key to this system was deprivation of capacity, with education being a class weapon used in ensuring that blacks had no access to skills. This was done by giving blacks an inferior education, education that did not prepare them for any meaningful contribution in the economy, and to a great extent blacks were not given access to education (NUM ABET Report, July 1993, p. 36).

Having defined the problem, he went on to stress that "education and training, as an element of the reconstruction program will have to address the disparities resulting from the apartheid education system". When he went into details about some areas of general education and technical training, the trade unionist's level of sophistication about education and training issues was evident:

On education, there are a few areas that should form part of the education for reconstruction: mass elimination of illiteracy, on this aspect we can draw valuable lessons from the Cuban approach after the revolutionary seizure of power particularly from 1961 onwards, i.e. literacy brigades of volunteers; compulsory education up to at least standard seven; restructuring the education to prepare our children for technical training. Mathematics to be made compulsory up to standard seven at least; development of bridging Maths programs by industrial training centers and technikons.

On training, the following aspects should be addressed: recognition of experience and provision of modular training to give workers the necessary theoretical background;

provision of functional mathematics by industrial training centers to develop the capacity for further development; competency test as a way of recognizing acquisition of skills through practical experience; management programs for workers with a minimum of matric as an academic qualification; exposure for workers by sending them to outside seminars and conferences.

His concluding remarks, "Finally, there should be mass involvement of workers. Workers development should be in their hands", say it all. Currently, the use of acronyms like "ABET" and "RDP" is so much part of South African language that it is noticeable in the above statements that in 1993 people were talking "literacy or ABE and Training" and "reconstruction program". One may appreciate that the union leader quoted above here once joked in a later gathering, "I still have my copies of all six drafts of the RDP".

Following the national ABET workshop, the NUM ABET educator and I conducted a series of awareness-raising, capacity-building, and mobilizing workshops involving shaft stewards, educators, and other union leaders at regional, mining group, and mining company levels. In total, these workshops were attended by about 200 shaft stewards. As the agenda and reports of all these workshops reflect, we consistently asked participants, in small and large groups, to speak to the question: *Why is ABET a union issue?* Below is a composite list of reasons directly lifted from some union ABET workshop reports. Different educational, economic, social, and political meanings can be drawn from these messages.

Some of the following testimonies were made in African languages:

National Workshop, July 1993

- \* high rates of illiteracy in the mining industry,
- \* to ensure that the education content of ABET will equip people to participate in reconstruction,
- \* NUM knows the problems, needs, experiences of workers very well,
- \* because of link between low levels of education and exploitation,

- \* management only wants narrow programs, so we must be there to come up with better programs and to make sure all our concerns are covered in the courses,
- \* to enable our members to fully participate in economic development of our country,
- \* to enable our members to participate in political life of the country from the basis of knowledge and understanding,
- \* to enable workers to take initiative and develop policies in social activities.
- \* to enable workers to participate in the reconstruction program effectively, ABE should be a priority both in terms of our short term and long term goals.

#### Regional Workshop, September 1993

- \* we must be able to understand agreements made with management, and ensure that they are implemented,
- \* be able to face new challenges,
- \* be part of decision-making,
- \* in order for our comrades to fully benefit from courses offered by the union, our comrades should already have basic education,
- \* the union should negotiate paid education leave for ABE,
- \* the union understands our needs, and should be involved to ensure needs are met,
- \* some members expect to be leaders tomorrow,
- \* ABE will facilitate the flow of communication in the company,
- \* lack of education puts many limits on our people and as a union we must address this.

#### Regional Workshop, October 1993

- \* high rate of illiteracy among workers because of discrimination,
- \* to teach reading and writing, and ability to see undesired statements
- \* to help shaft stewards with skills to negotiate,
- \* to get rid of illiteracy among workers,
- \* to improve level of education among workers.

#### Company Workshop, January 1994

- \* to make sure Bantu Education is pushed out completely,
- \* to ensure that needs of workers are met,
- \* to see to it that learning objectives are achieved,
- \* to make education useful and productive,
- \* to offer real certificates,
- \* to make sure we have proper agreement with management

#### Company Workshop, January 94

- \* for illiterate/unskilled workers who are our members,

- \* NUM is a democratic organization, it needs to ensure access to information in order for people to make choices,
- \* ensure knowledge and skills to actively participate in democratic structures, to stop unilateral decisions of management,
- \* to upgrade skills of workers to promote social and economic development,
- \* to ensure ABE is implemented properly,

Mining Group Workshop, January 1994,

- \* workers know what they need and NUM is their mouth piece,
- \* NUM must stand for workers and ensure programs are suitable, relevant, lead to national certificates and link to further education and training,
- \* many members need ABE to develop

Regional Workshop, February 1994

- \* because NUM deals with workers and issues affecting them,
- \* employers care for production only so the union must care for the workers,
- \* to encourage workers to attend ABE so that they are able to change the country.

The union also conducted a survey, part of which solicited views about its role in ABET issues. This survey was not part of my research proposal because the opportunity emerged in the field. However, I was able to incorporate it as part of participant observation activities. During the course of this study, NUM adapted a questionnaire from COSATU PRP (1993) and involved shaft stewards in administering it. Beyond data collection, the survey became a tool for shaft stewards to interact with workers on ABET issues. Its results were shared in union ABET workshops. This project, about a thousand copies of a 17 page questionnaire printed, was not viewed as an academic exercise. Although a union statistician helped us produce "an efficient survey", there was no intention to produce a statistical publication. The administration of this questionnaire was messy, not clinical. Shaft stewards were at times collecting more information than the questionnaire required, and they were randomly "explaining" questions in African languages. In effect, workers were sending their



union to work, and giving it bargaining ammunition. Earlier, as we were piloting it in the mines, it appeared that a simple questionnaire could provide a great moment for a shaft steward to sit down with workers and focus on issues of education and training. The survey, coupled with workshops, helped the union get some energy going to organize or mobilize mineworkers around its ABET project. The following excerpt from a regional union workshop report reveals how the survey was viewed and handled:

**Collecting Information on Existing ABE Programs**

Cde ... explained that the NUM ABE questionnaire (see workshop package, pages 104-120) originates in the July NUM ABE Workshop; and that the value of it is to introduce shaft stewards to ABE programmes going on in their mines, and to introduce them to ABE issues in general.

The questions contained in the questionnaire were explained and discussed. Ways of collecting information from learners, educators, and managers, through the questionnaire, were also discussed - and finalized in the workshop section: Regional Action Plan. (NUM ABET Regional Workshop Report, October 27-29, 1993, p. 5).

In questionnaires to learners, educators, and managers, the nature of ABE program administration was inquired about. The following are excerpts of responses from the survey:

**ABE LEARNERS:**

**B. ABE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

13.1 Who runs (that is, implements and monitors) the ABE programme? You can tick more than one:

- Management = 100%
- Outside education organization = 66%
- Learners = 0%
- Teachers/educators = 100%
- Union = 0%

14.1 Would you like the union to be involved in running the ABE program?

- YES = 100%
- NO = 0%

SOMETIMES = 0%  
DON'T KNOW = 0%

15. Please check your feeling about the way ABE classes are run:
- |      |        |
|------|--------|
| BAD  | = 0%   |
| OKAY | = 100% |
| GOOD | = 0%   |

ABE EDUCATORS:

D. CONTROL OF ABE CLASSES

- 18.1 Who runs the ABE program? You can tick more than one:
- |                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Management                     | = 100% |
| Outside education organization | = 40%  |
| Learners                       | = 40%  |
| Teachers/educators             | = 60%  |
| Union                          | = 20%  |
19. Do you think the following can contribute in running the ABE program?  
(Please circle).
- |                |        |    |    |
|----------------|--------|----|----|
| Educators: YES | = 100% | NO | 0% |
| Learners: YES  | = 100% | NO | 0% |
| Union: YES     | = 100% | NO | 0% |

20. Please tick your overall feeling about the way the ABE program is organized:
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| BAD  | = 0%  |
| OKAY | = 60% |
| GOOD | = 40% |

ABE MANAGERS:

- 30.1 Who runs the ABE program? You can tick more than one:
- |                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Management                     | = 100% |
| Outside education organization | = 60%  |
| Learners                       | = 40%  |
| Teachers/educators             | = 100% |
- 30.3 Do you think the following can contribute in running the ABE program?
- |            |     |     |    |     |
|------------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Educators: | YES | 80% | NO | 20% |
| Workers:   | YES | 80% | NO | 20% |
| Union:     | YES | 60% | NO | 40% |

While it is interesting that learners and educators feel "okay" about the way ABE programs are run, they still want the union to be involved. Generally, learners erroneously assume that educators play a 100 percent role in decision-making, whereas educators feel disempowered and point their finger to management. Management, on the other hand, would like to suggest that educators are fully involved in running programs. The fact that NGOs are sometimes invited to assess potential or completing learners, or to provide ABE workbooks, is sometimes mistakenly interpreted by learners as external involvement in running ABE classes. Based on responses to open-ended questions, and interviews, it became clear that most learners and educators are "in the dark" about the precise roles played, or not, by different parties in the running of ABET classes. I was completing a questionnaire with some educators, at union branch offices, when one of them said, "Wait, let me ask them (shaft stewards) what role they are playing in these classes?" The union was playing no role. The union's stated goal, "to put the development of workers in their own hands", should make learners feel part of running ABET programs, which is currently not the case.

In questionnaire responses and interviews about labor participation in ABET issues, learners repeated, in similar and different words, many of the above listed reasons which were given in union workshops. However, questionnaires are not necessarily the traditional way for shaft stewards to know about employee problems. Also, questionnaire responses and interviews can be seen as specific, but not necessarily binding, indications of the workers' willingness to entrust the union with the task of negotiating with management on their behalf. As I pointed out in chapter three, NUM has earned this trust in over ten years of struggle.

However, the future performance of NUM in Adult Basic Education and Training has yet to be decided.

Survey responses are illuminated by discussions with educators inside and outside the mining industry. Unmistakably, ABET professionals and practitioners point to one "potential value" of labor participation, and that is, "given the legitimacy which the unions may bring to programs, trade unions have a potential to encourage workers to come to classes". This "legitimizing and mobilizing" role for the union was highlighted in almost all interviews.

ABET practitioners also hope that the union will negotiate some improvements in their own working conditions. The following areas appear in many educators' wish lists which we collected over time: office space, staff meetings, refresher courses, representation in decision-making, and better wages. In fact, some educators expressed that the union had a potential to "push" management to implement improvements in the ABET programs and in their working conditions in a way that they could not. Unfortunately, there is no organized formation of educators in the mines.

The union ABET questionnaire, because it was the first one on ABET issues, sought to cover a wide spectrum of issues. As a result, it has more value in breadth than in depth, for instance, educators were not questioned much about possible roles that a union can play in ABET programs. Specifically, no one was asked what they anticipate to be the union's role, if any, in curriculum development. Also, I still do not know how prepared, or unprepared, educators are for interactions with other role players (employers, unions, learners, and education institutions) in ABET committees which are in the pipeline. I found that ABE educators had not yet thought through many implications of trade union involvement in Adult

Basic Education and Training. Some educators were not even aware of union-management ABET negotiations which were already underway. This was understandably common amongst educators who were not mine workers, but were bussed in from neighboring townships.

Some interesting responses to the union ABET survey came from mine managers. Sixty percent of managers who responded said "YES" there is a role for unions in ABET programs. The 40 percent of managers who checked "NO" to union involvement in ABET constitute the only case of expressed objection to labor involvement during the course of this study. As a result, I would like to elaborate on this "deviant case".

Usually, as soon as questionnaire responses arrived at union offices, the union ABET educator, to whom union ABET correspondence was always directed, would collate them and pass the file on to me. A union statistician, who had helped us design the questionnaire, produced a report out of the quantitative responses. I put together the responses to open-ended questions. In union ABET workshops, we would have a session where we reported on information emerging from the survey. Usually this session would follow after shaft stewards had shared their experiences during data collection.

The general trend of information from the survey was predictable to shaft stewards. With time allowing, we tried to present the data in an interactive way. For instance, we would pose a question like: So, how do you think the majority of educators responded to the question of union participation in ABET? Invariably, shaft stewards show confidence that learners and educators would support union participation in ABET programs. It was a little tricky when it came to managers. Initially, some participants would say something like, "Oh no, they won't agree." When informed that the majority of managers supported union

involvement, some participants thought, like I did, that managers who cooperated in the survey would probably be open to working with the union. Nevertheless, as activists, we did feel constrained by negative responses from management.

The irony of it all was that: The ABET managers who had checked "NO" to union involvement were among the first to sign an ABET agreement with the union. The union ABET educator, who is also aware of the origins of the particular questionnaires, later said this to me, "Is it not ironic that the same managers who in the survey said no to union participation are among the first to sign an (ABET) agreement with the union?" We just laughed. To my knowledge, this ironic turn of events was not again referred to, however.

The clearest expression of management support for labor involvement was expressed, in an interview for this dissertation, by an ABET manager for a group of mines, who some of us experienced as the main business voice to contend with on Adult Basic Education and Training in the mining industry, and indeed nationally:

- Manager: Union participation in the skills formation process is crucial.  
Researcher: That's ironic coming from you.  
Manager: You think it's ironic? Look, initiatives which have been implemented without consultation have mostly failed. We do not want to set things up for failure....
- Researcher: Is there a specific way in which union participation will help you?  
Manager: We have to educate industry leaders about the value of ABE. You have to persuade not command the ... of this world. The presence of unions count.
- Researcher: It seems that educators see the union bringing in more workers to classes. Do you think that is true?  
Manager: Oh, yes.

It is good to hear this attitude expressed by management. To back up his story of "attempts to get unions involved", this manager, besides recalling confirmable past attempts at contacting the union, provided some company documents, dating back to 1992. In them, a model of "A participative process to manage change in the workplace" is outlined. While mindful of the need to bring out the best in people and to empower potential partners, I make two remarks: Management's conception of ABET as part of a "skills formation process" may fall short of the union's conception of ABET as part of "job skills plus social skills". As I point out in chapters two and six, this philosophical difference, whether stated or not, manifests itself in ABET curriculum debates. Secondly, management's notion of "consultation" may in practice conflict with the union's notion of what "collaboration" means. These may or may not be, "conflicts in waiting".

According to this study, there are no substantial objections to workplace ABET collaborations to report. However, the degree to which different role players would get involved is still unclear. Union-management ABET agreements broadly state that the union, like other stakeholders, will be involved in the "planning, implementation, and monitoring" of programs. The questions of "how deep" and "how long" the union will get involved are different questions from "why" it should get involved in the first place.

In future, studies may be conducted to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of trade union participation in ABET programs. Also, studies would have to investigate the implementation and functioning, if any, of agreed collaborative structures. For instance, although "inclusive" committees may exist, various factors, such as lack of capacity, will likely distort the actual decision making process. Ultimately, the value of union participation

should be measured by the extent to which it is able to facilitate learner empowerment, which is one of stated goals of the union, as in: "Finally, there should be mass involvement of workers. Workers' development should be in their own hands," a call made by a union national organizer in the first NUM ABET workshop, July 1993.

### A History of NUM-COSATU Involvement in ABET

This section traces the history of NUM and COSATU in Adult Basic Education and Training. In this study, ABET activities of other COSATU unions are reported only in as far as they shed light on the federation's history and agenda. I would still like to see the story of COSATU unions in education and training chronicled and published - including sacrifices made by individuals in this effort. This dissertation does not pretend to do justice to that, although it is currently one of few reports of this compelling story.

Trade unionists, and some people who I interacted with in the course of this study, concur that COSATU PRP is "a watershed experience", "a mother of all research", for labor's contribution in Adult Basic Education and Training. "People should realize that this public policy (ANC education and training policy) was formulated with popular participation and wide consultation, originating from COSATU PRP", says the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator. "COSATU PRP produced a concrete and comprehensive document of industrial and national policy recommendations. Look, the very first workshop on the Lifelong Document (an initial draft of the ANC education framework) draws from PRP", a COSATU educator explains. Based on my experience during this study, I can attest to the fact that the COSATU PRP phenomenon, with its attendant limitations discussed later, gave us direction at NUM, and at ANC/CEPD, processes for developing industrial and national education and



training policy frameworks. However, the story of COSATU involvement in Adult Basic Education and Training begins with the experience of NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), the second largest affiliate of COSATU after NUM. NUMSA's "Vocational Training Project" is described in the South African Labor Bulletin issue of June 1990a. NUMSA's pioneering role is also discussed in a July/August 1992 South African Labour Bulletin issue which reports how, "COSATU unions take initiative in training" (p. 46), and that "NUMSA leads the way" (p. 51). The NUM head of education, a former COSATU educator, points to the fact that in 1987, NUMSA became the first COSATU affiliate to appoint a national education secretary, Alec Erwin, now an ANC MP and a deputy minister of finance in the national government. I interviewed a NUMSA educator, in order to gain a feeling on this story, and a view on other national policy issues where we were both involved.

In 1990, NUMSA conducted a three month Training Project at a cost of about R1.5 million. This "capacity-building initiative", included workshops in South Africa, and study trips to Australia, Zimbabwe (a 3 day ILO workshop), Italy, Tanzania, and Zambia. "It was a drinking of a lot of information. In the light of PRP, it may not sound revolutionary", as the NUMSA educator describes it. The recommendations of this training project, which involved 26 workers and two officials, were formulated into a resolution which was adopted at a NUMSA National Congress in May 1991. NUMSA policy proposals were then forwarded to COSATU. In an interview for this study, a COSATU head office educator who participated in the NUMSA project qualified the role of NUMSA in events informing a 1991 COSATU resolution on education and training by explaining that, "Between the NUMSA

resolution and the COSATU resolution other workshops were conducted in federation affiliates, so that NUMSA proposals were added on and changed". This fact is documented in The Shop Steward Guide to Adult Basic Education Programs, an undated COSATU publication: "From November 1990 to August 1991, workshops were held with NUMSA, CWIU, SACCAWU, SARHWU, POTWA, CAWU, SAMWU, NUM, TGWU and the companies, P G Bison (PPWAWU) and P G Glass (CWIU). Adult Basic Education was also discussed at the COSATU Human Resources Workshop on May 2-3, 1991, and COSATU Economics Workshop on May 22-24, 1991" (p. 9).

A resolution on "Basic Principles on the Education and Training System" was adopted at COSATU's Fourth National Congress in July 1991. The South African Labour Bulletin (July/August 1992, p. 48) refers to it as "a comprehensive resolution" because it addresses a wide spectrum of issues ranging from free and compulsory education, technical training, Adult Basic Education, and skills for women workers. The COSATU Participatory Research Project (COSATU PRP, 1993) was undertaken as an outcome of the 1991 COSATU Congress Resolution. The 1991 COSATU congress resolution, together with recommendations from the COSATU Participatory Research Project (1993), permeates almost all NUM ABET documents. In NUM ABET workshops, we also circulated and discussed the more accessible articles as contained in The Shopsteward, (August/September 1993, pp. 22-27), a bi-monthly magazine produced by COSATU.

The first part of the 1991 COSATU Congress Resolution shows that COSATU unions, like the early American labor unions, are engaged in a struggle for access to free and compulsory public education. The link that 1991 COSATU education resolutions make

between education and national development can be understood as an attempt to foster a balance between the 'functional and social uses' of education as discussed in chapter two. It is important to know about the 1991 COSATU Congress Resolutions since these principles, in general, subsequently guided the union negotiators at various industry and national forums, and they now find major expression in proposed government policy positions:

Adopted at COSATU Fourth National Congress July 1991.

**Basic Principles on Education and Training System:**

We reaffirm our commitment to work for a single, non-racial, non-sexist education and training system geared to meet the needs and aspirations of society as a whole. Apartheid education is an instrument of domination. We are committed to:

- a. destroying all forms of apartheid, open and disguised in the current education system.
- b. free and compulsory schooling for all.
- c. curricula which develop literacy, numeracy and the ability to think critically.
- d. a formal education system which is not purely academic but is geared to providing scientific and technological skills which can contribute to the development of our country.
- e. our country needs massive growth to provide jobs and improve standards of living. But there is a serious shortage of skilled workers.
  - \* Large numbers of adults (victims of the government's policies) lack proper basic education.
  - \* Many lack literacy and numeracy skills and are unable to benefit from training programmes.
  - \* Urgent steps are needed to provide extensive basic education and training.
  - \* We need the skills to run industries, to shape and develop economic policies, to build a democratic society and enhance job creation.

In the following part of the 1991 resolution, COSATU proposes to make Adult Basic

Education an active area of collective bargaining:

### **Principles on Adult Basic Education:**

We need to negotiate with employers and the state for nationwide adult basic education programmes open to workers and the wider community and based on the following guidelines:

- a. Courses must provide a general basic education and must be based on clear standards allowing advancement from one course to the next.
- b. All courses must lead to nationally recognised certificates, equivalent to formal education certificates and must enable entry into training programmes.
- c. Employers and the state must provide facilities for classes, paid time off for workers attending and must assist in paying for teachers and the costs of development of teaching materials.
- d. Recognition of existing skills.
- e. Use of existing training centers and state colleges to promote adult basic education.
- f. Agreed principles for evaluation, the selection of teachers and the development of programmes.

The following principles of the 1991 COSATU congress resolution about Training seek to make a link between training and economic planning issues:

### **Basic Principles on Training:**

- a. Training should be linked to economic planning and form an integral part of our attempts to restructure the economy.
- b. Unions should play a central role in planning, implementing and monitoring training, with agreed procedures for selection and testing. COSATU and its affiliates should involve themselves in restructuring existing training boards.
- c. The effects of past class, race and sex discrimination should be fought.
- d. Employers have a duty to train and to help finance training.
- e. All workers have a right to paid education and training leave. Retrenched to unemployed workers have a right to retraining to help them secure employment.

The 1991 COSATU resolution also speaks to education and training issues which face women workers:

## **Women Workers:**

Women workers face particular problems which need to be addressed. We want:

- a. Women's skills to be recognised and paid for - "equal wages for skills of equal value."
- b. Women trained for skilled jobs normally performed by men.
- c. Career paths for areas of traditional women's work.
- d. To make it easier for women to receive training - by the provision of childcare for all trainees, equal facilities for men and women, and non sexist documentation.

Issues raised in the above principles are discussed at various stages of this dissertation. The COSATU Participatory Research Project was established in order to develop recommendations on how to restructure ABET, and Job Grading Systems in South Africa consistent with the COSATU 1991 principles. The following COSATU PRP (1993) aims are stated:

1. To enhance the capacity of affiliates to address these issues, by providing elected worker participants (or organizers if the affiliate so decide) with the opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of these complex issues.
2. To facilitate the process of such participants leading debate around policy questions in their own affiliates.
3. To ensure a coordinated approach within COSATU to the development of detailed policy proposals based on principles adopted at the first congress. On the adult basic education side this would involve looking at issues like funding, linking adult basic education with the formal education system and training, possible legislation, the role of unions in negotiating these programs, possible content for national standards, structures for coordination. On the training side this would involve looking at how to transform the training system to allow for clearer career paths and portability of skills.
4. To ensure that the research process fully addresses the problems that members face and that policy alternatives are acceptable to members. This would include democratizing the process of determining the content of programs on grading/training and adult basic education to ensure that they meet members' needs and experiences.
5. To lay basis of understanding on which subsequent campaign and bargaining work can be built.
6. To conduct research. In the case of the adult basic education project all the participants would spend two months doing extensive interviews with people in all sectors of society. The main aim would be to develop detailed

proposals (for the core content of courses for the national standards) about a national adult basic education system at different levels.

In the case of the grading/training project all participants would spend extensive periods collecting information about existing grading systems, training provision, wage rates and possible career path routes. The main aim would be to assist with the formulation of national standards within a system of training which would allow for clear career paths for workers (pp. 97-98).

The seventy participants of COSATU PRP consisted of approximately fifty shop stewards, plus representatives from the following allied organizations: ANC Education Department, ANC Women's League, ANC Youth League, SANCO (South African National Civics Organization), NACTU (a smaller black labor federation), Rural Education Forum, National Literacy Cooperation (a coalition of ABE NGOs), and COSATU Women's Sub Committee. Reading the list of people invited to speak at COSATU PRP workshops (1993, p. v), one cannot help but be struck by the large number of them who have become top political and educational officials in the new government.

The series of workshops, from October 1992 to August 1993, are said to have been characterized by "intensive policy discussions and debates". The COSATU PRP process was supported by commissioned independent research from NGOs and university based adult educators, some of whom I have interviewed.

"The value of PRP should be measured against its aims ... And we have went through that exercise", a COSATU PRP Training Coordinator explained in an interview. "Following PRP, nine of our (15) affiliates are now (1993) participating in training boards at their industries as a result of understanding (capacity building) that was built in PRP. Labor participation in Industry Training Boards (ITBs) is important because these are forums that govern training in the industries. The 1990 Manpower Legislation, amendment, makes it

possible for unions to participate in ITBs", he added. Problems with current ITBs are described in chapter three. As discussed in chapter six, in 1994, NUM began charting its intervention in training boards in mining and energy sectors, for example, by holding a national union workshop.

COSATU PRP's goal of conducting research was achieved through both commissioned research and research done by PRP participants. "Participants conducted surveys and interviews in different sectors and parts of society. They also undertook study trips abroad. M. Young, A. Johnston, C. Cloyd, and A Machin were used as international consultants", the COSATU PRP ABE Coordinator notes. "Recommendations of commissioned research were actually evaluated and tallied against the results of a needs assessment survey conducted by PRP participants", she added. Unfortunately, the thick and crucial needs assessment survey, which was circulated at our ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group meeting in July 20, 1993, was actually never published. "It got 'lost' in the shuffle", as someone said. An informative, though may be less utilized at the time, curriculum research report undertaken by USWE, an NGO, as part of COSATU PRP, has since been published as: Core content for an Adult Basic Education curriculum for South Africa, (Uswe/COSATU, 1993).

I have had more than one interview with each of the following COSATU PRP leaders: ABE Coordinator, Training Coordinator, two independent curriculum research consultants, and the COSATU PRP International Advisor. Besides their self appraisal, I asked them to respond to criticisms made by people outside the COSATU-ANC Alliance.

An NGO-based educationist, who was familiar but not part of PRP, looked at a copy of my "emerging findings" and cautioned:

COSATU PRP is highly influential. Yet, it was never published in an academic way. It became a closed process ... From an academic point of view, how did they get their evidence? How did they interpret it? To what extent do leaders and workers influence each other? We saw transparencies of the findings, not a transparent process... You cannot interrogate it if it's not there.

"Most of the policy documents are not as widely available as is necessary, let alone accessible at all social levels", an ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team member, based at a university, also commented upon looking at a copy of my "emerging findings". It is unfortunate that the COSATU PRP "process" has not been published despite the fact that the "product" now forms part of industrial contracts and national policies. Interestingly, the NUM ABET educator, the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator, the COSATU PRP Training Coordinator, and the PRP's international adviser point to internal monthly progress reports as "more important than the final main report". This is precisely because the process and trends in the study are not part of the "list of recommendations" which make the final report.

It is true that people, inside and outside of South Africa, can learn from the COSATU PRP experience. Besides the PRP study, there are other needs assessment reports that have not been published. Although needs assessment has to be done in an on-going way, it would however be a mistake for one to interpret the fact that reports have not been availed and critiqued in an academic way to mean that more initial needs assessment is needed before implementation can begin. In a national stakeholders' working group meeting, for which I was a convener, a representative from the civics, now an ANC parliamentarian, made it "absolutely clear that we are not going to back any idea that has anything to do with needs assessment. Our people have been researched enough".



An NGO based researcher, and consultant to COSATU PRP felt that, "given the fact that PRP recommendations were used to formulate national policy, there should have been a larger sample from non-industrial working people". In one meeting of the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, an international adviser, waving a copy of The Shopsteward magazine (August/September 1993) in which the COSATU ABET vision is described, characterized this as, "a case of a part influencing the whole". Besides the fact that "the infrastructure of the movement was limited", as the NGO researcher says, COSATU educators, in interviews, have added the following responses to the criticism.

"The ANC, as an umbrella organization, complements COSATU by bringing in representation from people outside formal employment, through the Women's League, the Youth League, civic organizations, and so on", says the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator. "And we cannot close our eyes to problems affecting the dependents of our members", an NUM educator recalled a rationale contained in different union policy resolutions. In fact, NUM has established a "Development Unit" which reaches out to "people at home." It is a good example of the need for "generic portable skills" that can be used outside the mines. A COSATU PRP Training Coordinator explained COSATU's involvement in problems facing unemployed people in this way:

All COSATU affiliates are addressing the question of retrenched workers. To an extent that COSATU at one stage launched the Unemployed Workers Union. There were financial problems which constrained its growth, and all that. And unions like ... and your NUM, already have got projects for retrenched workers. Because of massive recession waves we faced around 1982/84 and 1991/92, unions were forced that, in their policy proposals, to take issues of their retrenched members into consideration. That is why PRP proposals could not be biased against our people who could not find employment.

A union educator revealed yet another aspect of this issue by saying that, "COSATU constituencies are more organized and determined than other sectors". I want to stress that in the anti-apartheid context, COSATU PRP should not be reduced to a clinical education exercise. COSATU education principles and recommendations were part of a social dynamic, in which COSATU, a part of society, played a leading role. To a great extent, COSATU, without comparing its role with that of other liberation forces, did rise to the occasion to provide some direction out of the educational predicament. Unlike many western trade unions, COSATU's role extends beyond the shop floor. "Currently, COSATU unions are a different beast as compared to many unions," someone said. However, this does not mean one should not seek a representative research sample.

A related comment that I have come across is that during negotiations at various forums, the political dominance of COSATU limited the ability of others to question COSATU PRP recommendations. This was not necessarily a spoken issue. When I shared this feedback within COSATU and ANC/CEPD, some comrades correctly pointed out that, "there are certain values we just can't move away from", "sometimes it is hard to distinguish between people who question the educational soundness of principles and forces who want to maintain the status quo", and "where are their proposals?"

While there is concern about COSATU making recommendations which affect non-industrial working people, there is also concern that industry-based adults are getting more attention than those outside formal employment. In discussing "challenges and contradictions in participatory education in a South African context", Kerfoot (1993, pp. 9-10) cites the following criticism:

To date, the most far-ranging proposals for Adult Basic Education have come from COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) the largest trade union body in the country with a membership of over 1,5 million (Cloete, 1990, p. 10). These proposals call for a comprehensive restructuring of education and training for workers, to ensure equivalencies across industries and maximum portability of skills.... This in turn would help kick-start the economy.

While such a system would undoubtedly have extensive benefits, various criticisms have been levelled against it. The most serious of these is that their proposals benefit only the 'core' manufacturing and ignore "the structural location and consequent needs of the vast majority of other workers" (Kraak, 1992, p. 419).

A university adult education lecturer, who was also not associated with COSATU PRP or the ANC policy groups, but acted as one of my peer debriefers pointed out that she would have liked to see "the policy process being more informed by classroom practice" than it actually was. It is true that one needs to keep in mind that during the policy processes at COSATU PRP, and other forums like ANC/CEPD, the NTB, and NETF, there were no classes or pilots conducted in relation to policy formation. Union-management policy negotiations in the mines were also not supported by any classroom based pilot studies. It is generally hoped that pilot projects will follow the policy negotiating processes at industry and national levels. Concepts like recognition of prior learning and experience, integration of education and training, and outcomes-based modules, as well as practitioner training should have been tried as people were "talking". However, at industry level, the union was still negotiating its way in. A regional NUM educator correctly puts the mining industry situation in perspective when he says, "We are still trying to secure the classroom".

COSATU PRP people, in interviews, admit that there was "very limited time and resources for research and training". There was effectively less than two years to research comprehensive policies for the whole education and training system of the country, from pre-

school to university. This had to be done mostly by people who held other full-time jobs - who were not full-time policy workers. This dilemma is summed by the international advisor to COSATU PRP, "people were being exposed to issues as they were being asked to formulate policy". For a number of logistical reasons, we experienced the same undesirable circumstance at NUM. At times, we would conduct a first time workshop in the morning, for shaft stewards who are going to negotiate a policy framework with management in the afternoon.

COSATU PRP was also intended to build capacity among the affiliates, however, it is quite a story to hear how many participating workers are no longer involved in ABET issues. "A weakness of PRP is that workers (PRP participants) went back to their unions and were not pulled in as they should be", a NUMSA educator regretted the failure of affiliates to use the skills acquired through PRP. A COSATU PRP Training Coordinator who has paid some follow up attention to PRP participants' lives relates how, "about ten to fifteen comrades have been promoted out of COSATU ranks to management of Human Resources or Industrial Relations.... After they made presentations to management, companies took them for further training (a mobility mechanism). About fifteen to twenty others were retrenched, or caught up in management traps". I remember the day when a COSATU PRP comrade who was a member of our ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group bid us farewell as he was going into a management position, "out of COSATU ranks". Some participants in national ABET forums might miss the humor of this fighter. "COSATU has not only lost educators, but it has lost leaders who were supportive to education in the unions", a COSATU educator explained the current exodus of COSATU leaders to government and corporate leadership. Some people

perceive it negatively as a "brain-drain", whilst some see it as a logical consequence of Affirmative Action calls made by COSATU itself. One hopes that they will have positive influences at the next levels instead of being merely co-opted to old practices. "The question of the bargaining scope of COSATU unions still has to be resolved", a COSATU educator said. The issues of broadening COSATU's traditional representation of blue collar employees is a matter for new labor laws. However, the fact that many PRP participants are no longer involved in ABET issues makes its capacity-building value debatable.

A COSATU PRP ABE Coordinator and a PRP Training Coordinator relate the following practical problems, which had an accumulated negative effect on COSATU PRP:

Some affiliate nominees were not well selected, regardless of the fact that COSATU provided some guidelines. This reflected in some individuals' commitment and performance in the project.

The project was also negatively impacted when some participants dropped out mid way and were replaced by others. This is true about NUM too. (NUM started off with ten reps and ended with six, of which two were added towards the end). A very serious difficulty was that not all participating shaft stewards could always get release time to conduct surveys and to attend workshops.

Those of us who have facilitated workshops know how disorganizing it is to a group, and depressing to a facilitator, when one participant misses a session because of logistical problems like transportation, health, and lack of punctuality. These practical problems may account for a situation of uneven development among participants. Given the fact that the infrastructure of trade unions was low, and that "the report had to go to people's hands as soon as possible", one cannot be picky about other things, like "the cheap look" of the report, and its confusing numbering.

"Follow up programmes, like the planned COSATU PRP Phase Two should have happened sooner, in order to give details to policy recommendations, especially curriculum principles, and to keep the momentum". This regret is shared by several NUM-COSATU-ANC educators, and an NGO-based curriculum researcher for COSATU PRP. It is true that there are a number of broad principles and goals recommended in the COSATU PRP report whose implementation steps "still need to be fleshed out". From the moment COSATU PRP Phase One was completed in August 1993, to August 1994, when field work for this study was completed, COSATU PRP Phase Two was talked about within COSATU, but could not be implemented primarily because of lack of funding. COSATU head office did send memos to affiliates describing PRP Two and soliciting nominees. However, frustrated COSATU educators kept saying that "negotiations with donors are still going on". Though lack of funding is the bottom line problem, some trade unionists feel that ABET issues are not yet "high enough" in the agenda of some COSATU unions.

Besides giving details to policy issues, COSATU PRP Two was or is intended to focus at building the capacity of the affiliates for implementation. "Smaller unions do not have resources to take forward these issues without a lot of help from COSATU head office. And this (COSATU lack of resources) is leading to a situation where unions are not moving (in implementing PRP recommendations) at an even pace, some are far ahead and some far behind", a PRP Training Coordinator observes. The situation of "uneven development" among COSATU unions, and within individual unions, is, unfortunately, likely to be the case for some time, I suspect. Within NUM, for instance, ABET workshops, negotiations, and joint committees have been undertaken in some regions, some mining houses and some

companies, whilst the majority of regions and companies are yet to be touched. Lack of capacity has something, but not everything, to do with this. With the principles and the frameworks having been negotiated and secured, implementation strategies have to be developed rather soon.

Alongside the history of NUMSA and COSATU involvement in ABET is the history of NUM involvement. The story, however short, of NUM participation in ABET issues can be said to begin with a 7th national congress resolution, in April 1991. It reads:

#### 11. SKILLS TRAINING

##### NOTING THAT:

1. There is a shortage of skilled workers in the mining industry; a shortage which has made the industry embark on an unfair policy favoring the importation of skilled workers from Europe;
2. The shortage of skills can be ascribed to the racist policies that have been pursued by the South African government and the mining industry in denying black mineworkers skills;
3. The low productivity levels in the mining industry are a direct result of the chronic lack of skills amongst black mineworkers;
4. The rate of illiteracy amongst black workers is too high;
5. Black mineworkers are hungry to acquire skills if given the opportunity.

##### THEREFORE RESOLVES:

1. The NUM, COSATU and the entire democratic movement must take training and skills acquisition the top-most priority issue and regard training as a lifelong activity;
2. A national literacy campaign should be embarked upon with the active participation of NUM, COSATU, COSATU affiliates, the ANC, and the government as well as employers' organizations such as SACOLA;
3. Literacy levels should be developed at national level;
4. Workers should be given paid time off to attend literacy and skills courses;
5. The mines must provide facilities for literacy courses;
6. All artificial educational barriers to skills training should be scrapped unless educational qualification is a prerequisite for the skill involved;
7. Skills acquired at one mine or center must be transferable to other places;

8. There should be several paths to qualification - modular, on the job and formal training routes to enable workers to opt for career paths;
9. Skills acquired must be flexible, adaptable and portable.

By 1993, this grand resolution was largely not implemented, except through indirect contributions to the labor and liberation process such as the union's participation in COSATU PRP. NUM appointed an ABET educator in May 1993. NUM began ABET negotiations with the Chamber of Mines in June 1993. As a researcher, I arrived at NUM in July 1993. NUM had its first, national, workshop on ABET on July 26-30, 1993, in Johannesburg. So, during its first ten years, from December 1982, when it was formed, right up to mid-1993, NUM was generally not involved in running ABET programs in the mines. In other words, from the moment minerals were discovered in the 1880s, right up to the 1990s, about a hundred years, employers exercised a sole prerogative over education and training. As mentioned in the earlier section, we conducted a survey among learners, educators and managers in order to find out who runs ABET programs. However, the most sure way for us to know was through direct contact with local shaft stewards. In every workshop that we conducted, we completed a grid which asked for names of mines, whether the union is involved, and if yes how. And the answer was a resounding: NOT INVOLVED!

Upon hearing about COSATU and NUM 1991 resolutions, and about associated problems in implementation, a professor from an American university, who was in the country to advise an ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, and took time to give feedback on this study, said, "You need to investigate discrepancies between the union manifesto and union manifestations - I mean what the union says vs what it actually does on the ground. Find out what accounts for the gap". I have prioritized this question. In an interview with two worker



leaders, a member and a chair of NESCO, the following was expressed as accounting for the unions lack of follow up on its goals for education and training:

The work of education structures has always been put last on the agenda of the union. The union has been focusing on wages. It is new that the union national office bearers are speaking out like this on education. And there has not been enough capacity in the education department (of the union). And there is no information at branch level.

A NUMSA educator put it this way, "For a while, basic issues in the union were about getting recognition and avoiding detention". Yes, it starts with organizing and getting recognition. Further, there was a period where progressive trade unionists were generally harassed and detained by the past regime. The following remarks were drawn from the union general secretary at more than one occasion:

COSATU is hardly ten years old (founded in 1985). You have to go back to the founding these unions. It was mainly about wages and conditions of employment of which education was not defined as one of them. Now that the ANC is the party of government, we can focus on shop floor issues. The lack of resources and capacity were key issues in the past. We want NUM to be self-sufficient.

The fact that political and economic rights were prioritized over education rights during the anti-apartheid struggle frustrated education NGOs who tried to work with trade unions.

Simmonds (1990) summarizes the hopes and frustrations of progressive literacy NGOs in trying to work with progressive trade unions in this way:

The unions could provide a useful pathway to reaching large numbers of workers who are illiterate. They could also provide an ideal forum for political conscientization and mobilization through literacy work. The promotion of literacy through unions by Learn and Teach has not taken place in a large scale. It is difficult to work with unions - they are generally very busy and overloaded in terms of their commitments and have not given priority to the issue of literacy. Learn and Teach has perhaps also not been persistent enough in pursuing the issue with the unions (p. 67).

It may be true that NGOs did not try hard enough "to pursue unions". It is also true that there were issues internal to unions, one of which was the fact that union's capacity was stretched over a million industry and national issues. I observed that although there are outstanding educators at COSATU head office, and at the major unions, there is a definite, if not troubling, lack of capacity in many COSATU unions, and at the grassroots, that is regional and branch levels, of major unions like NUM.

Baskin (1991) discusses some political and educational reasons which made it difficult for COSATU to conduct proper education programmes from its formation in 1985 to 1989. He says that, "Workers were hungry for knowledge, but this was not always easy to deliver. Unionists worked under pressure, in a climate of crisis, repression and struggle. Education work, by contrast, required time and an environment conducive to learning" (p. 246).

Based on experiences of NUMSA, COSATU and NUM, one can make a number of remarks. Workshops can concentrate attention and effort on issues within a union. Union congress resolutions constitute an important policy commitment, even though they are not always acted upon in entirety. For a trade union, a congress resolution helps to clarify the organization's position on an issue. More importantly, a lot of learning can occur through research, and workshops prior to and after congress. The need for ongoing workshops, is a recommendation stressed by most participants in this study and is reinforced elsewhere in this report. This study is not a complete nor an official chronicle of the history of "COSATU unions and ABET". Personal stories of workers, educators, and leaders, as well as different routes followed by other unions still have to be told. Employee organizations can undertake research and training projects along the lines of NUMSA, COSATU, and NUM.

## Do Trade Unions Speak for Worker-Learners?

Generally, according to the law, if a union has fifty plus one percent membership among the workforce, employers have to bargain with it. However, the question of whether trade unions speak for learners goes beyond the legal requirements. A South African adult education professional, who suggested that this was "the most important question of the study", said something to this effect, "I was at X workplace, talking to some learners. They have never really spoken to a union official about this issue". Through observation and interviews, I have tried to overcome my own ignorance about "how democratic unions work".

First, I must say that I found members of management to be aware, but not necessarily perturbed, about problems of "communication and consultation" within trade unions. In an interview, a mining house ABET manager answered, "Yes and No. Sometimes they represent views of union intellectuals". A mine level ABET manager responded by saying, "Look, we are aware of communication problems within the union. But that does not change the way we work with them".

In an interview, two NESCO members pointed to the need to understand the "mandating and reporting" processes of the union. "Shaft stewards are democratically elected worker representatives, the mandating and reporting processes include mass meetings, conferences and congresses", they stated what may not necessarily be obvious to an outsider. I cannot comment on interactions of workers and their leaders in the contexts of branch mass meetings since I have never attended one for any reason.

I also raised this question to a regional union educator, a former elected regional leader, in the presence of one of my peer debriefers. Since then, his attempts to try and help me understand "how democratic unions work" have included the comments below. His comments practically repeat the description of union structures and processes discussed in chapter three and five:

Union decisions are made in union constitutional structures which are worker controlled. In the case of education and training these are the BRESKO, RESKO, NESKO, NEC, regional and national education conferences, and national congresses. Union appointed officials, or the so called union intellectuals, have no right to vote in decisions of these meetings.

We have due-paying members. We have to take care of them. Service them, yes.

One time we were in negotiations with management. One manager said that he wondered if we had a mandate for a point we were raising. What could we say other than point him to the union constitution which states the union's right to represent the interests of workers.

There are however various factors that can lead to a union's loss of touch with its constituencies. Some people see the issue as a problem in communication. "The main issue there is communication. Communication problems become bigger as the union grows. Compared to other countries we have problems of illiteracy among our people, and our infrastructure is poor. Our communication problems are also complicated by the many languages we have in the mines. But, as you can see, we are very much in touch with our people", a NESKO member maintained.

Still, union involvement does not substitute for learner involvement. "Union participation is not intended to replace learner participation in the classroom and in program administration. Union participation should promote learner-participation, not replace it", says

the NUM ABET educator. During the period of this study, we conducted workshops, and survey interviews as well as read relevant literature, in order to familiarize ourselves with ABET issues in the mines, and with the needs of learners. These were activities undertaken in order to inform worker decisions in union structures. As one member of management correctly says, "Employees and their organizations, like management and the government, have a right to seek advice". Workers actually have a right to purchase services they need.

Basically, democratic organizations make decisions on the basis of majority vote by their membership. This happens at various levels of union structures. "Channels of communication and consultation exist", the union general secretary said. "From time to time, their observation would vary from union to union, and from issue to issue.... Cases of staff members undermining them (worker controlled union structures) are there. That's true", he concurred. The interactions between union leaders and union members are quite dynamic and complex. Consequently, in a 'shorthand' distinction between policy framework and detail, the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator correctly summed it up by saying, "In a broad sense, YES, in an absolute sense, NO". To debate whether the union should or should not represent workers/learners on education and training issues is now merely an academic exercise, I think. The following activities are already underway at NUM: policy resolutions are developed and adopted, agreements with management are negotiated, shaft stewards are being prepared for joint union-management structures, and a three year union education plan and budget reflects commitment to education and training.

In this study, the question of whether trade unions do speak for worker-learners is a good example of when "a researcher allows preconceived ideas and expectations to influence

their observations" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 408). Noticing this blind spot on my part, my peer debriefer and her friend intervened with me before I collected some of the above interview data. My assumptions about the legitimacy of unions, their right to represent workers in places where they are legally recognized, and our elaborate interactions with mineworkers, almost tempted me to overlook what was a proposed research question. Also, my own notions of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy are still evolving. President Nelson Mandela, and the ANC, represent my "interests" even though they do not check with me every time they make their decisions. I am also aware that they use a whole range of technical consultants who influence many important decisions which affect us ordinary people. Even though I gave the ANC a "broad" five year mandate, I still want to be consulted every step of the way.

On a more serious note, although I did not ask individual learners in classrooms if they felt the union represents their opinions, I think that this would be a worthwhile exercise, not only as a curiosity based exercise, but as an attempt to keep the union in touch with workers. I was at two mines where some learners and some educators in classrooms were not aware that the union was already in negotiations with management on Adult Basic Education and Training. This happened again while I was in the company of one of my research peer advisers. Also, some company level ABET coordinators were miserably in the dark about industry level negotiations, let alone appearing to be a part of them. Reasons that account for this undesirable situation include the fact that the year long negotiations with the chamber were taking place in Johannesburg, far away from classrooms. I share the union's approach that joint steering committees, not only the union, should bear responsibility for informing

workers about ABET issues and developments. It must be a joint responsibility. Learner and educator representatives in joint ABET committees would also have to be afforded platforms to report back and be properly mandated by their constituencies. Otherwise, the legitimacy of these joint committees will be compromised severely.

In Massachusetts Workplace Education programs which are partly supported through public/government funding, it is expected that "programs have an oversight body that coordinates activities of the project and makes decisions effecting policies and procedures" (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1993, p. 5). Partnership bodies, generally called Planning and Evaluation Teams, consist of program stakeholders like learners, teachers, unions, employers, and education providers. Partly based on my experiences in these programs, the following are some strategies that seem to help towards promoting active participation in activities of Planning and Evaluation Teams:

- \* having more than one learner be part of the committee can increase the comfort level of learners,
- \* setting ground rules at the beginning of the process can clarify expectations, and set a stage for give-and-take interactions. An outside party can be used in conducting some exercises to achieve this goal.
- \* learners can discuss meeting agenda items in class so that their representative is well informed,
- \* there needs to be continual evaluation of how the team is working or not working together,
- \* in general, meetings need to be short and focused so that busy people can be able to schedule activities without much effort.

Sometimes, I get the impression that many South Africans with little formal education are more politicized or politically informed than some American graduates. In fact, I do not necessarily think that illiteracy explains lack of political participation. In a democracy, leaders can lose contact with those they speak for. One hears that many Americans have

either voted for, or voted against, the Republican "Contract with America" whilst they have not read it - if they voted at all in November 1994. "COSATU unions are probably still better than other so called democratic organizations in terms of consulting with their people", some American friends, who strike me as generally unimpressed by their declining trade unions, have said. Only about 17 percent of US labor is organized into unions, mostly public sector unions where the state cannot "bash" unions to the extent that big businesses can.

### Trade Union Interactions with Education Institutions

This section describes some interactions which the union had with NGOs who sometimes acted as "providers and assessors" in ABET programs in the mines. Though some of these interactions did not occur with a lot of regularity during the period of this study, I believe that they are likely to occur more often as trade unions exert their stakeholder role in education and training at the workplace.

When I worked as an Adult Education Officer in one of the mining houses, we, as program administrators, were involved in various interactions with adult education agencies. At the time, 1988/89, NUM was not yet recognized by the mines I worked for. As program administrators, we decided which commercial organizations and/or NGOs would help us in the following activities: assess worker-learners, provide learners with workbooks, conduct training for educators. One illustrative anecdote of this long period of management prerogative over education decision-making happened when management removed what they considered "undesirable books" from hostel reading rooms and libraries. A black officer who was involved in physically pulling the books off the shelves, later informed me that he was told that "such books can only make workers unhappy". Workers are already unhappy. The



list of about seventy books that were "banned" by management, though not by the government, included literature on trade unionism.

The NGO which was asked to stock the libraries had no option but to remove the books. This NGO has since approached the union about its work in the mines. In 1993, during the course of this study, the union general secretary asked me to stand for him in a meeting with directors of this NGO. In that meeting, the NGO people not only described how they could contribute to providing a better learning environment in the mines, but also stressed their commitment in working cooperatively with both labor and management. We both recalled and regretted the undemocratic and uneducational conduct by management in the incident where they restricted what learners could read. I should say that my contact with the new ABET managers of this particular mining house, during the course of this study, showed commitment to participatory management of ABET programs.

The union has already started interacting with some ABE NGOs. A representative of an NGO which had screened potential learners, trained educators, and provided workbooks, though not written by it, made a presentation to a mine ABET workshop run by the union. In that workshop, and in a follow-up interview, she pointed to a potential value of unions as to "encourage workers to participate" in the program. At another mine, I was informed how arrangements are made for workers who want to take "external examinations" arranged for by some NGO at the end of a program. Learners, in their need for nationally recognized certificates want to take externally administered exams. In fact, different NGO courses still have to be evaluated in order to determine their level in a coordinated ABET framework. I do not know exactly how many mines train their educators internally, and how many send

them for training by NGOs. Two mine ABET Coordinators, who themselves had been trained by NGOs, informed me that "workshops conducted by NGOs needed to be supplemented" by internal training conducted by the mine. Staff turnover, and the fact that "a one or two weeks workshop is not enough". In some mines, the union is already involved in discussions with management about how to proceed with future training of ABET practitioners. In the future, the union, as part of a workplace ABET committee, should be involved in decision making about which NGOs should provide workbooks, train educators, and assess learners. These decisions should be made within national standards. It is probably more in the context of joint committees that one can expect more interactions between unions and ABET NGOs.

The fact that NGOs who provide ABET workbooks to learners in the mines are beginning to work with the unions is confirmed by various interactions which the union had with them during the period of this study. Commercial ABET agencies gave some "information sessions" to the union. A few times, the union ABET educator and I sat through presentations of revised course books by commercial NGOs. Sometimes commercial education providers specifically said that they were referred to the union by management. We could only point out how we thought they could contribute to the ABET transformation process. Some of these products or programs, like "study skills" or "training skills", are not specific to basic education and training. Often, we were not able to promptly arrange appointments and to review materials as the union was still developing "transitional guidelines" for interacting with education and training agencies.

A nonprofit ABE NGO, generally allied to the democratic movement, requested the union to review its materials. This was done and the materials were endorsed by the union. However, it would be advisable if unions were drawn into the process of curriculum development early on, instead of asking them to endorse finished products. In future, ABET NGOs may have to sell their materials to a joint union-management committee. It is already evident that some members of management want to purchase jointly agreed services and products. When employers and unions negotiate for ABET programs and then contract them out to service providers they can be excluded from decision making, for example about curriculum content. It is not yet clear whether South African unions and employers will in the long run participate actively in classroom practice. However, unions' participation can stop at the classroom door by deliberate design or by sheer lack of capacity on their part. Although one acknowledges a marvelous job by South African NGOs in providing alternative education, unions need to continue to negotiate the kinds of service providers that are selected since providers can vary in their socio-political outlook and educational practice.

According to a NUM-Chamber agreement, education and training service providers should be involved in running ABET programs in the mines. However, providers are expected to have advising, not voting status in an ABET workplace steering committee or forum. To their credit, South African ABET NGOs appear ready to contribute to a changing workplace environment. NGOs and labor may find that they need each other in order to improve the learning environment at the workplace. On issues that are not specific to the mines, education and training bodies would interact with the federation's head office,

COSATU. According to this study, the most that can be said is that the nature of a relationship between COSATU unions and ABET institutions and providers is still evolving.

According to recommendations from the CEPD NQF-SAQA Task Team (ANC IPET, 1994) and NTB (1994) providers and assessors of education and training would have to be accredited with a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This would mean that they can provide services which are within national guidelines, the NQF. Draft policy documents (ANC IPET, 1994) show that we think that SAQA would be able to perform its accrediting and monitoring functions by working through a decentralized system of education and training authorities in different sectors, replacing the current Industry Training Boards (ITBs). Education and training service providers can also help workplace stakeholders to contextualize national ABET standards. Workplace stakeholders, however, would have to establish and clearly communicate what their expectations from outside education and training service providers are.

#### Lessons from Early Experiences of Joint Union-Management Initiatives

"Setting up these joint structures is one matter, making them work is another battle altogether", the NUM ABET educator said. A chilling lesson that we drew from observing early experiences of union-management collaboration on ABET issues in the mines was that even if agreements on co-determination can exist, and joint committees established, it is still possible for management to single-handedly run programs. This section discusses pointers in the areas of capacity, communication, and the union-management relationship. Significant as they may be, these early lessons should not be interpreted as declarations of advantages and

disadvantages of labor participation in Adult Basic Education and Training. "Do not be in a rush to reach conclusions", that's in every research book. However, lack of capacity, on the side of the union, is already emerging "as a threat that may disable active labor participation". Lack of capacity on the part of employee structures of participation, such as unions, is likely to result in their powerlessness and voicelessness. Lack of capacity seems to be partly due to labor's lack of resources, as it addresses a million issues of transition.

"Overcoming suspicion and establishing trust in a conflict-ridden background like ours takes a while", an ABET manager from the energy sector expressed this feeling in an interview for this dissertation. The energy sector, which is currently organized by both NUM and NUMSA, and should be organized by NUM in the future, has a little longer and less tumultuous experience of collaboration for ABET than the mines. In fact, at an ABET workshop for a Shaft Steward Council for the energy sector, in January 27-28, 1994, head office educators were faulted for not paying sufficient attention to the energy sector. Besides the fact that our oversight of the energy sector arose from the work overload in the bigger and more difficult mining sector, and our taxing involvement in national policy processes, we had somehow become trustful of the working relationship developed with ABET management in the energy sector, I observed. The point here is that covering both the mining and energy sectors requires significant investment of resources on the part of NUM.

The legacy of historic conflict between labor and management in South African mines will have an impact on union-management relations in joint ABET initiatives. Beyond letting it happen naturally, which may or may not be the case, there are various forms of training and experiences that can be organized in order to promote some sense of working trust and

confidence between them. In an interview, a mining house ABET manager, and a private sector leader on ABET, appropriately employed an analogy of "a turning of an oil tanker" as a way of emphasizing the need to "start working now" in order to "transform this relationship" in the future.

The fact that joint structures may exist but not function properly was evident in one mine where an ABET committee was appointed and given initial training. Management continued to run the program without the committee because "people do not come to meetings". On the other side people were complaining that "meetings are not called". A learner who had been elected as a representative in the ABET committee told us in a classroom that "committee meetings were not called by management". This "initial confusion" can be forgiven since, during this transition period, the union is still "developing and negotiating procedures" of how these committees should function. These procedures should address questions like who has the authority to call committee meetings, what happens if a committee member does not attend meetings or perform given committee tasks, who chairs the committee, how will committees make decisions, etc?

After ABET agreements are signed, and joint structures established, "capacity building" is one of the big issues for unions, if not "the biggest issue" as some people said. Although joint training for all members of workplace ABET committees has been agreed upon with management, many shaft stewards have, however, expressed a need for "initial separate workshops" for them. Understandably, the need for separate workshops at the beginning does reflect the current loaded union-management relationship. I think that it would be advisable

to involve some NGOs and institutions of higher learning in training members of joint ABET committees.

In frustration, an ABET manager from the energy sector pulled out some working documents which he had drafted for feedback by committee members. He complained that, "union feedback is often delayed or not forthcoming". I must point out that delayed union response is sometimes caused by extended consultation processes within the union, not a lack of capacity. In order to "obtain a mandate", worker representatives report to union education structures and mass meetings, and may seek advice from head office. Scheduling such meetings, or work-shopping major management proposals, can take union representatives a long time. This is likely to account for a "cumbersome process" in ABET committees. It may possibly be experienced as an undesirable outcome of labor involvement in ABET at the workplace.

The exceptionally skilled union head office staff do not participate in ABET committees at mining company level. It is at the regional and branch levels where I observed a troubling lack of skills on the part of the union. In expressing that there can be "no blind trust" of management, a chairman of NESCO said, "It is the branch shaft stewards that have to do the work (of implementing agreements with management). Management will undermine these committees every time they can. To be vigilant, we have to build up our capacity at branch level." At company level, it is the shaft stewards who will be the face of the union because it is them who will interact with management, educators, and worker-learners. Tyler (in London, Tarr & Wilson, 1990) captures the essence of this point in the following way: "In unions, the 'pastor' should understand the pact, the process, and the people. The 'pact' is

the contract; the 'process' is the procedure for enforcing the contract; the 'people' are the workers" (p. 57).

The proposed ABET framework, discussed in chapter six of this dissertation, is radically different from currently practiced literacy models. Briefly, it calls for shaft steward understanding of educational concepts like integrating education and training, competency-based education and training, contextualizing and amplifying national standards, recognition of prior learning and experience, modular-based curriculum, flexible/multiple entry to education and training programs. "The need for skills does not only mean lack of familiarity with the new ABET framework. It also means the need for skills in general areas like conducting negotiations, meetings, collecting workers problems and reporting to them", the NUM ABET educator said. The union education unit, and regional educators, deliver a continuous shaft steward training program in several skill areas. In order to limit the scope of this dissertation, I do not discuss general shaft steward training, except to say that I was shaken to learn of a number of shaft stewards who are still awaiting an initial shaft steward training course. When I visited a mine where I used to work, I found an elaborate management program to "develop elected worker representatives for joint hostel administration committees" in progress. Coming out of union-management discussions to "democratize hostel administration", workers elect representatives, who are often union people, to jointly run hostels with management. Looking at the joint hostel administration structure, I was impressed by its similarity to our goal of joint ABET administration structures. What was more similar is the fact that they had also run into the problem of "lack of capacity".



I had an opportunity to talk to two management development specialists responsible for training worker leaders for hostel administration. "There are nineteen of them. I think there is one with matric (a high school diploma), but their average education level is about Standard 5 (Grade 7). The basis in which these guys were elected had nothing to do with formal education. It was about popularity, which is often based on political considerations", they stated. "The hostel manager continues to do the 'million' rand hostel budget by himself although they (worker-leaders) are welcome to it", they used the budget example to show that workers may be welcome to a decision making and planning process, but may genuinely lack the capacity to perform. ABET committees should also jointly work on budgets as part of joint program planning. In the energy sector, a three year million rand ABET budget was already on the table. Given that the low level of formal education among Africans is a national issue, one cannot expect this situation to be otherwise.

The two management development trainers experienced the problem of lack of formal education on the part of worker-leaders "during training workshops". "The amount of reading material we can give them becomes limited" they said. They went on to describe how they train worker leaders in English whilst they (worker-leaders) are interacting with management in Fanakalo (an improvised common language in the mines). In the mines, the problem of many languages becomes complicated when people are not even fully literate in their first languages. When I worked in the mines I translated some training manuals from English to Fanakalo with one of the management development specialists I talked to. "What is the union doing for these guys?" they asked a wrong person because I was not involved in the union's hostel democratization program.

In this dissertation, I highlight the union's need for capacity. However, meaningful participation in joint structures is limited by lack of capacity on all sides. The ABET framework, and the dynamics of participatory management, are new to representatives of management, educators, and learners alike. For ABET committees "to operate smoothly", an ABET manager from the energy sector emphasized that "all sides need training on skills like negotiating, communicating, counseling, writing, reporting, and basic meetings behaviors". My informed impression about the situation in the mines is that most learners' and educators' committee representatives are yet to be elected and briefed by those they will speak for, let alone be trained for this purpose. A mining house ABET manager admitted during an interview that, "There is lack of capacity on both sides, like I have just appointed...." An NUM regional educator responded to this assertion by saying that, "Management's current lack of capacity means nothing. They can acquire any skills they want. That is the difference. The playing field is not level".

In order to "level the playing field", the capacity of workers to implement agreements needs to be enhanced. Though employers should fund the training of all members of joint management structures, assistance for struggling businesses, like marginal mines, can be solicited from different sources like the state and international donors. A possible source of funding, not yet explored in the mining industry because of stalled agency fee negotiations, is a jointly administered "agency fund." According to the newly proposed labor law (1995), an agency fund should be established out of fees paid by non-union employees, "free riders," who benefit hundred percent from union efforts. The hotly contested Labor Relations Bill (1995), also says that a representative union can initiate to set up a permanent "workplace

forum" for stakeholders, almost similar to the joint committees discussed here. Hoping that it will go through, the proposed labor bill (1995) states that: An agency fee shop agreement shall be binding only if it provides that the fund shall be used only to defray expenses incurred for the employment of experts by, and the training of members of, a workplace forum which may have been established as contemplated in section 57 in such workplace or in workplaces in such sectors and areas. Consequently, unions should be able to propose that such an agency fund be partly used for the training of members of joint ABET committees or forums. Since it would be unfair and difficult for unions to singly finance the efficient functioning of ABET management structures, joint funding of capacity building needs to be pursued. In any event, the pace of capacity-building will be determined by funding availability. Early experiences of joint union-management structures indicate that beyond the historic effort to negotiate agreements with employers, trade unions still have to invest a great deal of energy and "vigilance" in the implementation of agreements.

After visiting with ABET programs in the mines, the following items were recorded in my journal. These work and research notes, edited for meaning, reflect a host of "transitional issues" in three areas: a need for information down at company level, a need for guidelines on how to negotiate or plan programs, and the need for clarity around the conditions of service for teachers (some of these are already being addressed by the union):

- no knowledge on union-chamber negotiations: joint committees to plan appropriate information briefings.
- little information about the proposed ABET framework: this is a national problem we should take up at CEPD.
- need for info about Recognition of Prior Learning: give information as part of the new ABET framework, need for national set RPL procedures.

- need for information on link between ABET and Affirmative Action: a general union issue.
- a need for guidelines about functions of ABET committees: these can only be transitional, since there is still a lot more to learn about their operation.
- need for decision about status of existing ABE classes, given new framework: union should develop, negotiate, provide transitional guidelines.
- need for PETL (time off to attend classes), and guidelines to implement it: still in negotiations.
- which curriculum to use in transition? use of Breakthrough to Literacy for Mother Tongue, and use BESA (commercial provider), supplemented by ELP (nonprofit NGO) materials for English.
- didactic teaching methods and atmosphere (a teacher throws a pen at a learner who is not listening, adult learners are made to stand up when answering questions, praying like at school): we have to work closely with NGOs in developing training, there must be a schedule for class visits by NGO or committee reps.
- use of untrained educators: some training has to be conducted by the mines in order to keep up with staff turn over.
- no educator staff meetings held: put in list of educator problems
- no educator office space: list of educator problems
- educators not paid for preparation time: educator list
- a Malawi teacher of English cannot speak South African languages, and learners are translating for one another: item for negotiating educator selection.
- union reps need criteria or guidelines to negotiate educator selection: it is agreed that educators will be selected by a joint committee.
- cold and noisy classrooms, and some warm and carpeted rooms: upgrading of facilities has to be negotiated by local committee members after inspection of classes, as a priority budget item.
- workers fill classes after electing a union chairman to act as an educator, in the interim, some shaft stewards join classes as learners: it's good to lead by example, it is also good for watching over implementation of agreements, we should encourage it.
- should there be separate committees for education and training beyond ABET? union reps are already overextended. ABET committees can oversee all education and training in the mine, prioritizing ABET will help the majority.
- a change in management, and union committee reps: this means training has to be done again.

## CHAPTER V

### UNION POLICY PROCESS AND RESOLUTION ON ABET

#### Introduction

In regard to Adult Basic Education and Training, relevant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) congress resolutions are the ones for the 7th national congress, in April 1991, and the 8th national congress, in February 1994. The 1991 resolution has already been discussed in chapter four of this dissertation, as part of "NUM-COSATU History in ABET". This chapter describes the policy development process, and reflects on policy positions of the 1994 resolution.

It is important to distinguish between "internal union education" policy, which deals with issues of Staff Development and Shaft Steward Development, and the union's approach to "regular (macro) education and training", which refers to issues of general education and technical training in the industry and nationally. This dissertation does not cover internal union staff and shaft steward training policies and programs. It also does not deal with formal schooling and higher education issues. The union's position discussed here is exclusively about basic education and training at the workplace.

This chapter should exemplify the process that the union follows in formulating its policy positions. An analysis of the resolution should provide insights into the positions of NUM. Much more than conducting interviews, as shown below, my involvement in the union policy process has improved my own understanding of union policy procedures:

- Researcher: Where are union policy positions stated?  
Educator: In a union congress resolution.  
Researcher: When does congress meet and who comes?

- Educator: It meets every three years. Delegates come from the regions. We (staff) also go but we do not vote.
- Researcher: So, people follow the resolutions?
- Educator: Congress resolutions set the program of action for the union. They should guide the union till the next congress. They state broad positions which still need to be fleshed out.
- Researcher: And what does flesh out mean?
- Educator: Union office bearers (elected leaders) and staff (full-time employees) have to give effect to the resolution subject to control by worker committees.
- Researcher: How are workers involved in fleshing out or implementing resolutions?
- Educator: That can vary.

### The Union ABET Policy Development Process

The following crisp and coded statement was attached to a "draft ABET resolution" in order to inform delegates to the 1994 NUM congress about the process followed in developing it. This section of the dissertation is basically an unpacking of this "note":

**NOTE:** This draft resolution arises from the national NUM ABE and Training workshop (July 1993), from subsequent regional workshops, and from discussions in the NUM National ABE/Training Core Group. It has been circulated at the NESCO and the NEC.

In the very first union ABET workshop, held in July 1993, attended by regional representatives and union staff, it was decided that, given new developments in the field of "literacy and ABET", meaning the involved paradigm shift from adult literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training, it was necessary that the union take a formal position in order to guide the work of the education unit and structures. As a build up to congress, which is the policy making body of the union, the following preparatory activities were to be undertaken: collecting information about ABET programs in the mines, and collecting workers' feelings about the programs, conducting of regional workshops on ABET, and holding of regional

education conferences. This policy formulation process would culminate in a national education conference. These are important steps to note in terms of union decision making. However, the preparation of a policy statement for adoption at the next congress, due February 1994, was only one of many purposes of these activities. Coming out of the national workshop, information about a need to arrange for ABET workshops was circulated to all regional offices.

Regional ABET workshops were conducted in three of the nine new South African provinces. Furthermore, workshops were conducted in some individual mines, and mining groups. Information, collected by the education unit through a survey, workshops, and from literature, about workers' needs and ABET programs in the mines was processed during workshops. Regional workshops were attended by branch representatives and regional office bearers.

Head office staff could only arrange and conduct ABET workshops upon request from regional and branch offices. Consequently, there was no head office master schedule for regional ABET workshops. It was hard to know when a region would decide "to push" for a workshop. I think that the few regional workshops that were held can be ascribed specifically to initiatives by certain personalities in the regions. The fact that a decision to hold or not to hold an ABET workshop rested entirely on regional initiative, struck me as "a weakness in a decentralized system". Maybe there were too many industry and national issues on the union's agenda. Maybe it was a lack of regional educators. Maybe it was a lack of energy for education issues. Maybe head office could have tried harder or tried different things. Maybe the route of regional workshops was a wrong strategy. Maybe regional union leaders

had not yet identified ABET issues as a priority. A few times, the union's general secretary said that resources for the ABET project were not an issue.

On November 26, 1993, the NUM ABET educator and I were almost on our knees in front of the NEC (National Executive Committee), a union decision making body that functioned in between congresses and consisted of regional chairs and secretaries, and national office bearers. We were asking for invitations to run ABET workshops in their regions. We even asked leaders who had already hosted workshops in their regions to share their feelings about them. The NEC was very interested. They asked a lot of questions and made a lot of suggestions. The one hour we were given became two hours, and we were invited to come back again. The idea to "sell ABET to the NEC" had come from members of the union ABET Core Group, who not only knew where power lay in the organization, but were conscious of "the need to popularize the issue of ABET within the union itself". A mine level invitation which we got as a result of that NEC pitch, is probably a model case of union-management collaboration that I have seen in the mines. It is at this particular NEC workshop that a draft ABET resolution was circulated and briefly discussed.

During the period under study, there was only one regional education conference, which I attended. The conference, on January 8, 1994, was a vibrant success, though it did not directly address an ABET resolution for congress. I note that this is one of few regions which hosted a regional ABET workshop. In this region, we conducted a group and a mine level workshop in support of ABET negotiations. It is in this region where the first ABET agreement was signed with mine employers. I think that one lesson needs to be noted about this particular region. It had an effective regional educator, while many other regions had no



educator at all for most of the duration of this study. In terms of strategy, this region's experience suggests that it might be advisable to prioritize the development of regional educators. The movement of educators from head office to regions, from region to region, from the educator position to another role, and staff turn over, created a situation of some instability. In another region, an educator with a legal background could not pay sufficient attention to education issues because of engagements in other union crises. Also, the hiring of new regional educators was delayed. "How can you run an education program in a region if there is no one coordinating it?", the union head of education, who himself moved on to become a union regional coordinator, lamented. There was no national education conference before the 1994 congress. NUM's fourth national education and training conference was eventually held in January 1995.

At the first union ABET workshop, July 1993, it was decided that there needs to be a "core group" of worker leaders who will work closely with the education unit on the ABET effort. This would be a "specialist group", prepared to take up ABET issues on a long term basis. It would be accountable to NESCO. Naturally, the six NUM representatives at COSATU PRP became part of it since they would be able to use this platform to share their PRP experience. Other members were drawn from NESCO. The Energy Sector was actively represented at this twelve person team.

The task of drafting the ABET resolution was "begun" by the union ABET Core Group, as the following minutes of this group's meeting reflect:

The proposed education and training resolution for 1994 congress was drafted by this group in our last meeting. It was included in documentation circulated to the NEC where Cdes X (the researcher) and Y (the union ABET educator) made a presentation

about ABE and Training. This resolution was again discussed and amended by this group. The latest version is here in attached. It was also suggested that this proposed resolution be sent to regions for further deliberation as soon as possible. And a deadline for regions be set (NUM ABET Core Group Report, December 6, 1993).

At one of the Core Group workshops, at the union head office, facilitated, by the union ABET educator and I, we brainstormed an outline of the resolution. Workshop participants started by reviewing the 1991 resolution, and its minimal implementation. The workshop report/draft resolution, written from a pile of newsprints, was circulated and discussed at most ABET related union events. Significantly, the evolution of the union's ABET position was externally informed by several national developments, such as: COSATU PRP, ANC policy process, and by the National Training Board process which involved labor, the state, employers, and education bodies. Accordingly, the resolution interprets emerging national policy frameworks to the mining environment.

The draft ABET resolution was revised at NESCO, to which the ABET Core Group reported. NESCO, a worker run body, which meets once a month, is composed of regional education representatives, and all union educators. However, I could not attend the particular NESCO meeting where the resolution was presented, because it conflicted with some national ABET activity in which I was involved.

Based on a realization that a lot of work needed to be done to promote ABET within the union, the union ABET educator and I, decided to go all out in making ABET a big issue in the congress. About a thousand delegates were going to attend the congress from all regions of the union. Working through the congress planning committee, we planned some awareness-raising activities.

First, we had to make sure that proposed revisions were incorporated into the draft ABET resolution. Since only regions, not departments, can propose and vote on congress resolutions, two regions sponsored the resolution for consideration by congress. Being inserted in a congress resolution booklet, meant that upon adoption by congress, it would immediately be available at all union branches as a union position on ABET.

Secondly, we designed and printed a forceful pamphlet, Appendix E. The pamphlet was inserted in every delegate's bag as part of congress material. The bright yellow pamphlet has since become useful for other occasions and purposes. The pamphlet was intended to be an easy tool for shaft stewards to use in mass meetings when reporting back about ABET, since it points out main issues that can be raised with workers without overloading people with facts and issues. During workshops, it emerged that shaft stewards could be helped by a user friendly info-sheet when interacting with workers. For instance, when shaft stewards role played report back situations in a workshop, they would touch on many different points without consistency.

I want to take time and analyze or explain this pamphlet, an historical artifact, because it actually embodies all the dimensions of the findings of this study, in a unique and symbolic sense. In other words it constitutes a synopsis of the findings. It also represents a verifiable document of the kind of information the union was giving to workers.

As produced in January 1994, the pamphlet reflects one historic development in regard to ABET. Its title reads: "ABE as a Key to Reconstruction and Development Program". Today, we would say "ABET" not "ABE" in line with the integration of education and training. The issue of integration is, however, dealt with appropriately inside

the pamphlet. I observed that the acronym ABET did not become common until after April 1994, when the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team unveiled its report with the enlarged ABET acronym shown on the cover as an absolute title, while the full reading of Adult Basic Education and Training was written out in smaller print. Some participants will recall union and national meetings and workshops where we toyed around with the use of ABE/T or ABET. The stroke between the "E" and the "T" still represented a divide between education and training. In fact, the timing of the shift to ABET speak is easily identifiable in policy documents, and other correspondence, produced in 1994.

The "Yellow Pamphlet" highlights four major worker demands for education and training, of which only one, "Paid Education and Training Leave", has not yet been achieved at most mines. The other three union demands, "national standards and certificates, worker participation in running ABET programs, and an integrated education and training system" are now incorporated in the NUN-Chamber agreement discussed in chapter six. Appendix I, A 1994 South African White Paper on ABET, shows that these three principles have been proposed as government policy. Their implementation is, however, at the embryonic stages.

The pamphlet succinctly lists major "ABE Problems in South Africa Today", by separating national and industry specific concerns. "Nationally: apartheid has denied about 15 million adults of a basic education, no national ABE system, ABE certificates have no national recognition, no link between ABE and national development, curriculum is mostly racist and sexist, few well trained educators, and stakeholders have not been involved in ABE provision". "In the mining industry: no union involvement, no time off to attend ABE classes, no link between education and training".

The main features of "The New ABET Vision" are outlined, prefaced by the fact that the union supports these positions of the country's democratic forces, the Patriotic Front. At this particular part of the pamphlet, it can be said that the union, and its now governing ally, are effectively communicating the following expectations about a new education and training dispensation: "ABE will: be a basic right for all, give recognition to prior learning and experience, lead to national certificates, link with Reconstruction and Development initiatives, give workers a general education and job related skills, promote democratic social values, be equivalent to 10 years of free and compulsory schooling (Std 7) GEC". The nature of an integrated ABET system, as well as the meaning of its equivalence to formal schooling is illustrated in an easy to follow chart in the pamphlet. If one compares the chart in this pamphlet, Appendix E, with the chart in Appendix F, COSATU Vision for ABET and Industry Grading System, one will recognize that the part about Industry Grading System is left out in the NUM pamphlet. This reflects the fact that around this time, early 1994, the union had not yet deeply engaged workers and employers on this issue.

The union's intervention in Adult Basic Education and Training is highlighted as: "**through workshops**, workers are equipped to participate in planning, implementing and monitoring ABE programs; **through negotiations**, management is engaged in establishing and restructuring ABE classes; **through COSATU, ANC and other national processes**, NUM contributes in developing a national ABE framework". A cartoon of the union's role as a defender of worker rights carries the message, "Workers have the right to a good basic education, Adult Education".

Steps that union members, can take in order to get involved in the ABET project are "pointed" out, starting with what "comrades" can do at mine level, i.e. "find out what is happening in your mine about ABE, discuss NUM proposals on ABE in your branch, contact your Regional Education Officer or RESCO or Head Office Educ. Dept.". The need for mineworkers to organize is carried in a mass meeting drawing, with "shaft stewards" leading the way.

A mobilizing cry, "Viva ABE!", is made, placing ABET in a struggle context. An ABET theme song, which did not take off, symbolic of other tactics that did not work that much, says: ABET lifts us, let's go into education. It is written in Xhosa as: "I ABE, Yonyuka, 'nyuka nathi, Masingene emfundisweni". It is based on a religious chant which, in some election rallies, was adapted to political slogans. The union logo, with a clenched fist mineworker next to a mine headgear, is affixed to make the pamphlet official. This National Union of Mineworkers' pamphlet was produced for and is dated: "1994 Congress". To estimate if the ABET pamphlet could have caught the attention of congress delegates, one has to know that it was among ANC buttons, flags, RDP pamphlets, campaign manifestos and other such electioneering paraphanelia. The following message was printed in bright yellow outside the black congress bags: 1994 YEAR OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS TRANSFORMATION AND PEACE. So, Adult Basic Education and Training had to compete for attention in an election campaign atmosphere. (To increase the utility of pamphlets like this, it is advisable that they be translated into the different languages - something we did not have time to do).

Thirdly, there was a display. The congress committee gave us some space at a wall display which stood at the foyer of the conference hall. Literacy posters, from all over the world, and NUM ABET workshop reports, were displayed. The "Yellow Pamphlet" was enlarged and displayed. I have no sense of how effective the beautiful display was. The display area was very busy at intervals.

Lastly, and maybe least effective was a puppet show. At a national conference for the South African Committee on Adult Basic Education (SACABE, 1994) there was a puppet show which proved to be popular. Union leaders approved about a thousand rands in order to have the puppet show for congress. They also agreed to make space in the congress agenda for it. One of the last minute preparations we did one evening, was to try and creatively adapt the script for the puppet show to issues and language of the mines.

At the congress, there was practically no time for the ABET puppet show. Congress proceedings were running behind. However, since the puppets were paid for, and were there, the congress chairperson squeezed them in. The hall was so large, and the acoustics so bad, that it was hard to hear the poor puppets speak. Some congress participants will remember the puppets who would not leave the stage while impatient delegates were on their feet waiting for their hero to ascend the stage. That was Cyril Ramaphosa, founding general secretary of NUM now general secretary of ANC, who at the time was a national star because of the leading role he was playing in national constitution negotiations. Congress had already been addressed and interacted with other luminaries like: the general secretary of COSATU, Jay Naidoo, the president of COSATU, John Gomomo, the general secretary of SACP, Charles Ngqakula, and the president of ANC, Nelson Mandela, who, in 1985, became an elected

Honorary Life President for NUM. In that climate, characterized by militant chanting and toyi-toying (liberation-style dancing), it was hard to keep ABET issues in focus, unless you were working on a dissertation.

I had never been to a trade union congress before. It is an occasion I will remember. Since a freedom ballot-box was two months away, and victory was guaranteed, happiness engulfed the hall. Trade unionists engaged one another in thorough going deliberations. Since we were convinced that the ABET resolution was very good, and was sufficiently processed through various structures, we were confident that it would be passed, may be with some amendments. However, as I was listening to deliberations of other resolutions, from a booth where I was posted as one of the simultaneous translators, translating from African languages to English, I grew anxious for the debate on the ABET resolution.

The ABET resolution was proposed and adopted at a blink of an eye. In my confusion, I approached one of the people who was always kind to answer my basic questions. "Oh no, departmental resolutions are not as problematic as regional resolutions. Anything can come from regions and they have to be sorted out. With departmental resolutions, it is different. But if you people make a mistake with departmental policy and put the union in ... you will land in ...", I was warned. The resolution has since been circulated very widely in the union.

I was curious to find out how the national media was going to cover what I had considered an important issue for workers, well elaborated in the education resolution. The next day, February 17, 1994, newspaper headlines read: "NUM tells future government: Mines to run on socialist principles" (The Citizen, p. 17), and "NUM urges socialist running



of mines" (The Star, p. 1). I wondered as to which congress they were reporting about, since I had gotten no "threat of socialism" in that conference. Anyway, buried somewhere in the middle of both articles, half a sentence reads: "and they want an upgraded education and training system". Upgraded, NO - Transformed, YES!

### The Union ABET Resolution

Overall, there is little difference between NUM's 1994 resolution on ABET and ANC policy framework on ABET as contained in ANC Education and Training Policy Framework (ANC, 1994), "the Yellow Book", and in the Human Resources Development chapter of the Reconstruction and Development Program, "the RDP" (RDP, 1994). In fact, there should not be a difference since so much effort, not least of which was my secondment by the union to the ANC education and training policy process, was expended in ensuring that COSATU and ANC processes dialectically informed each other.

I think that the magic of the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance lies in people's cross-membership and cross-leadership in these organizations. "The union still had to expressly adopt and commit itself to Alliance positions", says union secretary. "Union resolutions highlight industry-specific concerns and applications", he continued. A union educator correctly points out, a resolution is "a broad statement of intent", intended to guide union strategy in activities like negotiations, in which, not only "mandate", but also "flexibility" is required.

The entire resolution is reproduced below, albeit in a piece-meal manner, followed by comments on issues raised:

## 21. MACRO-EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### **Noting that:**

- 1 Part of the legacy of apartheid is a deprivation of education and skills for the majority of South Africans;
- 2 The contributions of mineworkers to the wealth of the nation went with little return and investment into their own development;
- 3 Through retrenchments and disabilities, many workers often find themselves on the streets without any recognized skills;
- 4 SA now stands at the verge of democracy which brings opportunities to redress past injustices;
- 5 There is a massive need for basic education and training in industry and nationally.

The above notation is probably significant as a historical marker. Today, when one reads the above summation of the world known grave circumstances in South African mines and society, one is comforted by the hope in "the rising of the sun".

### **Believing that:**

- (a) The basic education is a fundamental human right for all, and forms the basis for lifelong learning;
- (b) Education and training should empower and enable workers to participate effectively in socio-political institutions and economic processes;
- (c) Education and training are a key component of the reconstruction and development programme;
- (d) The primary responsibility of education and training lies with the state, and that employers are duty bound to provide for education and training for at least their employees, and their dependents, at the minimum;
- (e) Paid education and training leave is a right to every employee.

Analyzing documents by comparing them against each other can be an enlightening exercise. I tried to read the above union resolution comparatively with the ABET agreement, in chapter six, as well as with the ABET white paper, Appendix I. I notice a mix of achievements and compromises. For instance, the view of education as a "fundamental human right" is reflected in both the proposed bill and contracts with employers. The view that "employers

are duty bound to provide for education and training for at least their employees, and their dependents" is not included in either the bill or the agreement. In different wording, the article on "socio-political and economic" uses of education and training is repeatedly stated in both state and industrial documents. To say that, "education and training is a key component of the reconstruction and development programme", is not only found in legal documents, but can readily be found in mouths of ordinary South Africans on the street, I would assert. In 1994, "Paid education and training leave as a right to every employee" was on its second year as the union's education and training demand in mining industry negotiations. Paid Education and Training Leave, an ANC principle, does not appear in a bill proposed by the Government of National Unity. The PETL issue is discussed fully as principle thirteen in chapter six of this dissertation. The phrase "education and training" as used to reflect the new "integration" paradigm is consistently sustained in all documents as though it has always been there.

In this next part of the resolution, the state, employers, and the union are called to action and their roles in Adult Basic Education and Training are outlined. This union policy suggests the need for new structures in order to put provision in place, and to restructure the education and training content. It would be fair play to measure the future performance of these institutions, including the union, against these communicated standards or expectations. Below each article of the resolution are some comments (in italics) which are also discussed at different parts of this dissertation:

**Therefore congress resolves that:**

**The State:**

- (a) should introduce legislation guaranteeing the right to basic education for all; and to facilitate access to education and training programs;
- \* *Just because of the nature of a negotiated transition and coalition government, it is doubtful that PETL legislation may be introduced soon however crucial it is toward facilitating access to programs.*
  - \* *Access to ABET program is more than the provision of release time for workers. It can include other support services, like: childcare for parents, proficiency in language of instruction, facilities for disabled learners, and computer literacy.*
- (b) should, in a restructured and integrated system, provide national education and training, and address existing imbalances and infrastructure;
- \* *Partly because of the negotiated nature political transition, it is unclear how the institutionalization of an integrated education and training system will be facilitated.*
  - \* *It may be hard to measure progress towards addressing existing imbalances since there are no clearly established targets.*
- (c) should work consultatively with a statutory body consisting of organs of civil society in planning and implementing education and training;
- \* *The establishment of an ABET council or board is nationally expected. Hopefully, this stakeholder body will have real teeth.*
  - \* *However, a statutory ABET council can become bureaucratized and can take over power from the grassroots. Also, its operation as a group of people can be overtaken by individual personalities.*

**The employers should commit themselves to:**

- (a) provide education and training for at least their employees, and their dependents, at the minimum;
- \* *It remains to be seen as to how much will employers provide education and training to most their employees - let alone to the dependents of employees. Nationally, the current ABET provision is very low - consequently the need to dramatically increase it is justified.*

- (b) provide paid education and training leave for their employees;
  - \* *Although there is a need for a legislative framework, and for industry-wide standards, the provision of paid education and training leave would be negotiated at company level given the extent of demand and other considerations from employers and employees.*
- (c) avail their educational facilities for use by local communities;
  - \* *Publicity talk about social responsibility by top business executives would need to be matched by actions on the ground.*
  - \* *There are no clear targets for measuring progress on this aspect.*
- (d) restructure education and training in the industry in line with the national system;
  - \* *Commendably, this principle has been agreed between labor and employers. Its implementation can be facilitated by clear national norms and standards. Unfortunately, these are slow coming.*
- (e) restructure and democratize industry training boards, in mining and energy, in such a way that includes the NUM, and broadens the boards scope to cover all workers;
  - \* *The process of restructuring industry training boards is well underway between industry stakeholders. Its implementation however, has to wait for national legislation.*
  - \* *It is also unclear if labor will have the necessary capacity to engage other stakeholders in new industry education and training authorities.*
- (f) take measures which ensure access to education and training for disabled and retrenched workers.
  - \* *This area requires creative cooperation between employers and employee organization. The state too may have to give more active assistance to retrenched and disabled workers.*
  - \* *The current union efforts to assist disabled workers can use some international know how and funding.*

#### **The National Union of Mineworkers:**

- (a) should work with, and engage, relevant bodies in achieving these educational and training goals;
- (b) should commit to implement a programme of action, which will include mobilizing the membership around these demands, and engaging employers through collective bargaining.

- \* *The union has identified ABET as an important area of bargaining and development. Its efforts to mobilize workers, and to engage employers and the state are seriously underway. It is however emerging that their good work is undermined by lack of resources and capacity to deliver on a promising ABET vision.*
- \* *The union would need to continually appraise its inward and outward work based on these and other intentions.*
- \* *The worst thing that can happen to COSATU unions is if they can lose legitimacy (that is not to be perceived as based on popular democracy), and if they can lose momentum (because of lack of leadership and resources).*

The above "job descriptions" for state, industry, and labor in a way reveal the "stage of development" which South Africa, as a nation, is at. Basic education as a right for all, still needs to be "introduced". Basic democratic structures and processes of governance, "consultative stakeholder bodies", and inclusive industry Human Resources Development boards, also still have to be "introduced". Problems of race, gender, and class "imbalances" are plaguing the nation.

The largest union protest march I attended during the period of this study was led by disabled mineworkers on wheel chairs through the streets of Johannesburg to the department of Minerals and Energy. It's a very painful spectacle to consume. In response to the needs of retrenched and disabled mineworkers, the union is helping them establish some cooperatives in their home areas. Ex-mineworkers can speak passionately about the need for "non-mining skills". "Collective bargaining" as a method of achieving worker aspirations, relies heavily on "mobilized" masses. As discussed in chapter six, mass mobilization is needed for ABET issues too because employers can exploit lack of visible popular support for an issue, in order to extract concessions from the union.

## Summary

Lessons from NUM 1991 and 1994 resolutions, and 1991 resolutions by NUMSA and COSATU as discussed in chapter four, are many. One can conclude that trade unions need to clarify and communicate organizational positions with regard to the education and training of workers. A congress, or conference, resolution can help in that regard. In chapter two, we see how American labor unions adopted "planks" or "platforms" in their "conventions". The process of developing union policy, prior to and after a congress, has roles for both staff and workers. Worker empowering processes in developing and "fleshing out" union policy resolutions need to be observed. Workshops, prior to and after a congress, can be an important process for workers to impact effectively on union policy. Also, workshops can turn the policy process into a learning experience. However, factors like pressure of time, lack of resources, and personalities of staff and leaders involved, can shortchange the depth of worker participation in the formulation of union positions. A significant implication of the 1994 ABET resolution is that NUM was able to commit itself to the emerging ABET framework.

In the process towards and during congress interactions, one could observe that worker leaders are actually influenced by various factors beyond being informed by workers. Worker leaders, at various levels of the union structure, influence one another in many formal and informal dialogues and deeds. During the congress, for instance, there were formal (by region) and informal "caucuses" where union policy positions were lobbied for or against. Also, workers and their leaders are advised by imperfect technical experts, like me. It is also important to observe that union policy positions do not emerge only out of internal union

interactions, but they are also informed by external factors like the positions of the union federation, COSATU, and the ANC in this case. So, one would not say that union policy positions represent a word for word report of workers' words. Each union position would reflect a different degree of worker input, I would say. The challenge is for trade unions to promote popular participation within their own ranks so that worker input can be quantitatively and qualitatively increased.



## CHAPTER VI

### UNION-MANAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENT ON ABET

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the process and outcomes of NUM-Chamber negotiations on Adult Basic Education and Training. Since I was not a union or management representative, I did not sit at the negotiating table, a restriction stated in the letter of understanding between the union and me. However, my participation and observation during union negotiations activities gave me insights into surrounding issues and the implications of union-management negotiations. The union ABET educator and I co-facilitated training workshops for worker leaders participating in negotiations, reviewed and prepared documents for discussion in worker meetings, participated in union caucuses and debriefing sessions. Besides interacting with members of management at national ABET forums, I interviewed one who was involved in ABET chamber negotiations, and three others who took part in negotiations outside the chamber forum. I have also interacted with two other mining group level managers.

As of October 1994, there were three agreements signed between NUM and mine employers on Adult Basic Education and Training. The product, not necessarily the process, between the union and the chamber is mostly similar to ABET agreements with non-chamber mines. Currently, the union is involved in implementing signed agreements and securing outstanding ones. The negotiations process discussed here is something that happened in the case of ABET negotiations. Though it carries many lessons about negotiating in general, the process is not necessarily presented as a typical South African industrial negotiations process. This study does not evaluate implementation of agreements. It explores the intentions and

potential of agreements. Analyzing the agreement itself constitutes a major exercise in document analysis.

### The Negotiations Process

"It's a classic management strategy to protract negotiations, so that the union loses momentum and dilutes their demands." This lesson, shared by a trade unionist, was true in the case of ABET negotiations between NUM and the Chamber of Mines. In May 1993, as part of annual wage negotiations, the union Central Executive Committee, a body consisting of regional union leaders, decided to place a demand for ABET as part of annual wage negotiations with the chamber. However, when a wage settlement was reached in August 1993, the following was agreed about Adult Basic Education and Training, plus two other "non-economic demands":

Negotiations will continue in the coming months on three key issues that are being discussed by working parties:

- \* The NUM proposals for an industry approach to the implementation of Adult Basic Education programmes on every mine.
- \* The NUM proposals for each mine to negotiate a Social Plan to ameliorate the effects on people of the restructuring and downscaling in the mining industry.
- \* The NUM proposals for a national Health and Safety agreement (NUM Press Statement, August 25, 1993).

For reasons I do not fully understand, the other two working parties "never got anywhere", as one union official puts it, meaning that they never signed agreements. "This is how they usually deal with gender issues. They relegate them to a working group which neither meets nor has any authority. No one pays attention to it, and it simply fades out after wage negotiations have long been completed. This is what they are trying to do with ABET." The union ABET educator could not have explained it better. Through sheer doggedness, the union

stayed with ABET negotiations until an agreement was signed after sixteen months of intensive bargaining.

"The union kept changing their team", a management member explained the extended nature of negotiations in an interview. The number of union ABET negotiators fluctuated around twelve. The team consisted of shaft stewards who were drawn from the plenary negotiating forum. From the head office, the union ABET educator and the union's collective bargaining officer participated. At times the team was led by the union assistant secretary. Since a core group of union negotiators remained intact, there was no reported destabilization as a result of some members' inability to attend some meetings. The union's challenge to keep its negotiating team together, over a year's time, included: getting release time for workers, reimbursing workers every penny of their lost shifts and transportation, and juggling schedules of people who work different jobs, some of whom had to be flown from different parts of the country to Johannesburg. Added to this, was the fact that during parts of this period, the education unit had problems with administrative support. Rarely did I notice a dwindling of spirits among members of the union team. The management team had representatives from the six mining houses led by a chamber education advisor.

Without major disputes, agreement was slowly reached on: the preamble to the agreement, the ABET definition, aims of ABET programs, twelve principles for an ABET framework, the scope of work and the composition of a chamber level joint working group which would develop guidelines to implement the agreement. "Since both parties were participating in national ABET policy forums, it was easy to reach agreement on these issues," a management member accounted. The two contentious issues, which ended up not

being part of the agreement, are: the curriculum composition for an ABET framework, and the principle on paid education and training leave (PETL).

On June 6, 1994, almost exactly a year after ABET negotiations were started with the chamber, a joyous internal union memorandum, "Final Report", was issued to the effect that, "the ABET agreement (attached) should be signed by the end of the week. The signing should get maximum publicity ... as a launch of the NUM campaign around PETL". The agreement was not signed by the end of the week as agreed in "a final union-management working party meeting" following which this memorandum was issued. It was only signed, at the end of four more months of delay.

On July 27, 1994, the chamber telephoned and faxed to say that, "the Chamber is prepared to sign", subject to the following two major amendments: "removal of reference to 'training' i.e. the 'T' in the concept of ABE/T"; and removal of "guidelines for career pathways for learners". There were other inconsequential amendments, like replace "learners" with "employees". Instantly, the union office was filled with such anger I had never seen for the whole year I had been there. Within a blink of an eye, all standing on their feet around a boardroom table, the union general secretary, the assistant secretary, the union head of education, the union ABET educator, met. It is unusual for one to get the union top brass out to a meeting at a snap of a finger. A dispute with the Chamber of Mines was declared.

The legalities and logistics of an industrial negotiations dispute were all new to me. The union legal department filed dispute declaration forms with the Department of Labor. The union media department called a national press conference. Media briefing statements

were prepared. The union spokesperson was briefed. Everybody was resigned to the fact that the union was taking the workers' case to the public in an all out showdown with the Chamber of Mines because of the "T" that you now find in the acronym ABET. It is not just a "T". The union's strong feelings about what the letter "T" symbolized, have since been made known to the public. The shift from literacy to ABE and eventually to ABET is defined in the next section of this chapter, analyzing the NUM-Chamber agreement.

On August 1, 1994, as we were driving from a CEPD meeting, Radio 702 reported that "NUM is accusing the Chamber of Mines of undermining the RDP". The following two newspaper stories tell how the nation heard the news the following day:

**"Chamber reneging on pact - NUM"**, (The Star, August 2, 1994).

The National Union of Mineworkers yesterday declared a second dispute with the Chamber of Mines and accused it of sabotaging the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) by reneging on an agreement on basic adult education and training. This dispute is separate from the wage dispute, which will be handled by a conciliation board tomorrow.

Gwede Mantashe, the NUM's assistant general secretary, said the chamber's refusal to sign the agreement was a way of protecting interests of mainly white workers.

He said chamber members professed to support the RDP but failed "miserably" when it came to putting things into practice.

"... It's not good enough to say you support the RDP and (then you) renege on proposals which have elements of the program in them".

"The chamber wants no reference to training and career-pathing. This represents a fundamental deviation from previous agreements and is an obstacle to the removal of apartheid's horrendous legacy, where mineworkers are treated like mindless chattels", Mantashe said.

"New NUM dispute with chamber", (Business Day, Aug/02/94).

The NUM declared a second dispute with the Chamber of Mines yesterday, accusing it of renegeing on an agreement on basic education for miners.

A pay dispute declared two weeks ago will be the subject of a conciliation board hearing tomorrow.

The union said the agreement had been reached two months ago, but negotiators had yet to sign it. "On July 27 the chamber unilaterally removed any reference to training from the document and refused to discuss guidelines for career paths".

NUM assistant general secretary Gwede Mantashe said the union would continue to demand that education be linked to career advancement," South African Press Association.

Since it was the first time in the history of South Africa for a trade union to declare an industrial dispute with an employer on education issues, this case attracted a lot of media attention. Also, "sabotaging the RDP" was the worst national crime one could be accused of at the time, and still is. The liberation movement has galvanized national aspirations around the RDP as a vehicle for redressing the effects of apartheid. It may sound like pure political hyperbole, but some of us have come to believe that, "ABET represents a crucial step in the reconstruction and development of our country" as said in the RDP (1994, p. 63). As an adult educator, I take that statement seriously. Some of our friends did call to say, "If you guys let the chamber take away the 'T' from 'ABET', we may as well forget about the whole integration thing, nationally".

As a participant in national forums, I observed that members of mine management were active private sector spokespeople on basic education and training, and on an integrated system of national education and training. There was no question of whether the chamber fully understood what the "T" in ABET was all about. By this time, the national debate was

moving past, or was it, the point of whether technical training will be joined with general education in a single qualification framework. What they were still to find out was the union's resolve to fight for technical training. It was puzzling how the chamber negotiators could "come up to this far if they had no mandate from their principals". The union ABET educator was told by a chamber negotiator that they have been updating their principals about the fundamental shift from literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training. "It's just that people start paying attention when they have to sign," some management person explained. The implications and demands of the new ABET framework go far beyond the usual support literacy education as a charity exercise by the top executives. I have no way of estimating employer awareness about the fundamental shift from literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training. It would be important to find out more about what employers think they have agreed to - an agreement can have different interpretations. In an interview, I asked a member of management what the negotiations roller coaster was all about. "The lowest common denominator, that's how the chamber operates", he said, meaning that the chamber can only sign if all employers agree to do so. This was true since "he" had signed on another agreement outside the chamber, but could not sign as part of the chamber. However, we had no idea of where the problem lay.

At 7.15 p.m., Sunday, August 14, 1994, in a business news program, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) television featured the NUM-Chamber dispute on Adult Basic Education and Training. On top of evening news casts, this dispute could not have gotten better prime time television exposure. After a brief overview of the issues, accompanied by some footage of mine training programs, there was a debate between very

able spokespersons of the union and the chamber. The transcript of the program is here reproduced in its entirety because it represents a summary of major negotiation issues, as the public heard them. It also represents a substantial moment of self-representation of the employers' case:

### **NUM-Chamber Dispute: SABC Voice Over to Background Footage**

Labor has introduced a new issue in the collective bargaining: education and training. The legacy of racial inequalities in education under apartheid is a huge need for Adult Basic Education and Training in the country's workforce - but one which is far from being met. It is estimated that about 15 million black adults have had little or no education.

As a measure of redressing racial inequalities in education, and developing mine employees, the National Union of Mineworkers has proposed for an Adult Basic Education and Training Program. The union is advocating for a single national qualification and accreditation structure for Adult Basic Education and Training leading to General Education Certificate. The union says, workers must not only be taught how to write letters to their wives, but the Adult Basic Education and Training must include subjects like: Numeracy, Social Studies, Development Studies, and Science and Technology. They say, workers must be certificated as they progress in education.

They advocate for a career path development. At the moment, very few blacks qualify to enter mining technikons, as there is a demand for natural (science) subjects in their qualification. "That includes Maths, Engineering Science, Engineering Drawing, and Trade Theory, applicable to the particular trade", *Mac van der Merwe, a Manager of Technical Services is quoted.*

The bone of contention is over the control of education. This has traditionally been part of managerial prerogative, in the past. A negotiated set up would give the unions a substantial say over the content of training, and subsequent career path to which it leads.

At this college, *Colliery Training College*, students are recommended by various mining houses and unions do not have an input. "An apprentice would apply to a mine, an employer. If he is successful, he is accepted as an apprentice. He enters into a contract of apprenticeship, and he then comes to us for his training, off job training. And we then control his on job training with structured training programs



that they follow while they are on the mine, and in which we monitor to ensure that his training is complete", *Mac van der Merwe is quoted as saying*.

The other argument is over certification. The union would prefer that an individual be certified as he progresses. "But the certification only takes place at the end of a course when he does a final qualifying trade test, and he then goes into industry as a qualified artisan", *Mac van der Merwe concludes*.

SABC: And joining us today in the studio is Gwede Mantashe, the assistant general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, and Dr Andre Dippenar, for the Chamber of Mines. Good evening gentlemen.

NUM&COM: Good evening.

SABC: Mantashe, tell us, why have you declared a dispute with chamber?

NUM: There are basically two areas that have led to a dispute. One, in 1993 wage negotiations we agreed a working party on basic adult education and training. And that working party has worked for twelve months, and came up with an agreement. That all the time we believed that there was an agreement, that was only needed to be signed by the NUM and the chamber. But when the time has arrived for signing that agreement, it was clear that the chamber was not prepared to sign the agreement on the basis of refusal to link Adult Basic Education to Training. And wanting to cut out reference to career pathing.

I want to make the point that, it must be understood that the question of Paid Education and Training Leave was removed from the work of that committee. It is in the 1994 wage negotiations, and that is also a thorny issue in Adult Basic Education and Training.

SABC: Mr Dippenar we understand that, at the last moment, you people decided to remove Training in as far as Adult Basic Education is concerned. Is that what made NUM to declare a dispute as Mr Mantashe said, just now?

COM: I think in the first place we should not have a dispute. I believe that this working party, has had a high degree of agreement, on a wide range of issues that in other fora people have not agreed on. I think that we have really made some history here in getting around the table as a union and as employers, and getting this far with Adult Basic Education. We have not changed our minds right at the end before we signed an agreement. We have all along said Adult Basic Education is the education phase, the basic education phase, before you become trainable for other work on the mines. We have not deviated from that.

Secondly, we do not link career paths, in the way that has been suggested. We are talking about learning paths. We are talking about Adult Basic Education; and preparing you to become part of a lifelong learning process in the mine. How you then eventually link with career pathing, up in your

occupational training, is another matter. We have not got to that in our agreement yet. This is still looking at guidelines for a basic framework.

SABC: Mr Mantashe.

NUM: In the agreement itself, there was reference to career pathing, which was removed by the chamber in the amendments that are proposed.

And what is worrying us, is that in the 1994 wage negotiations, we have established a working party on Job Grading. And we said, Job Grading would have to acknowledge the question of Career Pathing and the question of Training and Development. And the chamber said they cannot accept that. There is no agreement in that working party. They said the question of career pathing and the question of training should be referred to the working group dealing with Adult Basic Education and Training. And in that working party, they say, No, we must not refer to it. In other words what the chamber is saying is, We should not talk Training. We should not talk Career Pathing. And to us we are saying, Adult Basic Education, if it has no linkage with Training, and linkage with career pathing is empty. It is actually a program that prepares mineworkers to write letters home, and receive responses to it. And we cannot accept that type of an agreement.

SABC: And, do you have problems with linking career paths to training?

COM: No, we don't have problems with that at all. In fact, if you look at what we are saying in this Adult Basic Education model, we speak of competencies. This is been something very well accepted at national level. We've been both NUM and ourselves and COSATU been involved on a national debate on what should go into Adult Basic Education. We have also been involved in that in our own industry. There is no disagreement. There is no disagreement between the union and ourselves on what the value is of Adult Basic Education.

SABC: But where is the disagreement?

COM: The disagreement, at the moment, is omission of the term Training in Adult Basic Education. We say, in the definition, that Adult Basic Education is the basic education phase. We also say that, in the same agreement, competencies is the most important underpinning issue in Adult Basic Education.

Now, a competency is made up of knowledge and skills. Quite rightly, as Mr Mantashe says. It is actually to do with knowledge and skills and behavior and experience. And we are totally one with the union on (a) the subjects that have to go into that, at this point in time we still at the guidelines stage.

Secondly, we are at one with them about competencies. Competencies is about skills acquisition and knowledge acquisition. And I think it is quite sad that we have to come this far, and now have a disagreement on what I would really think is a semantical issue. And I think that we should try and solve

that as quickly as possible. There is very considerable room for us to reach agreement on this issue.

SABC: Mantashe, do you think this is what you call a semantical issue?

NUM: Our view is that if you go to all the national fora and you deal with Andre, he will put very progressive positions. And as he puts now, that there is very little disagreement, or no disagreement at all. But the issue is, at the chamber, the decision makers are not taken on board, and that makes it impossible to have an agreement between the NUM and the chamber. And therefore I think that the process that must unfold is a process where the technical experts must take their decision makers on board on issues like Adult Basic Education and Training. I think that is the process. And if Andre says we can reach a settlement, I interpret that as saying, he needs time to carry his decision makers on board. And mineworkers are not that patient as all that. As long as that doesn't mean indefinite opportunity for him to take his decision makers along.

Take, let me give you one another example, question of Paid Education and Training Leave. That is acknowledged by Convention 140 of the ILO, dated back 1974. But in the negotiations with the chamber this year, they didn't, they could not budge on that.

SABC: Is it true Andre?

COM: I think this is absolutely wrong the way Mr Mantashe is putting this. I think that it should be made clear that all the principles underpinning the National Training Strategy were actually proposed by the mining industry. The very principles that are now underpinning our agreement. The very principles. Every one of them. All eleven of them, are actually the same principles, if you read it the National Training Strategy. My principals, the mining houses, the mines, our members, have agreed to those, and are committed to those. It is not so, that we have a difference between the technical people, as you call them, and the mines. I think we must accept here that both parties have come a long way. We know exactly what we want as a mining industry.

SABC: But on the question of paid training?

COM: On paid training we have a difference. We said so all along. There is no secret here. We said that, in the way that they have proposed it in the 1993 Adult Basic Education context, we said that we would like to deal with other matters there.

We made an offer. It was us who made an offer for a framework to be developed. It was a Chamber of Mines' idea. And it was a good idea because there is no such model at national level.

They then took it to the 1994 wage negotiations. It is still not clear to us, still not clear, what aspects of education and training they would wish us to pay

for up front. We have a fundamental problem with payment for skills per se. We would like to pay for skills that contribute to performance. I think there is a broader debate that we must still continue with NUM before we can get to final decision on Paid Education and Training Leave.

SABC: Mantashe, tell us exactly how do you like a mining company to pay for education? Which part of education? Are you talking about Adult Basic Education? Or are you talking about Training, artisans? What kind of training are you talking about?

NUM: What we are saying is that Adult Basic Education is one aspect, Training is another aspect. Where we differ with chamber, if Andre agrees that we differ, is that the mining houses are talking of "labor needs". And we are saying mineworkers must be given "generic skills", that makes them more flexible and more marketable - and therefore "portable skills". That is what we are talking about.

That's why we say, we are proposing that the industry must contribute 200 hours, paid hours, per worker. And a worker must also contribute 200 hours of his or her spare time. And we are saying, that will actually go long way in helping mine workers acquiring generic portable skills, that can be used in any other industry other than mining.

SABC: Last words, do you have any problem with that?

COM: Any, excuse me?

SABC: Do you have any problems in giving 200 hours, paid hours, to workers.

COM: Yes indeed we have. We have a problem with the principle of paying for skills per se. We are saying there is a debate here that has not happened.

Yes we have a difference with NUM. The difference is around payment for skills per se. And the difference is with industry (chamber level) trying to steer the needs of a mine. We should not do that from the industry level. That's the difference.

Let's sort that difference out. There is a way out. And we can propose that way. And then come to Paid Education and Training Leave. That is a specific application. We are trying to look at our whole industry. And we must get agreement on the principles first. And then we can go to some of these details.

SABC: Okay, thank you very much gentlemen.

NUM&COM: Thank you.

A day after this public exposure, the chamber called to say that they are ready to sign the agreement as "ABET". While we were still calculating that public pressure is a viable tool

for workers, they called to say, "as long as the 'T' does not mean vocational education".

What else could it mean? "They think we are fools", standing at the door of my office, the union ABET educator exclaimed in disgust. All along everybody knew that the "T" in ABET refers to vocational education or technical training. The "E" refers to general education or academic education. They are put together in ABET in line with the second principle in the agreement which refers to "integration" of education and training in a common qualification framework. The dispute was not withdrawn. It proceeded in the government's conciliation board, and was awarded in favor of NUM, or in favor of integrating education and training as discussed later.

Beyond intervening in management's prerogative over education and training, I argue that the most important meaning of this NUM-Chamber dispute is the fact that the union rejected, as "empty", an education settlement that did not include technical training. Some people wrongly perceive management as champions of technical skills in the industry, and wrongly assume the union as a champion of social skills. The NUM-Chamber dispute should belie this perception. To begin with, current ABE classes have little relevance to jobs, which is exactly the situation the union intends to change. The union's view, at least as I have come to understand and espouse it, is that technical skills are good for everyone because they can help workers get, keep, and advance in jobs; they can help companies to increase productivity and profitability; they can help improve the nation's competitiveness in the global economy by offering quality services and goods. Yet, technical skills are not a panacea, which is why labor is equally firm on social skills.

The value of social skills, which is an equally important goal, is to decolonize and democratize the nation, a process which does not only involve illiterate people. I submit that ABET classes constitute a crucial opportunity for many South African adults to overcome decades of apartheid indoctrination. Somehow we have to undergo a process of what Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) calls "decolonizing the mind" in order to relearn a number of things, for example: how to participate in civic institutions like local and national government, trade unions, churches, and families; to relearn the history of this country and continent, the history of the mining industry and other sectors, and the whole catastrophe about gender, tribal and race relations. Although we are vehemently campaigning for the integration of vocational training at the adult basic education level, we are committed to the social relevance of education.<sup>8</sup> A dichotomy between technical and social skills is a mistaken understanding.

However, curriculum issues were not brought to closure during the 1993/4 period of transition. Neither will I attempt to close them here. The strategy to push the issue for resolution by a new government does not necessarily represent how we view an ideal process of curriculum development. Workshop reports show some union attempts to participate in ABET curriculum dialogue. However, a question that is raised here is: What are the different views about ABET curriculum in the workplace, and nationally?

Although NUM participates in several decentralized company level negotiations, I would like to highlight the fact that the chamber ABET negotiations were an exercise in

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<sup>8</sup>As one of my doctoral comprehensive examination papers I reviewed literature on "The social context of literacy," (Mthwecu, 1993).

central bargaining. "Central bargaining", that is negotiating at industry level instead of at company level, is the COSATU approach. This approach is rationalized in terms of setting minimum industry wide standards. However, centralized bargaining has its problems. For example, during the period of this study, I observed that the implementation of joint ABET steering committees moved faster in independent mines, whereas, we had to wait for a signed chamber agreement before the union could start operating at chamber mines, even when there were enough signals that some managers were ready to go. "The chamber is not a negotiating forum. It's a place to block progress", the union general secretary had become that cynical. It was not unusual to hear a trade unionist sigh some disenchantment about the chamber forum. And yet the union has continued to pursue the principle of central bargaining.

The advantage with a chamber level agreement is that it can be followed by implementation at many mines. On the other hand, a mine level agreement means that the union still has to negotiate at about 74 other forums. Also, "if you can go past the chamber", some trade unionists think, it facilitates negotiations with independent employers who watch chamber negotiations. A mining house ABET manager revealed part of the rationale when, during an interview, he said, "The union has few skilled negotiators. So, it is understandable that they would want to use them effectively". The union may have to live with the disadvantages of negotiating at chamber level, in order to enjoy the spin off of broad application.

"You people must record the stuff (the episode of the NUM-Chamber dispute) for history", an African-American history professor advised. "After a while, people will forget the contributions made by trade unions in securing education rights for working people. This (the national memory lapse) has happened here in the US", he said. A relevant sticker, on an

office door in a History Department at our American university, reads: "THE LABOR MOVEMENT: The folks who brought you the weekend!" But, has the weekend not always been here for everyone to enjoy? No. It was struggled for.

### The Negotiations Outcomes

One of the outcomes of negotiations is a signed agreement. An NUM-Chamber agreement on Adult Basic Education and Training is here, it's about time to congratulate both parties! Assessing what both parties have achieved and not achieved in negotiations is the subject of this section of the dissertation. During some union workshops, where the union was trying to enhance understanding of the agreement, we asked participating workers, in groups, to complete a grid about what they think workers have gained and not gained in every aspect of this agreement. We also asked them to role play situations where they report back to workers, or other union officials, what the main achievements and problems with the agreement were.

The following discussion of potential strengths and weaknesses of the agreement includes my own perceptions some of which were not necessarily shared with workers. Each aspect of the NUM-Chamber agreement is quoted below, followed by a discussion of its major implications based on a myriad of interactions, observations, and readings during the course of this study. Given the fact that the principles underlying this agreement are identical with the principles underpinning the national ABET framework, this industry dialogue and outcome has ample relevance to issues at national level in South Africa.



A. PREAMBLE

Inferior education and lack of educational opportunities have resulted in extremely high levels of illiteracy amongst working people.

This lack of basic education has many negative effects. These include: a lack of control over many aspects of daily life; limited participation in the community; limited contribution to the development of the economy; and the perpetuation of racial discrimination. It has also made it difficult for workers to contribute to the innovations needed to improve the efficiency and safety of operations in the mining industry.

The fragmented and divided education and training systems in South Africa have created inflexibility and caused the skills and knowledge acquired to lack portability. In the case of ABET, it has resulted in no national standards and no national system.

The right to education is a fundamental human right. It opens up avenues for communication that would otherwise remain closed. It expands personal choice and control over one's environment and is necessary for the acquisition of other skills.

It is our view that the primary responsibility for the provision of education and training lies with the state. The extent of the need for ABET makes it essential that incentives be established to encourage every prospective provider of ABET to provide in terms of an agreed system.

The parties welcome developments at national level which are likely to result in a more relevant and legitimate national system of education and training incorporating ABET.

The relationship between ABET, Level 1, and Levels 2 to 4, as described in the Executive Summary of the National Training Strategy Initiative published in April 1994 (attached hereto as Appendix A) including the vocational implications of ABET, will need to be discussed in the light of national and industry developments.

The parties agree that in the context of their focused efforts to provide ABET in the industry, they will be guided by the principles and aims outlined below.

I do not engage in a word for word analysis of the evolution of this agreement. I focus on main implications. For instance, if one compared the union's proposal (June 8, 1993), and that of the chamber (June 9, 1993), one would notice that management did not have a

preamble, while the union had a hard hitting one in which the opening words were "apartheid education". It now opens as "inferior education". "This preamble is a compromise attempt to capture the context of ABET in the mines and nationally", explains a chamber-level union negotiator. "They (management) say that they don't understand why this preamble is necessary. Why have it in a working document when we all agree about what led to the situation?" a mine-level union negotiator reported.

Invariably, in union workshops workers find the statement, "The right to education is a fundamental human right", to be a significant achievement in this preamble. Further, this short introduction is a useful naming of "negative effects" due to a lack of basic education and training, as well as a naming of some "avenues" that can be "opened and expanded" by the provision of ABET.

The line: "It is our view that the primary responsibility for the provision of education and training lies within the state", should have been qualified with the following article from the union's policy resolution: "employers should provide education and training for at least their employees, and their dependents". At an independent mine, a joint ABET committee was able to agree on opening up mine facilities for participation by workers' dependents and the local community, as soon as that was possible.

## B. DEFINITION

ABET is the basic education and training phase in the provision of life-long learning which has the exit point equivalent with that of compulsory education and consists of levels along a continuum of learning. The skills and knowledge acquired in ABET programs should be assessed as competencies.

"Literacy is the ability to read and write in mother tongue" was management's opening definition in their proposal (COM Proposal, June 9, 1993). Looking at that employer starting point, one can appreciate the huge shift from 'adult literacy' to 'Adult Basic Education and Training'. In South Africa, this ABET definition moves us away from the model of Adult Literacy, whether that be formal, functional, or Freirean (as discussed in chapter two).

In South Africa, the end of apartheid has provided a historic opportunity to question or revisit the Adult Literacy notion. The problems with all the models of Adult Literacy go beyond apartheid, and can be found in many parts of the world. Without minimizing the many benefits of Adult Literacy, the systemic shortcomings in Adult Literacy models have led to a situation where it makes sense to advocate for the Adult Basic Education and Training model. The following identified problems should become clearer as the new ABET model is discussed:

- \* Adult Literacy, in South African and elsewhere, is about language literacy learning. Literacy is normally assumed to include numeracy, which is generally perceived as inferior to formal school Mathematics. Consequently, there is a push to separate numeracy from literacy and make it (Mathematics) a distinct subject area (ANC IPET, 1994).
- \* In the current South African context, the majority of people have been kept out of scientific and technological skills. The current Adult Literacy courses, whether they be government night schools, or workplace programs, or alternative NGO programs, do not provide a sufficient basis for the acquisition

of scientific and technological skills. Science and Technology is consequently being proposed as a subject area in the ABET framework.

\* Adult Literacy courses do not in fact present a systematic study of social issues. The traditional Adult Literacy models may be systematically presenting a pro-status quo social studies. Broadly defined Workplace Literacy programs may be integrating some social studies. Participatory literacy programs may be addressing expressed learners' needs. But, we are very unsatisfied with all these attempts. It is obvious to say that the ideological approach of traditional literacy programs needs to be changed. Although the current definition of Workplace Literacy has been broadened, it is unconvincing in its coverage of social issues. The learner-centered programs are increasingly losing their focus on social problems, as they try to address whatever the learner wants. There is a need to critically study a wide scope of social issues in South Africa. Since many adults did not have an opportunity to learn about the diverse history of the world and its people, it is proposed that the ABET framework include a subject area that can provide a systematic space to learn these. Can the current design of the learner-centered approach to Adult Literacy meet that need?

\* Many South African Adult Literacy courses are designed in such a way that their equivalency to formal school certificate levels is not clear, if any. Since learners often inquire about the market currency of ABE certificates, there is

an attempt to align ABET exit points with formal school exit points or grades.

This does not imply a similar curriculum for children and adults.

- \* Although participatory literacy programs try to respond to learners' expressed needs, the fact that these may vary tremendously from place to place make it difficult or baseless for a state or national government to award common certificates since there are no established minimum outcomes to be achieved.
- \* Although the current definition of Workplace Literacy is broad, current Workplace Literacy courses are generally not directly related or linked to vocational training. In an unspecified way, it is assumed that literacy skills will help adults when they try to acquire job skills. There needs to be a more clear way to account for how adult literacy classes lead to the enhancement of both social skills and technical skills. Sometimes planners deliberately want to keep vocational training away from general education because when these are put side by side, there is often a tendency to focus more on vocational training at the expense of general education. We see the challenge as being the need to fairly accommodate both. ABET programs can lead to both social empowerment (critical general knowledge) and economic empowerment (technical job-skills).
- \* Adult Literacy courses are generally not explained in such a way that their place in job grading systems is known. Due to the fact that Adult Literacy learning outcomes are not in anyway located in a job grading system, those who complete Adult Literacy classes are often not economically rewarded by

their employers for whatever knowledge and skills they may have acquired. Although some would argue that the notion of Workplace Literacy has been enlarged to encompass various forms of adult learning, these are so varied and fragmented that their meaning is unspecific and unclear, while their value continues to be questioned from all sides. We are often told that Adult Literacy improves the workers' productivity and the company's profitability, but we are never told how employees benefit from the increased skills. Why?

There is quite a series of systemic changes involved in the ABET definition. First, literacy language learning becomes only one of subject areas at ABET Level One. In the South African context, literacy in a first language often does not mean literacy in a language of wider communication, which is English. Significantly, the ABET framework is designed to accommodate literacy in at least two languages - bilingualism (ANC, 1994). Learning to read and write in a first language is only one of other (not yet determined) subject areas at ABET Level One. Beyond being literate, one would go on to learn ones' first language at higher ABET levels. At ABET level four, language learning will be far more than basic literacy - in two languages based on the learner's choice.

Secondly, in the ABET framework Mathematics will be a separate core subject area. Maths will be offered as one of yet undetermined number of subject areas or credits in all four levels of the ABET framework. This should enhance the status of Numeracy as a function of Literacy. Although it is generally accepted that at ABET Level One Maths, and other subjects, will be learned in the medium of ones first language, it is not yet determined

(though it is likely to be English) what will be the medium of instruction from ABET Level Two up to Level Four.

On top of two languages and Maths, there would be other subject areas in the ABET framework. However, one should say that consensus on the subject areas in the ABET framework ends here, that is with languages and Maths as the core content areas. The labor and liberation movements, and others, would like to add two more core subject areas, they are, Science and Technology, and Social Development Studies. On the other hand, employers did not go along with that proposal. Labor argues that Science and Technology has to be prioritized since the African community has practically been kept out of both Maths and Science skills acquisition. Employers argue that workers can learn science skills in context of vocational training without it being a separate subject area. Labor would like to include Social Development Studies as a subject area because ABET programs would be the main opportunity for adults to learn about participation in building democratic workplaces and society, to put it briefly. Employers, on the other hand, argue that Social Development Studies are not immediately relevant to the workplace, and that an inclusion of Science and Technology as well as Social Development Studies would make for an expensive and time consuming process. In any event, if the proposal to add both Science and Technology as well as Social Development Studies to languages and Maths as core subject areas at all four ABET levels succeeds, this would mean that it is no longer Adult Literacy but Adult Basic Education (ABE). The "T" for Training would be added if technical training is also included in the same framework. Still, without technical training, it is significant that the general education (ABE) component would be offered at four levels which would be equivalent to ten years of

free and compulsory schooling. Even if the technical training component was not included in the framework, there would still be a substantial departure from Adult Literacy to ABE because ABE includes more than language learning and is equivalent to the exit level of basic schooling, a General Education Certificate.

Significantly, the ABET definition includes the "T" for technical training. This means that technical training would be offered at the Adult Basic Education phase, and be certified in a common framework. The now popular notion of integrating education and training is however less developed. As shown in Appendix C, the emerging consensus is that technical training might have two components to it. There would be technical subjects which are common to every one at a particular industry, an Industry Common Core. For example, a common set of subject areas or modules that workers can take regardless of their specialties or trades can include, labor relations, health and safety, computer literacy, business principles, machine theory, customer service, quality assurance, marketing and management skills. These would be determined from industry to industry, and may vary at various levels in the ABET framework.

Beyond the common industry core courses, the ABET framework would offer workers a number of modules specific to their trades, that is, specializations or electives, so that workers can improve their occupation specific proficiency. The number and kinds of modules for any particular career path will be determined through industry education and training authorities, in which labor will have a role, and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). In order to finalize the definition of the ABET framework, there are a number of decisions that the new government has to make, these include: the total



number of general education and technical training modules or credits at each ABET level, the names of the various subject areas, and the language of instruction. Having achieved the shift from Adult Literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training, and after all the work done to promote the acronym ABET, some of us have become a little sensitive about the use of the term Adult Literacy. Adult Literacy does not quite define what we want. In other words, Adult Literacy is not an accurate descriptor of the essential nature of the ABET framework.

The dispute between NUM and the Chamber of Mines should indicate that achieving the shift from Adult Literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training has not been without its problems. As much as the union has been able to achieve agreement with employers on the integration of education and training, the determination of subject areas still lacks finality. The lack of agreement in defining the common core of subject areas has meant a delay in developing curriculum frameworks, assessment standards, and practitioner development programs. In its June 9, 1993 negotiations proposal, the chamber defined ABE as:

The establishment of core proficiencies in two areas, literacy/language and numeracy/computation, at four levels equivalent in formal education provision to standards 1, 4, 5 and 7. The notion is that the foundation of skills and knowledge in these core areas should provide a sufficiently good foundation of knowledge and skills for an individual to cope with subsequent vocational education.

The chamber's refusal to budge from their view of core subject areas as language and numeracy (as the common core of learning in an ABET curriculum), has been a source of industry and national debate on curriculum. The union's position, in line with COSATU PRP (1993, p. 47) and the ANC (1994, p. 90) policy framework, is that social development studies, and science and technology should be added on language and numeracy as core subject areas for a four level ABET framework. The hard issue of curriculum was removed

from industry negotiations. The decision on the composition of an ABET curriculum was deferred for settlement by a new national government. Immediately, both the union and employers from the mining industry tried to influence the national policy process. Based on my participant-observation experience in the mining industry and national policy dialogues, I am convinced that if there had been an agreement between NUM and the chamber on an ABET curriculum composition, the national curriculum process could have been facilitated because both parties were important, not to say dominant, contributors in shaping a new national ABET framework. The union was however satisfied with employers' willingness to follow nationally set requirements. Maybe they hope that a democratic government would care about enabling popular social empowerment. On the other hand, employers may be counting on holding to ransom a new government which may be anxious to govern in quiet.

The other part of the ABET definition relates to the competency-based approach to assessment. Although few Adult Literacy programs are designed according to the competency-based approach, it is possible to do so. Consequently, the notion of a competency-based approach to assessment can be understood separately from the following essential notions of the ABET framework: offering subject areas that go beyond language learning, integration of education and training, and the equivalence of ABET qualifications with formal school grades. However, the competency-based approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment introduces a major shift from the current norm-based approach to assessment in South Africa. It is fully discussed as principle number five below.

In union ABET workshops, we have found that it is simpler to explain the meaning of the ABET definition to workers by first explaining the ANC's undertaking to provide ten

years of free and compulsory education for children. Provision of ten years free and compulsory education, which is now a proposed policy of the new government, means that upon successful completion of a ten year period of formal primary schooling, students will receive a General Education Certificate (GEC). The ten year education period will include a reception year, that is Educare (see Appendix G). Currently there is no national Educare system.

Then comes the following question which had to be addressed: What will be done for adults who missed out on basic education during the apartheid era? Since the ANC (1994) education and training policy framework is based on the principle of "redress", compensation or reparation, which means that adults are also "entitled" to a ten years equivalent amount of basic education. Consequently, a GEC obtained by children after completing ten levels of formal schooling will be "equivalent" to a GEC obtained by adults who complete four levels of an ABET framework, as shown in Appendix G, A National Qualifications Framework. Both the children's and the adults' certificates would be called GEC though reached through different routes. Claiming that Adult Basic Education and Training should be equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory schooling was a very creative political manoeuvre, I believe. Completing a four level ABET framework would not be a timed event since factors like recognition of prior learning and experience can "accelerate" adult progression, while other commitments like jobs can "decelerate" worker progression.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>A General Education Certificate (GEC) will not be equivalent to a high school diploma. On top of a GEC, there will be three more years of schooling towards a Further Education Certificate (see Appendix G).

It has been further recommended that equivalent GEC certificates be identical in look. An international expert who participated in a national ABET conference in South Africa, related how in one country the "currency" of ABE certificates was "devalued" in the "market" by placing a stamp on it stating that, "It was gotten through the night schools". Such a "symbol" can feed into stereotypes that adult programs are "short cut" learning exercises in blatant disregard of other factors like the Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience. One should bear in mind that various aspects of the South African ABET definition, such as the integration of education and training, recognition of prior learning and experience, and a competency-based approach to assessment, still have to be tried in practice. However, in conclusion, one should emphasize the fact that the vision is to extend the traditional definition of Adult Literacy as language learning in order to include other general education subject areas beyond languages and numeracy, and to integrate technical training, as well as make ABET equivalent to the end of ten years of basic schooling.

### C. AIMS OF ABET PROGRAMS

ABET programs for employees should be aimed at the following:

1. To provide workers with an educational and training base for further learning.
2. To develop workers' skills and knowledge to participate more actively in the process of change within the mining industry and in the country as a whole.
3. To contribute towards removing all discriminatory barriers within the industry, particularly racial.

The first aim for ABET programs refers to the fact that ABET is conceived as a ground laying phase for more education and training, "a base for training and further learning". In other words, ABET is NOT conceived as a terminal phase of learning. Concerns about the word "basic" as in Adult "Basic" Education and Training, came from several quarters,

including some South African educationists and international commentators. "An emphasis on 'basic' flies in the face of the principle of lifelong learning", as one professional put it during a national conference. Some workers expressed concern that the union's emphasis on ABET may lead to a neglect of learning needs of workers above ABET levels. Since ABET affects the majority of workers, and South Africans at large, the union prioritized it, within the context of lifelong learning. Limited resources or capacity did not allow for multiple starting points, although it is advisable to have "a balance not a choice".

The fact that ABET should prepare people for "further learning" has implications for curriculum development within a national qualifications framework, like the yet to be determined question of language/s of learning. According to COSATU PRP (1993, pp. 48-49) and the ANC (1994, pp. 61-66), all learners would, by the end of ABET Level 4, learn at least two South African languages. At the first ABET level, subjects will be instructed in the people's first languages. A person would then continue to learn his or her first language as a subject area, while the medium of instruction would gradually transit to a language of wider communication which is expected to be English. This clear recommendation is consistent with my research of language literacy needs for mineworkers (Mthwecu, 1987), and the language literacy needs for rural people in Operation Hunger development projects.

However, in a way I did not fully understand, a policy recommendation for the language of instruction got terribly controversial and confused, and was consequently left for resolution by elected representatives and local communities. Some of the million variables that got introduced in the language policy debate include a future possibility of the development of all nine indigenous languages as medium of instruction at all education and training levels.

There was also some subtle resistance of the dominance of English over Afrikaans. If ABET programs are intended to prepare people for further learning, which is expected to be in English, African languages or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in ABET courses can hardly be the best preparation for further learning. It was interesting though to see some people who often emphasize the need to listen to what learners want, now look up to politicians for direction.

Whereas the first aim links ABET with "further learning", the second aim links it with "change", both "within the mining industry and nationally". This important program goal, if acted upon, should "empower" workers so that they can meaningfully participate in life as a whole, at work and beyond.

Finally, using ABET programs as a tool to eliminate all discrimination is a stated aim. Signals are already there, that translating this aim into implementable programs of learning can become an area of contestation between a union and management. For instance, management opposes labor's inclusion of "Social Development Studies" (not yet an official label) as a module in the curriculum framework. If international experience, as discussed in chapter two, is anything to go by, this "difference" is predictable. The phrase "particularly racial", in the third aim, can be faulted as a limited conception of "disadvantaged people", even though women workers are few and far between in the mines.

An important shortcoming of these ABET program aims is that they lack measurable goals. The first aim does not state any target number of workers that will be provided with education and training within any given time-frame. The second aim does not provide any indicators of how one can tell if workers are able to participate actively in workplace and

social change. The third aim, like the first and the second aims, is too general for one to be able to measure the extent of progress made or not made. One can accept that these are broad industry guidelines, whose implementation plans should be determined at the different mining companies. However, one hopes that company action plans will be specific enough to state target numbers for delivery.

#### D. PRINCIPLES

The Adult Basic Education and Training principles agreed in the mining industry are generally identical with the ones recommended for a national education and training system by the National Training Board (1994) and the African National Congress (1994). This points to the emerging coordination between industry and national systems. Bellis (1994) undertakes a useful exercise in attempting to analyze the implications of the emerging national guidelines/principles for consideration by planners of education and training programs. While Bellis' analysis should apply to education and training at all levels other than ABET, and applies to all contexts other than workplaces programs, this dissertation's analysis or interpretation of the principles is specific to ABET programs at the workplace.

The following analysis is partly informed by my participation at ANC/CEPD. Also, these principles were discussed with mineworkers during union ABET workshops, facilitated by the union ABET educator and I, as negotiations with employers were going on. Like Bellis (1994) I suggest that it is imperative that all stakeholders familiarize themselves with the meaning of these new guidelines. However, I observed that there was nationally very little effort taken to inform the public about these developments. Since these principles are interrelated, points which apply in various principles are not repeated in order to avoid

repetition. The national terminology is sometimes different to the one used in the mine agreement although the meaning is exactly the same. In future, as the following thirteen principles are implemented and their nature and implications are revealed, elaborate studies are likely to be undertaken about each of them.

1. Legitimacy or Credibility. Have legitimacy for both providers and learners in terms of achieving the agreed aims of ABET programs.

In future, ABET programs will have to be acceptable to both employers and employees. In union workshops, we have tried to promote at least two views in relation to this principle: (a) that joint program administration structures should contribute to the realization of this principle, with the active inclusion of learners lending more credibility to it; and (b) for ABET programs to be acceptable to all parties, both "economic and social priorities" would have to find accommodation in the programs. A curriculum serving one or the other need, that is technical or social skills at the expense of the other, would compromise program legitimacy or credibility in the eyes of either employers or employees.

2. Integration. Form part of a system of human resources development which provides for the establishment of an integrated approach to education and training.

"This approach is premised on eroding the distinction between mental and manual labor - and represents a radical break with past practice", according to a CEPD Head. This conceptual shift is expected to apply at all levels of learning in a National Qualifications Framework. Essentially, this principles means that the acquisition of basic general or academic education will no longer be viewed as a platform for later acquisition of technical or vocational skills. The acquisition of technical skills would happen in tandem with general education. In future,



the certification of general education and technical training would be merged in a common ABET qualification. Appendix C, A sample integrated ABET framework, which we drafted for and out of union workshops, is an attempt to give some concrete sense of a possible nature of an integrated ABET framework. It has also been discussed in various national meetings. A major change that we were intending to effect is that: at ABET level one, there would not be different modules for industry and trade training, but there would be a consolidated and comprehensive induction program. This would be because learners at ABET level one would have limited literacy abilities. However, the responsibility of providing a final and official framework lies with a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a yet to be born institution.

The good news is that adult learners no longer have to grind through years of a general education, which is often irrelevant to their daily lives, before they can acquire technical skills. The separation of general education and technical training in South Africa has not only penalized people for wanting technical skills, but has also effectively served as a gate-keeping mechanism. Historically, Africans have been tracked into and trapped in non-technical education fields. Combining technical training and general education in a single qualification framework should open access to technical skills for all, it is hoped. This principle, which still has to be tried, is a conscious reaction to contextual circumstances. Some international commentators have referred to this part of our vision as "ambitious indeed".

It should also be highlighted that the underlying assumption is that a curriculum for technical training should combine theoretical and practical components, so that people can

understand the concepts behind practical skills and technology. Combining technical training into a common qualification framework with general education is not by itself a sufficient measure to transform technical training. There is a need to seriously rethink the way technical training is currently designed. This part of discussion was, admittedly, very limited in policy dialogues during this period.

Another structural implication of the integration approach would be the putting together of education and training functions under the same department or ministry. Currently, training functions are located in the Department of Manpower/Labor. It is proposed (ANC, 1994), that they need to be transferred to a new Department of Education and Training in line with the integration principle. French (in Hutton, 1992) describes the current senseless division, which can actually be found in many countries, in this way:

Limitations in literacy work in industry has been the result of an absurd sensitivity about the legal territory between the Department of Manpower and the DET (Department of Education and Training). While 'training' was seen to be a person-power issue and gained generous tax exemptions, literacy was regarded as 'education', and was the preserve of the DET (p. 77).

Some members of Industry Training Boards and the Department of Manpower informally told me that their reservation, which as far as I know was not formally written or presented anywhere, is that in an integrated education and training system, technical training would be placed under the administration of educationists. They said that this may happen because "education people, unlike technical people, have accumulated a lot of academic qualifications". Probably, this means that some power-sharing arrangement between education and training administrators would have to be struck in the course of setting up an integrated system so that those who have vested interests in the status quo do not feel

marginalized, especially during the transition period, or else they may bureaucratically block its implementation. Even if the Department of Education and the Department of Labor do not structurally merge their education and training functions, it is possible and necessary that the provision and certification of education and training take place within a single qualifications framework. It is expected that the merger of education and training should be facilitated by the establishment of a South African Qualifications Authority, a new para-statal body.

The proposal to integrate education and training is a sincere attempt to gain access to technical skills because the systemic separation of education and training, a deliberate measure, has resulted in the exclusion of many people from technical skills. Internationally, there is a serious problem with the way in which ABE programs fail to relate to technical training. In a vague way, one often hears about how ABE programs can help improve workers' abilities for job training. However, the actual access to technical training remains controlled elsewhere, who knows where. An alternative view is that the inclusion of technical training at the basic education phase may lead to a situation where ABE is reduced to technical training. We think that the challenge lies in combining social and technical skills, not in keeping technical skills away. This challenge needs to be addressed in both the design of the national ABET standards, as well as in the implementation of ABET programs in various sectors and areas. Unfortunately, the implementation plans are not very explicit on this aspects. Also, the resources and capacity of various stakeholders seems inadequate for responding to this challenge.

3. Coherence and Flexibility. Adhere to principles and frameworks for certification which may be established at national or industry level, but allow the flexibility required to meet the needs of learners and providers. To this end, both parties are committed to contributing towards the establishment of a national system for ABET.

On the one hand, this principles implies that workplace ABET programs should be designed in such a way that they can offer knowledge and skills that are "coherent with", or "in line with", national frameworks or standards. This would facilitate national recognition and mobility of qualifications. On the other hand, there should be sufficient "flexibility" for programs to be designed in such a way that local workplace and individual needs can be accommodated and contextualized. While observance of this principle should bring an end to current worker frustrations about ABET certificates which often have no currency beyond the workplace at which they are obtained, a challenge lies ahead for local ABET practitioners and stakeholders to contextualize or make meaning of standards provided in a national framework. Besides customizing national standards, local people should be able to inform and add on national standards based on contextual realities as discussed in the literature reviewed in chapter two (Auerbach, 1990). National standards will need to be structured in such a way that "unexpected outcomes" can be encouraged and welcome.

Given international experience, the tension in balancing the advantages of a national framework and the need for flexibility (coordination vs decentralization) should not be underestimated. In workplace ABET programs, where part-time practitioners are used, national curriculum guidelines may have to be structured in such a way that they lend themselves to easy application, without being too detailed.

4. Involvement or Participation. Provide for the participation of all stakeholders, including Trade Unions, in the planning and provision of access to ABET.  
\* Stakeholders include at least management, learners, unions and providers.<sup>10</sup>

At the workplace, a visible expression of this principle would be the formation of joint ABET committees or forums so that "management, learners, unions, and providers" can all participate in decision making. Setting up "joint ABET steering committees" has already begun at chamber, mining house, and down to mine level. However, as mentioned in chapter four, lack of capacity is threatening to be a disabling factor in implementing this principle.

Without prejudging the long term value of labor participation, however, it is significant that the union has won the right to be involved as a stakeholder in education and training issues. The government, which should have no role in day to day management of workplace-based ABET programs, would provide a national framework of norms and standards. Although labor would like to see a more active role for a democratic government in support of education and training, the role of the new government in workplace ABET remains to be seen. In chapter two, I discussed the case of the National Workplace Literacy Program in the U.S.A. (U.S. Dept. of Educ. 1992). According to the experience of this initiative by the U.S. Department of Education, it is possible that a government can, through a system of grants, require partnerships. The Massachusetts Department of Education, for example, assists in the building of the capacity of workplace education partnerships by providing services for administrators, practitioners, curriculum developers, as well as service providers.

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<sup>10</sup>Providers in this case refers to education and training service organization and institutions.

5. Standards. Be based on clearly identified standards expressed as ABET competencies.

(Competence here is used in the broadest sense of the word. It recognizes that performance is founded in not only skill but also knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, it accepts that competence involves the ability to perform in different contexts and the capacity to transfer knowledge and skills to new tasks and situations).

"They must not drop standards", is a common reaction from privileged groups when changes are proposed. But what in the world is a standard? The following definition by our ANC/CEPD NQF-SAQA task team has been publicly, but not widely, circulated. It is part of a draft NQF-SAQA Act (ANC IPET, 1994):

**Standard** means nationally agreed and registered statements of education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria.

In South Africa, the principle about standards introduces an "outcomes-driven" approach to learning. It means that "learning objectives", that is "knowledge and skills", which a learner is expected to achieve at the end of learning will be stated ahead of time. Also, how learners are going to be assessed would have to be made explicit from the outset.

Significantly, not included in this definition of a standard is a description of HOW and WHERE learning will happen. "As long as you can demonstrate ability, it should not matter where, how, and when one achieves an objective," is the rationale. Also, an outcomes based approach to assessment should facilitate Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE), which is principle number nine below. It is also important to realize the exclusion of methods of teaching in the definition of a standard, because people who are critical of abilities of current educators have wondered about the lack of educator training issues in policy dialogues. For instance, a note from one of my peer debriefers reads:

The issue of content is important, yes, but I believe that the HOW of education (which hasn't really been addressed at all) is at least as critical as WHAT is being learned.

The fact that there is "no ready army to drive this complex agenda" cannot be underestimated. At this charging, some people have whispered that we should "go slowly". The following policy planning documents contain framework ideas about how ABET Practitioners (ANC IPET, 1994) or ETD Practitioners (NTB, 1994) can be developed. Excluding the WHERE of learning from a definition of a standard should end the traditional perception of formal institutions as the only places where "real" learning can take place. Workplaces would be able to provide learning opportunities to people who want to achieve the standards of the National Qualifications Framework. There WHERE and HOW of learning are as important as the WHAT of learning, we still believe. Consequently, to agree that a national definition of standards would not include the WHERE and HOW of learning is a big compromise. For local program stakeholders, a challenge lies ahead in making sure that the learning environment and the teaching and learning methods are also attended to in the process of contextualizing national standards. It will be important for trade unions to participate in processes of ABET provision in the workplace in order to continue negotiating emerging issues around the HOW, WHERE, and WHAT of learning.

Again, the principle about standards declares a fundamental switch from a "norm-based" learning process to a "competency-based" learning process. Identifying and expressing goals for a learning experience would mean that everyone will be transparently assessed on this supposedly objective criteria. When assessment is based on identifiable "learning-outcomes", a current buzzword, arbitrary or normative factors like one's race or gender, time

spent in class, and more importantly the normal distribution curve, which was never normal nor distributive, should have no relevance what so ever. Everyone would be able to enter and progress in learning based on individual capacities - so it is hoped.

It is significant that an outcomes-led approach, traditionally applied in technical training, has also been agreed for application in general education. This means that behavioral objectives for both technical and social skills would have to be listed and agreed. Later, when I discuss some major objections to the competency-based approach to learning, I indicate that establishing and monitoring/measuring the attainment of non-technical behavioral objectives can be very difficult. Based on results of a survey and commissioned research, COSATU PRP (1993) proposes ten generic competencies/outcomes that should underlie ABET curricula, Appendix D. The proposed ABET generic outcomes have not yet been adopted as government policy, that would have to wait for the establishment of SAQA. It is significant however that the proposed ABET outcomes are based on both social and economic needs. A significant emerging implication, according to this study, is that labor and employers are engaged in a standard setting process of naming and negotiating the meaning of ABET curriculum outcomes.

In the course of this study, I acted as one of the union technical representatives, in a task team set up by a Mining Qualifications Forum (MQF). The MQF consisted of mine employers, the Department of Minerals and Energy, mine professional associations, and employee organizations. It was set up in 1994 in order to restructure the education and training system in the mining industry. This forum decided to identify all competencies, that is knowledge and skills, which are necessary for all jobs performed in the mines. This meant



a fundamental review of mine tasks and competencies, from sweeper to engineer, or from ABET Level 1 to NQF Level 8. Existing mining qualifications were used as a starting point. After identifying tasks and competencies, the Mining Qualifications Forum would group these into related categories in such a way that new categories would be in line with an emerging National Qualifications Framework. When four task teams were set up for this purpose, the mine managers' association kicked off the process by circulating their view of the "Main Skills Inventory". The union was in the middle of this incredible opportunity to restructure the mining education and training system and reorganize work categories, when I sadly ran out of time and handed my role over to a COSATU/Australian expert.

The Mining Qualifications Forum was so important to the union that the vice president, a full-time mineworker, led the union team. The union team consisted of workers and educators. Commendably, a former miner, shift boss and mine captain, white male, who works for the union was part of the team. An independent union legal adviser also participated in a task team that would draft proposals into a legal framework. The union held a national workshop in order to define its approach, and to equip its representatives in the various task teams. I prepared the workshop discussion paper. "This has been your most important contribution to the union. No really. I want you to know that", the union ABET educator commented on my role in the Mining Qualifications Forum. Interestingly, I was complemented in an area I had not anticipated at the outset, and as I was partly regretting my frequent absence from union activities because of involvement in ABET national policy and planning. Admittedly, I first had to capture the vision and the fire of the movement before I could make a confident contribution in cutting through the status quo.

At NUM, we ran a national workshop specifically to introduce worker-leaders to the advent of an "outcomes-driven" learning approach. This was after we had conducted a national workshop for both mining and energy sectors where we asked workers to list the kinds of modules they would like to see in general education, common industry skills like industrial relations, and skills specific to the different trades. Though we were exploring the competency-based approach in relation to ABET levels, this approach is expected to apply to education and training at all levels of the National Qualifications Framework. When I worked as an Adult Education Officer in the mines, I was trained in Criterion Referenced Instruction (CRI) which is another name for a competency-based approach to education and training. My graduate studies have only partly included competency-based vocational education. South African consensus toward an outcomes-based approach to education and training finds expression in a proposed education bill (1995) - though with less clarity on implementation steps.

Since the late 1980s, there are initiatives towards setting nation-wide and state-wide curriculum standards in the United States, of which South Africans may want to take a look at. Coming out of the AMERICA 2000 Excellence in Education Act of 1991, a federal US legislation, there are national and state efforts to identify and compile voluntary national guidelines on which school curricula, K-12, can be based. The American K-12 process to develop common curriculum frameworks is at a more advanced stage than where we are in South Africa (AFT, 1995), with the American setting of Social Studies and History standards being particularly controversial if not partisan. In the state of Massachusetts, for instance, the "education reform" movement is proceeding right along the following stages:

- \* **the common core of learning**, established a set of seven subject areas that form a common core of learning from PreK-12, that is from preschool to high school. These are:
- \* **curriculum frameworks**, state-wide standards for each subject area are developed, this means that they stated what each child will be expected to know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The curriculum frameworks are expected to be approved by the state Board of Education by the end of 1995.
- \* **curriculum development by school districts**, using the curriculum frameworks as a basis, school districts or learning centers, will develop their curricula in ways that can respond to contextual needs.
- \* **assessment**, state-wide assessment will be introduced at grades 4, 8, 10, and possibly 12. Both state-wide assessment and the use of competency-standards will be new exercises in the states education system.
- \* **professional development**, professional development or teacher training becomes is a component in order to help teachers build their own classroom curriculum, and prepare students for assessment.

Without going into detail about the elaborate Massachusetts education reform process, one can mention that their consultative process of developing the curriculum standards was characterized by writing teams, advisory committee, public consultations, and revisions of drafts for final approval by the state's Board of Education.

In the South African education and training reform process, there is yet to be an agreed set of subjects to form a common core of learning. As mention earlier, in Adult Basic Education and Training, there is a deep disagreement about the issue of what should constitute a common core of ABET learning. With the common core subject areas not agreed, there is little progress in the areas of curriculum frameworks, curriculum development, assessment, and educator development. There are, however unofficial, some initiatives at generating possible standards, curriculum materials, assessment tools, and practitioner development programs.

Parallel to the process to developing national standards for K-12, a similar exercise is being undertaken for Workplace Literacy programs in the United States. One should say, however, that although the formal school curriculum standards movement is informing the Adult Education field, the process of setting curriculum standards for Adult Education in the United States, including Massachusetts, is at its very beginning stages. The following handy information about some recent initiatives was circulated during a national workplace literacy video-conference, in April 13, 1995:

Just as there is a movement in K-12 education to develop standards about what students need to know and be able to do, there is a parallel movement to develop skills standards for the workplace as part of achieving Goals 2000...

Skills standards are an attempt to define the specific skills needed for particular arenas as well as to define the outcomes of good instruction. By defining the outcomes, educators can plan instruction so that it leads to the achievement of those outcomes.

The skills standards movement calls for the establishment of voluntary industry skills standards that will inform workers as well as companies about the skills requirements for various occupational clusters...

Through this project, curricula created as part of the National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP) are being reviewed to determine the basic skills that are most frequently taught in various workplaces, especially those adopting high performance work patterns. Draft standards will be developed for those basic skills occurring most frequently - they will be anchored with examples from the curricula. Information will also be gathered on various efforts related to setting standards for basic skills in the workplace. (Skills Standards Team, U.S. Department of Labor, Tel: 202-208-7018; Eunice Askov, National Institute for Literacy, Tel: 202-632-1500, and National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania, 3910 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3111, Tel: 215-898-2100, Fax: 215-898-9804).

Besides planning for implementation, it is becoming increasingly important for South Africans to seriously review the history competency-based approaches to education and training, as well as possible benefits and problems. At NUM we had begun conducting

workshops on this subject. One initial impression is that there is not much that is readily known about this subject among ordinary workers. In "A Review of Relevant Literature and Research Dealing with the Development of Competency based Curriculum for Vocational Education" Charles A. Sheaf (no date) names different terms used as descriptors of this movement, they are: performance-based education, criterion-referenced instruction, mastery-learning, and proficiency-based education. Sheaf says that although, in the USA, the competency-based approach became a major education reform movement in the 1970s and 1980s, this approach was described - as early as 1911 - by Charles R. Allen in, The Instructor, the Man and the Job. Sheaf says that:

His approach starts with determining skills to be taught with a "trade analysis", then careful organization of instruction was to be based upon the level of difficulty and prerequisite knowledge and skills required. Allen recommended an individualized approach to instruction (p. 2).

In 1962, Robert Mager contributed an answer to the call for accountability in the schools by throwing light on the advantages of "behavioral objectives", in which he says that: the behavioral objectives provide a means to organize instruction by teaching only those things directly related to the pre-stated objectives, and they provide the only way to assess the effectiveness of the instructional process, since what cannot be measured cannot be said to have been learned. Based on stated objectives, learners know what to expect and their existing abilities can be measured. Sheaf discusses the following distinguishing characteristics of a competency-based approach to education and training:

1. Course content is based upon actual worker's tasks which are measurable.
2. Student performance objectives are specified in advance of instruction.
3. Student achievement is based upon demonstrated competency.
4. Instruction is individualized.

5. The student and teacher are more accountable for performance of competencies.
6. Learning is guided by feedback.
7. Learning time is flexible.
8. An open entry/open exit program is possible.
9. Criterion-referenced measurement is employed to evaluate the attainment of the performance objectives.
10. The teacher is a manager and facilitator of instruction (pp. 6-7).

There are, however, many concerns raised about the outcomes-based approach to learning. In the process of implementing the agreed competency-based approach to Adult Basic Education and Training, the following major shortcomings about it would certainly have to be addressed by employers, labor, and ABET practitioners:

- \* the linkage between job and learning requirements leads to a tendency to place less emphasis on knowledge and understanding, relying instead on performance of specific tasks, the result is a worker who is well prepared for a job as it now exists but ill-equipped to adapt and learn with changes in job requirements;
- \* the revision of competency-based materials is considerably more time consuming especially if the program is individualized;
- \* the emphasis on individualized learning can foster a spirit of competition not cooperation and learning from each other;
- \* the focus on accountability at the expense of flexibility leads to emphasis on outputs of learning programs whilst paying less attention to the learning process itself;
- \* the specification of affective outcomes (attitudes, values, and habits) is often overlooked or omitted due to the subjective nature of their evaluation and the difficulty of stating non-technical objectives (Auerbach, 1986, Sheaf, no date).

Sheaf correctly concludes a review of this approach by cautioning that, "Like any other educational reform movement it should not be viewed as a cure-all to the woes of modern education. It is a means to answering some of the questions being raised" (p. 14).

An NUM economist and head of the union's collective bargaining unit, who was also a member of NUM's ABET negotiating team at the chamber, went on a sabbatical in Canada.

He sent us some literature, which we have shared with some employer experts, about issues of competency based education in Canada. I would like to quote one which is written from a labor perspective. In The Case Against Competence: The Improvement of Working Knowledge Jackson (1989) reveals the nature of the debate over the outcomes-based approach as is taking place in Canada today. She effectively argues for the need to contest the competency movement:

Who can be against "competence"? It is the motherhood slogan of current reform movements in institutions of education and training.... Thus, we are assured, with the competency approach a dollar spent on education brings a dollar's worth of results. This "common sense" approach to educational efficiency is touted as the answer to individual employability and the key to Canada's "competitive edge" in the new global economy. The rhetoric is persuasive, even comforting, in these times of economic upheaval....

The competency framework offers educational opportunities from which the interests of working people have already been excluded.... The net effect of this practice is to impose a narrow and short-sighted perspective on the definition of learning "needs", weighing in favor of those "objectives" which can be expressed in simplistic, often mechanical terms. Such a restrictive view of competence obscures and trivializes many essential aspects of learning for work as well as many critical elements of mastery in performance. In so doing, it undermines the most rudimentary understanding of both the long and short term interests of workers....

These simplistic pursuit of one-dimensional "competence" obscures many essential features of everyday working knowledge which have long been at the heart of the struggle between working people and their bosses.... These are the forms of working knowledge which underlie "good judgement" on the job, including reliable intuition for routine problem solving or "trouble shooting" and safe reflexes in unpredictable and emergency situations....

At its worst, this fragmented approach to skill training resembles what Frank Smith has called (in the context of public schooling) "programmed learning ... a ritualistic teaching of non-sense, educational junk food, instruction with no significant intellectual content".... The power and popularity of the competency approach derive from its appearance as a common sense solution to a simple empirical problem. It lulls us into believing that the "requirements" of work can be established more or less

as fixed entities, and that we need only use objective, empirical procedures (free from the vested interests of educators) to determine what they are....

The other important danger embedded in the competency paradigm is its invasive power as a system of accountability for educational action.... They make education and training more administrable, not by educators, but by managers in the offices of educational institutions as well as in industry and government.

The obvious answer is that all of us must be against it, if the momentum of this destructive and contradictory approach to education and training is to be halted. We should individually and collectively refuse the administrative arrangements which make us its practitioners in isolation from one another in public schools, post secondary institutions, labour unions, and community groups. We should claim an effective voice in redefining the interests of "ordinary Canadians" in all kinds of education and training opportunities, including the right to acquire - and to use for our own ends - comprehensive forms of knowledge at work. The case against competence deserves a central place on our agenda for political action (pp. 82-84).

However, Jackson (1989) further states what I also observed in South Africa, that, "But there are dangers too, in pursuing a broader approach to working knowledge in the present historical juncture" (p. 82). The notion of national standards is so broadly accepted in South Africa that it has to be tried and evaluated.

In South Africa, the following evaluation of the competency based approach has been made by Clifford and Kerfoot (in Hutton, 1992). They also mention COSATU's backing of the competency based approach :

#### **Weaknesses and strengths of competency-based approaches:**

In South Africa today, increasing interest has been shown in the CB approach to ESL programmes for adults. (Cosatu, 1991) The approach is appealing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it presents learning in a meaningful way to teachers and learners by stipulating very clearly what will be learnt and taught in terms of behavioral outcomes. CB programmes appear systematic and well organized, with materials neatly packaged into modules. This enables learners and teachers to follow a programme very systematically and avoids deviation. Assessment also appears easier to carry out as it is built into the performance of competencies. This also offers the participants a greater sense of achievement in a learning process which is inherently



organic, developmental and therefore difficult to assess. ... Although it is relatively new and has not been extensively evaluated yet, criticisms to date have been made on ideological and linguistic grounds (p. 184).

Clifford and Kerfoot's discussion of ideological and linguistic criticisms of the competency based approach borrows from Auerbach (1986) and have been covered in this chapter. They are about who determines and benefits from competencies, competencies tend to teach limited and passive skills instead of critical thinking skills, and that the complex phenomena of learning is reduced to discrete skills which may be a way of controlling the learning process. They also raise the fact that it is the what not the how of learning that is emphasized, and that competency based learning may lead to a mechanical rote learning process. The below caution by Clifford and Kerfoot (in Hutton, 1992) has also been made by different people during the course of this study. Although they suggest that we should be guided by careful pilots and research in implementing this approach, they do not suggest that we should abandon it entirely:

In conclusion, a CB approach appears to offer a relatively cheap 'quick fix' solution to large-scale ABE provision in South Africa. It implies a less demanding role for teachers and trainers and therefore minimal investment in training. On the other hand, the severe criticisms leveled at the approach suggest a need for caution especially as it is still relatively new. Therefore further research and evaluation of the approach in practice is essential. Adopting such an approach in haste could have disastrous repercussions for the entire country (p. 185).

The notion of an outcomes-based approach to learning is becoming acceptable in South Africa precisely because it is being re-defined. While competency-based training has traditionally accommodated mostly job-based skills, it is now being extended to accommodate "individual, workplace, and national development needs" (see principle twelve later). Whether that honest intention can be translated into practice is another battle altogether. The

approach we are advocating for is that learning-outcomes should show an accommodation of both general knowledge and technical skills. The challenge lies in finding such a balance, which should be a negotiated process. The notion of organizing learning according to outcomes is not by itself anathema. It is when learning outcomes are defined narrowly to mean workplace tasks, in exclusion of a broad range of individual and national needs, that it becomes totally unacceptable. We believe that the notion of competency-based learning, though originating in, and is traditionally associated with, functional workplace skills, can be appropriated and redefined to include needs of learners, workplaces, and communities. Union negotiators generally understood that employers are attracted to the competency-based notion partly because they would like to know what they are getting for their investment in education. Employers would like to make practitioners account by teaching job-relevant skills. However, in South Africa today, employers now accept that learning competencies can never be acceptable to other stakeholders if they do not accommodate broader interests. The NUM-Chamber agreement shows that this is a clear achievement by the union. Now that all are part of decision making, we have to focus on a new struggle, and not get distracted by initial qualms about competency-based learning, I urge. The new struggle lies in establishing consensus around national ABET outcomes, and the other part of it being how to contextualize national standards. What is necessary is both competence and commitment from all parties to continue negotiating the establishment of national curriculum outcomes, and how to localize or customize them.

Labor unions would have to build up their capacity in order to engage employers, "on each and every outcome statement", as we say. The processes for setting and monitoring

education and training standards need to be seriously contested because competencies are situated and interested - that means they are not neutral or apolitical entities. During the 1993/4 period, standard setting forums at the national level, like the ANC/CEPD planning task team, and at the industry level, like the Mining Qualifications Forum technical task teams, in which I both participated, were actually unrepresentative in terms of gender and race. In a house full meeting, you would find one, sometimes two black people and women. One hopes that people do not make a mistake of equating standards with white males. It is going to be interesting to watch the race and gender composition of standard setting and monitoring institutions like a South African Qualifications Authority, and new education and training authorities in various sectors.

In South Africa, the overall task of developing and monitoring national standards (a National Qualifications Framework), in which an outcomes-based approach is a key, would fall on a yet to be established institution called the South African Qualifications Authority (ANC IPET, 1994). This institution of accreditation and maintenance of national education and training standards would do its work through a system of education and training authorities for various economic sectors and geographic provinces, like the current Industry Training Boards. Ideally, SAQA should not be a big bureaucracy. National education and training standards would be registered with SAQA, via SAQA accredited education and training authorities in various sectors and areas. Also, SAQA and its satellite bodies should operate through as system of transient or specially convened pools of standards setting and monitoring teams, instead of employing a large permanent staff (ANC IPET, 1994).

Although issues of setting and monitoring education and training standards had not yet been widely discussed in South Africa, labor and employers are generally expected to play a role in their implementation. It is mainly in the context of industry education and training structures that unions and employers would actively interact in setting and monitoring education and training standards. How these interactions will occur is not yet final. Since the dialogue about education standards was mostly taking place at the very top, with the NUM activities not been necessarily representative, one should not get an impression that there was an intense dialogue about standards in South Africa. I would like to end the discussion on standards by recommending that the following book be read in view of the national qualifications dialogue and possible role/s for a South African Qualifications Authority and sector education and training authorities: Monitoring the Standards of Education edited by A. C. Tuijnman and T.N. Postlethwaite (1994). In it, various writers discuss issues about setting and monitoring education standards. They make it clear that there is no one internationally accepted way of setting and monitoring education standards.

6. Access. Provide access to ABET opportunities for all employees.

This principle is about increasing people's opportunity to learn. In chapter three, "The Research Context", I discuss how in the past race was a barrier from skills acquisition in South African mines. It is also generally known that gender has been a worse barrier to education and training. Today, paid education and training leave, as discussed in principle 13 below, is already threatening to be the single most important barrier beyond the legal lifting of "the color bar". Of what good are the grand schemes and frameworks if workers cannot begin to access them? If the question of PETL is not attended to in workplace based ABET

programs, "opening the doors of culture and learning to all", as pronounced in the 1955 ANC Freedom Charter, can hardly be realized.

I would like to further suggest that there are other aspects of this principle that are yet to emerge. For instance, the question of childcare, which is generally a non-issue in the male hostel environment of the mines, may be a burning-issue of access in other ABET programs.

7. **Articulation.** Provide for learners to move, on successful completion of accredited units of learning, from one course in the certification framework to another.

The principle about articulation would provide for both vertical and horizontal mobility within a National Qualifications Framework, of which ABET is a part. ABET qualifications would be established in such a way that they articulate with formal schooling, a GEC, to which they will be equivalent. This would be possible because both formal school and out of school education and training will be provided within a single National Qualifications Framework.

This principle, though it could be better stated, speaks of the fact that adult learners who complete ABET programs at workplaces, or elsewhere, can continue their learning in formal school systems if they so wish. The articulation and equivalence of school-based and out-of-school learning and qualifications does "not" mean adults will have to learn formal school curriculum. An adult curriculum should be relevant to adult needs. The challenge is to make sure that these intentions are implemented as intended.

8. **Portability.** Provide for successful learners to transfer their ABET credits or qualifications from one provider or user of ABET qualifications to another.

National guidelines, the NQF, would make it possible for someone to be able to transfer earned credits whether it's a single module or a whole certificate level. ABET providers, like

NGOs, the government, and workplaces would have to be "accredited" by a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a yet-to-be-born institution, that will act as a "guarantor" of the NQF. An important implication here is that workplaces, as one of many education and training "vendors", will have to meet nationally set standards of accreditation. The steps of developing the NQF and setting up SAQA are outlined in a separate 1995 education legislation.

9. Recognition of prior learning and experience. Give recognition to prior learning.

In an article that we incorporated in some union workshops about the Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE), Fehnel (1994) says: "The term prior learning basically means (1) learning that was acquired by an individual prior to undertaking new learning activities, and (2) learning acquired in 'nonformal' settings - that is learning acquired informally, such as on-the-job training, or through education and training events offered by organizations not a part of the formal education establishment.

Faces of many workers light up when they hear that the amount of time spent in prison, I mean in a classroom, will no longer be the measure of learning. In union ABET workshops, we often ran over our time because of anxious questions from workers who want to know "how and when" this principle would actually be implemented. Consequently, it is important at this stage to point at Appendix H, which is a copy of an illustration we always used when explaining possible steps in which a worker's existing abilities can be assessed and recognized. It graphically describes some of the principles under consideration. It should be

SAQA's responsibility, not that of individual sectors, to provide guidelines on how to assess and credit prior learning and experience.

The fact that many mineworkers are not fully literate would limit their ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in paper and pencil tests. It is not yet clear what will happen if tests are translated to all first languages. Beyond test measures for RPLE, non-test methods like portfolios are under consideration. A portfolio would allow a worker to compile and produce evidence of achieved curriculum objectives for evaluation by a committee which may include employers, unions, workers holding similar qualifications, and external educationists.

In South African mines the RPLE issue is a burning one because many African workers, who could not legally be certified and consequently remunerated, are already performing the work of white miners, and other skilled positions. As Morotoba writes in The Shopsteward (August/September 1993) the RPLE issue exist in other industries as well:

The skills people do have are not recognized or compensated. One often sees young white males reading newspapers in the bakkies while the so-called unskilled assistants do their jobs. Some of us have had young graduates introduced to us on the shopfloor. We teach them the jobs and soon they become our supervisors. Yet, we are told we have no skills! When we ask for more pay, we are told we have reached the limit for our grade (p. 25).

RPLE is almost an issue of racial access in South Africa. A solution to the problem of skilled but uncertificated, and consequently under-remunerated, workers must be found. RPLE adds an attraction to an outcomes led approach to learning. One will only have to demonstrate ability on stated learning outcomes, even if abilities were picked up in prison. Teaching and

learning would focus on knowledge and skill areas identified as "gaps" in terms of objectives spelled out in a given curriculum.

10. **Voluntarism.** Provide for individuals to undertake learning on a voluntary basis.

This principle applies to learners who are past the age of eighteen. The fact that a General Education Certificate (GEC) obtained by adults through ABET programs will be equivalent in value with a GEC obtained by children after ten years of compulsory schooling, leads some people to mistakenly assume that participation in ABET programs will also be compulsory. According to the principle of "voluntarism", adults, including workers in formal employment, cannot be compelled to participate in learning. "Because you are an adult, employers cannot force you to go to class", we have had to say. However, some shaft stewards, conscious of and concerned about the other side of this double edged sword, have suggested that, "until all our people have a basic education level, we just have to make sure that everyone gets this opportunity". In a national ABET conference (SACABE, 1994), many educationists felt that since ABET would mostly be "a first bite at the cherry for many people", a major campaign to popularize ABET should be undertaken. "Advocacy for ABET" is elaborated in the ANC/CEPD ABET Plan (ANC IPET, 1994). While plan is to mobilize adults for participation in ABET programs, the policy is still voluntarism.

11. **Further Opportunities.** Allow for learners to benefit from learning and employment options aligned with the career paths operational in the company/industry.

Currently, workplace literacy classes are not, in any deliberate manner, linked or related to other forms of education and training in the workplace. It is envisaged that worker-learners



should be able to select ABET modules in preparation for defined learning-pathways.

Possible learning-pathways would be identified and registered with an industry education and training authority (currently an Industry Training Board), so that possible career paths can be easily available for ABET learners who want to make their learning choices toward pursuing certain trades. Consequently, ABET programs are an initial phase toward "lifelong learning".

The implementation of this principle should, however, be triggered by decisions and actions in the national government, related to SAQA and industry education and training boards.

12. Relevance. Shall address provider<sup>11</sup> needs at industry and enterprise level, and be relevant to national development needs, community development needs and individual development needs.

This important principle means that program planners and practitioners will have to design and deliver ABET courses which will respond to multiple needs, that is: individual, workplace, and national development needs.

This principle means that SAQA can only set minimum standards in the National Qualifications Framework. National curriculum standards will not be voluntary for providers who want to offer nationally recognized qualifications. (The U.S.A. national and state-wide curriculum standards are voluntary. However this may become tenuous as these standards begin to drive assessment). At South African workplaces and elsewhere, stakeholders would have to work together in "contextualizing" national standards. Further, planners and practitioners can add on national standards based on expressed needs of individual learners and companies.

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<sup>11</sup>In this principle, provider refers to an employer, not to education and training service providers.

While the principle about relevance can be understood to accommodate workers' needs for understanding relevant socio-political issues, on top of gaining economic skills, it can also be interpreted to advocate for a limited job-based relevance of learning, on the basis that socio-political competencies do not demonstrably lead to improved performance on the job. A difference of interpretation of this nature can lead to some curriculum debates.

The principle about "relevance" is related to the first principle about "legitimacy" in the sense that ABET programs will have to be relevant to the needs of all stakeholders in order to enjoy any degree of legitimacy. The accommodation of disparate needs calls for a perpetual negotiations culture during the implementation.

13. Paid Education and Training Leave. Note: No agreement on the proposal on the right to paid education leave was reached.

This is how the disagreement on the PETL principle is stated in the agreement between NUM and the Chamber of Mines. "The chamber does not want to talk about PETL at all. They do not even want to state it as a principle that PETL will be an issue for negotiations at the mine level. They argue that just to even mention it at industry level would be to impose decisions to managers at mine level", this view was expressed by different union negotiators over a year's negotiating period. "NUM has won the rights workers demanded, except for PETL (and curriculum issues)", an assessment by the union ABET educator. Consequently, I would like to elaborate on the outstanding PETL issue, which is an issue of access.

In COSATU's The Shopsteward Guide to ABE Programs (undated), the rationale for workers' need for Paid Education and Training Leave is based on sheer human exhaustion:

If we are serious about making it possible for workers to further their education, paid education leave is essential. Workers can then study when they are not tired and attend classes regularly (p. 24).

The term "paid education leave", referring to time off from work in order to attend education and training programs, should be understood as Paid Education and Training Leave (PETL), in keeping with developments in integrating education and training. Arguably, the PETL issue is a class issue, or a form of a class weapon. Generally, people who occupy higher job categories, have higher education and training, and earn higher incomes, have more opportunities for further development. On the other hand, folks who are in low wage jobs, with less education and training, also have less opportunities or access to develop themselves. Unless some serious intervention is made, PETL provision being one measure, we will continue to have gross disparities between the haves and have nots.

A COSATU PRP recommendation is that 400 hours a year should be the demand for Paid Education and Training Leave (COSATU PRP, 1993). It reads as follows:

There should be a campaign for the right of all workers to 400 hours of paid education and training leave per year, until they have the equivalent of a general education qualification at the end of compulsory education (p. 87).

According to COSATU PRP, 400 hours is calculated on the basis of "what is currently the average duration of literacy courses (250 hours), given that we want to try and accommodate both education and training. It was not absolutely scientific", the COSATU PRP ABE Coordinator explains.

NUM's opening demand in 1993 ABET negotiations was: "Principle 6. All workers should have a right to paid time off for study" (NUM proposal to the Chamber of Mines, June 8, 1993). The assumption was that 400 PETL hours a year would be for workers who

need basic education and training, not for education and training above ABET levels.

Employers flatly rejected this demand. The union's fourth progress report, dated August 24, 1993, reflects that the union then compromised, unsuccessfully, its position in order to enable some settlement:

The sixth meeting of the Working Party was held on 20 August. Progress made is contained here in:

2) Principles

2.1 Paid Education Leave (PEL)

After further debate, NUM proposed the following rewording: "PEL is recognized as a key means of providing access to ABE for workers. How PEL is implemented will be subject to operational constraints at enterprise level".

The Chamber indicated they have no mandate on PEL and needed to go back to their mines in order to obtain one.

The union continued to try to have some industry-wide principle that would declare PETL a legitimate subject for negotiation at enterprise level. Consequently, a union negotiations progress report dated June 6, 1994 reads as follows:

Paid Education and Training Leave. Note: There was no agreement reached on the principle below. Paid Education and Training Leave. Recognize that all workers have the right to paid time off for education or training. The way this right is exercised will be subject to operational constraints at company level.

However, the above position was reversed by employers to plainly say that there is just no agreement at all. With PETL being an outstanding issue in the 1993 ABET demands, the union decided to re-table a PETL demand as the sole education and training item in 1994 chamber negotiations. Realizing that significant victories were scored in the very first set of ABET negotiations, and that there were many industry and national transition issues in workers' minds, and that workers were not yet well mobilized for PETL, the union decided to

settle the 1993 ABET negotiations without PETL. Going to 1994 negotiations there had to be both momentum on the ground and a change of strategy on PETL.

The following NUM's 1994 PETL demand to the Chamber of Mines was reported in full by the national press, as part of headline news on wage negotiations:

**"NUM kicks off pay talks with demand for minimum 25% increase"** (Business Day, May 18 1994).

Chamber mines should agree to pay for 200 hours off for at least ten percent of their workforce at work each year to participate in education and training courses, provided that each person contributes at least 200 hours of his/her own time to the course. This shall apply to education and training courses approved by a procedure subject to negotiation at group level. These negotiations shall be completed by August 1994 (p. 1).

Three union compromises are entailed in this proposal. Can you identify them? Firstly, the union proposes that workers contribute 50 percent of their own time if employers also put in 50 percent time to the kitty. In practice, this would mean that a worker comes to class for two hours a day, of which one hour is on company time. This can be for four days in a week. "Putting some of their own time, workers should show some commitment in attending and performing in classes", some people have reasoned.

Secondly, the ratio of workers who could be given time off is specified at an all time low 10 percent. Much as there are no reliable figures, the number of workers currently in mine literacy classes is around three percent, based on information that we were collecting from the mines. For instance, at a mine with 18 000 employees. Of which 62 percent were estimated to be illiterate, after some internal testing. The number of learners in ABE classes had ranged between 300 and 350 in the past five to six years. The quality of the program notwithstanding, this means that only about 3 percent of the need was being met. ABE provision

in the mines is assumed to be above the national average of 1 percent. At 10 percent, the number of learners would increase significantly to above 1 000, at that mine. A mine Adult Basic Education coordinator, who was not aware of this union proposal in negotiations, exclaimed, "We will need a lot more classrooms and teachers if that can happen!" Also, in the long term, this percentage can be negotiated up by local ABET committees.

A third concession is that the union proposes to negotiate with employers the kind of course workers can get time off for. Considering employers' concerns in giving time off for an ABET curriculum they did not even agree with, the union was willing to negotiate, from mine to mine, the kind of courses for which PETL could be used. With the PETL demand being re-formulated, pressure was then exerted on the union negotiating team to keep the PETL demand linked to a wage settlement. In other words, to refuse to settle for wage increases without a settlement on PETL.

Presenting a PETL demand in June 1994 was based on the assumption that the 1993 ABET agreement would be signed without PETL, as already agreed with management. As discussed earlier, in August 1994, the chamber reneged on the 1993 ABET agreement, a situation which led to a dispute. The 1994 wage negotiations plenary assigned the PETL demand to a working group. In August 1994, at the end of field work for this dissertation PETL was still in working group negotiations without hope for early settlement.

The 1994 wage dispute was settled without PETL. On the other hand, the chamber signed the 1993 ABET agreement. This move appeared to be part of their strategy, if one carefully reads the chamber analysis and approach to the union's PETL demand. The following chamber analysis was shared by some trade unionists involved in negotiations:

## BACKGROUND

It appears as if the Union is looking for approximately 2 months leave of absence for 10% of the workforce per year. This is probably one of the NUM's "hard issues" in '94. It is also high on the Government's (RDP), COSATU's and educational lobbyist's agenda and featured prominently in the NUM's Congress discussions.

At Chamber level, the subject of education and training is being dealt with in an ongoing working party (ABE) with the NUM which commenced last year and is into the second leg, namely that of the implementation of a framework for application. The terms of reference of this working party are broad and comprehensive and it does appear to have momentum.

The particular issue of paid time off has again been proposed in discussions on this framework for application but has been resisted on the grounds that it is one of the NUM's proposals for the plenary wage negotiations.

The decision in this regard is therefore whether we address the issue directly in the wage review or defer to the working party where it might be traded off for some other concession.

A rejection of the 200 hours paid leave would have to be accompanied by some commitment to talking about education and training at another forum.

## RECOMMENDATION

- \* The Chamber should advise that broad education and training principles are under consideration in an industry working party.
- \* The issue of paid time off and/or percentages of workforce trained are ultimately mine or company level matters, which are going to vary widely with regard to particular operational circumstances. Training and education are pre-eminently "needs driven".
- \* The Chamber does not support as a general principle, the calculation of ratios and/or hours of training on member mines, at industry level.

In relationships with mines outside the chamber, the issue of PETL has been resolved by referring it to the lowest negotiating unit, though with less rancor. Outside of the chamber, we encountered some sincere attempts to work out possibilities for PETL given a combination of local circumstance, including resource constraints, facilities, educators,

workers' contracts, and the number of people who want classes. For instance, at one independent mine, employers amicably agreed to give time off to workers subject to logistics that could be sorted out. When we left the mine for the head office, we were confident that local shaft stewards and managers could figure out what works for them, given the spirit that was prevailing. Just before I concluded the field study, I made a point of re-visiting this mine. In fact, shaft stewards had been requesting head office staff to come and give advice since they were having some difficulties with ABE workbooks purchased from NGOs.

I had just arrived at the mine (the ABET manager, the group's Human Resources Head, who happened to be there, and I were at the mine manager's office waiting for the branch union chairman) when the ABET manager started saying, "So, what do you think now that our workers have decided not to take time off from work to attend classes?" I could not immediately understand what the man was saying since it was so far out from my realm of expectations. He reminded me about a previous meeting where the PETL issue was also discussed. Later, I separately asked the union chairman about this question. "In our mass meeting, the workers felt that they did not want to disrupt production. As long as management provides classes, they are working things out so that they can attend at their own time", he said in a mix of English and an African language. In classrooms, I asked learners how the timing of classes was working out for them. They confirmed that they had agreed to come at their own time. They described how the timing of the classes allowed them to come out from underground, quickly wash and rest, before coming to class.

We were sitting at a lunch table, when the managers and the union branch chairman worked on a calculator trying to confirm that participation in their program had increased



from about 3% to 17% in a matter of months. They walked me to hostel rooms that were being converted into classrooms, in order to accommodate the demand. Learners told me that union chairman was asked by workers, despite his busy schedule, to act as one of educators, "just to make sure that classes get off the ground on the right foot". He was pleased that the strategy of making ABET a regular agenda item in mass meetings was working. His frustration was with "uninspiring and irrelevant" workbooks. In his classroom, we tried to go over some basic steps or activities that they can take in order to generate their own topics and lesson plans, a participatory problem-posing approach. It is apparent that coming out of the top-down and expert-oriented approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, there is a need to confirm with people that their own reality and decisions are valid objects for education. However, during the period of this study, the union had not yet achieved sufficient access to programs so that some systematic work could be done on classroom level issues.

One cannot, however, be naive of the rocky past of the labor-management relationship in this mine. When we were first invited, shaft stewards told us that although the union commanded over 90% of membership among workers, all educators were drawn from the handful of non-union workers, without anybody else knowing. It is in this mine, where we conducted a joint workshop for branch shaft stewards and the said educators. It puts the union in an awkward position when boxes of books are purchased and educators appointed without due consultation. A union then has to negotiate for derecognition of existing educators, and call for joint selection of legitimate educators through transparent criteria and processes in order to ensure "transparency" and "equal opportunity."

During my lonely four hour night drive back to Johannesburg, I started second guessing how different my experience in South Africa would have been should I have not disproportionately spent more time in industry and national policy, as compared to time on the ground with workers and managers who were ready to try out things. I found that the positive attitude prevailing between labor and management in this mine does not necessarily constitute a deviant case. I also do not necessarily assume that PETL will be such a sticky issue in all economic sectors of South Africa. For instance, in the energy sector, which is currently organized by NUM and NUMSA, Paid Education and Training Leave was given in full early on.

The ILO (International Labor Organization) has policies, however subject to contextual circumstances, to promote "paid educational leave", our Paid Education and Training Leave (PETL). The following recommendation is expressed in accordance with a 1974 Paid Educational Leave Convention:

Article 2 of Convention No. 140 obliges ratifying states to formulate and apply a policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice and by stages as necessary, the granting of paid education leave for the purpose of: (a) training at any level; (b) general, social and civic education; and (c) trade union education.

On the one hand, this ILO article declares PETL as a right for workers. On the other hand, it does not prescribe its implementation steps. In the case of apartheid South Africa, PETL has not been a right in law. In view of this violation, the ANC education and training policy framework (ANC, 1994), precisely in the section dealing with ABET, states that:

Workers, including farm and domestic workers, will have the right to paid time off during working hours to attend ABE classes. The implementation of this right will be negotiated through the collective bargaining process (ANC, 1994, p. 89).

At the face of it, this statement has impressed many workers and ABET professionals. In public stakeholder consultations that were conducted by the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, in which I participated, national employers, led by the mines, unmistakably expressed their "comfort" with this clause. This article is significant in what it does not say. It does not oblige employers to give any amount of time off, to any number of employees, and for any kind of learning. To illustrate this point, the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator puts the question in this way:

In Italy, the right to PETL is enshrined in the constitution. Each industry, not company, negotiates its application. Then collective bargaining at companies were to better the industry standard. It was also half-half, at 150-150 hours. In practice, most companies ended up giving two thirds of the time. But only for 4% of the workers at any one point in time. As to who goes on courses is negotiated with the union.... The question is whether a new legislation just states the right, or goes a step further to state a minimum hours.

The following is a full context of the often cited Italian example:

In Italy negotiations between trade unions and employers have been more successful because they took place during a period of general militancy amongst workers in the early 1970s. Workers were not satisfied with the 1970 Workers Statute which gave unpaid leave for studies. When workers applied individually for study leave, they were steered towards courses that met managements' needs.

Thus, the aims of the campaign for paid education leave were to encourage workers to act collectively to overcome the divisions and deskilling that had taken place in their ranks. It was also a means of collectively improving the education provision for members of the working class.

In the early 1970s the trade unions popularized the demand for universal paid education leave. They argued that if all workers had access to education, educational qualifications would fall away as a reason for wage differentials. They also maintained that greater knowledge would give workers more control over the labour process.

The campaign gained momentum during collective bargaining in the engineering industry and quickly spread to other industries. By the late 1970s paid education

leave rights were part of nearly fifty industrial agreements. The norm was 150 hours over three years: some agreements were more restrictive, others were better. For example, chemical workers won 200 hours over two years, printing workers, 100 hours every two years, and farm workers, sixty hours per year. People really used this right. In 1977, for example, 80 000 workers made use of the 150 hours paid education leave to complete secondary schooling as well as trade union courses.

The Italian example shows that paid education leave must be sustained by active educational work. The campaign spread during the 1970s while unions fought to have their membership gain secondary schooling. The number of workers who used paid education leave grew from 20 000 in 1973 to almost 7 million in 1975. The campaign was most successful in the bigger, more active factories. But as trade union and other mass activity declined in the 1980s, fewer workers applied for education leave (Roux, 1992, pp. 29-30).

According to Learn and Teach, E.L.P. and Lacom (1991), "The 150 Hours campaign that began in 1973 was an enormous victory for the trade unions in Italy. For the first time ever the unions had the ability to provide adult basic education for the working class on a very large scale" (p. 103). The Italian example is also characterized by different applications of paid education leave in various sectors. Differences on the nature of Paid Education and Training Leave, which often favor employers, are more exemplified by the decentralized

German situation:

In Germany paid education leave is very limited. Major employers agreed to the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) demands for paid education leave. The employers then pushed for local legislation. Now paid education leave rights differ from area to area, and some areas have no paid education leave law at all. The DGB has been unable to get national legislation passed.

In most German states paid education leave is as little as five days per year. In some areas workers must be under twenty-six years of age. They must also prove that they are "worthy" of education. The categories and numbers of workers who can be released are restricted. Employers, who alone fund this form of leave, insist on checking the content and educational institution. In some cases, they have created their own educational institutions to undermine those preferred by the DGB (Roux, 1992, p. 29).

Although various kinds of paid education leave laws exist in many countries, like Australia, Britain, Belgium, Canada, India, New Zealand, and India, Sweden constitutes an ideal case scenario:

The Swedish state gave backing to mass education amongst workers as early as 1944. Paid education leave rights were entrenched and broadened in the legislation of 1975 and 1981. Today workers in Sweden enjoy the best paid education leave rights. Time is limited, although it is usually a maximum of one month per annum, and studies are unspecified.

Although a student should have a clear study plan, the leave rights include study circles, which are completely undirected. Employers are liable for fines if they delay workers for more than fourteen days in the case of a planned trade union course and six months in the case of other studies. The type of training requested determines how the state and employers fund the worker student's wages (Roux, 1992, p. 30).

Based on experiences from various countries, Roux (1992) concludes that trade unions often have to undertake campaigns in their fight for paid education leave. She says:

What is clear from the above is that the struggle for paid education leave for workers attending basic education courses is long and hard. The struggle for paid education leave for trade union education is even harder. The unions require clear aims and strategies toward state and capital in order to win paid education leave. They must run an inventive and sustainable campaign (p. 31).

Although the COSATU Participatory Research Project (1993) recommends a series of campaigns, none were carried out during 1993-94 when NUM was negotiating with the chamber. As to how much progress can be made on the issue of PETL without a concerted campaign still remains to be seen.

In ABET commissions at ANC provincial and national education conferences, which were co-facilitated by the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator and I, people did express their frustration with the "weak position" of declaring PETL as a right without legislating its application. A right or wrong transitional consideration was that it could not be made any

stronger without impacting negatively on "a carefully built national consensus around education and training".

Besides the fact that employers had already hardened their position on PETL in industry negotiations, and at the National Training Board, the people had not yet been mobilized around it. In fact, Adult Basic Education and Training as a whole was mostly not part of public debate about education in 1993/94. Newspaper headlines and stories announcing and analyzing "sweeping changes" in ANC education and training policies do not mention the ABET component, let alone PETL, for instance: "ANC's Education Revolution", (Sunday Times, January 9, 1994, p. 1) and "Education, training to get special attention", (The Citizen, May 25, 1994, p. 10). The fact is, the public gives ANC credit for "sound education and training proposals", and for pulling stakeholders together "behind a vision".

For understandable reasons, national imagination in South Africa is currently focused on the promise of "ten years of free and compulsory schooling for all children". ANC election advertisements focused on ten years of free education. I would go as far as to suggest that ANC success or failure to deliver on education can be measured more easily by the election pledge of ten years free and compulsory education, than by ABET not to mention PETL. In an election period like that, it was logical to focus on celebrated achievements. Also, it was important to keep fragile coalitions together, which means "emphasize areas we share". Later, when other issues are consolidated and moved off the front banner, PETL may still have to be vigorously "campaigning" for. I am not aware of the new government's position on PETL.

Having spent so many hours advocating for the PETL demand, I would like to end by offering the following compromise scenario. One can calculate PETL on the basis of 2 hours of class time per day. Given the fact that a Friday is a dead day<sup>12</sup>, 8 hours in 40 weeks a year would come down to 320 hours. If employers put in 50 percent of the time, it would mean 160 hours a year of PETL. 10 per cent, as a minimum industry benchmark for employees who can get release time can be improved on at mining company level. In terms of courses, a balance between basic literacy level, completing ABET level, general education courses, and technical courses can be negotiated upon consideration of an actual pool of prospective learners. Reducing a 400 hours demand down to 160 hours might be an acceptable compromise if employers contribute 50 percent. Frankly, I find the chamber's refusal to talk about PETL at industry level to be unhelpful, to say the least. Just as basic education and training is a fundamental human right, national legislation needs to be introduced in South Africa to give a framework in which Paid Education and Training Leave can be negotiated in different sectors. In fact, future studies might look at PETL applications in various sectors.

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<sup>12</sup>A former secretary of education from India, advised against our ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team assumption of Friday as a nonfunctional day. However, when I worked as an Adult Education Officer in the mines, and when I talked to mineworkers during the course of this study, I learned that various reasons, including alcohol, account for poor attendance in Friday classes.

E. ABET FRAMEWORK AND DELIVERY

The parties note that at national level the ABET debate is still underway with the aim of establishing a national framework. It is thus proposed that the Working Group develop an ABET framework which will enable mines to further pursue their ABET development activities.

"The ABET agreement has to be followed up by joint implementation between the union and management. This is a major distinction between an education agreement and a regular wage settlement." We have tried to highlight this point among mineworkers. In view of this fact, NUM and the Chamber of Mines further agreed that the "scope" of work for this joint delivery working group would be as follows:

The goal of this joint Working Group will be to develop guidelines for the mining industry in the context of the emerging national education and training framework. In its work, the working group will be informed by national processes and developments as well as contribute to such processes and developments. In addition, the WG will develop guidelines to facilitate the delivery of ABET to workers within the industry.

The following aspects of the framework work are listed as needing further development: definition, aims, and principles. Also, the working group would develop "guidelines" for: learner curriculum, ABET levels, subject areas for ABET, standards, themes and competencies/outcome statements, assessment, recognition of prior learning, evaluation of existing curricula in terms of the national framework, development of education, training and development practitioners, integration of education and training, accreditation, career paths for learners, and governance. Guidelines for "management information systems, infrastructure and resources, and access", are also to be developed.

The delivery part of the agreement has neglected to identify the need for negotiating and planning for the financing of ABET programs. Up to this stage, the issue of how to



finance workplace education and training has not yet been adequately addressed. As a result, future studies might focus on funding issues. This should include the question of Paid Education and Training Leave which will imply substantial investment by companies.

It was agreed that a joint ABET working group at the chamber level be composed in the following manner: "a maximum of seven NUM and seven COM delegates". However, "the Working Group may invite external inputs as deemed necessary". From the NUM side, six representatives were selected from each of the six mining houses. The seventh representative is the union ABET educator. So that no momentum would be lost, an orientation workshop for the union team was conducted, even before the agreement was signed. This concept of joint ABET working parties is to be replicated at mining house, mine level, and down to the shaft or learning center level. Significantly, this new system of joint working groups sets up the stage for co-management of ABET programs in South African mines. For technical reasons, it may be appropriate to reflect the following legal status of the NUM-Chamber agreement:

F. AMENDMENTS

This agreement may be amended at any time in writing by agreement of both parties.

G. DURATION OF AGREEMENT

This agreement shall terminate on the expiry of 6 months notice which may be given by either party to the other at any time, subject to full reasons being provided for the basis of the termination.

A Next Area of Collective Bargaining:  
Linking Adult Basic Education and Training to Job Grading and Wages.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1994 chamber wage negotiations, NUM presented a demand for restructuring the current race-based job grading system in the mines. Black mineworkers have been historically relegated to the bottom eight job grades in the mining industry. In what can be a complex discussion, but is not, this issue is in fact linked to Adult Basic Education and Training. In the earlier mentioned television debate, the NUM spokesperson made it known that, "in the 1994 wage negotiations, we have established a working party on Job Grading. And we said, Job Grading would have to acknowledge the question of Career Pathing and the question of Training and Development".

To put the question bluntly: Will there be any monetary benefits for workers who successfully complete ABET programs? I mean, if workers gain knowledge and skills, and consequently improve their performance and productivity, will they get any economic rewards in return? (Now, we are not talking about literacy). If NONE, why would workers be interested to acquire education and training equivalent to ten years of education and training? And, what alternative mechanisms are there for people to improve their standard of living after the apartheid era? If YES, in what way/s would ABET qualifications lead to improvements in people's material conditions? In effect, what is the use of ABET? This area of contestation is only unfolding in South Africa.

Currently, there are ABE classes going on in South African mines and other workplaces. They are not linked to technical training or to defined career routes. They are

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<sup>13</sup>While reading this section, keep an eye on Appendix F.

also not linked to job grades. When a worker-learner completes a literacy/ABE program s/he has no hope of changing a job grade, and consequently wages. People spend ages in literacy classes without any clear end points or any defined next steps. This is a problem. In an attempt to do away with this "dead-end" approach to adult literacy, which is a national phenomenon in South Africa, South Africans are placing their hopes on an integrated education and training framework whose learning-pathways would relate to industry job grading systems. This strategy, it is hoped, should begin to pull the country out of the mud into a high road of skills and economic productivity. It should complement our political gains by both growing the economy and raising the people's standard of living.

In an interview with a veteran educator from one of the COSATU affiliated unions, I shared the fact that, to an extent I had not anticipated, I find that at NUM we have to take steps to promote ABET within the union. I wondered what the situation was in other sister unions. Beyond confirming the fact that ABET needs to be consciously promoted within the unions, the following response is a cutting edge illustration of the emerging link between Adult Basic Education and Training, Job Grading, and Wages:

You know where we got our breakthrough? When we got people to listen? It is when we linked it to wages. It is when we said, "This is a wages strategy". We explained how education and training levels are going to drive mobility in the job grading structure. People began to sit up and listen, "Okay now this is about money. Now its serious. Now let's talk". "Look, Grade Level 2 will have 12 modules, and you can get to Grade Level 3 by completing these other modules" we explained. That's what moved it from the periphery to the center for us. The minute it made this link. We did not have a problem any more. People were talking. They don't want to get into the details of what course goes where. They don't give a ... but they do care about the link.

That revolutionized it. It's definite now that workers know that that's our new bargaining strategy, for three years.... Honestly, I am convinced of that. It's this link with money that's gonna move it up the agenda of unions.

In Auto, I have been talking about Metal, they have agreed, you know in an annual agreement, that workers who complete the specified and agreed number of courses will automatically get paid at that level. And will automatically be moved up the next level. So, as you complete the specified and agreed number of courses you move automatically up, irrespective of whether your job changes. Simply by accumulating the required number of credits you will move up to Level Four in Auto Industry. Only the movement from Level Four to Five (which is beyond ABET) is based on vacancies. From Level One to Four is automatic progression. And that's on the agreement - a pretty substantial agreement....

No. They (employers) would not on their own do that.

To be able to appreciate the advanced thinking on this matter, I was given some documents which explain this new bargaining strategy. It is also important to understand that the goal of introducing "a new job grading system based on skills" is intended to "improve the standard of living", which amounts to a development strategy. Even though negotiating processes would depend on different circumstances, it is important to know the following goals of the strategy:

### **NUMSA's New Bargaining Strategy: Living Wage Campaign 1993 - 1996**

What is the strategy?

Over the next three years we want to:

- \* bring up the pay of the low paid, improve workers' standard of living
- \* bring in a new grading system based on skills, not tasks
- \* set up training and career paths for all workers
- \* establish new and improved benefits
- \* better the working conditions
- \* link employment security to industry growth and job creation
- \* negotiate with employers to find solutions to the problems facing our industries (p. 5).

NUMSA's approach of explicitly connecting education and training to job grades in a career ladder is already reported and discussed by Hindson and Crankshaw in a June 1990b issue of The South African Labour Bulletin. In it, the discussion of "new jobs, new skills, and new divisions" is actually accompanied by a graphic illustration of a worker climbing a ladder, from "unskilled, semi-skilled, artisan, technician, to engineer level" (p. 14).

A simple description of this idea, which we circulated at NUM workshops and meetings, is given by Morotoba in a COSATU magazine The Shopsteward (August/September 1993). It is here reproduced as Appendix F, COSATU's Vision for ABET and Industry Grading System. According to it, ABET Level 4 is equivalent to the end of ten years of schooling. Level 5 is beyond ABET, and is equivalent to a high school diploma, or an industry artisan certificate. Levels 6, 7 and 8, which refer to tertiary qualifications, are not reflected in Appendix F, but are part of the National Qualifications Framework, as shown in Appendix G. Now, the categorization of jobs would link with education and training qualifications by specifying the required education and training (competency modules) at different levels. In this way, a new job grading system would be based on knowledge and skills.

A description of the required nature and number of education and training modules or credits for different industrial job grades, that is career paths, would be publicly available as registered in education and training authorities for different sectors. The revolution is that people would know what knowledge and skills are required to perform at what jobs - as well as know what wages are available at each job grade. In this eventuality, the key to enter and progress in work would be based on learning abilities, not any other attribute, especially race

and gender. An introduction of a skills-based job grading system does not, however, presuppose any particular levels of wages because trade unions would continue to negotiate wage increases for different job grades. Other negotiable mechanisms of rewarding an increase in applicable knowledge and skills, include bonuses and profit sharing schemes. It is however important to emphasize that the application of this COSATU argument or theory would depend on outcomes of negotiations from industry to industry.

In the above mentioned case, workers would be remunerated according to the amount of education and training modules they have at the first four levels, the ABET levels. Beyond the ABET levels, one's wages would change based on the availability of positions that s/he can fill. An important attraction of this concept is that it should make it possible for people to improve their basic wages and basic standard of living based on the amount of basic education and training they can acquire. For purposes of this exploratory study, it is significant to report that COSATU unions and employers are involved in various forums and processes where strategies to reorganize education and training, work, and wage structures are negotiated. The Mining Qualifications Forum and the NUM-Chamber negotiations are some attempts to this regard. However, a pioneering example in this regard is the case of NUMSA, which is mentioned but not explored in this study.

COSATU educators point to the fact that according to the results of their Participatory Research Project (1993), it is evident that workers do not want to spend endless hours on general education before they can get skills for work and wages. Since consensus around the integration view is growing, however untried, it means that we all would have to rethink a number of assumptions about education, training, and work:

Has it been educationally proven anywhere that working adults cannot learn technical skills simultaneously with general education? Is there a proven amount of general education which is absolutely essential before one can start acquiring profitable skills? Whose idea is it that years of ABE should constitute a required platform for technical skills, for adults who are already having some skills and are on the job? Is there any penalty or gate-keeping measure going on here if adults are made to wait and grind through often irrelevant, boring, child based general education curriculum before they can be given access to profitable skills?

The traditional view that adults, like children, need to gain general knowledge separate from and as a platform or gateway to technical skills is the exact opposite of labor's vision that working adults, who often have some skills, can acquire technical skills simultaneously with general education right from the beginning. This point is evident from the previously cited SABC television debate:

- COM: We have all along said Adult Basic Education is the education phase, the basic education phase, before you become trainable for other work on the mines. We have not deviated from that.
- NUM: And to us, we are saying, Adult Basic Education, if it has no linkage with Training, and linkage with Career Pathing is empty. It is actually a program that prepares mineworkers to write letters home, and receive responses to it. And we cannot accept that type of an agreement (August 14, 1994).

The question becomes: If a worker acquires ten years equivalent of education and training, and right away applies it in his or her job, what mechanism is there to reward the increase in worker productivity? Through industry negotiations, some COSATU unions are attempting to introduce some skills-based grading systems. "In developing a Skill Based Grading System the COSATU PRP was guided by the COSATU Congress Resolution: Training must link to grading and pay. Increased skills must mean increased pay. Workers must be able to advance along a career path through a training system" (NUM ABET Workshop, July 1993, p. 83). A positive emerging implication is that if technical training is linked to ABE, the

integration concept becomes a gateway into the need to reorganize various aspects of the work environment including job grading and wage structures.

In my estimation, the simplest explanation of this discussion is contained in a 28-page document called Job Grading and Wages produced by the Johannesburg based Workplace Information Group (WIG), in October 1988. According to this pamphlet type document, which is written from a progressive perspective, job grading is described as:

### **What is job grading?**

Job grading is a way of saying how important different jobs are for management. Job grading is a way of comparing different jobs, and saying that some jobs are very important, and other jobs are not so important. Most job grading systems say that managers and engineers are very important, and that labourers and operators are not important. Wages are paid according to the workers' grade in the job grading system. A worker with an important job will earn higher wages than a worker with a job that is not so important (WIG, 1988, p. 2).

The Workplace Information Group (1988) describes and compares the following three job grading systems: Paterson, Peromnes, and Industrial Council. According to the Paterson job grading system, which is the one used in the mining industry, "decision-making" is used as the main factor to measure the importance of different jobs. "This means that the grading committee tries to decide whether the person doing the job has to make a lot of decisions or a few decisions. The jobs with a lot of big decisions go to the highest grades, while the jobs with a few decisions go into the bottom grade" (WIG, 1988, p. 90). Although the Paterson system classifies jobs into six grades or bands, from top management down to unskilled workers, black mineworkers are graded on a separate eight level system. In the mining industry, as in other South African sectors, white men mostly occupy the higher grades while Africans are relegated to the lower grades where there is less decision making and less pay.



This system of racial Paterson was then given legitimacy through various job reservation laws. This is the essence of racial-capitalism, that is apartheid.

Whereas the Paterson system considers decision making as a main factor in grading different jobs, the Peromnes job grading system (WIG, 1988) uses eight factors, with up to 36 points per each of the following factors: problem solving, cost of mistakes, pressure of work, knowledge, job impact, level of understanding of reading and writing, educational qualifications, training and experience. Although the Peromnes system would give a worker more points on other factors other than decision making, it still favors management because there are no points for heavy and dangerous work, as well as bad and stressful conditions, while factors like qualifications and others clearly favor management people (WIG, 1988).

In South Africa, a job grading system can be negotiated and established at an industry level by bodies like Industrial Councils, such as cited by a NUMSA educator above. Industry bodies can decide to grade the jobs according to training and experience. This process is also not scientific at all. The following explanation also shows the need for COSATU unions to participate in decision making during job grading processes:

In the past there were no black unions in the Industrial Council until MAWU joined in 1983. So only the white unions were bargaining with employers. The white unions pushed for the jobs of their members to be graded higher. So black workers in the metal industries stayed on low grades, while the white workers were pushed into higher grades.

That is why you might find a black welder and a white welder doing slightly different jobs. There may be no difference in skill and training for the job, but you find the job of the white welder graded higher than the job of the black welder (WIG, 1988, p. 15).

Since the 1922 white miners' strike, white unions have been negotiating themselves better deals with mine employers. It is possible to manipulate skills grading in not so subtle racial and gender ways. Clearly, the question of how to fairly distribute socio-economic opportunities and rewards in a capitalist context cannot be underestimated.

It concerns me that the current discriminatory job grading system is likely to forge its way to the future, at least in some form, primarily because of its claim as a "scientific" system. There are power issues involved in the process of designing job grades, and there is no scientific or objective way, including education and training, of deciding what criteria to use and how to measure them. At best, a job grading process is a negotiated estimation, I think. Its design and application need to be co-determined as COSATU unions are beginning to do. On the other hand, employers often present the job grading system as scientifically based on meritocracy, suggesting that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. WIG (1988) puts it this way:

By saying that the job grading is scientific, management wishes everyone to accept the system. They also want workers to believe that the system is neutral, that it does not favor anyone. They want to prevent workers from challenging the system (p. 16).

The notion of reorganizing work in such a way that knowledge and skills determine individual entry and mobility is fascinating stuff in a context where people are looking for practical methods of overcoming discriminatory criteria like race and gender. "I got my mental injection in Australia", a NUMSA educator said. Australian approaches to education and training, and work organization are quite a part of the South African dialogue. Australian advisers are stationed at COSATU head office, and in the affiliate where an agreement has been struck about linking ABET to Job Grading and Wages. In some interviews with them,

they told me of their speaking engagements with employers from various sectors. In some task team meetings, managers circulated literature about Australian curriculum standards. One Australian economist explained to me that, "The irony of it is that Australian literature, like the book Australia Reconstructed (1987), is more theoretical. While American literature like The Real Economy by Bob Reich (1991), now a Secretary of Labor in the United States, is more applied". In the following conference paper, Skill Formation and Human Resources Management: Australia's place in the international race G.K. Wurzburg (1992) highlights three lessons from the Australian experience, which are: the value of basic education and training in workforce productivity and competitiveness, the possibility of "starting at the back of the pack" and still be able to improve your position, and that education and training is one of many variables responsible for a country's competitiveness in the global economy. Wurzburg (1992) makes a case for basic education and training in economic development in the following way:

**Initial education and training: the human watershed.** Initial education and training is a powerful determinant of overall prospects through productivity levels. Analysts may differ in their views as to the precise percentage increase in productivity that results from a given increase in skills and competencies, but their overwhelming importance are not questioned. There is little new in the most recent findings in this area....

Eight years ago labour force qualifications was not on the public, the industrial, or the trade union agenda in Australia. Since then Australia stands out in the OECD community as the country that has done more than almost any other to confront the problem of inadequate skills and competencies among its workforce. The change in preoccupations and priorities could not be more striking or timely....

To be sure, there are a large number of influential intervening variables between training and competitiveness, and the review of French experience could hardly capture them all. In fact training may have strong positive affects on productivity and eventual competitiveness - but as accumulating evidence demonstrates (and this is

consistent with French findings), its eventual impact can be reinforced or undercut by a number of factors at the level of enterprise (pp. 115-123).

The linking of Adult Basic Education and Training to Job Grading Systems has not been without its critics within the labor and liberation movement in South Africa. Some comrades express caution about "raising people's expectations too high", are skeptical about "economism or economic determinism", or do not know how "this linking system may or may not work in this or that industry". The following are sample comments from informal discussions with some COSATU/ANC educators who are less enthusiastic about the development of linking ABET to Job Grading:

The struggle for people's rights should not be coopted. Whilst emphasizing the need for economic skills and advancement, we should guard against reducing the intrinsic value of education to narrow economic criteria. My fear with management's excitement about the competency based approach is that they will argue that every little objective must be listed and debated ahead of time, which will delay delivery, and nothing can be taught unless it can be justified in economic returns, that is economism.

A trade unionist is correct to suggest that beyond achieving Adult Basic Education and Training as a "political entitlement", there is a need to "seriously explain and bargain" its meaning in economic terms. This study suggests that the following questions need to be answered: What are economic implications of the ABET framework (not literacy) for both employers and employees? How will ABET lead to improvements in worker performance? How will it lead to business productivity? How will it lead to business profitability? How will it lead to improvements in the lives of workers? In short, where is it taking us? I suggest that it is legitimate to inquire how ten years equivalent of general and technical

development would lead to economic improvements in workers' lives, beyond improvements in performance, productivity, and profitability.

While no one wants to raise false hopes, it is hard to look at a worker, straight in the eye, and say, "Even if you can complete all the modules and levels of the ABET framework, and right away use the knowledge and skills in your job, you will get nothing for it". A major implication of this ABET framework, which is more than language literacy, is that one cannot, in good conscience, lead people through the whole framework, which we were estimating (it's not anybody's policy) that it may take about forty modules in four years of full-time study, and then say to people only employers can benefit right away not you. Some incentive measures must be found; otherwise there will be no participation in these programs, as hungry people look elsewhere for other ways of finding something to eat.

I think that employers were mistaken to think that workers would stay in a ten year equivalent general education (ABE) program, before they can be permitted to access profitable skills. Now that employers have been dragged, screaming and kicking, to a conciliation board and made to sign, they have to bargain the economic implications of the ABET agreement. One cannot assume that people will be happy to participate in elaborate ABET programs only to see economic spin offs being enjoyed by employers alone.

On the other hand, employers were faulting the union of overloading the ABET framework, and decelerating progression, by proposing Social Development Studies, and Science and Technology as part of core subject areas in general education. Employers were proposing a lean core consisting of Languages and Mathematics. This debate is now outside industry negotiations. Although various compromise proposals were floated on how to

overcome the impasse, there was no legitimate authority to pronounce a final national curriculum decision. A legitimate government is now in place and it should determine the composition of a National Qualifications Framework. Still, in future, the workplace is likely to be reorganized in such a way that basic education and training would fit into some agreed learning-pathways.

While it has been worthwhile to fight for basic education and training as a political entitlement, a basic human right, questions are emerging about its economic utility. "We have a duty to conceptualize the vision to completion.... We must have enough economics to know how much of it is going to fly. There is no point in being naive about it. We live in a global capitalist economy", a NUMSA educator suggested. Besides trade unions, the government and employers also have a duty to provide a way out of the apartheid settlement. Setting up an education and training system that relates to the economy needs to be tried, among other strategies. The tension between protecting hard-won democratic rights, and pushing for economic upliftment, should make for an interesting long-term challenge.

In chapter one, I discuss how Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that one purpose of "an exploratory qualitative study," such as this one, can be "to discover important questions, processes, and relationships, not to test them" (p. 43). The fact that there is an elaborately developed vision and a concrete agreement means that a complex and fascinating question has been found, that is: How does Adult Basic Education and Training relate to the economy, if at all? Underlying this question is: How can Adult Basic Education and Training contribute to the process of reconstruction and development? Again, the link between ABET and Job Grading Systems is still at its early stages in South Africa. In July

1993, when I arrived at NUM, the post of a Training and Grading Specialist was already advertised. Unfortunately, for about a year no person could be found to fill it, perhaps partly because of a lack of people with interest or training in this subject.

### Summary

By way of summarizing the main points of this chapter on negotiations, I would like to address myself to mineworkers and their employers. Although I note that the central bargaining process at the chamber level was a quite protracted, I express appreciation for a constructive attitude toward collaboration shown by managers at mine level. I am respectful of the tireless effort by shaft stewards, supported by a brilliant staff, whose passionate defence of workers' rights I cannot measure up to. Viva comrades!

As for the negotiations outcomes, both sides deserve to be credited profusely for "making history", as the chamber spokesman correctly says, in reaching agreement on so many fundamental issues, on the very first round of ABET negotiations. The significant achievements lie in your joint declaration of education and training as a fundamental human right, regretting apartheid abuses and acknowledging potential advantages of ABET, stating ambitious aims for ABET programs, adopting a revolutionary definition of ABET which introduces a departure from literacy as we know it to basic education and training as equivalent to the end of ten years of primary schooling, as well as integrating technical training to basic education, adopting industry principles that are in line with a new national approach to education and training, amongst which is the principle about involving all stakeholders in the running of ABET programs, thus opening the way for learners to participate in decision making, and finally setting up joint working groups to implement the

agreement. Realizing that education and training policy and provision are both political and technical issues, and are subject to stakeholder negotiations, is a major accomplishment indeed.

These achievements, whose combination is unique to South Africa, should not be overshadowed by the lack of agreement, at the chamber level, on the question of paid education and training leave. The fact that PETL has been speedily re-tabled by the union, is evidence of a correct understanding that without access to the long awaited ABET classes, workers will not be able to acquire knowledge and skills in order to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Program.

Given the visionary consensus-building approach shown by the ANC during the run-up to elections, we hope that the new legitimate government, in consultation with stakeholders, will immediately settle outstanding policy questions like curriculum, in order to facilitate implementation. Having had the privilege of participating and observing a year long negotiations process in the mining industry, and having had unlimited opportunities to interview and interact with personalities from both sides, I strongly believe that the collective bargaining process was a useful vehicle for laying the ground for possible structural transformation in basic education and training. We, however, anxiously await for a positive outcome from the continuing negotiations on job grading. Finally, the vision to make the mining industry a different place can only become a reality if agreements are implemented.



## CHAPTER VII

### LABOR CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN ABET<sup>14</sup>

#### Introduction

During the transition period between 1990-94, COSATU unions did, indeed, seize the historic opportunity to shape future national policy on education and training. "There was a need for unions to shape future policies. And they seized openings in the political transition to do so. In that sense, there was a relationship between political change and workplace change. Besides political considerations, there were problems in the nature of the economy which forced unions to push for the upgrading of worker skills", the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator felt. An emerging implication of trade union participation in national education and training policy formulation during this transition period, as evident in all relevant policy documents (NTB, 1994; ANC, 1994; Education and Training White Paper, 1995) is that employee organizations have been able to secure themselves a permanent place in future policy-making forums. This development makes it important for one to understand trade unions as they ought to be vehicles of worker-learner voices in statutory bodies like the proposed ABET Council.

It is important to indicate that COSATU was participating in education and training policy planning which was taking place at a national level, even though some of these decisions may in future be dealt with at a provincial level. According to the South African transitional constitution (1993), Adult Basic Education and Training is a function of provincial

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<sup>14</sup>The events of this chapter took place in the context of a 1990-94 Timeline for ABET Policy Development, see Appendix J.

governance. Section 126 (1) of the 1993 constitution provides that a provincial legislature shall be competent to make laws for a province with regard to "education at all levels excluding university and technikon education". Also, education is a "concurrent power" for which both the national and provincial parliaments can make laws. Training is, however, an exclusively national power. Generally speaking, this means that the national government will set national norms and standards for an integrated education and training system while delivery issues will be determined at the provincial level. Since the nine new provinces were still being established, and since Adult Basic Education and Training should be provided within a national framework, it was logical that transitional policy planning exercises took place at a national level. A permanent constitution should be adopted by 1996. With regard to education and training, it is generally not expected to change much, except if popular attempts to move teacher training to become a national government function become successful.

I do not discuss all education and training policy forums in which COSATU participated, such as the National Education and Training Forum (NETF). To illustrate COSATU's role in education and training policy making during 1993/4, I have chosen two processes which are relevant to ABET at the workplace. First, I discuss COSATU's involvement in the National Training Board (NTB), a key process in industry policy. Secondly, I discuss the CEPD process where COSATU participated as an ANC-ally. Within the NTB and ANC/CEPD processes, I focus on ABET issues. In national policy forums, union federations represent their affiliates. So, NUM was represented by COSATU at the National Training

Board and the ANC/CEPD forums. It still remains to be seen how many recommendations made in transitional forums will ultimately become part of national legislation.

First, I would like to offer a theoretical framework in which one can understand the South African education and training policy making process. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) preface their seminal text, The Policy Making Process, by suggesting that, "Political interactions and flawed human judgements play a primary role in making policy, and these necessarily involve partisan disagreements that are settled by voting or other manifestations of power" (p. vii). They also suggest that, "Whereas most policy research focuses on informing political elites, we suggest that helping ordinary people to think more clearly about social problems and possibilities is the best hope for shaping a better world" (p. viii). These two points are relevant to the fact that COSATU unions participated in the formulation of public policy in education and training on the side of the ANC, which is a political organization. Secondly, the workshops we conducted at NUM about policy issues are relevant to the suggestion of enabling ordinary people to understand public policy issues, whether these are industrial or national.

Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) further state that the public policy process, like the economic process, is a complex system which involves many players and decisions at various levels. Van Horn, Baumer and Gormley, Jr (1989, pp. 6-18) discuss the roles of the following public policy makers or actors: chief executives like presidents, legislators, bureaucrats, judges, interest groups and lobbyists, and the mass media. Consequently, public policy cannot be understood by merely looking at the actions of presidents and government officials. In the South African process of formulating public policy for basic education and

training during the period under study, there was a deliberate effort to involve ordinary working people, for example, through the COSATU PRP (1993) and various unions workshops at NUM. Trade unionists, employers, and educators in NGOs and other institutions clearly had vast input on the ABET policy than government officials. This was possible because the apartheid regime had been discredited. For purposes of this dissertation, it is important to underline the fact that government officials per se are not the sole public policy makers. According to Lindblom and Woodhouse, it is important that employers and trade unions be understood as important public policy players:

Important public tasks are delegated to the business sector in societies that employ market economies; since the demise of centrally planned economies in the USSR and eastern Europe, this includes all democratic systems and most of the rest of the world. Market-oriented societies can be said to have a second set of "public officials": business managers who organize the labor force, allocate resources, plan capital investments, and otherwise undertake many of the organizational tasks of economic life. Corporate executives, not government officials, set most policies regarding production of electric power, transportation services, entertainment, insurance, steel, housing, food, computers, newspapers, television, toys, and many other goods and services. Even though these functions are not governmental, they are public in the sense of mattering to everyone, and decisions about them are as important as decisions made by government (1993, pp. 7-8).

It is democratically necessary that public policy, whether made by elected government officials or top corporate executives, be contested because "business executives make wise decisions as well as bad ones, just as government officials do, the quality of decisions varies" (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993, p. 8). It is in the light of contesting public policy making by business managers that the labor's role should be viewed. However, I hasten to add that during this period in South Africa, the labor voice still extends well beyond private sector concerns. This is because of the unions' historic role in the struggle for liberation.

Although there can be no accurate portrayal of an orderly step-by-step policy making process, Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) offer the following scheme: policy problems arise and first appear on the agenda, political actors formulate issues for action, legislative or other action ensues, administrators subsequently implement the policy, and policy is evaluated.

Harman (in Hough, 1984) also describes four stages in educational policy: issue emergence and problem identification, policy formulation and authorization, implementation, and termination or change. Perhaps a clearer outline and definition of stages in a cyclical policy making process is the one offered by Anderson, Brady and Bullock, III, (1978):

- \* **policy agenda**, those problems among many, which receive the serious attention of public officials;
- \* **policy formulation**, the development of pertinent and acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with a public problem;
- \* **policy adoption**, development of support for specific proposals so that a policy can be legitimized or authorized;
- \* **policy implementation**, application of the policy by the government's administrative machinery to the problem;
- \* **policy evaluation**, efforts by the government to determine whether the policy was effective and why or why not.

In the South African transition, many policy issues, like paid education and training leave, were put on the policy agenda by the labor movement. As much as the right to paid education and training leave was on the public policy agenda, it is important to note that controversial issues about its implementation were somehow kept out of the agenda in what Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) call "strategic intelligence" (as discussed in chapter six). Some possible policy issues were not part of the policy agenda because there were no strong advocates for them. One can mention two examples of social issues that are still to be

seriously placed on the education policy dialogue: the needs of learners with disabilities, and the promotion of environmental awareness.

Sometimes only one item can be on the policy agenda, like the demand for paid education and training leave in the 1994 chamber negotiations (discussed in chapter six under principle thirteen). However, the fact that during this period of transition in South Africa almost every aspect of the education and training system was on the agenda is quite revolutionary, transformation. In future, regular South African education and training public policy making is more likely to be based on single or fewer agenda items at a time, reform.

Stakeholder transformation forums, task teams, and public consultation have characterized the public policy making process during this period in South Africa. Representative-consultative-policy-forums were important in making the South African transitional process unique. Placing a lot of stress on transparent and inclusive processes became necessary because in the past public policy was made by a few elites away from public view. Although these transitional forums have produced recommendations on how to restructure the education and training system, it is the newly elected government that has authority to adopt public policy. This study, which looks at the policy agenda and policy formulation process during the transition, does not discuss the adoption, implementation and evaluation of national policy on basic education and training. However, Appendix I, a proposed (not yet passed) national ABET legislation, is attached as an attempt to indicate the growing consensus around the recommendations of these transitional forums.

How policy is formulated is an important factor in the implementation process. However, beyond consensus seeking during policy formulation, which is the strong point of

the South African ABET policy process, even though it should have been less hurried and more deepened, there are other important factors which affect the implementation of public policies. Harman (in Hough, 1984) discusses the following four factors as crucial to the implementation of policies:

- \* **the policy design**, an ideal policy is the one that is clear with unambiguous goals, a policy will have a reduced chance of success if it is based on a defective theoretical conception, or if the objectives are unclear or unrealistic;
- \* **the implementation strategy**, generally simple straightforward programs that anticipate accurately likely problems and that require minimal management effort have the best chances of success;
- \* **the commitment and capacity of the bureaucratic system**, capacity includes the political resources available and means available to secure compliance;
- \* **and environmental factors**, particularly the degree of support or opposition encountered in the community, and the ability of those likely to benefit to be able to build effective coalitions of on-going support and political pressure (p.25).

In the light of the above named factors, one can make the following remarks about possible issues in regard to the implementation of the ABET policy framework. I think that the conception and goals of the South African ABET framework are a clearly articulated response to the South Africa context. As discussed in chapter two, the ABET framework has similarities with the formal, functional, and awareness-raising models of adult literacy. Yet, it has some distinct characteristics of its own. Concerns about the ABET framework include the fact that the policy formulation process was not directly informed or supported by classroom-based pilot studies. In the proposed education and training system, there is quite a number of major concepts whose benefits and problems still have to be revealed in practice, these include: a competency-based modular approach to curriculum, assessment and recognition of prior learning and experience, articulation and equivalency with ten years of

schooling levels, integration of general education and technical training in a common certification framework, and the establishment of national standards while providing space for contextualization of curriculum at local levels. The piloting of these proposed aspects will have to be done in order to facilitate manageable implementation. Trial studies, which unfortunately did not happen during the period under study, can be negotiated by various program stakeholders.

Given the huge needs of reconstruction and development, it may, however, be unrealistic to expect that the new government can effectively respond to all areas of basic needs including housing, transportation, electricity, water, public safety, jobs, etc. Adult Basis Education and Training, in particular, will compete for limited funds for Human Resources Development in a national context where the urgency to provide, for the very first time, a free ten year basic education to all children is politically charged. However, unions should strive for some decent ABET provision at the workplace since this should be a key to emancipation and productivity.

The current bureaucratic system's commitment to changed social values, and its capacity to deliver the new and complex National Qualifications Framework is questionable, and this may be an understatement. Given the limited nature of resources, and the fact that all current civil servants' jobs are guaranteed by the transitional constitution, it would be unrealistic to expect an immediate overhaul of the civil service. Based on the experience of policy-making during the 1993/94 period, there is reason to be concerned about employer support for ABET policies, such as Paid Education and Training Leave, and ABET curriculum. As a major party of government, the ANC can safely rely, not without being



challenged, on continued support from its traditional mass-based organs of society, including COSATU, the Women's League, the Youth League, the South African National Organization of Civic Organizations, NGOs, and some church organizations. However, it is clear that despite the outstanding effort at garnering consensus in developing an ABET policy framework, there are a number of variables that need to be considered during the implementation of the ABET framework.

### COSATU Involvement in the National Training Board

In South Africa, the National Training Board (NTB) operates under the auspices of the Department of Labor. Industry Training Boards (ITBs) are bodies which govern training in various industries. The nature and problems around ITBs are discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, "The Research Context". Problems with the existing ITBs include the fact that their composition excluded trade unions, and that ABET concerns were not covered in the work of these important industry policy bodies. The development of a new National Training Strategy in the context of the NTB, was a significant policy exercise during the transition period. Its significance is drawn mainly from the fact that it was a representative process:

During 1991, the National Training Board developed a provisional national training strategy. Although that provisional report carried valuable information, the process of compiling it suffered from a lack of representation of critical interest groups. A more representative National Task Team under the auspices of the National Training Board was therefore established in 1993 (NTB, 1994, p.1).

COSATU was one such "critical interest group" that could not be left out any more. A representative NTB process consisted of nominees from the following four main stakeholder organizations: employers, the trade unions, the State, and providers of education and training. The NTB research and report was done through a series of eight working

committees, which are: Environmental Scan; Integration of Education and Training, Career Paths and Certification; Training of Trainers; Adult Basic Education and Access to Training<sup>15</sup>; Infrastructure, Facilities, Incentives and Finance; Labor Market Training Strategies; International Comparators; and Legislation. It is significant that, "COSATU PRP proposals were fed into different NTB Working Groups", as COSATU delegates stated in interviews for this dissertation. Even a cursory comparative analysis of the COSATU PRP report (1993) and the NTB report (1994) will show that this is true.

In April 1994, the results of the NTB policy process were published, for public comment, by the Department of Labor, as a "National Training Strategy Initiative". "The NTB process is significant as a consensus building exercise", a participating manager felt. Stakeholders were able to reach broad agreement about the nature of a new education and training system in South Africa. The proposed national system (NTB, 1994) is characterized by the same principles which underlie the NUM-Chamber agreement and are already discussed in chapter six. Outcomes of this NTB process are also incorporated in reports of other policy forums on education and training which proceeded concurrently with the NTB process, like the ANC/CEPD process.

Beyond reaching broad consensus, the National Training Board process (NTB, 1994) did reveal some areas of difference which constituted "minority opinions". The following areas of contestation are already discussed in chapters two and six: subject areas for a

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<sup>15</sup>The Adult Basic Education and Access to Training working group of the NTB had about 23 members. I interviewed two representatives from COSATU, one employer delegate, and an NGO educator. I interacted with seven others from this committee.

common core of an ABET framework, generic competencies to underlie ABET curricula, and the right to paid education and training leave for workers.

Relevant to the subject of this dissertation is the fact that the NTB recommended that "stakeholders", including trade unions, should be represented in future policy making. This principle is envisioned in proposed "statutory councils" (NTB, 1994, pp. 20-21). Councils, or boards, should act in "advisory capacities" to ministries of education and training at national and provincial levels. The NTB (1994, p.31) recommended that, "Constituency-based national, regional, and local structures should be established to assist with policy development, mobilization of resources, monitoring and co-ordination of delivery systems". The concept of "participative governance" is a hall mark of ANC policy proposals (ANC, 1994; ANC IPET, 1994). The following principle about a statutory stakeholder body is specifically stated in regard to ABET governance:

Stakeholders will have a central role to play in the formulation and development of ABE policy through representation on the ABE Board, a substructure of the General Education Council (ANC, 1994, p. 90).

Setting up some education boards may sound too basic to talk about. However, it is a major departure from past practice in South Africa, where such consultative statutory bodies did not exist. Policy advisory bodies can only be basic stuff if you already have them, but they can be a source of hope to those who are yet to see them.

The ABET Implementation Plan (ANC IPET, 1994, p. 283)) takes this policy position forward by suggesting the following possible composition of an ABET Council:

the business community (2), sector education and training boards (2), trade unions (2), women's organizations (2), youth, civics (2), rural organizations (2), churches (2), pre-higher education board (1), non-governmental organizations active in adult

education (2), state labor and education and training ministries (2), state ministries involved in education (Health, RDP, Agriculture, Employment) (4), national adult education association (1), SACABE (1), adult learners association (1), tertiary adult educator institutions (2), representatives from nine provincial adult education departments (9), the chairperson of the Adult Education and Training Council.

Trade union federated bodies, like COSATU, not affiliates like NUM, would participate in a statutory stakeholder forum of this nature. Through representation in statutory stakeholder bodies, labor unions should in future be able to contribute and shape national policy. For unions and other constituency-based organization to be legitimate representatives of worker voices and consequently be effective in national forums, proper mandating and reporting structures and processes need to exist and function within their organizations. Sustaining popular participation within organizations is a future challenge for all the above listed stakeholder bodies. Since individual worker-learners will not be able to directly participate in these policy forums, employee organizations become a vehicle for their concerns.

The NTB report (1994) correctly recommends that in each economic sector there needs to be a Sector Education and Training Organization (SETOs), replacing the current Industry Training Boards. In the ANC/CEPD recommendations, SETOs are referred to as Education and Training Qualifications Authorities (ANC IPET, 1994). A rationale for replacing Industry Training Boards with SETOs/ETQAs (like a Mining Qualifications Authority), or what ever the new government decides to call them, is mainly that they would be composed democratically and would address all levels of education and training in a sector. It is mostly in the context of SETOs that trade unions will be involved in education and training at industry level, with further involvement at company level. What is emerging out of these recommended changes is that trade unions will be involved in many important

functions of education and training in their sectors. The NTB report (1994) lists the following widely anticipated functions for SETOs:

### **PRIMARY FUNCTIONS**

5. It is envisaged that SETOs could:
  - 5.1 Take the lead in the development of higher standards of education and training, and a skills and a learning culture in their sector.
  - 5.2 Identify and define the qualitative and quantitative needs of the work-force in its sector in terms of the national and sectoral economic and development needs.
  - 5.3 Develop flexible career paths in their sector.
  - 5.4 Identify, encourage and develop potential members of the labour market (including those still in school and tertiary) in partnership with all relevant stakeholders.
  - 5.5 Facilitate the process of developing and describing educational and training standards for their sector.
  - 5.6 Develop the national standards to registered in a national qualification framework.
  - 5.7 Develop the arrangements for the delivery of education and training for example by establishing partnerships with the formal providers of education and training to a sector.
  - 5.8 Develop arrangements for monitoring the quality of education and training and assessment provided by individual enterprises (on and off the job).
  - 5.9 Facilitate and co-ordinate strategies, processes and structures for recognition of prior learning (RPL).
  - 5.10 Take over existing apprenticeship programmes and/or develop new training programmes according to the present and future needs of the sector.
  - 5.11 Oversee the development of learning programmes/curriculum/materials where the operations/enterprises within the scope of the SETO are not in a position to do so.
  - 5.12 Develop or assist with the development and provision of programmes to be delivered in labour market programmes where these relate to the specific skill area of the SETO.
  - 5.13 Carry out such functions as may be developed by the NLC or SAQA.
  - 5.14 Encourage investment in and make appropriate arrangements for the funding of education and training relevant to their sector in line with national guidelines (pp. 115-116).

The composition and functions of the new education and training bodies in various sectors (like the agreed Mining Qualifications Authority which should replaced the current Mining Industry Training Board) still have to be adopted by the new government. The introduction, in 1995, of the bill proposing for the establishment of a South African Qualifications Authority became a necessary step in that direction. Generally, the above recommendations should mostly be reflected in new regulations or guidelines since they have been generally agreed to by stakeholders (employers, labor, education bodies, and some political parties).

#### COSATU Involvement in ANC/CEPD Policy Process

The Center for Education Policy Development (CEPD) was commissioned by the ANC to develop education policy proposals, and implementation plans. At the unveiling of ANC policy positions, the media did inform the public that, "The 119-page policy document was compiled by the Center for Education Policy Development, an ANC think tank" (Sunday Times, January 9, 1994, p. 1). The following discussion may show that the line between the Center for Education Policy Development, an education policy-research unit, and the African National Congress, then a liberation movement, was to an extent blurred. This was partly because the ANC did not have independent capacity on many of the policy planning demands. As a participant in the ANC/CEPD policy development process, I observed that the policy formulation process was mainly characterized by technical task teams and public consultations. One should distinguish between two processes that went on at CEPD, that is, the process to develop a policy framework (through working groups) and the process to develop its implementation plans (through task teams). From July 1993 to January 1994, the ABET Working Group first developed a policy framework. Its brief was stated as follows:

The main aim of the policy groups is to take existing policy proposals, identify gaps, and then identify further work that needs to be done and feed reports into the policy process of the ANC in interaction with the CEPD. It would be especially important to look at the question of financing of ABE as this was a huge gap in the NEPI reports. However, the policy framework should not be driven by financial constraints. It will also be necessary to think more concretely about how to translate a vision of mass ABE provision into clear targets over the next five years (ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group Minutes, July 20, 1993, p. 2).

The CEPD process is significantly different from other very valuable policy processes, such as the National Education Policy Investigation (1992), the National Training Board (1994), and the National Education and Training Forum that were going on at the time because it was more than exploring policy options. The CEPD process was about making policy choices and recommendations for consideration by the ANC, a political party. This process culminated with the publication, for comment, of "The ANC Education and Training Policy Framework", in January 1994.

Following the publication of the policy framework, the CEPD process went on to develop plans to implement ANC policy positions. The question was, for example: If the ANC policy position is to institute a National Qualifications Framework, provide Adult Basic Education and Training, provide ten years of free and compulsory education to all children, integrate 19 education departments to a national one plus nine provincial ones, change curriculum, train and retrain teachers, and so on, how are these policy positions going to be implemented? That is, where does a new government start? Consequently, the large and part-time ABET 'policy working group' of thirteen was reduced to a small intensive 'planning task team' of seven. In January 1994, the ABET Task Team became one of about twenty

ANC/CEPD task teams which were set up in order to produce implementation plans before the April 1994 elections.

The composition of ANC/CEPD task teams, as reflected in the publicly circulated planning report (ANC IPET, 1994), varied from group to group. Task teams followed various ways of working. In this dissertation I only comment on the ABET Task Team. Since I did not investigate the composition and operation of the other task teams, I do not necessarily suggest that the ABET Task Team was representative of them.

Although there is no "conveyor belt system" between COSATU and the ANC, it is significant that COSATU was the only organization that was formally represented in the ANC/CEPD process, while everyone else participated as an individual, though people were expected to inform or contribute to the process based on their diverse backgrounds. The minutes of the first ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group categorically state that:

Only COSATU is officially represented because of the alliance between ANC and COSATU. Other members of the group are present in their individual capacities though it was hoped that they would informally represent the particular sectors or bodies they were drawn from (July 20, 1993, p. 2).

Participating as an individual also meant that people were not coming to negotiate based on mandates they had from their organizations or institutions. The broad composition of the ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group, a racially and gender diverse group of thirteen, consisted of adult educators from: Education Policy Units and Adult Education Units at universities, Adult Education NGOs, the ANC Women's League, and some COSATU PRP participants. It is quite significant that the ABE Coordinator of the COSATU Participatory Research Project (1993) became the Coordinator of the CEPD ABET policy and planning processes (ANC,



1994; ANC IPET, 1994). The ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group did not include individuals from the business sector or the past government.

NUM's approach is that industry standards should be guided by national standards, while national standards should be informed by industry realities. While the NUM ABET educator was participating, as a COSATU delegate, in the National Training Board forum, the union also made me available to the ANC education and training policy process. Within a month of my arrival at NUM, the union ABET educator and the union general secretary suggested the need for me to assist in the development of a new national ABET policy at ANC level. The whole twelve month period of this field study was characterized by my attempts to balance my participant observation at NUM, where I was based, and participation in the ANC/CEPD policy development process. The following letter, sent to the union general secretary by the Coordinator of the CEPD ABET Working Group, on October 5, 1993, formalized the situation:

We hereby inform you that Menzi Mthwecu has been asked to join an ABE Working Group set up by the Center for Education Policy Development. The main task of this Working Group is to formulate policy proposals for the ANC. The ANC has accordingly asked Comrade Menzi to represent the ANC in a Working Group which has been set up to prepare a discussion paper by 25 October for a proposed National ABE Conference scheduled to take place from 12-14 November. Comrade Menzi has been asked by the members of this Working Group to act as the Convener.

His contribution should advance the preparation of detailed policy proposals in this crucial phase of our history. Please contact us if you need any further information.

On top of being a member of the ANC/CEPD ABET Working Group (July-December 1993) and later ABET Task Team (January-August 1994), I became an ABET representative in an ANC/CEPD Task Team that developed implementation plans, and a draft legislation, for a

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The NQF-SAQA work, which is here incorporated only as it relates to ABET issues, is a central proposition in the new national education and training system as a whole.

A refreshing dimension of the ANC/CEPD process was the use of international consultants. Four international experts on adult literacy came to advise the ABET group, they are: a professor from a U.S.A. university, a Latin American senior advisor in UNICEF, a consultant from Sweden, and a former secretary of education from India.

Again, the fact that every aspect of the education and training system was under review, means that this was an opportunity for real policy transformation. Since all parts of the national education and training system, *from the ground up*, were on the table, twenty task teams were set up. The following is a gist of the brief given to all planning task teams:

The objective is to prepare an Implementation Plan for the Education and Training sector (IPET), for use by the Government of National Unity and the Provincial Governments immediately after the elections.... The IPET is being prepared by CEPD at the request of the ANC Education Department. The IPET will be prepared within the context of the ANC's **Reconstruction and Development Programme** and the draft **Policy Framework for Education and Training** ... Technically the IPET will be an indicative (rather than prescriptive) rolling plan (ANC IPET, 1994, p. v).

The ANC Head of Education (now a deputy director-general in the national department of education) once put it this way, "There is no way we can face the nation and say we need another year to plan. Plans must be concrete". An ANC Convener of the ABET Task Team consistently outlined the "values and vision" of this policy process whenever we conducted consultations with members of the public. The thrust of his stage setting remarks included: "the intention to provide more but different quality education and training for all (equity), commitment to transparent governance (democracy), overcoming the apartheid legacy

(redress), and meaningful grassroots participation in national reconstruction and development" (E. Motala, 1994, "ABET and the RDP", a source paper for ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team).

The ANC policy proposals (1994) for Adult Basic Education and Training have been discussed in various parts of this dissertation. They are based on the principles of "reconstruction and development, democratization of society, access to life long learning, and mass-scale provision of ABE as a national priority" (pp. 87-88). They propose for an outcomes-based national core curriculum framework leading to national qualifications equivalent to ten years of primary schooling, a General Education Certificate (GEC). An integrated ABET framework will be composed of a general core curriculum and a functional/applied curriculum. Finally, it says that stakeholders will have a "central role" to play in the formulation of future ABET policy.<sup>16</sup>

A major implication of the proposed ABET policy framework is that there would not be a traditional literacy campaign in South Africa. The proposed ABET framework is so complex and involved that it just cannot be pulled off through a quick and popular campaign. Although there is yet no consensus on the number of core subject areas for the ABET framework, the fact that language literacy will only be one of other subject areas makes it inaccurate to talk about a literacy campaign. Besides the fact that there are no practitioners who are trained on competency-based teaching, there is not yet consensus on what competencies should be taught. So, there are no accepted ABET workbooks ready. The

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<sup>16</sup>The African National Congress education and training policy framework is available on the Internet at: <http://www.anc.org.za>

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), an institution which should accredit education and training providers, as well as establish and authorize national competencies, is yet to be established. Besides the fact that the general education component of the ABET framework will offer at least two languages plus other subject areas, the ABET framework will include technical training modules too. ABET qualifications will be equivalent to ten years of schooling, which further makes it impossible to attempt a tradition-style literacy campaign. This is the case despite the fact that many people expected a popular whirlwind literacy campaign immediately after the first democratic elections.

However, one needs to qualify the fact that the ABET framework is too large and complex to be delivered through a traditional literacy campaign by stating that the new ABET framework is not the only reason that there would not be a literacy campaign in South Africa. To varying degrees, it is important to understand the existence of the following environmental factors: the large scope of need, which is about 15 million adults; the number of languages, nine African languages and English as a common medium of communication; the nature of political transition, which is a negotiated settlement and not a popular revolution; and limited resources for national reconstruction and development, given the fact that almost every aspect of South African life has a justified claim to resources for change. The implications of the fact that there will not be a Cuban-style literacy campaign in South Africa need to be explained in detail since some people strongly feel that an opportunity for popular participation and provision of ABET programs may be lost for ever.

Usually, the provision of mass literacy takes the following three forms: a one off campaign, a series of campaigns, and large scale general literacy programs. During the

course of this study, the below description of each approach and its implications for the South African context has also been used as a basis of discussing this important national policy choice with mineworkers. It is taken from a Learn and Teach/ELP/LACOM publication (1991) called Never Too Old To Learn: Toward formulating policy for adult basic education in a post-apartheid South Africa:

### **The One Off Campaign**

A "one off campaign" is when the state initiates a national effort to teach all illiterate adults the basic skills of reading and writing in their own language. It usually takes about six to nine months. Nicaragua chose this option, as did Cuba Vietnam and Somalia.... There are some important factors that made these "one off" mass campaign successful:

- \* The government had a strong commitment to democracy and the intention to revolutionize the social and economic structure of society.
- \* Not more than half the adult population was illiterate.
- \* There were not more than one and a half million illiterate people altogether.
- \* The countries had only one principal majority language.
- \* The campaigns began within two years of liberation.

The only factor common to South Africa is that our liberation struggle has a strong democratic tradition and a commitment to a fundamental restructuring of society. But South Africa differs from Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Somalia in the following respects:

- \* More than half the adult population is illiterate (at least nine million).
- \* There are nine major African languages in South Africa ... Also, there is the issue of English: would a "one off" campaign be run in English or in learners' own languages?
- \* In South Africa there are large numbers of people with some basic education. But they require education at a variety of levels ...
- \* Due to the many other social problems - such as housing, unemployment and inadequate schooling for children - there will be many demands on a future state. The government will be forced to make choices about where and how to spend their money. Therefore, there is no guarantee that a future government will prioritize literacy in the first two years.

## **A Series of Campaigns**

Many countries have decided to tackle the problem of illiteracy by organizing a series of campaigns. These campaigns were run one after the other and were part of a more general plan to wipe out illiteracy over 5 to 10 years ... Most countries which ran a series of campaigns have targeted particular groups for teaching, with the hope of eventually reaching all the different sectors of the population. The enrollment groups were based on different priorities for each campaign. For example, groups were selected by area (urban/rural, specific district), by political or economic status (cadres, workers, collectivized peasants etc.), by language (major languages first), by age group (usually 45 is the upper limit), and so on.

There are three main factors that made governments choose a series approach. These factors also apply to South Africa:

- \* The very high level of illiteracy ...
- \* The countries did not have enough money at the time of independence ...
- \* There were a lot of languages in the country which made it difficult to plan and develop the necessary course books.

The main problem seems to be that if you have one literacy campaign after another, people lose interest after a while because the end is never in sight. In Mozambique the situation was made worse because FRELIMO centralized control of the literacy efforts, and this slowed down the whole process, which meant that even more people lost interest.

## **Large Scale General Literacy Programs**

In some countries, governments have not initiated mass literacy campaigns. Instead they gave their support to large scale literacy programs that were organized mainly by non governmental organizations. Some countries where large-scale literacy programs have taken place are Botswana, Kenya, Brazil and India.... So they set up literacy departments in the Ministry of Education, made public statements of support and increased the amount of money available for non-governmental organizations doing literacy work.

The positive side to this strategy is that it encourages local initiatives which are able to respond to the particular needs of a constituency in terms of the choice of language, content and levels. Also, autonomous control of the programs strengthens grassroots organization and democracy. The negative aspects of this strategy of large scale literacy programs can be:

- \* Poor co-ordination ... therefore a duplication of scarce resources.
- \* Large amounts of money are spent to support full-time workers, as opposed to the volunteers that are mobilized in a campaign.

- \* Too little planning and thinking is done about what learners can do after they finish a literacy course....
- \* Too little national thinking is done about which languages or language to cover and this can result in different policies all over the country (pp. 126-129).

In view of the need to intervene decisively, the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, in consultation with national stakeholders, planned for a number of "strategic projects or thrusts" that would create a visible impact of delivery in the following sectors: rural revitalization projects among women, participants in public works projects, industrial workers, a particular geographic area in which a specific number of people complete Level One of ABET, special sector workers such as agriculture, public sector and domestic workers, people in informal settlements, people in small enterprises, and the youth as ABET practitioners (ANC IPET, 1994). ABET directorates would be established in the national and provincial ministries of education in order to actively facilitate large scale delivery of Adult Basic Education and Training. This approach is similar to both the "series of campaigns" and the "large scale literacy programs" approaches to mass delivery because, at different times and at different socio-economic sectors, there would be popular mobilization of adult learners to participate in ABET programs. At the same time there would be a standing government directorate to deal with large scale ABET provision on an on-going basis. However, this plan, like other ANC positions on education and training, still stands to be adopted, amended or even rejected by the new Government of National Unity. According to this plan (ANC IPET, 1994), it is calculated that we should be able to reach 12.5 million adults in 15 years. This is a measurable goal. One looks forward to evaluating progress against this policy plan. For

now, let us give the ANC the support they need and a chance to prove themselves. There will be plenty of time to critically appraise their work, I mean critically.

Feedback from ANC regions and conferences on education and training led to revisions of the policy framework. Public feedback to the whole ANC policy framework was received and reviewed by the Center for Education Policy Development. It was reported and discussed at a national ANC education conference in April, 15-17, 1994, in Johannesburg. ABET specific feedback led to amendment of some policy positions. However, due to the quick pace of events, like the focus on implementation plans and the emergence of a new government, a revised ABET policy framework was not widely circulated.

When presenting the public responses at the ANC national education conference, the CEPD Head (now a deputy director-general in the national department of education) remarked that, "The feedback should be kept in due perspective since it represents opinions of those who can read and write, in a country where a big majority are illiterate". This remark is especially relevant to ABET feedback. The feedback below, as presented in an "open session" during the conference, is important, not as an ANC constituency feedback, which is not necessarily so, but as expressed public feelings about the proposed ABET policy. I suggest that one way of understanding the initial impact of the ANC ABET policy framework is to look at the raw words of what people are saying about it:

Summary of responses to the discussion document: ABE

There is comparatively little direct comment on ABE in the responses. This is not surprising as most of them come from educational institutions bound up with formal conventional schooling and tertiary education. The notes below summarize what comment there is, as well as some of their more general observations that have relevance to ABE. The responses are grouped not by institutions but by themes.



Responses were received from an ANC committee, some state education departments, universities, technical colleges, teacher training colleges, teachers' associations, the Board of Jewish education, the HSRC, the Urban Foundation, a number of university and NGO based projects, some profit making bodies and the business sector.

#### LIKES:

lifelong learning, open learning, stress on the education of adults, and general adult education ethos, prioritizing of ABE, technical colleges, coordination of ABE, integration of general education, adult education and training within a framework of lifelong learning, recognizing prior learning and experience, horizontal and vertical mobility, curricula based on an outcomes approach, ABE as a priority area for development, national training system for adult educators, community learning centers, ABE up to Std 7 level, congruence/matching of ABE and schooling, building up of credits from general sources, partnerships, cooperative approach suggested is the only workable strategy, concept of educator/trainer/development worker, inclusion of ABE teachers in Labour Legislation to teachers, and a National Institute for Curriculum Development (NICD).

#### DISLIKES AND CRITICISMS:

Terminology: undefined or vague. Ideological approach: decline of radical perspective and rise of a World Bank, and de Lange one (*a government commission by the past South African government*). Tendency to central control: centralism, wants a proper balance between centralism and devolution to provincial and local, central control over curriculum through a National Institute for Curriculum Development (NICD), central approval of textbooks through NICD, national examinations, statism. Division of ABE and Adult Education: over concentration on ABE at expense of more general adult education and finds distinction ABE and adult education untenable, other types of adult education and nonformal education may be more productive than ABE.

Sole base in one ministry of education and training: need for linkage with other departments than only ministry of education and training, incorporating adult and nonformal education into the education system may be cumbersome and delay things. Women and youth marginalised: danger of marginalising women and youth by making them "special areas" as distinct from the mainstream male employed workers. Failure to address current failings: the document fails to address the problems of the poor management of existing state adult education centers, under estimates the difficulty in training ABE educators. Skills based curriculum: a curriculum which is too heavily skills based is likely to produce people who simply don't know enough.

Paid education leave: giving of paid leave or time off for ABE should be the subject of negotiations, the right to paid leave should be linked to a monitored commitment on the part of workers to spend at least equivalent part of their own free time attending such classes. Incentives to employers: dislikes incentives since they suggest could be sanctions, threats and blackmailing to ensure that employers fulfil their responsibilities for education of workers, the large role given to NGOs and doubt their capacity. Lack of role for the illiterate learner: learners are not directly recognized as stakeholders, nor is their contribution to the creation of their teaching-learning situation recognized. Freedom of choice not stressed: freedom of choice and voluntary participation not stressed. No linkage with Early Childhood Educare (ECE) and Library Information Services (LIS): ABE document does not make linkage with ECE and LIS though in other sections there is a linkage of LIS with ABE and sees the library as a community learning enter.

#### GRUDGING ACCEPTANCE:

Some degree of central co-ordination of ABE "To accommodate the many stakeholders already in the field, coordination at the central level would be necessary though implementation will obviously take place at provincial and local levels".

#### SUGGESTIONS:

Childcare facilities need to be provided. Encourage pilots. Rephrase the three basic learning aims of ABE and Further Education curriculum to explicitly include a willingness to watch out for problems coming from, rather than waiting for someone to point out the need for action. Avoid setting up a separate ABE curriculum development institute. Make literacy skills for home use. Primary health care should be included through working closely with health departments. Use technical colleges infrastructure for ABE teacher training. Colleges have the expertise and infrastructure to implement and maintain a system of distance education to reduce the cost of ABE and minimize the sacrifices involved in traveling long distance to attend classes on a daily basis.

Community learning centers should be establish on college buildings after hours and bridging and educational support programs designed and implemented to assist disadvantaged students. Use distance education via technical colleges. SAQA now! Standards must be monitored in process of articulation and integration. ABE provision should be preceded by intensive research and validation of proposed levels to avoid a drop in general standards. Tax reduction to donations to educational institutions. Private sector should be closely involved in curriculum and standards, occupational education, and especially in ABE and the training system.

... interested in participating in the development of national curriculum based on the integration of academic and vocational skills. Have incentives to encourage

national/provincial/local co-operation. ... offers to participate in various types of ABE research. ... sees need for longitudinal studies of ABE. In-service education and training (INSET) is needed for ABE teachers and has not been costed in. ... could help build ABE facilities and run ABE classes. District extra-mural education centers for both school attenders and workers, the unemployed and marginalised youth. A national Std 5 exam may be needed. Action plans must be developed to deliver tangible benefits to key stake holders. Life skills training should be provided as part of the general core curriculum for ABE (is it part of "Social Studies?"). For public accountability the names of the document writers should be listed.

#### QUERIES:

Who will provide community learning centers? What about rural facilities? Difficulties in achieving credit system for practical experience and nonformal education as well as formal education. This problem might make a coherent system impossible.

Outcome approach as too short term and failing to develop attitudes, values and aesthetics, and emotion. Danger of education dealing only with discrete bits of vocational behavior. Purely outcomes approach may lead us back into "learning by objectives" and the very impoverished forms of classroom practice which these gave rise to. Another difficulty is that an outcomes approach obscures the problem of similar outcomes being reached by very different approaches.

Modular approach will need a large integrated in-service education and training program and new modular texts would be costly. Trials and pilots would be essential. View of education and training and particularly in-service education and training as a closed system of courses to be completed.

Can ministry of education cope with additional ABE, LIS, and ECE? Unclear whether partnerships are real or simply cost sharing. Integration of education and training? Would employers be prepared to accept certificates based on differentiated standards? How can skills acquired in the workplace be converted into an academic qualification? Believes that the private sector should be closely involved in curriculum and standards. Is the obligation of employers for education and training exclusively theirs or a shared responsibility.

#### FINANCE:

Worries about the heavy cost of new initiatives such as ABE. Where will money for ECE and ABE and 10 years schooling and elimination of backlogs come from? Wants the National Education and Training Forum to continue. Set up a cap on administrative spending as a fixed percentage of local budgets and offer incentives to

reduce administrative spending. Given increased scope of activities, like ABE, the document is weak on affordability.

Beyond the above feedback on a 'policy framework', the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team collected a sea of feedback on 'implementation plans', which we did not have time to process. After the ANC policy framework was published in January 1994, and after its implementation plans were published in April 1994, NUM continued to release me to assist the ANC in what I can call the third phase of this period. From May till August 1994, I was part of the ANC/CEPD task team efforts to disseminate information about the proposed ABET policy framework, as well as gather feedback on its draft implementation plans. In order to illustrate this phase of the public policy process, I select three examples, they are: meeting with small and medium businesses, planning the incorporation of basic education and training into public-works projects, and working with the South African Broadcasting Corporation to popularize the new ABET framework.

On May 18-19, 1994, at Brits, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) had a conference in which they invited our task team to come and present the ANC policy plans on basic education and training. SME members expressed that they had not been involved in the ABET policy process. However, they realized that their own lack of an organized representative voice on issues of education and training was partly a cause of that. Another rationale is that SMEs are at times exempt from some policy requirements that are placed on big businesses. They wanted to be included on a suggested list of national stakeholders who would form an advisory body to the education ministry. SME members have since been included in some of our public consultations, including the one we had with universities.

Members of Small and Medium Enterprises also gave feedback relating to curriculum issues. During deliberations in a commission on education and training, they looked at the ten generic competencies/outcomes (Appendix D) which COSATU is proposing for ABET curricula. A serious reservation which they expressed is that "these are based on the assumption of people as workers. They do not promote entrepreneurship". This means, for example, that in a Math curriculum, people should not only be socialized into being "receivers" of wages, and change at the store. They also need to work out Math problems around "giving" change and paying business bills. The dialogue about how an ABET curriculum framework may, or may not, promote or socialize learners into a permanent working class culture did not necessarily feature prominently in South Africa during this period. Two SME members followed up on this conversation by sending me some references to study in this regard. While I have not studied and worked on this subject extensively enough, my general impression is that a broad definition of an enterprising/hardworking person can include individuals anywhere from single parents to senators. However, if one considers entrepreneurs to be women and men who own and manage businesses, perhaps only a small percentage of ABET graduates would ultimately make it to that category - due to a number of intervening variables.

During the election campaign, ANC public messages included the creation of job opportunities through public-works projects. They say that Public Works Projects (PWP), like housing and road construction, will be labor intensive projects which will not only offer employment and quality infrastructure, but will also provide education and training to participants. The National Economic Forum (NEF), a transitional forum consisting of the

state, the private sector, and labor, set up a task team to plan how to "build national capacity", that means provide education and training, through the public-works projects. This task team operated from the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and COSATU was represented on it.

However, since it is anticipated that many participants in Public-Works Projects are likely to be in need of education and training at the basic levels, the convener of that task team, now a national ANC MP, also approached our ABET Task Team for assistance. A former secretary of education from India, and an American professor were both present to contribute when our CEPD task team was brainstorming how to integrate basic education and training in public-works projects. Partly because I was one of the people focusing on curriculum and vocational training issues within our task team, the convener of the PWP capacity building task team then requested the union to support my participation in her task team. The union supported my part-time participation in that task team until we had produced a report, which is not necessarily a conclusive or official response to the question of how to integrate education and training in public-works projects.

Two directors of South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) education programs approached the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) and the ANC/CEPD task team in order to get assistance on how to provide "adult literacy" television programs along the new framework. The SABC was already running weekly half-hour TV shows called "Literacy Alive." We could not stand the word "literacy" any more, and a task team was immediately set up to plan the SABC switch from adult literacy to Adult Basic Education and Training. I was asked to be part of that working group partly because the member of our task

team who was assigned to it was based at a university out in KwaZulu/Natal province, when frequent meetings were happening in Johannesburg. In fact, it may be interesting to note the "politics of location" because a number of our task team members were located outside Johannesburg. Consequently, a lot of policy work, and daily errands like driving our international guests around, fell on those of us who were based in Johannesburg. Being located within COSATU was also a contributing factor because the union was anxious to see the ABET framework take off and ANC efforts succeed. Further, as 'source papers' to our task team show, I am the principal drafter of the section that deals with "Advocacy for ABET" (ANC IPET, 1994).

As a result of the work of this SABC-based task team, on October 13-14, 1994, a national conference on "*The Role of Broadcast Media in Adult Basic Education and Training*" was hosted at SABC. Our working group had produced papers outlining: the history of SABC role in education and training, the possible roles of electronic media in the advocacy of ABET, and how stakeholders can be a permanent part of SABC decision making on this matter. The conference, which I did not attend, can be said to be a success in as far as national stakeholders addressed the need to popularize Adult Basic Education and Training; and to commit the SABC, which is traditionally perceived to be controlled by elitist interests, to work in consultation with an ABET stakeholder committee for this purpose. This was also the first time in which we were able to get the new national minister of education to come out and speak to issues of basic education and training.

One should not, however, necessarily get an impression that all ANC/CEPD task teams engaged the public in this intensive manner. For example, the NQF-SAQA task team,

in which I participated, did not. Overall, the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team involved the following stakeholders during the policy planning process:

Adult Education NGOs, the private sector, Small and Medium Enterprises, the past Department of Education and Training, tertiary institutions, research organizations, the National Youth Development Forum, South African Broadcasting Corporation, the South African National Civics Organization (SANCO), religious organizations, women's organizations, the Rural Education Forum, different political parties, and trade unions.

Although these organizations were consulted about the changes, I do not suggest that they have all fully "internalized" the implications of the new policy frameworks. I also do not know what the level of readiness is in other COSATU unions.

I would not like to imply that we were satisfied with the extent to which individuals or organizations analyzed or engaged the ABET policy documents, whether they be National Training Board or COSATU-ANC documents. Although one can confidently say that a sincere attempt, within resource and time constraints, was made to widely circulate ABET policy documents to relevant organizations; and that attempts were also made to receive and discuss the responses with their originators, policy documents were not necessarily widely available or substantially commented on. This is partly because, one way or another, stakeholder views were solicited as policy recommendations were being formulated. Also, it is often very difficult for a person, regardless of one's educational level, to penetrate technical policy documents. Absorbing the meaning of detailed policy documents is especially difficult if one has not gone through a comparable process. In some public-consultation workshops, we would spend more time answering information-seeking questions about policy plans, instead of receiving feedback statements - even when people were sent documents ahead of



time. In an oral culture, and an oppressive culture, where people are not used to writing reaction and position papers to public-policy proposals, it is necessary that policy-workers try to reach people where they are in terms of language and understanding, preferably face-to-face. For ABET programs, it is advisable that workbooks be designed in such a way that learners can continually have opportunities to learn about and to contribute to public policy issues. It is debatable whether the public should be given the actual policy documents or summary pamphlets. We circulated the actual ABET policy and planning documents. When an easy reading or simplified RDP pamphlet was released, some people felt that it was "meatless," meaning that it over simplified complex policy debates. In any event, it is generally hard to precisely measure when the level of public participation is informed and satisfactory.

At NUM, we did run a number of workshops where issues involved in the new policy direction were explored, for instance: in the mining industry, how will we contextualize national curriculum, assess and recognize workers' existing abilities, make sure employers do not co-opt the outcomes-based learning approach, and actively participate in ABET committees? We also ran an exploratory curriculum workshop for both mining and energy sectors, where we asked workers to name modules they think they will need at the four ABET levels for: (a) general education, (b) common industry skills like health and safety or computer literacy, and (c) specialized skills for different trades (Appendix C). In the absence of any official word, this exercise was valuable as an attempt to give workers a feel of what in the world could be meant by an integrated education and training system. The fact that NUM leaders might be relatively informed and ready than some sectors was demonstrated to

me when the ANC/CEPD task team met with ABET civil servants at their Pretoria headquarters.

First, I should put on record that ABE civil servants, or the so called "apartheid bureaucrats", a term which may reveal how their role was perceived in the past, did not obstruct the policy planning process during this period, I observed. In all consultations where they attended, I do not remember them uttering a word. In fact, I asked some COSATU delegates to the National Training Board process what their interactions, which had a potential to be combative, were like. "You people you work so hard, that's all they say", I was told. However, they were very forthcoming with any information needed.

On the other hand, I should say that the past government and employers were deliberately excluded from some mobilizing processes. For example, they were not invited to the seminal national conference, on November 12-14, 1993, in Johannesburg, which formed the South African Committee on Adult Basic Education (SACABE, 1994). One can question this part of COSATU/ANC strategy because it sounds anti-democratic to exclude people from "an educational gathering". However, the fact that some politics of the day dictated otherwise, should serve to reinforce the fact that educational decisions are sometimes based on political considerations, which are themselves grounded on power relations. In hindsight, though, I think that concerted in-roads to the public sector provision of ABE could have been initiated even before the elections, especially given the fact that civil servants themselves did not offer any alternative solutions to the crisis. Labor and liberation educators were however consumed by the challenge posed by employers, which partly explains the oversight.

It has since become clear to some of us that the idea of leaving out civil servants might contribute to a delaying effect in implementing new policy plans they were mostly not part of. The election and inauguration dust had hardly died down when some comrades within the civil service, started drawing our attention to the fact that there were questions among adult educators that needed to be addressed, not least of which was a need for clarity about the meaning of proposed organograms.

On July 29, 1994, in Pretoria, a big "feedback gathering workshop", involving some principals of night schools and department directors from the head office, the regions, and the former independent homelands, was jointly arranged by the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team and the Department of Education and Training. To cut a long story short, it was during the small group report backs, when people reported that, "Since we are seeing this document (the ANC/CEPD ABET Plan) for the first time, although some of us have gotten it in our own ways, we are not in a position to give feedback. We will go back and discuss it in our various regions. Another meeting must be planned very soon". When I walked through the small groups some confessed that they have never before been involved in an open process of discussing a R132 million budget for the department. The hall was filled with laughter as different state employees distanced themselves from the past establishment. Out of the interactions of that day, I began to feel that my earlier perceptions that the National Party (NP) had a vice-like grip on civil servants may have been exaggerated. In fact, the conciliatory attitude that we were generally showing to one another was reflected upon by members of the ANC/CEPD that met for a drink afterwards, in which the workshop chairpersons, that is a government woman and I, were described as "a lump of sugar". On

the other hand, I was unsettled or unprepared to hear public servants say that they were in effect not ready to run with the public program. May be this public meeting is memorable to me partly because it was the last one before I flew back to the United States.

The following notes from feedback and motivation given by a professor from a U.S.A. university to our ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team seem relevant in ending this policy planning section:

Your plan is more detailed than necessary. Policy choices will get lost in the detail. Do norm setting not controlling. Policy planners never have enough data. Ban the word JOBS in ABE. Don't lead people down the rose garden promising this and that. Teach proper aspirations. There is never a society where all have jobs. Communists collapse because they give jobs where there is none. Look at the budget not at the vote. One is never fully ready. Validate your plan with action, then you will find the real problems. This is not going to be easy, it may not even succeed, but it has to be tried.

#### Summary

A number of lessons can be drawn from the experience of transition. Amongst other things, this dissertation highlights the fact that working people, through COSATU and the ANC, attempted to impact on new national policy. An outcome of which is the fact that many COSATU/ANC ABET principles and recommendations now form part of national policy proposals for education and training. As for purposes of future policy making, it is important that labor will be part of public policy formulation through a statutory ABET stakeholder body, amongst other channels. However, to be able to contribute effectively, trade unions and other stakeholders participating in ABET policy forums would need to enhance their capacity. Also, so that people are not fooled by the appearance of a

democracy, levels of informed participation within their various organizations should be actively pursued.

The fact that NUM's ABET educator, and some workers, participated in national forums as part of COSATU delegations, while I participated as part of ANC/CEPD, also meant a number of things for the union, amongst which are: the union prioritized the development of ABET national policy, it invested time and resources to the policy process, it benefitted from values and vision that were fed back into various union activities, and it sacrificed some of its work in order to support COSATU and ANC efforts in securing the ABET framework for all South Africans. Arguably, the union's participation in the policy-making processes during this period has given it insights and capacity that should put it in a confident position as it participates or responds to future policies by the government.

In terms of depth of thinking and public consultation, it is significant that COSATU and the ANC, including other stakeholders, went through a unique policy process in South Africa. The gallant experience of transition, not only its legislative outcomes, needs to be documented and published. Knowing why and how things were set up can enhance understanding of future developments. However, there are enough precedents, within labor and liberation movements, and about the politics of publication, that make one fear that this may not necessarily happen. This dissertation hopefully makes a contribution to that regard by highlighting the role of labor unions in adult basic education and training policy making. To a commendable extent, the unions joined hands with other South Africans in producing an ABET policy framework which largely responds to a South African context.

One hopes that this is not the last time that ordinary people are involved in public policy making. Although worker involvement and public consultation were distinguishing characteristics of the COSATU-ANC Alliance, one continues to feel that this could have been more organized and deeper than it actually was. This is more so if one knows that, to some extent, some of the innovative activities can be ascribed almost directly to individual initiatives, than to a concerted design of the organizational system. However, since the national policy effort was a collective exercise, there has not been intention in this dissertation to ascribe particular initiatives to individuals. In future studies, one can choose for example to insert vignettes of individual experiences during this period. Further, although individuals were drawn from various organizations to participate in the national ABET policy process, it remains uncertain to me what the extent of policy dialogue was within various other organizations, such as the private sector, the universities, the bureaucracy, the NGOs, and other civic organizations like churches. It maybe more interesting to see how the ANC in government, with access to more resources, time and person power, measures up to its public consultation efforts as a liberation movement.

Given the diverse and deep policy planning demands that faced the ANC upon its unbanning, it was very useful to have such a capable and committed think-tank as the Center for Education Policy Development (CEPD). On the other hand, having such a powerful think-tank can be an issue, especially given the fact that the quick pace of events did not allow the movement extended periods of time for processing the recommendations which were made by the think-tank. Future studies can throw more light on the work of CEPD by comparing it to other ANC think-tanks, such as the ones which worked on the macro-economic and health

policies. Although the overall initiative of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP, 1994) was visibly driven by COSATU, I did not investigate how COSATU was organizationally connected with other non-education and training ANC policy-units. There were actually minimal organizational connections between the various ANC policy-research units and their technical task teams. One wishes there were more connections within the CEPD policy planning groups themselves. Confusingly, the connections between the mass-based policy processes and up-coming processes of state government remained tenuously defined. As a result, it will be more interesting to find out the extent to which popular education and training recommendations end up being compromised or implemented by the new government. How will public policy be made in the future? Will it be mostly through the bureaucracy? How can organs of civil society (unions, women's organizations, NGOs, and independent research units) effectively engage the government on public policy matters such as education and training?

## CHAPTER VIII

### LOOKING FORWARD

#### Introduction

By way of conclusion, I try to look forward to implementation - to delivery and rethinking - of proposed ABET policies in South Africa. The argument that basic education and training for adults is an important part of rebuilding our nation has already been made at various parts of this dissertation. In fact, the need for basic education and training speaks for itself. Proposed policy implementation strategies have also been discussed. This is the time to move the dialogue toward delivery issues, in which unions will play a role too.

In accordance with Qualitative Research theory, I make no conclusions, but summaries, and no recommendations but remarks. Essentially, this means that there is no need to force closure to issues. In fact, summaries and remarks are integrated in various chapters of this dissertation. Having learned so much from people in the field, I would feel presumptuous making recommendations to them. However, I do identify some major achievements, challenges, and questions.

First, I would like to suggest that the delivery of ABET programs needs to be introduced and undertaken in the context of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP, 1994). The RDP can be seen as South Africa's idea of a Marshall Plan, an initiative emerging from the U.S.A. to rebuild Europe after World War II. All parts of South African life were devastated by apartheid. In an attempt to rebuild and develop it, the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance have proposed the Reconstruction and Development Program (1994) which is now "an umbrella policy" of the new government. In each chapter of the RDP,



(1994) existing "problems" are stated, followed by a proposed "vision and objectives". The four chapters of this "integrated and coherent" socio-economic policy framework are: Meeting Basic Needs, Developing our Human Resources, Building the Economy, and Democratizing the State and Society. It ends with a chapter about, "Implementing the RDP".

The fact that the whole nation now talks about the RDP, "RDP speak", cannot be over emphasized. The importance, relevance and urgency of any initiative gains audience if explained in RDP terms and context. To this effect, an abridged version of the RDP has been published to help people participate in what is effectively the only game in town. The Weekly Mail newspaper (December 29, 1994) published the list below of RDP key-words in order to "make sure that you're RDP-correct", especially if you want to land a "large consulting contract with the government". One can practice the RDP language by, for example, picking words from the columns making a sentence, such as: *This ABET project will be "people-driven" and "gender sensitive," and will also have a "capacity-building" component to it.* One would hope that by memorizing a set of politically correct terms, people might want to learn about their philosophical underpinnings, and do as they say:

People-driven	Participatory	Development
Community-oriented	Physical	Transformation
Transparent	Gender-sensitive	Framework
Comprehensive	Capacity-building	Culture
Appropriate	Socio-economic	Empowerment
Ongoing	Integrated	Process
Coherent	Sustainable	Implementation
Effective	Co-operative	Program
Purposeful	Democratic	Plan
Achievable	Realistic	Restructuring
Grassroots	Institutional	Resource allocation
Viable	Bottom-up	Agenda
Fundamental	Infrastructural	Reconstruction
Accountable	Co-ordinated	Policy
Far-reaching	Decision-making	Support
Consistent	Redistributive	Goal
Responsible	Macro-economic	Change
Dynamic	Environmental	Strategy

A high school teacher, in our township, tells how a group of community people requested to use a school hall "in order to host a beauty pageant, as part of the RDP". I guess it is possible that one can find some passage in the RDP which can be interpreted to explain how a beauty contest can be "crucial to the success of the RDP". In its own sense, the RDP (1994) is becoming like a Bible, allowing for multiple interpretations. It is, consequently, very important for basic education and training to be explained in RDP terms in order to facilitate its implementation in the new reality. The union has contributed to this RDP discourse. Union documents, from the July 1993 ABET workshop to the February 1994 congress, show that NUM tried to popularize, amongst mineworkers, ABET as a "key" to reconstruction and development - sometime before RDP became government policy.

An analysis of the following media articles show how the ANC has moved from presenting the RDP as a savior initiative, to asking people to moderate their expectations of it:

"RDP soul of the nation says Naidoo" (Pretoria News, June 15, 1994), "RDP is a framework not a Bible ... Minister Without Portfolio Jay Naidoo is responsible for implementing the RDP" (The Star, June 15, 1994), and "Don't overestimate RDP: Mandela" (The Citizen, June 10, 1994). Apportioning blame for unrealistically raising national expectations, or taking credit for galvanizing national imagination around a vision, is not the issue here. Everyone looks forward to delivery of RDP projects.

### Implementation of ABET Programs

NUM's strategy of taking up its workplace demands as part of the new government's RDP policy framework has already been reported in national media: "RDP will occupy prime position on NUM's agenda", (New Nation, June 10, 1994, p. 14). This report was based on the union's first RDP workshop. On May 27-29, 1994, at its Elijah Barayi Workers' College, NUM held its first national RDP workshop. It was attended by 72 regional and national worker leaders, plus various departmental staff. Jay Naidoo, the former COSATU General Secretary, and now national minister responsible for the RDP, addressed this strategy workshop. It is partly political and logical that workplace changes are viewed in a context of national development.

NUM's RDP workshop (NUM RDP Workshop Report, May 1994) is important as the union's deliberate and public step to frame and advance its views about workplace issues in the new discourse. In four workshop groups, the union began to concretely name and locate its demands in terms of the four RDP legs, in which case, providing decent accommodation for mineworkers becomes an issue of Meeting Basic Needs; setting up small mines in order to empower blacks and to provide more jobs is an aspect of Building our Economy; the

participation of workers in upcoming local government elections (November 1995) would be part of Democratizing the State and Society. Fourthly, the union's renewed positioning of Adult Basic Education and Training as a part of Human Resources Development was highlighted in press reports:

More specifically, the NUM has proposed the need to directly lobby the Minister of Education and Training, S'busiso Bhengu, to pass legislation that will allow for paid education and training leave for workers and shop stewards. Legislation compelling employers to grant paid education and training leave could obviate the need for the issue to be subjected to negotiated agreements (New Nation, June 10, 1994, p. 14).

The above statement also shows that unions have to operate under changed political dynamics. Even when the ANC is the majority party of government, and the education minister is from the ANC, the unions, like employers and everyone else, still have to "lobby" the government for their positions.

COSATU unions are grappling with the multiple meanings of change in South Africa, not least of which are implications of having as an ally a majority party of government. After the national elections, the first issue of The Shopsteward (June/July 1994) appropriately focused on "Workers in government. And COSATU at the crossroads". In a National Staff Seminar, June 10-12, 1994, in Johannesburg, where all union regional and national staff members attended, and I was one of minute takers, the union's general secretary delivered a timely message as though he had been to the promised land. He actually had been to Robben Island for ten years. He spoke to the need for union leaders to be prepared to operate in a redefined political climate:

We have a duty to guide and defend our membership in a new political environment. We will no longer enjoy the sympathy we enjoyed as victims. Blacks need to internalize the meanings of what it means to lose claim to victim status. This is a new

phase. We will no longer be able to use political arguments to wiggle out of an illegal strike. Be careful on illegal strikes. I am not trying to water down the militancy of the union....

In Tunisia, an 80% union government passed its first law banning trade unions.... This is not to throw scorn or suspicion on ANC reps. We must be able to educate our members.

How many comrades in this hall have read the RDP? [Audience show of hands] Be honest to yourself. Read the section on Mines and Minerals. This (the RDP) is a program outline. It needs someone to implement it....

You will have to negotiate with black employers....  
No guards down. Aluta Continua!

The following main NUM demands about basic education and training have been discussed in this dissertation: national standards and certificates, worker participation in running ABET programs, paid education and training leave, an integrated education and training system (NUM Congress Pamphlet, 1994).

The implementation of national standards and certificates holds promise for the future. Accordingly, this would mean that education and training qualifications acquired in the mines can be marketed widely. How this expectation is realized in practice still has to unfold. Having worked on implementation plans for a National Qualifications Framework, as part of an ANC/CEPD task team, I am aware that the ANC has a firm commitment and concrete plans, including draft legislation, to deliver on this promise. In various union workshops we have tried to draw a picture of the challenges that still have to be faced during implementation. Without stepping too much out of the time frames of this study, I, however, note that the implementation of a National Qualifications Framework and a South African Qualifications

Authority, as well as Adult Basic Education and Training, are not part of "first year achievements" of the Government of National Unity.

NUM's goal for joint ABET committees has been agreed with employers. In some mines, the committees are already established and given orientation. However, given the fact that representatives of management, labor, educators, and learners alike, still have to be familiarized with the new frameworks, as well as be trained on other skills like meetings behavior, group dynamics, participative management, counseling and reporting, one looks forward to an elaborate capacity-building effort. The government, and education bodies, can give valuable support to workplace based education and training initiatives.

Whether the union management relationship becomes "merely consultative or truly collaborative" is yet to be seen. They both talk about it as collaborative, and so does their agreement. However, unions may be limited by capacity in making meaningful contributions in the process, whilst management, whose motives are not all in the open, may take advantage of the other parties' shortcomings. Fingeret and Jurmo (1989) already suggest that, for various reasons, participation by various role players and learners is, in fact, never equal. As a result, attempts need to be made in order to level the playing field. As to how much employers and unions will decide to build their capacity or to purchase services from private agencies is still unclear. Equally uncertain is the future role of government in workplace Adult Basic Education and Training.

The labor-management agreement about ABET as a fundamental human right, equivalent to the end of ten years of primary education, whilst integrating academic education and technical training, still needs to be celebrated. However, in a mineworker's words, "No

celebrations must take place until we can see concrete people coming out of the programs.

Now that the right to basic education has been agreed on paper, it is time to implement it on the ground". Learners cannot come out of programs if they cannot go into programs. This brings up the fact that Paid Education and Training Leave, an issue of access, is an outstanding union demand with the chamber. One looks forward to a speedy compromise settlement on it. In a television debate, a chamber spokesman correctly described the developmental process that both parties are undergoing, "I think we must accept here that both parties have come a long way". We look forward to them going a longer way still.

One looks forward to piloting and eventual implementation of proposed education concepts like: integrating education and training, competency based modules, and recognition of prior learning and experience. "The late entry of the 'T' part into ABET, shows the need for further development of the policy framework", commented one of my peer advisers. "It is in practice where the real problems will be discovered", an international expert advised. I would like to further highlight two issues, that is, the need to share information about these proposed changes, and the need to prepare educators, trainers, and development workers to drive this new agenda. Classroom pilots can inform the consensus seeking policy process. It is possible to talk these ideas to death, without trying them.

The new government is already committing about 25 percent of the national budget to: phase in the provision of ten years free education for all children, set up nine provincial bureaucracies plus a national one, build schools, provide a new curricula, train and retrain teachers, and support institutions of higher learning, etc. It is possible that the ANC's strategic focus on ten years of free and compulsory education, which seems to work as

intended, may draw away attention from other education issues. We still look forward to "some degree of a balance, not a choice", as the ANC/CEPD ABET Coordinator puts it, between the education of adults and the education of children given the fact that this would be the first opportunity for many adults. In an attempt to promote basic education and training for adults as an element of the RDP, in the first RDP White Paper (1995), ABET was proudly announced as one of 22 presidential priority projects. Disappointingly, the funding allocation was, "None - Donor funded to 1997" (RDP White Paper, 1995, p. 57). It may be the huge needs, not necessarily the framework, that may lead to few ABET programs in the public sector. However, there needs to be a different story in the private sector.

This study shows that the collective bargaining process needs to be better understood as a factor in ABET issues. Education and training is a new area of collective bargaining for COSATU unions. Despite the fact that an international literacy expert warned our ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team that: "There is no easy link between basic education and jobs. Basic education does not automatically lead to anything", I find COSATU's intention to link ABET to Job Grading and Wages to be the most fascinating question raised by this study. If the relation between education and the economy can be clearly articulated, there may be real motivation for people to attend ABET programs.

Given the fact that ABET will integrate vocational learning and general education in a common framework, as well as offer adults an opportunity which is equivalent to the end of primary schooling, the proposed ABET framework should be a hundred times more involved and different than regular adult literacy models. However, it will only be after some implementation that South Africans can safely say that, "in ABET we have a new model to



contribute to world knowledge". This dissertation confirms the fact that COSATU unions are playing a key part in trying to extend the traditional notion of Workplace Literacy. They even dare attempt to link literacy with money, in a four step ladder. Hopefully, this dissertation throws some light on the following observation:

Trade unions have been at the forefront of the struggle for a new South Africa. A number of COSATU unions, such as National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), are exploring innovative approaches to mass literacy and vocational training with a view to securing black advancement (Commonwealth Expert Group Report, 1991, p. 57).

The emerging ABET framework has significant implications for institutions of higher learning. They have to prepare educationists who are going to work in new labor and management roles at the workplace. To illustrate this point, I want to cite two job descriptions of Adult Education positions that I never thought of prior to undertaking this study. First, is the fact that within unions there need to be knowledgeable and skilled adult educators and trainers who can coordinate union activities on education and training. The following is a description of functions and skills required from an ABET educator at NUM:

#### **ABE and Training Officer (NUM NESCO, June 18, 1994)**

##### **Job Functions**

1. To undertake, co-ordinate and commission appropriate research into ABE and Training in the mining and energy sector.
2. To assist the union in the development of policies on ABE and Training.
3. To help prepare for and co-ordinate negotiations on ABE and Training, and to develop appropriate resource materials.
4. To build the capacity for NUM Stewards to negotiate and implement education and training programs at company/branch level. To plan, co-ordinate and implement education and training program within the union in order to achieve this.
5. To liaise with and participate in initiatives by COSATU and other similar bodies in the field of macro education and training.

6. To prepare relevant reports for the various structures and to report to the Unit Head on achievements.
7. To facilitate the development of core group of stewards in each of the companies where negotiations around ABE and Training are taking place.
8. To develop weekly and monthly workplans.

### **Skills Required**

Negotiation skills

Communication and education skills

Research skills

Report writing

Word processing

Team building and leadership

Planning and organizational management

Based on what the union ABET educator and I were doing at NUM, and based on interactions with educators from COSATU head office and other affiliates, I feel compelled to emphasize the need for South African universities to pay attention to needs of trade union educators - just as they respond to needs of managers.

On September 27, 1993, the following job advertisement was placed at our office door at NUM. In it, they need someone who can coordinate workplace ABET activities. What is significant about this position is that the person would not be a union or management official per se, but would be accountable to a joint union-management committee. Though the person would enjoy management benefits, s/he would not be beholden solely to employers. It is particularly significant that there are other industries which are creatively taking forward the concept of participatory management of education and training, even further than it is contemplated in the mines.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION COORDINATOR:  
VACANCY ...(NAME OF GROUP OF COMPANIES)

There is a vacancy for a suitably qualified and experienced adult educator dedicated to Adult Basic Education at the ... group of companies.

The incumbent would have strong administration and organizational skills, be flexible and able to relate to people, and create a sound learning environment. Attributes required would include:

- \* Natural leadership skills
- \* Self motivation
- \* Ability to travel nationally
- \* Speak at least one African language

The successful candidate will be responsible to effectively implement, administer and nationally coordinate the proposed ... Adult Basic Education program.

S/he will report to the Group Training Coordinator and the Joint National Working Group (made up of Management and Trade Union reps) and will be based in Johannesburg.

As this is a senior position, the salary is negotiable and includes the use of a company car. Responses to Selection Committee, of the Joint National Working Committee.

Although the concept of a jointly appointed ABET coordinator has not been entertained in this case study, I would strongly recommend it to any workplace as a possible measure of healing a confrontational relationship.

In 1994, the ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team, realizing the urgent need to restructure curriculum frameworks for training ABET practitioners, convened a national workshop for universities and technikons working in Adult Education. This workshop confirmed the fact that the ABET framework has far reaching implications for university curriculum. Our task team, which was again charged with the work of coordinating the process of transition, immediately organized a retreat where we sat down with some members of different universities and actually designed draft curriculum outlines.

It was also the goal of the workshop with universities to collect feedback on the ABET report that the task team had produced. Let me select two university speakers since they have not had much to say in this study. "The 'T' in ABET should, may be, be a small letter "t" at this stage, since not much has gone into it yet", a university professor said. "Really, how competent are we to teach about competency?" one small group reported. The letter below was faxed from a university to our ANC/CEPD ABET Task Team. It arrived at our union offices the next morning after we held this national workshop with universities, at NUM Workers' College, which I co-chaired. It should show the crying need for capacity within our institutions of higher learning. It has to be heard by our anti-apartheid global friends. In fact, according to a report of the South African Committee for Adult Basic Education (SACABE, 1994), "the capacity of some institutions, like traditionally black universities, should be enhanced" (p. 68).

I refer to our conversation of 21 June 1994, in connection with the curriculum of ABE courses.

I would appreciate it if it would be possible for you to give direction and possible literature in the case of a one year course for the training of ABE tutors, with senior certificates or equivalent qualification. As it is quite urgent for us to get this through the channels at our university, it would be appreciated if you could respond as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation in this very important matter.

## In Conclusion

I venture to summarize what can be seen as major achievements about labor's participation in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) issues during the period of this study. Secondly, I highlight some serious challenges which I see emerging in the process of implementing ABET programs in South Africa. Thirdly, I would like to state some ABET and non-ABET questions whose future outcomes remain to be seen. The following cautions should however be raised: the identified achievements, challenges, and questions are not presented as exhaustive; there is no standing body of literature which speaks directly to the proposed South African ABET framework, it is, consequently, in the implementation where the true benefits and problems of the policy proposals will be revealed following which they will have to be rethought; and, these achievements, challenges, and questions actually overlap in the sense that today's gains still need to be selfishly guarded.

### Achievements:

- \* **Democratic participation in ABET decision making has been agreed to in the mining industry, and is also nationally expected.** A major implication of labor's intervention in ABET issues at the workplace has been the restructuring of decision making structures and processes. In the mining industry, it has been negotiated between the union and employers that there be joint ABET committees which will involve employers, the union, service providers, teachers, and learners in planning and implementing programs. Joint ABET committees, which are being established at industry, mining house, mining company, and learning center levels, should mean an end to management's sole prerogative over education and training.

COSATU unions have also contributed significantly to the fact that, in future, a democratic government will transparently plan and implement ABET policies through inclusive stakeholder partnerships, ABET councils/boards. As proposed in several transitional forums, and in the ANC education policy frameworks, it is nationally expected that there will be statutory-advisory bodies at national, provincial, and local government levels.

A big challenge lies in making democratically constituted industry and national ABET forums work as intended. The planned workplace and governmental partnerships call for a permanent culture of negotiations (continuous consensus-seeking) in all ABET aspects. It is still too early for one to estimate how effective joint ABET committees can contribute toward addressing the apartheid backlogs in human resources development. However, in order to enable meaningful participation, resources need to be invested now in building the capacity of all participating stakeholders, for example, in the following areas: principles of the ABET framework which includes an outcomes-led approach to learning, negotiation and communication skills, group dynamics and team work, social-awareness, as well as organizational and national development issues. So that the legitimacy of industry partnerships and national ABET forums is not compromised, stakeholder representatives, such as union leaders and educators, participating in joint ABET committees will need to be guided by informed and active voices of learners, workers, and citizens. So, ways of soliciting

learner input need to be continuously sought through classroom activities and other organizational processes.

\* **The notion of adult literacy has been broadened to Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).** A major implication of labor participation has been the proposal for a new model of adult basic education and training. According to the ABET model, the important ability to read, write, and count in a language will become only one of several general education and technical training subject areas in an ABET framework which will be equivalent to ten years of schooling. The labor championed, and widely supported, ABET model has introduced a major paradigm shift from adult literacy models in South Africa. Although not yet implemented, the proposed South African Adult Basic Education and Training framework contains major propositions which go far beyond the regular provision of adult literacy whether that be formal, functional or Freirean.

Beyond the ability to read and write in ones first language, the ABET framework will provide for language literacy in at least two languages (probably an African language and English). It is also significant that Mathematics will be provided as a core content area independent from language learning. Beyond language learning and Mathematics, labor proposes that Science and Technology, as well as Social Development Studies (not yet a formal title) be added in the core general education component of the ABET framework, however, this is yet to be agreed with

employers. Since many black South Africans have traditionally been excluded from the acquisition of Mathematics and Science skills, these are now prioritized by labor and liberation movements. Labor and liberation movements have also prioritized the provision of Social Development Studies in order to enable people to critically participate in the building of new democratic institutions. On the other hand, employers have expressed concern about the provision of a large and expensive general education component. Whilst the resolution of this point of difference is expected to take place at national government level (which has its many dangers) not at individual workplaces, it is important to realize that labor is pushing for a broader general education provision as a national norm.

Beyond providing for a general education which is broader than language learning, the proposed ABET framework will provide for the integration of technical training at the Adult Basic Education (ABE) phase. This means that ABE will no longer be seen as a platform for later vocational training, in the sense that an adult will not have to wait or go through an ABE program before s/he can be admitted to a technical training program. Instead, basic general education and technical training will be offered and certified along side each other, in the same ABET framework. The labor's role in the fight for an ABET framework which integrates both general education and technical training is epitomized by the dispute between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Chamber of Mines in which NUM rejected as "empty" a management position that ABE should not include technical training for workers. The now



nationally agreed notion of providing and certifying general education and technical training in a single qualification framework still needs a lot of development, however. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a yet to be established institution, is expected to facilitate the development of a new National Qualifications Framework and to ensure the setting and monitoring of quality curriculum standards - of which ABET is a part. Labor unions are expected to participate in proposed industry education and training authorities which, as SAQA agencies, will determine the core industry modules like health and safety, as well as occupation specific modules for the various trades. Although there is still limited dialogue about standard setting and monitoring in South Africa, the challenge about how to ensure that the structures and processes are not bureaucratized is emerging.

Beyond incorporating technical training at the basic general education phase, it is significant to note that the ABET framework will provide for education and training qualifications which are equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory schooling for children, a post-apartheid policy exercise. A General Education Certificate (GEC) will be awarded to both children and adults who complete the basic education phase of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Obviously, this means that first language literacy cannot be the only one module or credit in an ABET continuum that has four school-equivalent exit points. The fact that various sectors of South Africa came together and successfully re-claimed the adults' right or entitlement to a basic education and training equivalent to ten years of schooling, is a creative achievement.

The push to "redress" the apartheid educational legacy, in which the majority of the population missed out on basic education, has to be highlighted because in other social aspects, like mineral and land rights, there is often a tendency to emphasize the need for "reconciliation" over the need for redress. This means that instead of merely "forgetting the past," South Africans chose to face the past and work for the "restoration" or "compensation" of the people's right to basic education. Redress, equity, and democracy are prime motivations or values for the ABET vision. There are, however, many challenges which still await joint ABET partnerships which will be the channels for implementing this ambitious framework.

\* **The provision of ABET programs within a National Qualifications Framework should end the current industry and national fragmentation.** Labor organizations have campaigned against the current situation where workers are provided with education and training "credentials" which have no industry-wide or nation-wide recognition. The introduction of the proposed National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is intended to enable the mobility or transferability of ABET qualifications, by establishing and registering core competencies that ABET programs should cover. To a great extent, consensus on structures and processes for establishing some common national standards has been reached with employers and other stakeholders. The challenge now lies in reaching consensus on what the national standards should be, and how they should be customized into various contexts like workplaces. Labor

unions are expected to continue to play a role in future workplace and national processes for establishing, implementing, and evaluating ABET standards.

\* **The competency-based approach to learning has been re-defined and broadened to include both social knowledge and technical skills.** Traditionally, the definition of competence has been limited to job-based skills in exclusion of generic and critical thinking skills (which is why employers particularly liked them). In South Africa today, the NUM-Chamber agreement (see chapter six) is the clearest indication of the re-definition of competency. The NUM-Chamber agreement clearly states that, "competence is used in the broadest sense of the word." Both parties "recognize" and "accept" that ABET competencies, learning outcomes, or performance standards are "founded not only in skill but also in knowledge and understanding." Also, one needs to read the agreed aims of ABET programs carefully, which are: "ABET programs should develop workers' skills and knowledge to participate more actively in the process of change within the mining industry and in the country as a whole. And to contribute towards removing all discriminatory barriers within the industry, particularly racial." In this regard, a major implication of labor participation is that the meaning of education and training competencies has been broadened so as to add social competencies into vocational competencies. During the course implementation, it will be important to ensure the agreed aim of having ABET competencies to be based on learner, workplace, and national needs, instead of "tasks" as has been the case in the past. In the foreseeable future, the ABET dialogue is likely to be

dominated by the development and implementation of national ABET standards, and their application in various contexts.

So that learners can obtain education and training qualifications which have national mobility and recognition, it is nationally agreed that there will be some minimum national curriculum standards/competencies registered with the South African Qualifications Authority. The national curriculum standards should be contextualized and added upon in various sectors so that they are responsive to expressed local needs of learners and employers. Today's challenge lie in making sure that the noble aims, and the new understanding of what education and training competencies can be, are acted upon as intended or agreed. Stakeholders, including employers, trade unions, learners, and practitioners would have to follow-up on this major development by actively participating in the establishment and contextualization of each and every curriculum-competency statement. One should not, however, under-estimate potential problems in implementing the ABET agreement. Although the understanding of what a learning objective can be has been revolutionarized, a lot of work still has to be undertaken in implementing the new paradigm. Based on a lack of resources and capacity to participate effectively, which I observed within the unions and allied organizations, I sadly admit that it is possible for employers to design ABET programs which mostly focus on job-training even if the agreement says otherwise. The impact of current capacity building initiatives is yet unknown.

\* **Trade unions, and other mass-based organs of society, were able to shape national ABET policy during the 1990-1994 period of transition.** Through the National Education Policy Investigation (1992), COSATU Participatory Research Project (1993), the National Training Board (1994), the African National Congress (1994), and the National Education and Training Forum, various stakeholder organizations contributed to the ABET policy dialogue. One can only ask them to: "Keep it up!"

Although it is also recommended that future ABET policy be made in consultation with all stakeholders, it is too early to estimate the extent in which this will happen as planned. Also, it remains to be seen how much of the recommendations made in the transitional forums, and by COSATU-ANC, will ultimately become government policy.

\* **Some COSATU unions have begun the move toward linking Adult Basic Education and Training to Job Grading Systems.** Increases in workforce education and training should mean increases in company productivity and profitability. As a result, it is fair to expect that increases in one's productivity should lead to increases in one's standard of living. According to COSATU's vision (Appendix F), and according to a union-management agreement from the manufacturing sector (both discussed in chapter six), there are some union attempts to bargain the economic implications of ABET skills. One major implication of labor involvement in ABET

issues is the notion that when one completes required ABET modules/credits, one should be able to move from one job grade to another. It is important to realize, however, that the application of this notion will differ based on negotiations at various industries.

In a serious way, literature on Workplace Education can be faulted for being silent on the question of how worker-learners can economically benefit from increased knowledge and skills. Since the ABET framework is quite elaborate in the sense that it will offer both general education and technical training equivalent to ten years of free and compulsory schooling, employers and unions have to bargain its economic implications for both employers and employees. For instance, although ABET may be an expensive undertaking for employers, it will likely lead to a dramatic increase in worker productivity. Since ABET programs have a potential to enhance national development and competitiveness, it would be advisable for the new government to actively support workplace initiatives as much as possible. For example, this can be done through providing some matching grant-funds to workplace ABET partnerships.

\* **The issue of paid education and training leave (PETL) has been taken up in the context of collective bargaining.** The workers' need to be released in order to attend educational and training programs is in its second year as an NUM demand with the Chamber of Mines. The fact that the PETL principle has been identified for collective bargaining is a major implication of labor participation. Although PETL is

yet to be agreed at chamber/industry level, it is important to report that the PETL issue has been successfully negotiated by the union in some mines outside the chamber forum, and in the energy sector. Arguably, it is significant that workers have been able to identify two elements in the struggle for access to basic education and training programs: firstly, that PETL is a right not a favor for workers to improve their skills, although it still has to be so stated by the new government; secondly, workers are determined to undertake the struggle for access to education and training programs as a collective unit rather than go pleading for PETL as individuals. **If international experience is anything to go by, gaining access to classes will be a challenge for workers and unions for a long time to come.**

#### Challenges:

- \* **How to ensure that ABET program planners and practitioners are informed by individual-voices of learners in the classroom, whilst listening to their collective-voices through their various organizations, such as unions, women's organizations, and other civic organizations.** Although individual-voices and organizational -voices do not necessarily always mean the same thing, these two processes need to support each other. The two pronged strategy of learner and organizational participation is a major recommendation of this study. For mass-based organizations, such as unions, the new challenge lies in effectively expressing their views in workplace and governmental ABET forums. Organizational participation is not, however, intended to replace active learner participation - the development of working people should be put in their own hands. The credibility of various

stakeholders should be determined by the extent of popular participation within their own organizations. Joint ABET committees should not become ends in themselves.

Also, how can learner and practitioner participation in ABET public policy making and program delivery be promoted? During the period of this study, the union did engage workers in ABET policy issues through workshops. However, this could have been deepened. Workers were not engaged in their capacities as learners and practitioners because the union was still negotiating with employers. In future, the union should continue to involve workers in various public policy issues even if they are not enrolled in ABET programs. However, strategies of how to involve worker-learners and teachers in social policy issues can be found - if we are determined. For example, workplace-policy and public-policy issues can be incorporated into classroom exercises.

\* **How to empower ABET practitioners so that they can effectively contribute in the implementation of the proposed policy initiatives.** Generally, ABET practitioners, who are mostly part-time staff, are not trained and paid properly, and they often feel insecure in their jobs. This affects their performance negatively. Joint ABET committees need to ensure that practitioners are well selected, well trained, well paid, and given the freedom to pursue knowledge and skills with their learners. There has to be serious intervention in the current culture of lack of practitioner commitment and competence, or else the grand ABET framework may not change anything.



Practitioner development should cover the principles contained in the new ABET framework which include participatory education and management. The level of practitioner development will, however, mostly depend on the availability of resources.

- \* **How to use the services of education and training providers in workplace programs.** ABET providers include NGOs, institutions of higher learning, and independent consultants. Besides training ABET practitioners, developing curricula, and assessing learners, ABET service providers can be carefully selected and harnessed in the development of the capacity of joint ABET committees at the workplace. Whilst employing the services of outside bodies, employers and unions should continue to build their capacity on planning and implementing education and training programs.
  
- \* **How to avoid a rush to procure ABET qualifications which would destroy the learning process.** It seems to me that once the ABET framework is formally established as proposed (which will have learners and teachers working for a General Education Certificate, a GEC) there may be a race towards the acquisition of the GEC. Should the GEC become socially identified and accepted as an essential step, "a key," toward individual career advancement and economic betterment learners will, understandably, want GEC credentials whatever they are and however they can get them. This may shortchange attention to the learning process itself.

Should ABET credentials be socially accepted as the ticket to better life, there may be a social assumption to associate poverty with a lack of basic education and training. This would generally lead to a situation of "blaming the victim" for not getting education and training credentials. An over emphasis on ABET qualifications can lead to a situation where other intervening political, social, and economic factors are overlooked. For ABET policy makers and classroom practitioners, the challenge is to make sure that in the midst of pressure to provide for ABET credentials, some attention has to be paid to what people learn and how they learn. Two ways, at least, in which the quality of ABET qualifications can be enhanced are: to establish curriculum standards which are based on the needs of learners and reflect the development needs of workplaces and communities. Secondly, training programs for ABET practitioners need to be rigorous and should be continuously improved. Developing widely accepted curriculum standards, and thorough practitioner training programs would have to be based on extended pilot projects. A rush to consensus should be avoided. Although we would have to help learners acquire established ABET standards and qualifications, we still would have an obligation to provide high quality programs - continuous experimentation is necessary in this regard.

#### Questions:

- \* According to the transitional constitution, ABET provision is a responsibility of provincial governments. However, the nine new South African provinces emerged very late in the process of developing ABET policy. Consequently, their ABET plans, which are not part of this study, remain to be seen.

- \* Although this dissertation focuses on ABET issues, there are other pressing problems in the South African mining industry, such as: the ownership of mineral rights, the implementation of Affirmative Action programs, and migratory labor. ABET provision cannot by itself change the difficult conditions of the mining industry. It may be sometime before some of these major ABET questions are resolved.
  
- \* The future direction of the COSATU-ANC Alliance is yet unclear. In terms of ABET policy development, the ANC relied heavily on COSATU unions. How effective will unions be in future industry and national policy development? Will COSATU unions play a central role in ABET issues in the future? Besides the fact that unions may lack resources and capacity, the legitimacy and capacity of the new government and employers (which are recruiting many COSATU educators and trade unionists, and are moving away from obvious oppressive policies) may improve, and they may ultimately overtake COSATU unions as leading players in the ABET field. The new government should assist in the development of the capacity of trade unions and other civic organizations, beyond the regular COSATU-ANC relationship.
  
- \* This study focuses on ABET issues in the industrial sector. How basic education and training will be designed and implemented in the development sector is another subject all together. However, although our ANC/CEPD ABET group drafted plans to implement ABET projects among women and in rural communities, as well as within public works projects, these have not been incorporated in this dissertation and are not

yet government plans. Since NGOs do a fairly good job of reaching people in non-industrial settings, one hopes that the new government and international donors will assist NGOs in their efforts. The lack of resources and capacity will likely lead to uneven development between the development and industrial sectors - as well as within the various industrial sectors.

\* How much will the current political transformation be followed up by economic changes? I think that it is nationally understood in South Africa that political gains have to be stand on or be followed by economic transformation - for me the question is how far will this understanding be acted upon. Some people put the question as: Will the current nationalist (racial) transition from apartheid to democracy be followed by a socialist change? It has been argued that current policy proposals need to be understood in the context of a two stage transition, which is: the introduction of a democratically elected government to replace the minority white regime, to be followed by a change in the economic system which is currently concentrated in a few conglomerates. According to the new government's overall policy of reconstruction and development (RDP, 1994), achieving the right to vote and ending formal racism still need to be followed up by improvements in the people's standards of living. Although the provision of basic education and training can make a contribution in that regard, it is not yet entirely clear how other elements of the political-economy will be configured in order to facilitate comprehensive change.

The National Union of Mineworkers has to be commended for putting its motives, strategies, achievements, and setbacks under academic scrutiny. It models commitment to transparency, something it campaigns for. This sentiment is extended to the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance and the Center for Education Policy Development. Any shoddy work on this study cannot be ascribed to them, but to me, the researcher. This dissertation should, hopefully, throw some light on what the mining industry and the nation went through during this fascinating period of social change and education and training policy making. Since the ABET effort was a collective exercise, this dissertation is not intended to take individual credit or blame for any part of it. Not a day passes without me thinking about my indebtedness to mineworkers, without whom this project could not have been realized. Since now is the time to face new challenges, to implement our revolutionary ABET policies and plans, there will be time to, "Thank God for Labor."

APPENDIX A

NUMBER OF ILLITERATES PER INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

From the National Training Board (NTB, 1994, p. 153).

APPENDIX B

A LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNION AND THE RESEARCHER

## APPENDIX C

### A SAMPLE INTEGRATED ABET FRAMEWORK

From NUM National ABET Workshop (July 20-22 1994, pp. 33-34).





## APPENDIX D

### GENERIC COMPETENCIES/OUTCOMES FOR ABET

From COSATU PRP (1993, Appendix 8), and National Training Board (1994, Appendix F).



APPENDIX E

A NUM ABET PAMPHLET

From NUM National Congress, February 1994.



APPENDIX F

COSATU'S VISION FOR ABET AND INDUSTRY GRADING SYSTEM

From The Shopsteward, Vol. 2.4, August/September 1993, p. 25, by Morotoba, S.

APPENDIX G

A NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

From the National Training Board (NTB, 1994, p. 96).

APPENDIX H

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

From NUMSA Vocational Training Project, March 1991.



## APPENDIX I

### A 1994 SOUTH AFRICAN WHITE PAPER ON ABET

From "Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First steps to develop a new system," by the Department of Education (1994, pp. 17-18).



## APPENDIX J

### TIMELINE FOR ABET POLICY DEVELOPMENT (1990-94).

- 1990 National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) undertook a research project to examine the vocational training system in South Africa.
- Dec. 1990 - July 1992 National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), a project of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), was undertaken to investigate policy options in all areas of education, including adult education and training.
- April 1991 The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) congress adopted a resolution about Skills Training, and called for a national literacy campaign.
- July 1991 Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) adopted policy principles on national education and training, Adult Basic Education, industry training, and education for women workers.
- 1992 - Aug. 1993 COSATU Participatory Research Project (PRP) was undertaken to develop recommendations on how to restructure adult basic education, training, and grading systems in South Africa consistent with the COSATU 1991 principles.
- 1993 - April 1994 The National Training Board (NTB), representing four main stakeholder organizations (the business sector, labor organizations, the State, and education and training providers), formulated recommendations for a new National Training Strategy Initiative, which included a new ABET framework.
- July 1993 - Jan. 1994 Through the Center for Education Policy Development (CEPD), the African National Congress (ANC) developed an education and training policy framework in all areas of national education and training.
- Jan. 1994 - Apr. 1994 The CEPD developed policy implementation plans for ANC education and training policy proposals, including ABET implementation plans.
- February 1994 NUM congress adopted a resolution on Adult Basic Education and Training.

- November 1993 A national ABET conference, which launched the South African Committee on Adult Basic Education (SACABE), was held in Johannesburg.
- July 1993 The first NUM national ABET workshop was held. It initiated an intensive union effort at participating in industry and national ABET policy processes.
- June 1993 - Oct 1994 NUM and the Chamber of Mines negotiated an industry ABET framework, and also established a joint working group to negotiate implementation issues.
- 1994 The ANC, and its Alliance partners, produced the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), which is currently an overall socio-economic policy framework of the new government. According to the RDP, ABET provision "represents a crucial step in reconstruction and development."
- September 1994 The new Government of National Unity (GNU) introduced draft legislation on education and training, including Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

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