KAGISO TRUST

A Strategic Roadmap for Systematic Reform and Inclusive Learning

Transforming the Community Education Training and Adult Education and Training (AET) in South Africa:

A CASE STUDY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE CET/AET

40 Years – and Beyond

1985-2025

Transforming the Community Education Training and Adult Education and Training (AET) in South Africa:

A Strategic Roadmap for Systematic Reform and Inclusive Learning

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A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY KAGISO TRUST

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ACRONYMS

EAEA : European Association for the Education of Adults
AIDS   : Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ABET : Adult Basic Education Training
AET   : Adult Education Training
CET   : Community Education Training
ECD   : Early Childhood Development
FET   : Further Education Training
HIV   : Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IKS: : indigenous knowledge systems
LTSM   : Learning and Teaching Support Material
NDP   : National Development Plan
NQF   : National Qualification Framework
SAQA   : South African qualification Authority Act
TVET   : Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TOR   : Terms of Reference
EAEA   : The European Association for the Education of Adults
NLMP   : The National Literacy Mission Programme
UNSDG : United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
U.S.A. : United States of America
WIOA   : Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In the complex socio-economic fabric of South Africa, where the shadows of historical disparities loom large, adult education emerges not merely as an educational initiative but as a profound force for socio-economic transformation and empowerment.

Adult education and training is now redefined as Community Education andTraining (CET) to ensure comprehensive opportunity for young people who falls of the cracks of mainstream education pipeline – often due to socio-economic reasons. The CET/ AET – previously also known as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) it represents a pivotal axis around which the aspirations for a more equitable and prosperous future rotate. As the nation grapples with the vestiges of its past, the urgency to reconfigure the adult education sector becomes increasingly apparent, positioning it both as a corrective mechanism for historical oversights and a visionary pathway towards societal rejuvenation.

The detailed inquiry commissioned by Kagiso Trust illuminates the multifaceted challenges pervading the adult education sector. Despite strides toward progress, the echoes of historical systemic oversights resonate within the educational realms, manifesting as enduring policy discrepancies and operational inadequacies. The sector's current state, marked by a discernible disconnect between educational provisions and the actual needs of adult learners, calls for immediate and comprehensive interventions.

Key Findings Elaborated

a. **Curriculum Disconnection**

    The prevailing curriculum starkly misaligns with the real-world needs and aspirations of adult learners, resulting in diminished engagement and sub-optimal knowledge transfer.

b. **Ineffective Teaching Approaches**

    Predominant teaching methodologies are proving inadequate in fostering deep, impactful learning, with a negligible percentage of learners finding these methods to be highly efficacious.

c. **Linguistic Exclusion**

    The disproportionate emphasis on English, devoid of adequate institutional backing for multilingualism, presents considerable barriers, overlooking the pedagogical benefits inherent in mother tongue-based bilingual education.

d. **Material Incoherence**

Teaching resources currently in use are often misaligned with learners' contexts and fail to bridge the learning gaps effectively, undermining the educational journey of adult learners.

e. **Governance Shortcomings**

The governance frameworks within the adult education sector are perceived as insufficiently responsive and participatory, particularly concerning community engagement and oversight.

Proposed Key Interventions

Curriculum Transformation: Urgently redesign the curriculum to prioritise learner-centricity, embedding the socio-cultural, economic, and experiential realities of adult learners into the educational content, thereby enhancing relevance and applicability.

IKS-Centric Curriculum Design: Proactively infuse the curriculum with indigenous knowledge, ensuring that it aligns with and amplifies local wisdom, practices, and linguistic diversity, thereby enhancing the curriculum's relevance and transformative potential.

Advanced Teacher Development: Launch expansive teacher training initiatives aimed at equipping educators with the latest pedagogical insights, a deep understanding of adult learning dynamics, and proficiency in multilingual instruction to ensure teaching excellence and effectiveness.

Bilingual Education Enhancement: Systematically incorporate and valorise bilingual teaching methodologies, recognising and harnessing the linguistic diversity of the learner population, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Strategic Resource Provision: Commit to the development and widespread distribution of pedagogically sound, culturally resonant, and contextually relevant teaching materials, tailored to bridge the existing educational gaps and enrich the learning experience.

Governance Revitalisation: Overhaul the governance structures to foster greater inclusivity, accountability, and community engagement, ensuring that the governance mechanisms resonate with and effectively serve the diverse needs of the adult learning community.

The transformative potential of a well-structured, responsive adult education system extends far beyond individual upliftment; it is a catalyst for national development, economic enhancement, and communal empowerment. An educated adult population stands as a testament to a nation's resilience, its commitment to progress, and its dedication to the principles of justice and equality.

The exigency for a reformed policy landscape that is responsive, forward-looking, and attuned to the exigencies of contemporary and future educational needs is undeniable. The call to action is for a sweeping, systemic overhaul of the adult education paradigm, one that is imbued with a sense of urgency, underpinned by a commitment to equity, and guided by a vision of transformative empowerment. As this report underscores, the moment for decisive, bold action is not just imminent; it is now.

The journey to reimagine and revitalise adult education is pivotal to the nation's trajectory towards sustainable development and societal well-being, making the timely and effective implementation of these recommendations not just strategic, but imperative.
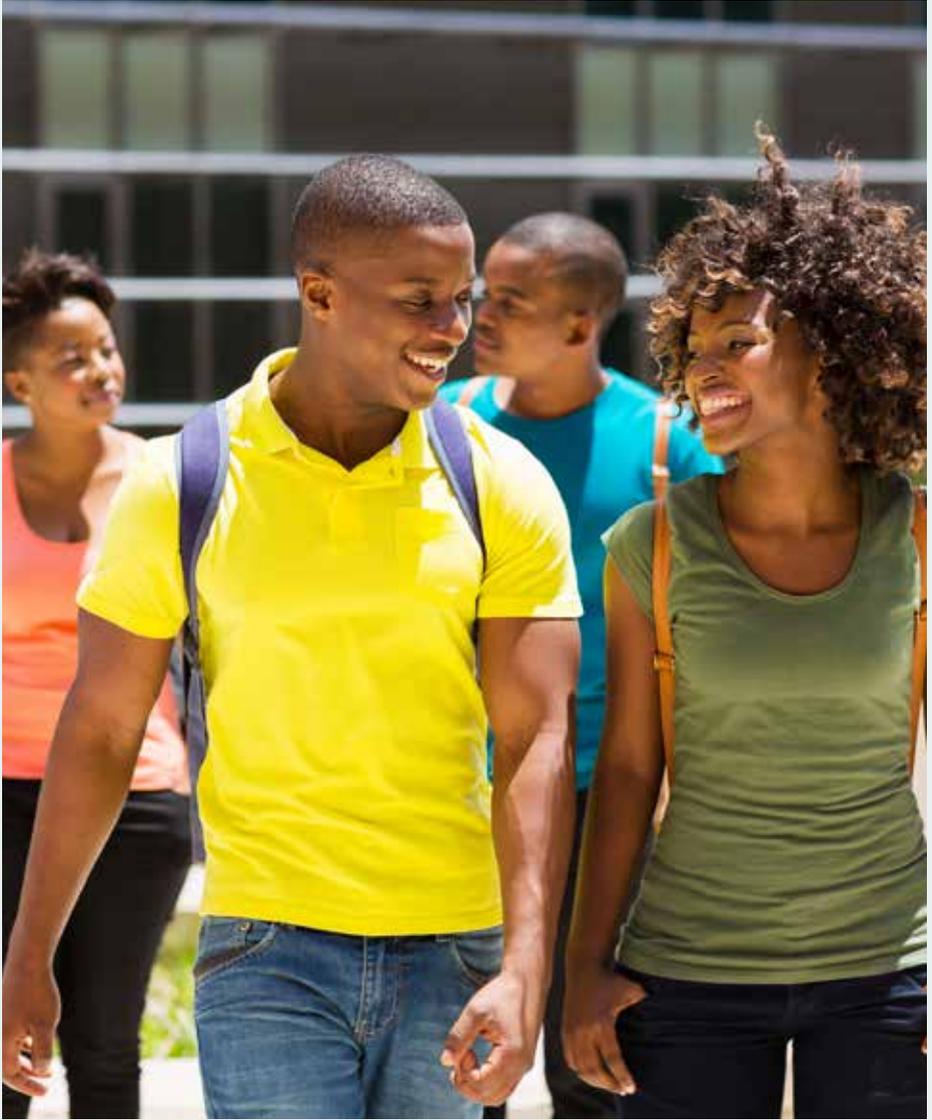
1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background

In the transformative landscape of South Africa, Adult Education and Training (AET) emerges as a critical beacon of hope, addressing the entwined challenges of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy that significantly impede national progress.

The exigency for AET is underscored by a stark trend: a substantial segment of the population, having exited the formal education system prematurely, later seeks to re-engage with educational frameworks to secure qualifications akin to the national senior certificate. This demographic shift, documented in studies by Daniels (2020), Khuluvhe (2021), and Tawiah & Ngmenkpieo (2018), underscores a burgeoning demand for adult education, juxtaposed against an infrastructure struggling to accommodate this rising tide, thereby spotlighting critical gaps in provision and accessibility.

The prevailing AET curriculum, while well-intentioned, often exhibits a discordant alignment with the eclectic and nuanced needs of adult learners. This discord is magnified by the heterogeneity of the adult learning populace, characterised by diverse educational antecedents, cultural backgrounds, and distinct learning objectives, which collectively advocate for a curriculum that is not only flexible but profoundly resonant with their life experiences and aspirations.

Commissioned by Kagiso Trust, this report delves into the intricacies of Limpopo Province's AET landscape, intending to extrapolate scalable, impactful practices that can inform and enhance the broader South African AET framework.

1.2 Scope

The imperative to fortify the post-school education sector, especially for individuals aged 18 and above, is well-articulated in South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP, Chapter 9, p 263). The NDP's vision harmonises with global educational mandates such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, all of which champion education as a cornerstone for sustainable development, socio-economic upliftment, and democratic progress. Yet, the journey from policy to tangible impact is fraught with complexities.

A significant demographic, encompassing adults and youths seeking educational resurgence, remains on the periphery of these educational advancements, signalling a pressing need for interventions that are not merely equitable but profoundly transformative.

1.3 Objectives

This technical report is crafted to:

- Illuminate the existing landscape of AET/CET in South Africa through a comprehensive review of pertinent literature, policy frameworks, and prior studies.

- Conduct a nuanced exploration, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to distill the unique challenges and triumphs of AET within Limpopo Province.

- Chart potential pathways for Kagiso Trust to bolster and refine AET/CET initiatives.

- Foster a dialogue with key stakeholders in the education sphere to harvest diverse insights and forge collaborative strategies.

- Synthesise research findings into strategic recommendations for Kagiso Trust's leadership.

- Articulate a detailed compendium of research processes, pivotal discoveries, and pragmatic strategies for sectoral enhancement.

The aspiration of this report transcends mere academic inquiry; rather it seeks to actuate a paradigm shift from policy formulation to impactful execution, advocating for strategic investments, focused inquiry, and pragmatic reforms that rejuvenate the AET domain. The envisioned outcome is a revitalised AET sector, poised as a pivotal platform for lifelong learning and employment, integral to South Africa's journey towards inclusive growth and sustainable development. Readers are invited to delve deeper into the ensuing analysis to uncover the transformative potential of AET, poised to redefine the contours of educational equity and societal advancement.

2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

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Adult Education and Training (AET) has become a focal point for policymakers globally as countries grapple with the challenges of a rapidly changing economy, technological advancements, and the need for a skilled workforce. The importance of AET is further highlighted by its inclusion in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, emphasising the significance of lifelong learning opportunities for all.

2.1 International Perspectives on Adult Basic Education

Contextualising South Africa's Adult Basic Education within a global perspective is essential for benchmarking against international standards, adopting best practices, and understanding innovative trends in adult education. The following subsections offer international perspectives on AET:

2.1.1 The European Context

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) stands out as a pivotal entity in this landscape, fervently advocating for the value and expansion of adult learning opportunities across Europe. The EAEA's initiatives and policy recommendations have significantly contributed to shaping the discourse and practices surrounding adult education in the region (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2023).

In examining the specific national strategies, Germany and the United Kingdom emerge as illustrative examples of how different European countries are responding to the contemporary challenges of adult education, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancements and shifting workplace demands. Germany's renowned dual system exemplifies a structured approach to vocational training, seamlessly integrating practical skills acquisition with theoretical knowledge. This system is not only pivotal for the youth but also for adults, as it offers continuous upskilling opportunities, thereby enhancing employability and addressing the skills gap in the economy (BIBB, 2022).

The UK's Skills for Life strategy, on the other hand, underscores a commitment to foundational skills, with a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. This initiative reflects an understanding of the critical role these basic skills play in empowering individuals, fostering social inclusion, and enhancing job prospects in an increasingly knowledge-based economy (Department for Education, 2021).

However, the journey is fraught with challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the integration of immigrants, a common challenge across Europe but particularly acute in countries with significant migrant populations. The task is not merely about language acquisition but extends to equipping these individuals with the necessary skills to thrive in their new environments, thereby fostering societal cohesion and mutual cultural understanding (Migration Policy Institute, 2020).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of these educational strategies is contingent upon their adaptability to the rapidly evolving labour market, influenced by digitalisation, globalisation, and demographic shifts. The agility of adult education programmes in responding to these changes, coupled with their ability to remain accessible and relevant to diverse learner demographics, is crucial for sustaining Europe's economic competitiveness and social fabric.

In conclusion, the European approach to adult education, characterised by its rich diversity and innovative strategies, offers valuable insights into the potential of lifelong learning to address contemporary challenges. The experiences of countries like Germany and the UK illustrate the importance of adaptive education systems that support individuals throughout their life course, ensuring that they remain resilient in the face of changing economic landscapes and societal needs. As we move forward, the continuous evaluation and adaptation of these educational frameworks will be essential in maximising their impact and relevance in an interconnected and rapidly evolving world.

2.1.2 The North American Approach

In the North American context, adult education and training is a critical component of the educational ecosystem, addressing the diverse needs of adult learners across the United States and Canada. Both countries prioritise equipping adults with essential foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving, crucial for navigating the complexities of modern society and the labour market. However, the strategies and emphases within their AET systems reflect their unique social, economic, and cultural landscapes.

In the United States, the AET framework is deeply rooted in community-based traditions, particularly focusing on marginalised and underserved populations. The country has a long history of adult education programmes that are locally driven, emphasising community involvement and tailored to meet the specific needs of the

learners. These programmes often target vulnerable groups, including immigrants, low-income individuals, and those lacking formal education, providing them with not only academic skills but also life skills and workforce preparation (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, 2021).

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 is a landmark legislation that underscores the U.S. commitment to integrating adult education with workforce development. It aims to foster a more cohesive system that not only improves foundational skills but also provides adults with pathways to higher education, vocational training, and meaningful employment, thereby addressing the skills gap in the economy (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Canada's approach, while also focusing on foundational skills, places a significant emphasis on language training, reflecting the country's bilingual heritage and its policy of multiculturalism. The integration of language skills is particularly crucial given Canada's high rates of immigration, with programmes designed to facilitate the smooth social and economic integration of immigrants. These programmes are not only about language acquisition but also about understanding Canadian cultural norms, values, and the legal framework, thereby aiding in the broader integration process (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020).

Moreover, Canada has a strong commitment to addressing the educational needs of its indigenous populations. Indigenous-focused AET programmes are designed to be culturally relevant and responsive, recognising the unique histories, cultures, and challenges faced by these communities. These initiatives aim to provide indigenous adults with the skills necessary for employment and civic participation while respecting and integrating their cultural heritage (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2019).

Both the U.S. and Canada recognise the transformative power of AET in fostering economic empowerment, social inclusion, and personal development. However, their approaches reflect their distinct societal needs and historical contexts. The U.S. has a strong tradition of community-based adult education, focusing on empowering marginalised communities through a broad spectrum of educational opportunities. In contrast, Canada's AET system places a heavier emphasis on language and cultural integration, reflecting its commitment to bilingualism, multiculturalism, and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Despite these differences, both countries face the challenge of ensuring that AET programmes are accessible, relevant, and aligned with the evolving demands of the workforce. As technological advancements and globalisation continue to reshape the job market, the need for ongoing adult education and skills development becomes increasingly critical.

In conclusion, the North American approaches to AET, while varied, share a common goal of enhancing the skills and opportunities of adult learners. The ongoing challenge for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders is to adapt these programmes to the changing global landscape, ensuring that all adults have the skills and knowledge to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

2.1.3 Asia and the Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region, with its rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and economic frameworks, presents a unique and diverse landscape for Adult Education and Training (AET). The historical influence of Confucian values, which hold education in high esteem, continues to resonate, albeit alongside a growing acknowledgment of the need for comprehensive AET systems that cater to the evolving demands of the modern world. This shift is particularly pertinent given the region's rapid economic transformations, technological advancements, and the challenges posed by vast rural expanses and linguistic diversity.

2.1.4 India's AET Initiatives

India, with its immense population and significant linguistic and cultural diversity, has recognised the critical role of adult education, particularly in enhancing literacy amongst women in rural areas. The National Literacy Mission Programme (NLMP) stands out as a cornerstone in India's strategy, aiming to make a substantial dent in adult illiteracy rates. This initiative reflects a broader commitment to empowering marginalised communities, with a special focus on gender inclusivity, enabling women to gain literacy and numeracy skills that are crucial for personal empowerment and socio-economic participation (Government of India, Ministry of Education).

2.1.5 China's Vocational and Technological Focus

China's approach to AET has been significantly shaped by its economic priorities and the needs of its vast manufacturing sector. The country's emphasis on vocational training is designed to align the workforce with the demands of its industrial and technological sectors. Moreover, with China's rapid technological evolution, there is

a strong focus on enhancing technological literacy, ensuring that the workforce can adapt to the fast-paced changes and innovations that characterise the country's economic landscape (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China).

2.1.6 Australia's Distance Learning and Indigenous Focus

Australia's strategy in AET is notably influenced by its geographical characteristics and the need to provide education to remote and indigenous populations. The country has effectively utilised technology to bridge distances, promoting distance learning and online education platforms to ensure that quality education is accessible even in the most remote areas. Additionally, there is a concerted effort to tailor educational programmes to the needs of indigenous communities, recognising the importance of cultural literacy and the value of integrating indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the learning process (Australian Government, Department of Education, Skills and Employment).

2.1.7 Regional Challenges and Strategies

Across the Asia-Pacific, the challenges in AET are as varied as the region itself, encompassing issues like rural accessibility, the integration of traditional and modern educational values, and the need to continuously adapt to a rapidly changing global economic environment. The responses to these challenges are multifaceted, focusing on both enhancing skills relevant to the current economic landscape and ensuring that cultural literacy and traditional knowledge are preserved and valued.

Efforts in these countries are not just about economic pragmatism; they also reflect a deeper recognition of the role of education in fostering societal well-being, cultural continuity, and individual empowerment. The varied strategies – be it India's focus on rural literacy, China's vocational training aligned with industrial needs, or Australia's innovative use of technology for remote education – highlight a shared understanding of the transformative power of AET in shaping resilient, adaptable, and inclusive societies.

In conclusion, the Asia-Pacific region exemplifies a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in the realm of adult education. The ongoing efforts to enhance AET systems in countries like India, China, and Australia are pivotal in equipping adults with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of the contemporary world, ensuring that education remains a lifelong journey that is accessible and relevant to all.

2.2 History of AET in South Africa

The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) or AET initiative in South Africa is rooted in the country's commitment to redress past educational inequalities and provide opportunities for lifelong learning. This literature review delves into the historical context, the evolution of AET, its successes and challenges, and its current status in South Africa.

2.2.1 Historical context

During apartheid, the majority of South Africans were denied access to quality education, leading to high illiteracy rates among the adult population. The apartheid era in South Africa, which spanned from 1948 to 1994, was characterised by institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination. This system affected every facet of life in South Africa, including education. Here's a deeper look into the educational landscape during apartheid and its implications:

2.2.2 Bantu Education Act (1953)

There are several issues that arose out of this Act. One of the most significant pieces of legislation impacting education during apartheid was the Bantu Education Act. Introduced by Hendrik Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, this act aimed to ensure that Black South Africans received an education designed to relegate them to inferior roles in society. Verwoerd famously stated, "There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour."(n.d)

Notably, there was a vast disparity in government spending on education for different racial groups. White schools were well-funded, had superior facilities, and well-trained teachers. In stark contrast, Black schools were underfunded, overcrowded, and poorly resourced. For instance, in the 1980s, the government spent ten times more per White student than per Black student.

Second, the curriculum in Black schools was designed to reinforce racial stereotypes and prepare Black students for manual labour and subservience. The government also controlled the curriculum, ensuring it aligned with apartheid ideologies. Furthermore, teaching about apartheid critically or discussing its opponents was forbidden.

Thirdly, the government's decision to enforce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in Black schools, despite it being neither the home language for many Black students nor educators, further exacerbated educational disparities. This decision led to significant student protests, most notably the Soweto Uprising in 1976.

2.2.3 Implication for Adult Illiteracy

The Apartheid era in South Africa has left indelible marks on the fabric of the nation, particularly within the education sector. The systematic denial of quality education to Black South Africans has had profound implications for adult literacy, echoing through generations and posing significant challenges to societal progress. These challenges manifested in the following ways:

High Dropout Rates: The scarcity of educational resources, compounded by a curriculum that lacked relevance to the students' lives and aspirations, precipitated alarmingly high dropout rates. A significant number of Black students were compelled to abandon their education prematurely, with many failing to complete even the most basic levels of education. This truncation of their educational journey left deep scars, limiting their prospects and perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

Compromised Quality of Education: For those who persisted within the system, the quality of education they received was markedly substandard. The acute shortage of adequately trained teachers, essential learning materials, and suitable educational infrastructure severely compromised the learning experience. Consequently, even the education that was attained often fell short of empowering students with the knowledge and skills necessary for their personal and professional development.

Economic Implications: The direct correlation between the quality of education and economic opportunities is well-established. In this context, the inferior education received by Black South Africans effectively barred them from accessing meaningful economic opportunities, relegating many to low-skilled, manual labour jobs characterised by precarious conditions and minimal remuneration. This economic marginalisation not only perpetuated the cycle of poverty but also made the pursuit of further education or vocational training an insurmountable challenge for many.

Legacy of Illiteracy: The enduring legacy of apartheid's educational policies is a widespread illiteracy among the adult Black population. Lacking foundational skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, many adults have been left ill-equipped to navigate the demands of modern life, hindered in their personal development, and stifled in their economic potential. This pervasive illiteracy underscores a profound societal failure and highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions.

In response to this dire legacy, the post-apartheid government, recognising the critical need to bridge these educational gaps, has placed considerable emphasis on Adult Education and Training (AET) initiatives. These programmes are not merely corrective measures but foundational steps toward rectifying the historical injustices of apartheid, aiming to empower individuals with the essential skills for personal empowerment and economic participation. As South Africa continues to grapple with the shadows of its past, the commitment to adult literacy and education remains a beacon of hope, symbolising the nation's resolve to forge a more equitable and informed society.

It is in this context that the post-1994 government recognised the urgent need to address adult illiteracy and initiated AET as a means to do so (Aitchison, 2003).

2.3 Current AET issues in South Africa

The current landscape of Adult Education and Training (AET) in South Africa reflects a complex interplay of advancements and enduring challenges, with provincial nuances adding layers to the national picture. While AET has broadened its scope beyond basic literacy and numeracy to include a more comprehensive educational framework, province-specific issues highlight the varied effectiveness and reach of these programmes across the country.

Overview of Province-Specific Issues in AET

This section delves into province-specific challenges within the Adult Education and Training (AET) sector, recognising the unique socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural landscapes that influence AET delivery and effectiveness across different regions. A province-specific focus enables tailored strategies and interventions that address localised needs and barriers, fostering more effective and impactful AET programmes that are responsive to the distinct contexts of each province.

Gauteng and Western Cape: Urbanisation and Migration Challenges

In Gauteng and the Western Cape, the rapid urbanisation and influx of migrants from other provinces and countries strain AET resources. These provinces, with their relatively better-resourced urban centres, attract a diverse population seeking employment and education, leading to overcrowded AET centres and a high demand for diverse educational programmes that cater to varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The challenge here is not just about quantity but also the quality of education, with a need for curricula that are responsive to the fast-changing urban economic landscape, particularly in sectors like technology and services.

KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape: Rural Access and Infrastructure

KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, with significant rural populations, face challenges related to access and infrastructure. In these provinces, AET centres are often geographically dispersed, making them less accessible to potential learners who might not have the means to travel long distances. Additionally, the quality of education is compromised by the lack of resources, such as trained educators and learning materials, which are crucial for the effective delivery of AET programmes.

Limpopo and Mpumalanga: Economic Constraints and Educational Relevance

In Limpopo and Mpumalanga, economic constraints significantly impact AET participation. High levels of poverty mean that potential learners often prioritise immediate income-generating activities over educational opportunities, leading to high dropout rates.

The relevance of the curriculum is also a critical issue, as the economic base in these provinces require specific vocational skills that are not adequately addressed by the current AET offerings.

Northern Cape and Free State: Sparse Populations and Resource Allocation

The Northern Cape and Free State face unique challenges due to their sparse populations and vast geographical areas. Delivering AET in such contexts is logistically challenging and often more costly, impacting the frequency and reach of educational programmes.

Resource allocation is a significant concern, with a need for innovative solutions like mobile learning centres or online platforms to enhance the accessibility of AET.

North West: Political Will and Community Engagement

In North West, the effectiveness of AET programmes is often influenced by the level of political will and community engagement. Sustained investment in adult education is crucial, but fluctuating political priorities affect the consistency of support for AET initiatives.

Community involvement is essential for the success of AET, ensuring that programmes are tailored to the local context and that there is a sense of ownership and relevance among the adult learners.

2.4 Overarching Challenges and Future Directions

Across all provinces, several overarching challenges persist:

Quality and Relevance: Ensuring that AET programmes are of high quality and relevant to the socio-economic needs of the adult learners is crucial. This includes updating curricula to reflect current market demands and incorporating digital literacy to keep pace with technological advancements.

Access and Retention: Expanding access to remote and underserved areas remains a challenge, as does improving retention rates among enrolled learners, who often face multiple barriers to sustained participation.

Professionalisation of Educators: Consistently high-quality teaching in AET programmes requires ongoing professional development and support for educators- a challenge that needs addressing across provinces.

The future of AET in South Africa hinges on addressing these nuanced, province-specific challenges while aligning with the national vision for a comprehensive, inclusive, and responsive adult education system. As the country continues to refine its post-school education and training strategy, the adaptability and resilience of the AET framework will be pivotal in meeting the diverse needs of South Africa's adult learners.

2.5 Legislative framework on AET in South Africa

Adult Education and Training (AET) in South Africa is positioned within a comprehensive legislative framework that underscores the importance of addressing the educational needs of adults. This framework is aligned with the country's broader goals of reducing inequality, promoting social justice, and enhancing economic development. Below is a brief overview of the legislative framework:

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

The South African Constitution guarantees the right to basic education, including adult basic education, in Section 29. It is the overarching document that ensures that every citizen, irrespective of age, has the right to education. Undoubtedly, the Constitution is the supreme law of South Africa and sets the foundation for human rights, including the right to education.

It is worth noting that Section 29 not only guarantees the right to basic education but also emphasises that everyone has the right to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. This foundational right serves as the base upon which all other educational policies and legislation are constructed. However, while the Constitution provides this right, the mechanisms, quality assurance, and delivery methods are left to subsidiary legislation and policies.

South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996

While this Act primarily deals with the governance of schools, it establishes the framework for the provision of learning from Grades R-9, which is foundational to the AET levels. This Act primarily pertains to the governance and provision of basic education, setting the framework for compulsory education up to a certain age. However, its mention of Grades R-9 is significant for AET as it connects foundational learning with further education. A potential gap here is the limited focus on adult learners who often have unique learning needs distinct from younger learners.

National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996

This Act provides for the determination of national education policy and ensures that policy is consistent with provisions of the Constitution and other applicable laws. It has implications for adult education in terms of policy formulation, quality assurance, and standards setting. A pivotal piece of legislation, this Act underscores

the necessity of coherent policy across the nation's education system. It mandates the Minister of Education to determine national education policy according to certain principles. While the Act provides for the formulation of policies affecting adult education, there might be a need for more specific directives addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in the adult education sector.

Further Education and Training Act, No. 98 of 1998

This Act covers the governance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges (previously FET colleges). AET Level 4 is equivalent to Grade 9, making it a bridge between basic and further education. Thus, some colleges may offer AET as part of their programmes. While this Act emphasises post-basic education (Grade 10 and above), the bridge between basic education and further education (like AET Level 4) highlights the continuum of learning. The potential gap is the delineation between basic and further education, which might leave certain adult learners in a policy grey area.

Adult Education and Training Act, No. 52 of 2000

This Act specifically focuses on adult education and training. It provides the governance framework for public and private adult learning centres, which offer the AET programme. Directly addressing adult learning, this Act establishes the governance framework for adult learning centres. While it recognises the importance of adult education, its implementation has faced challenges, particularly regarding funding, infrastructure, and quality assurance.

South African Qualifications Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995 (SAQA)

SAQA is responsible for the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which categorises and oversees all qualifications in South Africa. AET levels are positioned on the NQF, ensuring that they are recognised nationally. SAQA's role in ensuring nationally recognised qualifications is pivotal. It integrates education and training into a unified framework. However, the challenge remains in ensuring that AET qualifications are viewed with the same esteem as other qualifications, eliminating stigma and promoting lifelong learning.

General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, No. 58 of 2001

Established Umalusi as the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training. Umalusi is responsible for quality assurance of AET providers and the

certification of learners. Umalusi's role in assuring the quality of providers and certifications is crucial. However, consistent standards across providers, especially in the adult education sector, can be challenging, given the varied backgrounds and needs of adult learners.

White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013)

This document sets out the government's vision for the post-school system, emphasising the need to cater to those outside of formal schooling, including adults needing education and training. This vision-driven document recognises the diverse needs of the post-school population. It aims to expand access to education and training opportunities. While its intentions are commendable, operationalising these goals requires considerable resources and coordination across sectors.

Policy for the Community Education and Training Colleges

In the pursuit to reposition and consolidate adult education, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) introduced Community Education and Training Colleges, which would cater to the youth and adults who did not meet the requirements of the formal schooling system or needed skills training. The introduction of Community Education and Training Colleges to cater to adults and out-of-school youth was a significant step. However, these institutions need adequate support, both in terms of resources and capacity building, to effectively address the needs of their target demographic.

National Development Plan (NDP) 2030

While not strictly a legislative document, the NDP recognises the importance of education, including adult education, in achieving its vision of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030. The NDP's vision for education is holistic, linking it to broader socio-economic goals. However, translating this vision into actionable strategies, especially for marginalised groups like adult learners, remains a challenge.

The legislative framework for AET in South Africa is comprehensive and reflects the country's commitment to ensuring that all citizens, regardless of age or previous educational experiences, have access to quality education and training. This commitment is deeply rooted in the country's history and the recognition of education as a critical tool for personal and national development.

2.6 Policy gaps analysis

In the realm of adult education, a tapestry of acts and policies weaves through the landscape, each strand representing a commitment to lifelong learning. Yet, despite this intricate array, there lies a pressing need for greater integration and continuity. The current framework, while robust in its intentions, often presents a fragmented journey for learners, lacking a seamless pathway that adults can navigate with confidence and clarity.

The vision is clear: a cohesive educational tapestry that not only connects various threads of policy but also aligns them in such a way that adults find a continuous, unbroken path to personal and professional growth. However, the ambition of these policies frequently encounters the stark reality of resource allocation. While the significance of adult education is widely acknowledged in policy circles, the translation of this recognition into tangible support – be it financial or human – remains inconsistent.

The gap between the ideal and the actuality of resource provision means that the potential of adult learners is not fully harnessed, leaving many educational initiatives underfunded and understaffed. This shortfall not only undermines the effectiveness of existing programmes but also dims the prospects of expanding innovative and impactful learning opportunities for adults.

Quality assurance stands as another formidable challenge in the adult education sector, characterised by its diversity and complexity. Ensuring that the myriad providers deliver consistent and high-quality education is a task fraught with difficulties. The sector's heterogeneity means that standardising quality without stifling the unique strengths and innovative approaches of different providers is a delicate balancing act. Yet, it is a crucial endeavour, for the stakes are high: the credibility and recognition of adult education qualifications depend on the assurance that they represent a reliable standard of learning and skill acquisition.

Compounding these challenges is the persistent stigma and skewed perceptions surrounding adult education. Despite the presence of supportive policies, societal attitudes often fail to reflect the value and legitimacy of lifelong learning. This stigma not only discourages potential learners from enrolling in adult education programmes but also casts a long shadow over the qualifications they earn, affecting their acceptance in the wider world of work and society. Overcoming

this societal bias is imperative, not only for the sake of individual learners but also for the broader recognition of adult education as a vital component of a dynamic, inclusive, and learning-oriented society.

In essence, the journey toward an empowered, educated adult population is multifaceted, requiring a harmonious blend of integration, resource commitment, quality assurance, and societal respect. Each element is crucial in sculpting an environment where adult education is not just available but is also valued, effective, and transformative.

2.7 Analysis of quality assurance measures

AET's annual results, while not attributable to any specific assessment bodies, reflect a pattern of general underperformance that underscores deeper, systemic issues in the educational provision itself. Umalusi, a quality assurance body, deals with results that show concern regarding the quality of the AET sector. The recurring underperformance signals that the challenges faced are not merely at the point of assessment but are rooted in the foundational stages of educational provision.

These systemic challenges manifest in various dimensions of the AET landscape:

Curriculum Relevance: One of the critical issues is the alignment of the curriculum with the real-world needs of adult learners. The curriculum must be responsive to the evolving socio-economic environment, ensuring that learners acquire skills that are relevant and applicable to the current job market and their personal development goals.

Educator Training and Support: The quality of education is significantly influenced by the competency and preparedness of educators. Systemic challenges include the need for continuous professional development, adequate support, and resources for educators to effectively deliver the curriculum and engage adult learners.

Resource Allocation: Disparities in resource allocation contribute to the underperformance, with some regions or institutions lacking the necessary infrastructure, learning materials, and support services. This uneven distribution affects the quality of education and the learners' ability to engage fully with the learning material.

Learner Support Systems: Adult learners often face unique challenges, including balancing their studies with work, family responsibilities, and other personal

commitments. Adequate support systems, such as counselling, career guidance, and flexible learning options, are essential to help learners navigate these challenges and remain engaged in their education.

Engagement and Retention Strategies: High dropout rates and low learner engagement are symptomatic of broader systemic issues. Effective strategies are needed to maintain learner interest and motivation, ensuring that education is seen as both relevant and valuable.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms: While the assessment bodies play a crucial role in upholding standards, there is a need for robust quality assurance mechanisms throughout the educational journey, not just at the assessment phase. This includes management of the examination cycle: question papers, invigilation of the exam process, marking of exam papers, coupled with monitoring, evaluation, and feedback loops to inform continuous improvement.

Given the insights gained from reviewing international practices, local and provincial research, legislative frameworks, and Umalusi's Annual reports for both public and private centres, it becomes evident that the adult education and training sector is at a critical juncture. The identified gaps underscore the pressing need for a consolidated policy framework specifically tailored to the AET landscape. This framework must not only encapsulate the unique challenges faced by adult learners but also ensure a seamless integration with the broader national education system, guaranteeing that adult education is recognised as a pivotal component of lifelong learning.

The necessity for such a framework is amplified by the current disparities in resource allocation, the variability in quality assurance practices, and the overarching need to elevate the societal and economic perception of adult education. These factors collectively highlight the sector's potential to significantly contribute to national development, workforce enhancement, and personal empowerment but also point to the vulnerabilities that could undermine these contributions if not addressed with urgency and precision.

Therefore, embarking on detailed research to elucidate these gaps is not just beneficial but imperative. This research should aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the sector's current state, identifying both the strengths that can be leveraged and the weaknesses that require immediate intervention. It should encompass an in-depth analysis of the existing policy landscape, stakeholder

perspectives, best practices globally, and the specific needs of adult learners, thereby constructing a holistic view of the sector's operational environment.

The findings of such research are expected to inform a robust proposal for improvements, emphasising not just the rectification of identified gaps but also the proactive enhancement of the sector's overall efficacy. The proposed improvements should be actionable, evidence-based, and aligned with the overarching goal of creating an inclusive, responsive, and high-quality adult education system.

This study is poised to be a cornerstone in the strategic redevelopment of the AET sector. By aligning the research outcomes with the overall strategy to foster sustainable solutions, there is a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the sector, making it more relevant, resilient, and responsive to the needs of adult learners. The urgency of this endeavour cannot be overstated, as the implications of the study's findings are set to reverberate across the educational landscape, potentially transforming the future of adult education and, by extension, enhancing the socio-economic fabric of the nation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Background

Acomprehensive study was conducted on Adult Education and Training (AET) provision in Limpopo, leveraging its status as a supplier of public AET materials on a national scale. The province's rich linguistic diversity, hosting major language and cultural groups such as Xitsonga, Tshivenda, and Sepedi, presents a unique microcosm of South Africa's broader educational and cultural landscape, making it an ideal candidate for this study.

The research design was strategically developed to employ a mixed-method approach, harmonising both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to ensure a robust and comprehensive analysis. This methodological choice was driven by the need to capture the multifaceted nature of AET provision, encompassing the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the AET ecosystem.

For the quantitative aspect of the study, a stratified random selection process was utilised. This sampling rationale was chosen to ensure that the data collected would be representative of the diverse population groups within Limpopo, reflecting the varied experiences and outcomes of AET provision across different linguistic and cultural demographics. The stratification criteria included linguistic groupings, geographical location, and types of AET centres, which allowed for a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the quantitative data.

Conversely, the qualitative data collection was guided by a purposive sampling strategy, targeting specific groups that would provide depth, context, and insights into the AET provision within the province. This included a spectrum of participants such as teachers, learners, centre managers, officials from the Department of Higher Education, and representatives from Umalusi, the quality assurance body. Selecting these participants deliberately allowed the study to gather detailed, contextualised, and rich qualitative data that illuminated the intricacies, challenges, and successes of the AET programmes.

The integration of these sampling methods, in alignment with the Mixed Method approach, facilitated a comprehensive and holistic exploration of the AET landscape in Limpopo. This approach not only enhanced the reliability and validity of the research findings but also ensured that the study captured the complexity and dynamism of AET provision in a linguistically and culturally diverse setting.

The anticipation is that the insights gained from Limpopo, given its embodiment of both private and public community learning centres, will have broader implications for the South African AET landscape. The findings from Limpopo are expected to inform policy, practice, and future research, potentially guiding national strategies for enhancing AET provision, aligning it with the educational needs and cultural contexts of learners, and ensuring high-quality outcomes consistent with Umalusi's standards for quality assurance.

3.2 Steps undertaken

Step 1: Comprehensive Review of Literature and Policy Framework

To ensure a robust understanding of adult education within the South African milieu, we embarked on a meticulous review of pertinent literature. This encompassed not only national sources but also selected international documents to foster a comparative perspective.

Our scrutiny extended to an in-depth analysis of legislative and policy frameworks related to AET qualifications in South Africa.

By systematically synthesising these legislative structures, we were equipped to pinpoint discrepancies between policy intentions and on-the-ground practices. Additionally, juxtaposing South Africa's approach with international benchmarks served to provide context, highlighting both unique regional challenges and shared global concerns. Through this rigorous procedure, our objective was to unveil a multi-faceted, critical understanding of the adult education landscape, firmly grounded in both theory and practical realities.

Step 2: Quantitative Measures

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of various stakeholders in Limpopo Province, a survey was meticulously designed, employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The utilisation of this scale was aimed at capturing the nuanced sentiments of participants, thereby facilitating a detailed exploration of their attitudes and opinions.

In the quest for a holistic representation of the study population, 90 participants were engaged through a stratified random sampling method. This technique was pivotal in ensuring proportional representation across different subgroups, including teachers, centre managers, and both current and former learners. The employment of such a stratified approach played a crucial role in minimising potential sampling bias, thus enhancing the credibility of the study.

Following the collection of survey responses, a comprehensive data analysis phase was initiated, utilising the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis commenced with descriptive statistics to establish a foundational understanding of the data. This phase included the calculation of means to identify central tendencies and frequency counts to observe the distribution of responses. Furthermore, standard deviations were examined to assess the variability and dispersion of responses, providing insights into the consistency of opinions across the sample.

In the pursuit of deeper analytical insights within the dataset, the research methodology was adjusted from an initial consideration of a one-series t-test to the implementation of the Chi-square test. This adjustment was informed by the specific

characteristics of the collected data and the defined objectives of the analysis. Frequency counts were employed to catalogue the occurrences of each response option provided in the survey questions. This method facilitated the identification of predominant responses and enabled a comprehensive quantification of the distribution of answers amongst the participants. Through this analytical process, valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes, behaviours, and characteristics of the study population were obtained, providing a foundational understanding of the demographic and contextual factors at play.

The Chi-square test was subsequently applied to investigate the relationships between categorical variables, aiming to test the independence of these variables from one another. This statistical test was crucial in identifying any statistically significant associations or discrepancies among different groups within the data. The analysis of the Chi-square results allowed for the determination of whether certain characteristics or behaviours were interconnected, and to what extent these relationships could be considered statistically significant.

The selection of the Chi-square test was particularly appropriate, given its status as a non-parametric inferential test suitable for measuring the significance levels of observed frequencies within categorical data. This methodological adjustment not only aligned with the nature of the data but also significantly enhanced the ability to meet the analytical goals of the study, enabling a thorough examination of the complex relationships present within the dataset. The utilisation of the Chi-square test in this research is particularly justified for several reasons:

Categorical Data Analysis: The employment of a Likert scale generates ordinal data, aligning well with the Chi-square test's capabilities to analyse categorical variables. This alignment is crucial for the accurate interpretation of the data collected.

Testing Independence: The Chi-square test facilitates the examination of independence between various groups within the sample, such as teachers versus learners. This capability is instrumental in providing insights into the variance in perceptions amongst different stakeholders, highlighting significant differences in viewpoints.

Non-Parametric Nature: Considering the possibility that the data may not adhere to a normal distribution, the non-parametric nature of the Chi-square test renders it a suitable analytical tool. This characteristic is advantageous as it necessitates fewer assumptions regarding the distribution of the data.

By establishing an alpha value at 0.05, the research adheres to a widely accepted threshold for statistical significance, thereby ensuring a high degree of confidence in the findings. This threshold indicates a mere 5% likelihood that the observed associations or differences could manifest in the absence of any actual underlying effect within the population.

In conclusion, the methodological strategy adopted, encompassing both data collection and analysis phases, was meticulously designed to elicit both profound and scientifically robust insights. Through the application of the Chi-square test, the research successfully unveiled significant patterns and relationships within the dataset, thereby making a substantive contribution to the discourse on Adult Education and Training in Limpopo Province.

Step 3: Interviews

A comprehensive qualitative methodology was designed to glean deep insights from the participants. Two distinct interview strategies were adopted to ensure the breadth of data collection.

Initially, on-site interviews were conducted across various AET Centres in the Limpopo province. These sessions included a mix of students, teachers, principals, and administrators, with each centre contributing insights from four unique respondents. This approach was designed to capture a representative snapshot of daily operations, challenges, and successes.

In the next phase, digital interviews were scheduled with senior officials representing key organisations in the sector. These online sessions, facilitated by secure and user-friendly platforms, aimed to gather high-level insights, policy directions, and overarching strategies.

To maintain the integrity and richness of the responses, all interviews were designed with open-ended questions and were carried out in an environment conducive to open sharing. Every session was recorded, post receiving explicit consent from the participants. The resulting 29 hours of audio data was then diligently transcribed, ensuring every nuance of the conversation was captured.

The transcription served as the foundation for our thematic analysis. This began with multiple readings of the data for familiarisation, followed by the identification and coding of distinct data points. These codes were grouped into overarching themes, which were then reviewed, refined, and finalised. This robust approach ensured our findings were both authentic to the participants' perspectives and critically analysed for deeper understanding.

Step 4: Observations

Classroom observations were conducted at selected Adult Basic Education Centres. These observations aimed to gain insights into the dynamics of classroom interactions and gauge them against principles derived from other data sources. Observations spanned various learning areas, including language (English communication) and content subjects like mathematics.

In conclusion, the methodology meticulously adopted for this study was instrumental in ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Adult Education and Training (AET) landscape within the targeted provinces. By strategically integrating a diverse array of research methods, including thorough literature reviews, precise quantitative measures, insightful interviews, and detailed observations, the research was able to construct a holistic view that spans both the historical challenges and the notable successes characterising the AET sector.

This multifaceted approach not only facilitated a deep dive into the complexities inherent in adult education but also illuminated the pathways through which the sector has navigated its evolution. The resultant analysis provides a rich, multi-dimensional perspective on the AET landscape, highlighting the critical factors that have shaped its development and the ongoing efforts to address educational disparities.

Through this comprehensive methodology, the study contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of adult education, offering a foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing the efficacy and reach of AET programmes.

4. KEY FINDINGS

4. KEY FINDINGS

The findings of the study are categorised under the following themes: curriculum, learning and teaching materials, structural issues, governance and language and literacy levels. Quantitative findings are presented in Section A and Section B reports on qualitative narratives.

4.1 Section A: Quantitative Findings

This section presents the quantitative findings of our study, which employed statistical methods to analyse the data collected from our survey respondents. The primary statistical techniques used in this analysis were frequency counts and Chi-square tests, allowing us to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the data. These methods provided a robust framework for quantitatively assessing the variables of interest in our study. The results are presented under each of the following themes:

4.1.1 Mismatch between curriculum assumptions and the learners' needs

The participants were asked rate on a scale of 1-5 the degree to which they believed the curriculum and unit standards are relevant to the needs of the adult learners. The results are presented below:

Table 1: Feedback on alignment between curriculum standards and learner cohort

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	13	14.4	14.4	14.4
2	35	38.8	38.8	53.3
3	37	41.1	41.1	94.4
4	4	4.4	4.4	98.8
5	1	1.1	1.1	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

The findings from Table 1 illuminate a critical issue within the adult education sector: a significant discrepancy between the current curriculum and the actual needs of

adult learners. The majority of survey respondents – over half – signalled a strong belief that the curriculum does not adequately serve the educational requirements of adults, with a substantial 53.3% assigning low ratings that underscore this perceived misalignment. Conversely, a minimal fraction of participants, merely 5.5%, felt that the curriculum aligns well with adult learners' needs, as indicated by their positive ratings of 4 or 5.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' feedback on the alignment between curriculum standards and the learner cohort (χ^2 = 54.67, df = 4, p < 0.001). This significant χ^2 value indicates a pronounced discrepancy in participants' perceptions, with the majority expressing concerns about the curriculum's adequacy in meeting the needs of adult learners.

This significant lean towards a negative or neutral evaluation points to a substantive concern regarding the current educational frameworks, highlighting a potential gap in how well the curriculum resonates with the practical and contextual needs of adult learners. The overwhelming consensus, marked by 53.3% of participants assigning low alignment ratings, signals a pressing need to scrutinise and possibly reformulate the existing curricular standards to better cater to the diverse and specific needs of this demographic.

The compelling statistical evidence provided by the χ^2 result underscores the urgency of this educational issue, advocating for a re-evaluation of curriculum development processes to ensure they are closely attuned to the real-world scenarios and expectations of adult learners. Such findings necessitate a thoughtful and proactive response, aiming to bridge the identified gap and enhance the relevance, applicability, and effectiveness of the curriculum to ultimately improve the educational outcomes and satisfaction of adult learners in the sector.

4.1.2 Ineffectiveness of teaching methods

All the 90 participants rated on a scale of 1-5 on whether the methods used for teaching are effective in enhancing understanding. The results are reported in Table 2 following:

Table 2: Feedback on Teaching methods

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	15	16.6	16.6	16.6
2	33	36.6	36.6	53.3
3	40	44.4	44.4	97.7
4	2	2.2	2.2	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

The data presented here offers a compelling insight into the current state of teaching methodologies employed within the adult education sector. The utilisation of a 1 to 5 Likert scale to gauge participants' perceptions of these methods reveals a nuanced landscape of effectiveness as perceived by adult learners themselves. Notably, the absence of any responses categorising the teaching methods as "strongly agree" (5) for effectiveness is telling. It underscores a critical gap in perceived efficacy, with a striking 53.3% of respondents viewing the methods as either not effective or only somewhat effective. This sentiment starkly contrasts with the mere 2.2% who deemed the methods to be highly effective, highlighting a significant discrepancy in satisfaction levels.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' feedback on teaching methods (χ^2 = 62.22, df = 3, p < 0.001). This significant χ^2 value highlights considerable variability in the participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of current teaching methodologies within the adult education sector.

The predominant lean towards neutral to negative perceptions indicates a pressing concern about the current state of teaching methodologies. The near absence of high endorsement (2.2% for the most positive response) underscores a critical gap in the perceived adequacy and effectiveness of the methods utilised, with a majority of respondents signalling a need for enhancement or re-evaluation of the teaching strategies in place.

The overwhelming statistical significance denoted by the χ^2 result underscores the importance of these findings, suggesting that the prevalent sentiments are not random but a reflection of a substantive issue with the current teaching methods. This calls for a strategic reassessment of educational practices, advocating for reforms that align more closely with the needs and preferences of adult learners.

Addressing these identified gaps is essential for enhancing the educational experience and outcomes in the adult education sector. The feedback captured points to the necessity for innovative, evidence-based instructional strategies that resonate more effectively with adult learners, potentially leading to improved engagement, satisfaction, and learning outcomes. The urgency conveyed by these results highlights the critical need for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to collaboratively explore and implement teaching methodologies that are both impactful and aligned with adult learning principles.

4.1.3 Teachers' Training and knowledge of subject matter

Participants were inquired about their perception of teacher training and knowledge base pertaining to the subjects they teach. They were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree" (suggesting they believe they lack appropriate training and knowledge), 2 indicates "Disagree," and 3 represents a "Neutral" stance. The results of the survey on this variable are in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Feedback on Teacher Training and Knowledge of subject matter

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	17	18.8	18.8	18.8
2	41	45.5	45.5	64.4
3	32	35.5	35.5	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

Out of the 90 participants, 17 (18.8%) expressed strong disagreement, indicating they perceive a significant lack in their training or knowledge of the subject matter. The largest group, consisting of 41 participants (45.5%), disagreed, suggesting they believe there's room for improvement in their training and knowledge.

32 participants (35.5%) held a neutral stance on the matter, neither explicitly indicating satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with their training and knowledge base.

The overall mean score for this assessment was 2.1 with a standard deviation of 0.723. This average score leans towards a perception of disagreement on the adequacy of their training and knowledge, but it's not overwhelmingly negative.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test indicated a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' feedback on teacher training and their knowledge of the subject matter (χ^2 = 48.33, df = 2, p < 0.001). This significant χ^2 value suggests that there is a notable variation in the participants' perceptions, primarily skewed towards expressing concerns about the adequacy of their training and understanding of the subject matter.

The aggregation of these responses highlights a predominant sentiment of inadequacy in teacher training and subject knowledge among the participants. With the mean score positioned at 2.1, it reflects a general tendency among respondents to perceive their training and knowledge in a less favourable light, albeit not categorically negative.

The substantial χ^2 statistic from the Chi-Square test, combined with the notable percentage of participants expressing reservations about their training adequacy, underlines the need for a critical examination and potential enhancement of teacher training programmes. The results emphasise the importance of addressing the highlighted areas of concern to elevate the quality of education delivered, ensuring that educators are well-prepared and proficient in their respective subject areas.

Such statistically significant findings necessitate an informed response, advocating for targeted interventions to bolster teacher training and deepen educators' subject matter expertise. This alignment with the participants' feedback is pivotal for advancing educational quality and fostering an environment where teachers feel confident and well-equipped to facilitate effective learning.

4.1.4 Evaluation of learning and teaching materials

Participants were invited to assess the quality and efficacy of the learning and teaching materials available to them. The assessment scale extended from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "Strongly agree".

Table 4: Learning and Teaching Materials

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	21	23.3	23.3	23.3
2	33	36.6	36.6	60.0
3	30	33.3	33.3	93.3
4	5	5.5	5.5	98.8
5	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

This table shows that 21 participants (23.3% of the total) found the materials to be very inadequate. A significant portion, 33 participants (36.6%) rated the materials as inadequate. 30 participants (33.3%) adopted a neutral stance on the materials' adequacy. A minority, with only 5 participants (5.5%) found the materials to be adequate. Just 1 participant (1.1%) believed the materials to be very adequate.

The findings indicate a predominant sense of inadequacy regarding the teaching materials among participants. The overall mean score is 2.2, with a standard deviation of 0.9, further underscoring the tendency toward perceiving the materials as below par.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' evaluations regarding the adequacy of learning and teaching materials ($\chi^2 = 55.22$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$). This significant χ^2 value highlights a distinct variation in participants' perceptions, predominantly indicating a sense of inadequacy in the provided materials.

The pronounced statistical significance of these findings underscores the urgency to address the perceived inadequacies in educational resources. It suggests that the majority of respondents are not confident in the effectiveness of the current materials to support optimal learning outcomes, emphasising a notable gap

between the materials provided and the participants' expectations or requirements for effective learning.

These results serve as a compelling quantitative validation of the need for educational stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive review and enhancement of the learning and teaching materials. Ensuring that these resources meet the necessary quality standards is crucial for fostering an educational environment conducive to successful teaching and learning experiences. The findings advocate for strategic interventions aimed at improving the quality and relevance of educational materials, aligning them more closely with the pedagogical needs and enhancing the overall educational quality and learner satisfaction.

4.1.5 Assessment of classroom Equipment for effective learning

Participants were asked to express their opinions on whether classrooms are adequately equipped to facilitate effective learning. They were given a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree", suggesting classrooms are not well-equipped; 2 means "Disagree", implying a somewhat negative perception, and 3 represents a "Neutral" stance. The results are summarised in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Feedback on classroom equipment

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	18	20.0	20.0	20.0
2	38	42.2	42.2	62.2
3	34	37.7	37.7	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

This table shows that participants, which constitute 20% of the total, voiced a strong disagreement, implying they believe classrooms are ill-equipped for effective learning. The most significant portion of the respondents, 38 (42.2%) disagreed, indicating they perceive classrooms as not optimally equipped but not entirely insufficient either. 34 participants (37.7%) remained neutral on the topic, neither wholly affirming nor denying the adequacy of classroom equipment. From these

findings, a noticeable inclination towards the classrooms being perceived as less than adequately equipped emerges. The average score for this assessment settled at 2.1 with a standard deviation of 0.7. This mean leans towards a general sense of disagreement, yet not overwhelmingly negative.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test indicated a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' opinions regarding the adequacy of classroom equipment to facilitate effective learning (χ^2 = 46.67, df = 2, p < 0.001). This significant outcome underscores a discernible variation in the participants' perceptions, with a clear inclination towards viewing the classroom equipment as inadequate for effective learning.

The pronounced χ^2 value reveals a dominant sentiment among respondents, with a considerable number expressing disagreement or strong disagreement, suggesting that classrooms are not optimally equipped. This trend is indicative of prevalent concerns regarding the current state of classroom infrastructure, highlighting potential gaps in the provision of necessary resources to support effective learning environments.

The statistical significance of these findings accentuates the importance of addressing the identified inadequacies in classroom equipment. It reflects a critical need for educational institutions to reassess and potentially enhance their classroom setups to ensure they are conducive to effective learning. The results serve as a robust quantitative confirmation of the need for improvements in the physical learning environment, emphasising that enhancements in classroom equipment could substantially impact the quality of education and learning outcomes.

Such findings advocate for a focused evaluation of existing educational infrastructure, with the goal of aligning classroom facilities more closely with the pedagogical requirements for effective teaching and learning. Addressing these concerns is paramount to creating environments that are fully equipped to support educational excellence and foster an engaging and productive learning experience for students.

4.1.6 Absence of governance systems

Participants were queried about the effectiveness and inclusivity of their management systems. A specific focus of the assessment was the involvement

of the school governing body or an equivalent community-based management structure. Their feedback on the governance systems is tabulated below:

Table 6: Assessment of governance systems

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	19	21	21	21
2	36	40	40	61.1
3	30	33.3	33.3	94.4
4	5	5.5	5.5	100
Missing	**0**	**0.0**		
Total	**90**	**100**		

Table 6 shows that 19 participants, representing 21% of the total, perceived the governance systems to be very ineffective, particularly regarding the involvement of governing bodies. A considerable segment, 36 participants (40%) rated the systems as ineffective. There are 30 participants (33%) who held a neutral position, neither fully satisfied nor dissatisfied with the governance systems in place. A minority, 5 participants (5%) perceived the governance systems as effective and inclusive of governing bodies or equivalent community-based structures.

The data paints a picture where a significant majority, over 61%, lean towards finding the governance systems to be lacking, especially concerning community or governing body involvement. The overall mean score for this assessment was 2.2, with a standard deviation of 0.8. This average score corroborates the general sense of ineffectiveness perceived by the participants.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test indicated a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' assessments of governance systems ($\chi^2 = 60.22$, df = 3, p < 0.001). This significant outcome suggests a substantial variation in participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of governance systems, with a predominant trend towards viewing these systems as ineffective.

The high χ^2 value reflects a notable consensus among the respondents, with a majority indicating dissatisfaction or neutrality towards the current governance frameworks, particularly concerning the involvement and effectiveness of governing bodies. This trend points to prevalent concerns among participants, highlighting potential deficiencies in the existing governance structures and suggesting a significant disconnect between the governance systems' intended function and their perceived performance.

This statistical significance underlines the critical need for scrutinising and possibly reforming the governance mechanisms, especially considering the overwhelming lean towards negative evaluations. Such findings emphasise the urgency of addressing perceived shortcomings within governance systems to enhance their effectiveness, transparency, and inclusivity, ultimately fostering a governance environment that is more responsive to the needs and expectations of those it serves. The results serve as a robust statistical basis for advocating for substantial improvements in governance practices, aiming to bolster trust, efficiency, and overall satisfaction among stakeholders.

4.1.7 Teachers' Evaluation of Teaching and Learning through English

Participants were prompted to evaluate the effectiveness of utilising English as the medium for teaching and learning tailored for adult learners. The assessment employed a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 implies "strongly disagree", 2 indicates "disagree", 3 represents "neutral", and 4 means "Agree" and 5 means strongly agree. The results are summarised as below:

Table 7: Participants' feedback on using English as medium

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	13	14.4	14.4	14.4
2	36	40	40	54.4
3	38	42.2	42.2	96.6
4	3	3.3	3.3	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

This table shows that 13 participants, equivalent to 14.4% of the sample, felt that using English as the teaching medium was not effective at all for adult learners. A notable portion, 36 participants (40%) believed it to be not to be effective, suggesting serious challenges in using the medium. The majority, comprising 38 participants (42%) perceived English were unsure on effectiveness medium for teaching and learning. Only a small fraction, 3 participants (3.3%) considered English to be effective medium for the adult learners in question.

The data paints a nuanced picture, with a majority (82.2%) not considering English as effective. The overall mean score for this assessment gravitated towards 2.3, with a standard deviation of 0.7. This average underscores a negative perception about the effectiveness of English as a medium for adult education.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of participants' feedback on using English as the medium of instruction (χ^2 = 53.78, df = 3, p < 0.001). This significant divergence from an expected uniform distribution indicates that participants' views on the effectiveness of English as a teaching medium are significantly varied, with a substantial majority (82.2%) expressing scepticism about its effectiveness for adult learners.

The notable χ^2 value underscores the pronounced tendency of respondents to rate the use of English as ineffective or to express uncertainty about its effectiveness, rather than endorsing it as a positive medium for instruction. This overwhelming inclination towards negative or uncertain perceptions highlights critical concerns regarding the suitability of English as the sole medium for adult education, suggesting a need for a re-evaluation of language use strategies in teaching contexts to better accommodate adult learners' needs and improve educational outcomes.

The statistical significance of these results reinforces the importance of addressing linguistic barriers and adapting teaching methods to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of adult education programmes.

4.1.8 Learners' challenges with English as a medium

Participants were queried about whether learners encounter challenges when using English as their medium of instruction. The assessment scale spanned from

3 to 5, with 3 indicating "Slightly Agree", 4 symbolising "Agree", and 5 representing "Strongly Agree". The results are summarised in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Feedback on learners' challenges with English

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	20	22.2	22.2	22.2
4	38	42.2	42.2	64.4
5	32	35.5	35.5	100
Missing	**0**	**0.0**		
Total	**90**	**100**		

This table shows that 20 participants, equivalent to 22.2% of the total, felt that learners faced some challenges with the English medium but not profoundly. A significant number of respondents, 38 (42.2%) agreed that learners do encounter challenges when using English. Notably, a substantial portion, 32 participants (35.5%) were in strong agreement that learners face notable challenges with the English medium.

The overwhelming consensus is clear: learners do face challenges with English. A remarkable 77.7% either agree or strongly agree with this sentiment, pointing to the need for potential interventions or support in this area.

The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses regarding learners' challenges with the English medium (χ^2 = 47.22, df = 2, p < 0.001). This indicates that the distribution of participants' responses is significantly non-uniform, showing a marked consensus towards acknowledging the challenges learners face with English. The significant χ^2 value suggests that the actual distribution of responses markedly diverges from what might be expected under a hypothesis of no specific trend or uniform distribution.

The substantial agreement amongst respondents, with a majority highlighting that learners indeed face challenges with English, underscores the need for educational strategies tailored to address these language barriers effectively. The pronounced

alignment with the acknowledgment of these challenges reflects the urgent call for interventions or support mechanisms, emphasising the critical role of linguistic proficiency in educational success.

4.1.9 Utility of mother tongue-based bilingual methods

Participants were solicited for their views on the potential benefits of employing mother tongue-based bilingual methods in the education process. They were provided a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree", 2 indicating "Disagree", 3 being "Neutral", 4 meaning "Agree", and 5 symbolising "Strongly Agree". The results are presented below:

Table 9: Feedback on Mother-Tongue-based bilingual methods

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
2	6	6.6	6.6	8.8
3	22	24.4	24.4	33.3
4	32	35.5	35.5	68.8
5	28	31.1	31.1	100
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	90	100		

This table shows that a tiny fraction, only 2 participants (2.22%) expressed strong disagreement about the potential benefits of these methods. Another small fraction of only 6 participants, which makes up 6.6% of the total, disagreed that using mother tongue-based bilingual methods would be beneficial. On the contrary, 22 respondents (24.4%) took a neutral stance on the topic. A significant portion, 32 participants (35.5%) agreed that these bilingual methods would be advantageous. A further notable 28 participants, (31.1%) expressed strong agreement, under-scoring their belief in the pronounced benefits of the method.

A clear majority, 66.6%, either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the sentiment that mother tongue-based bilingual methods would be beneficial. This suggests that there's a robust inclination towards favouring such educational techniques.

The mean score for this assessment was 3.8, with a standard deviation of 1.0, reflecting a general agreement among the participants. The frequencies were subjected to a Chi-Square test, and the results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses regarding the effectiveness of mother-tongue-based bilingual methods ($\chi^2 = 39.56$, df = 4, p < 0.001).

This suggests that participants' preferences are significantly non-uniform, with a clear inclination towards agreement or strong agreement on the potential benefits of these methods, reflecting a substantial endorsement of mother-tongue-based bilingual education amongst the respondents. The significant χ^2 value indicates that the observed distribution of the responses significantly deviates from what would be expected if there were no preference among the different response options.

The participants' pronounced preference for agreeing or strongly agreeing suggests that the mother-tongue-based bilingual methods are viewed favourably, aligning with the hypothesis that such educational techniques are beneficial and valued by the respondents. This alignment underscores the importance of incorporating mother-tongue considerations in bilingual education strategies, thereby supporting the development of pedagogical practices that resonate with the linguistic and cultural contexts of the learners.

In conclusion, the collective findings from the foregoing analyses underscore a critical need for a comprehensive re-evaluation and enhancement across multiple dimensions of the adult education sector. The data indicates a sector-wide call for reforms in teaching practices, curriculum design, teacher preparedness, and educational resources to better meet the needs of adult learners. Addressing these identified gaps is essential for elevating the quality of adult education, ensuring that it is responsive, relevant, and effective in equipping learners with the skills and knowledge required in today's fast-evolving educational and professional landscapes.

The overarching implication is clear: there is a significant opportunity for stakeholders in the adult education sector to implement targeted improvements that will drive positive change and significantly enhance the educational experiences and outcomes for adult learners.

Now we turn to Section B to triangulate the quantitative responses.

4.2 SECTION B: Qualitative findings

Feedback from diverse stakeholders through focused interviews has provided significant insights into the adult education sector. The overarching sentiment, distilled from focus groups and individual interviews, points towards systemic challenges, mainly rooted in curriculum alignment, language barriers, material accessibility, and assessment protocols.

4.2.1 Curriculum Alignment and Relevance

An underpinning theme across many participants' narratives was the discord between the curriculum, teaching materials, and learner assessments. The following extracts exemplify this trend:

Extract 1

Um....we should be learner based, learner centred not teacher centred, but at the same time English becomes a barrier to these learners. Remember the learners that we having in our institution, they are so slow so when you use English it becomes a barrier and for now with what we having it doesn't say how we should interpret to other languages so it is the challenge in terms of those.

In the next extract, the mismatch between learner cohort and intended curriculum:

Extract 2:

The method they used to come up with the unit standards are not the same because we don't have adult learners, we have children learners that are drop outs from school so it is totally different. That why there is a need to re-visit unit standards.

These responses from the study participants clearly illustrate a significant incongruence between the current curriculum, unit standards, and teaching methodologies within the AET framework. They point out a stark mismatch between teacher-centric approaches, which are traditionally more content-focused, and the desired learner-centric strategies that prioritise learners' needs, experiences, and contexts. This disparity underscores an educational model that seems rigidly anchored in conventional pedagogy, which may not align with the principles of adult learning that advocate for adaptability, relevance, and learner involvement in the educational process.

A critical issue brought to light by the respondents is the predominant use of English in the educational content and delivery, which constitutes a substantial barrier to effective learning for many adult learners. This challenge is particularly acute in multilingual contexts where English may not be the first language of the learners. The lack of structured guidelines or strategies for incorporating multilingual approaches into the curriculum exacerbates this problem, limiting the accessibility and inclusivity of the learning environment.

Moreover, the feedback highlights a 'one-size-fits-all' approach in the existing AET curriculum, which fails to adequately accommodate the varied backgrounds and needs of adult learners, especially those who are school dropouts and may not align with the typical 'adult learner' profile. This oversight suggests a disconnect from the foundational principles of adult education, which emphasise the importance of recognising the diverse experiences, motivations, and goals of adult learners and tailoring educational offerings accordingly.

The findings from this analysis resonate strongly with existing literature and international trends in adult education. Research consistently emphasises the importance of aligning educational content and delivery with the needs and contexts of adult learners, advocating for flexible, relevant, and context-sensitive curricula. The shift towards learner-centric approaches is a global trend, reflecting a broader understanding that adult learners require different methodologies compared to traditional school-aged education, focusing on practicality, engagement, and direct relevance to their life and work experiences.

The challenge of language barriers and the necessity for multilingual education models are well-documented in international contexts. Many global AET programmes are increasingly incorporating bilingual or multilingual approaches to accommodate linguistic diversity and enhance learners' comprehension and engagement. The move towards such models aligns with the international recognition of the importance of linguistic inclusivity and cultural relevance in adult education.

The critique of a 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum aligns with ongoing debates in the AET sector worldwide, where there is a growing acknowledgment of the need for differentiated learning pathways. These pathways are designed to cater to the heterogeneous profiles of adult learners, recognising that adults bring varied life experiences, literacy levels, and learning motivations to the educational setting.

The feedback from the respondents underscores a crucial call for reform within the AET sector, echoing broader trends and literature advocating for more responsive, flexible, and inclusive educational practices. It highlights the imperative for curricular reforms that embrace learner-centred approaches, linguistic diversity, and adaptability to the diverse needs of adult learners.

Addressing these highlighted issues is essential for enhancing the effectiveness, accessibility, and relevance of adult education, ensuring it is equipped to meet the evolving demands of learners and the broader socio-economic landscape. Such alignment not only responds to the immediate feedback from the study participants but also positions the AET sector to better reflect global best practices and trends in adult learning.

4.2.2 The Language Conundrum

Language, particularly the prevalence of English, surfaced as a major impediment to effective teaching and learning. This is illustrated prototypically in the following extract:

Extract 3:

Mina what I realise ke issue ya go re some eeh ba na le disocial problems in class ake re. Go re they have different types of problems, so de affecta the learning environment.

   They don't want to be kept for a long time, they just want something very brief and so want to go. ….We first try to teach them in English and then ha re bona go re they don't understand that's when we try to explain to them in their mother language which is mostly ka Sepedi and that when they engage with us because then they understand what we trying to teach them

The respondent's insights shed light on a critical issue in the educational landscape: the profound impact of language barriers on learners' engagement and retention. The negative influence on learners' interest and attention spans is a significant concern, as these factors are pivotal to the learning process and overall educational success. When learners are confronted with instruction in a language that does not align with their linguistic proficiency, their motivation to remain in the learning environment diminishes, often resulting in early dropout rates.

The qualitative feedback emphasises the complex interplay between societal challenges and linguistic obstacles. Learners, particularly those from marginalised

communities who may already be contending with various societal issues, face compounded difficulties in educational settings where the language of instruction is not their first language. The cognitive load of understanding and assimilating content in a foreign language can exacerbate existing stresses, hindering their ability to focus, engage, and succeed in their learning endeavours.

Despite these challenges, the feedback highlights a grassroots-level response amongst educators who, recognising the barrier posed by language, often resort to using learners' home languages as an impromptu strategy to facilitate under standing. This practice aligns with the concept of translanguaging, a pedagogical approach gaining recognition in multilingual education literature. Translanguaging refers to the process by which individuals leverage their entire linguistic repertoire, fluidly moving between languages to enhance comprehension, expression, and learning.

The phenomenon of translanguaging, while organically manifesting in classrooms as an ad-hoc solution, is underscored in international literature as a robust educational strategy that acknowledges and harnesses linguistic diversity (Garcia, 2009; Garcia and Li Wei, 2014; Gracia 2022; Makalela 2016, 2018, 2022). It fosters an inclusive learning environment where all students can engage with content in a linguistically accessible manner, promoting deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. However, for translanguaging to be truly effective, it requires formal acknowledgment and integration into educational frameworks, moving beyond being a makeshift solution to becoming a structured, intentional approach that educators are trained to implement.

Incorporating translanguaging and multilingual strategies aligns with global educational trends that advocate for linguistic inclusivity and responsiveness to the diverse needs of learners. Such approaches are particularly relevant in adult education, where learners bring varied linguistic backgrounds and where learning in a second or foreign language can pose a significant barrier to participation and success. Institutionalising these strategies can significantly enhance learner engagement, persistence, and achievement, especially in contexts where societal challenges and educational goals are closely intertwined.

The feedback from the respondent, in conjunction with international literature, underscores the urgent need for educational policies and practices that recognise and address linguistic diversity as a central component of the learning environment. The purpose of this report – to illuminate and address factors affecting learner

engagement and retention – is served by advocating for the integration of translanguaging and multilingual educational practices. Such integration not only acknowledges the reality of multilingual competence amongst learners and teachers but also leverages it as a powerful tool to bridge the gap between learners' linguistic backgrounds and the educational content, thereby enhancing the effectiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility of adult education programmes. Institutionalising translanguaging as a planned pedagogical strategy offers a pathway to transform linguistic diversity from a barrier into an asset, promoting educational equity and improving outcomes for all learners, particularly those facing the dual challenges of societal issues and language barriers.

4.2.3 Assessment Challenges: The Disconnect between Teaching and Testing

One of the most poignant feedback loops pertained to the disjunction between what's taught and what's assessed. Respondents unanimously voiced concerns over the elevated cognitive demands of assessments, which seemingly catered to a higher educational tier than what was imparted in classrooms. This mismatch, in essence, has driven educators to teach to the test, fostering rote learning and stifling holistic education. This view is presented in the following extract:

Extract 4:

In our experience is that the unit standards itself its right is ok, is aligned well. The problem is the question papers. Those who set the question papers they raise on a high standard and we don't know from which learning materials do they get the questions aha…that's the confusion. What we teach and what we assess is different. " I think mam there was a question that you were inquiring in Mathematics in Mathematical Literacy, the one on the recent SBA, you said the question were….

*   That question paper sir most of the questions eehh… They set it was like they were setting for the matrics not for this level and our students have knowledge here, I just have one book for myself.*

*   If they can give us the syllabus, maybe the books they are using for setting this maybe our pass rate will be up.*

*   We use the previous papers to teach, we also google because those books they give us, some of the things are not there. Like the question you were asking, mina I'm teaching ECD luckily I've done educare at TVET so some of the questions I can hear gore they are not in the syllabus anywhere in the syllabus for level 4.*

This feedback underscores a palpable disjunction where the cognitive demands of assessments do not correspond to the material covered in the classroom, leading to a critical instructional challenge. The respondents' experiences reveal a concerning discrepancy between the unit standards – presumably well-aligned and appropriate for the educational level – and the question papers used in assessments. The educators find themselves at odds with examination standards that appear to be pitched at a higher educational level than what is delivered in the classroom settings. This misalignment suggests that the questions in these exams are derived from content or a complexity level not covered in the available teaching materials, leaving educators and students unprepared for the type of questions asked.

The elevated standard of the question papers compels educators to adopt a teaching approach that is heavily oriented towards "teaching to the test." This strategy involves focusing the teaching content around anticipated exam questions, which are often sourced from previous papers or external online resources due to the lack of appropriate or adequate official materials. Such a strategy inevitably leads to rote learning, where students are trained to pass the exams rather than to understand the subject matter deeply and holistically. This approach undermines the essence of education, particularly adult education, which ideally aims to be engaging, relevant, and applicable to real-world situations.

The reliance on past papers and internet resources as makeshift teaching tools indicates a desperate attempt by educators to fill the curriculum-examination gap. However, this workaround is far from ideal. It not only questions the relevance and quality of the official teaching materials but also highlights a systemic flaw in the educational design. Such a disjointed approach hampers the educators' ability to provide a comprehensive, coherent educational experience, potentially impacting students' ability to apply their learning in practical, real-world contexts.

The feedback also hints at a possible solution: providing educators with access to the syllabus or materials used in setting the examination questions. Such access could align teaching and assessment more closely, ensuring that educators are adequately equipped to prepare students for the assessments they will face. This change could lead to an increase in pass rates, a more confident and competent learner cohort, and an overall improvement in the educational quality of the AET programmes. Taken together, the disjunction between what is taught and what is assessed in AET programmes poses a formidable challenge, undermining the goal of providing meaningful, applicable, and holistic education.

Addressing this issue requires a systemic review of the assessment design, a re-evaluation of the teaching materials, and a concerted effort to ensure that the curriculum and the assessments are well-aligned. Such steps are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of adult education, ensuring it remains relevant, engaging, and capable of fulfilling its foundational objectives.

4.2.4 The Material Mismatch

Probing into the accessibility and relevance of learning and teaching materials unveiled significant disparities. These are illustrated prototypically in the following extracts:

Extract 5:

Materials is English. Like I mentioned before that we are supposed to teach in using learner centred method but at the same time the material that we are using if is EMS what they are going to give for the learner exam it will come in English , they won't write that examination in Sepedi so now its deriving from learner centred into the main stream level of which it was supposed to go there, so it forces at the same time you have to adhere to this one that at the same time as you are doing it for your learners you have to be learner centred. If you are a facilitator you have to know an African language if not let's say right now I got to Giyani to train I don't know Tsonga, I have to go with someone who knows the very same unit standard that I'm going to use so that can help.

The respondent points out at a deficit within the learning and teaching materials supplied at the AET centres. She claims that the current materials clash with the teaching philosophy of learner-centred teaching. Even though they could try incorporate African languages like Sepedi as the media of learning to encourage learner centred participation, the challenge is that the assessments are in English-further creating a mismatch between the language of learning and teaching versus the language of assessment. Using more than one language to interpret materials that are written in only one language becomes a unique challenge for the sector.

In the next extract, there appears not to be coherence around the materials they use.

We don't have syllabus for level 4. we just have LTSM. They just tell us to do this, just lines, just 2...1 paragraphs of information then the rest is lying I'm sorry to disclose them, they were from SAADA, they have nothing in it.

There was a meeting where we chose eh bare keng Stimela, and bare keng Fire Works or what eh... because we know gore those eh eh...units have enough information but they keep on supplying the SAADA ones. How we don't know.

This extract points to the lack of coherent syllabus, but disjointed teaching materials that are not relevant to the type of learners the centres admit. The respondents claims that the public AET centres do not have a syllabus for Level 4 and that guidelines for teachers are haphazard and cryptic. Reference in this extract is made to the previous set of materials that were relatively useful compared to the current materials, which barely have adequate information to help the teachers.

Materials, predominantly in English, clashed with the learner-centred teaching philosophy, thereby diluting its efficacy. Moreover, the rigidities imposed by examinations being exclusively in English further deepened the mismatch between teaching methods and assessment. The testimonies further spotlighted the absence of coherence in the materials. An illustrative feedback depicted the lacunae in the materials, with fragmented and often irrelevant content. The dilemma is not just the insufficiency of content but its misalignment with the diverse learner needs.

4.2.5 Sampled Materials: Textual analysis

In light of the insightful feedback garnered from interviews regarding educational materials, our research team undertook a systematic collection of samples from selected centres, employing a random selection method to ensure a broad and representative review. This approach facilitated an in-depth examination of the texts currently in use, enabling us to dissect and critically analyse their content, structure, and pedagogical alignment with adult education principles. The findings from this meticulous review are presented below, detailing observations for each text and synthesising these insights to interpret the broader implications for materials development in adult education contexts.

(i) Early Childhood Book Analysis

Cultural Incongruence: The book is culturally misaligned with the adult learners, particularly those from rural areas, failing to represent the diversity of the learners, with an absence of images that reflect black children, which could alienate the intended audience.

Typographical Errors: Persistent spelling errors (e.g., "interlectual" instead of "intellectual") undermine the credibility of the material and can disrupt the learning process.

Content Relevance: The advice against using 'baby-talk' or 'motherese' contradicts established language acquisition theories and indigenous child-rearing practices, potentially causing resistance and reducing accessibility to the material.

(ii) Life Orientation Learners Workbook Analysis

Socio-economic Exclusion and Racial/Ethnic Dimensions: While inclusive in imagery, the content is tailored for a wealthier, well-read demographic, not reflecting the socio-economic realities of the broader adult learner population.

Curriculum Density: The overwhelming volume of content (548 pages) and the depth of concepts addressed without adequate scaffolding (e.g., self-esteem) make it inaccessible and impractical for the targeted learner cohort.

(iii) Sepedi Home Language Material Analysis

Pure Typing Infelicities: The material is plagued with typographical issues, impacting readability and learner engagement.

Incompatible Version of English: The direct translation from English to Sepedi fails to consider the cultural and contextual nuances necessary for meaningful learning, focusing rigidly on grammatical aspects without relevance to the learners' everyday lives.

(iv) HIV & Aids Training Manual Analysis:

Age Appropriateness and Socio-Economic Context: The manual uses complex biological terminology without adequate explanation, disregarding the varied educational backgrounds of adult learners. This approach may alienate learners with less formal education or those who struggled with science subjects.

Cultural and Age Sensitivity: Illustrations of sexual organs and direct biological descriptions may clash with cultural norms and age dynamics within the classroom,

necessitating a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to this sensitive topic.

4.2.5.1 Summary of Key Issues on Materials

Cultural Incongruence: Materials fail to resonate culturally with learners, often reflecting a bias toward Western or metropolitan norms alien to the learners' lived experiences.

Linguistic and Conceptual Accessibility: The use of advanced language and concepts, misaligned with the learners' educational and linguistic background, challenges comprehension and relevance.

Curriculum Density and Relevance: Overloaded content and lack of contextual relevance make the learning materials daunting and disconnected from the learners' realities.

Typographical and Translation Quality: Frequent typographical errors and poor translations detract from the materials' quality and learners' engagement.

Socio-Economic and Educational Exclusion: The assumption of a higher socio-economic status and educational background excludes a significant portion of the learner population.

Age and Cultural Sensitivity: The materials occasionally lack sensitivity to the age diversity and cultural norms of adult learners, especially in sensitive topics like HIV/AIDS education.

The critical examination of educational materials used in adult education underscores the imperative for a comprehensive overhaul and rigorous quality assurance mechanisms that ensure cultural congruence, linguistic accessibility, and relevance to the curriculum, all of which are essential for honouring the diverse backgrounds and experiences of adult learners. It is crucial that the development of these materials is anchored in a deep understanding of the learners' socio-cultural, economic, and educational realities, thereby guaranteeing that the content is not only reflective and responsive to their specific needs but also actively contributes to an educational framework that is both inclusive and effective.

Integrating indigenous knowledge systems and African languages into this developmental process transcends the mere enhancement of educational quality; it embodies a commitment to justice, equity, and the acknowledgment of Africa's

vast intellectual traditions. This strategic inclusion serves not only to enrich the educational landscape, making it more accessible and pertinent, but also signifies a pivotal step towards decolonising knowledge, thereby enabling adult learners to reconnect with their cultural identities and heritage within a learning environment that genuinely respects and elevates their lived experiences.

4.2.6 Gap between private and public AET providers

The landscape of Adult Education and Training (AET) centres is distinctly marked by the division between public and private institutions, each catering to different demographics and operating under varying paradigms of funding, infrastructure, and educational focus. This dichotomy presents a complex array of challenges and nuances, particularly in the realms of curriculum relevance, teacher development, and the overarching infrastructure.

a. Demographic Distinctions: Private AET centres tend to attract a younger cohort of learners, diverging from the traditional adult learner demographic predominantly found in public centres. This variance in learner age groups can significantly impact the relevance of the curriculum offered. Private centres, catering to these younger learners, might lean towards more contemporary or flexible curricula that align with their specific educational and developmental needs, contrasting with the more conventional curricula often found in public AET centres that cater to the traditional adult learner demographic.

b. Funding and Infrastructure: The financial model underpinning these institutions is a critical differentiator. Private AET centres are primarily funded through tuition fees paid by the learners, which can afford them a certain level of autonomy in developing their infrastructure. In contrast, public AET centres are typically free, relying on government funding, which may result in them utilising existing public facilities like primary schools. This dependency can lead to an infrastructure imbalance, with public centres potentially facing limitations that private institutions, with their ability to generate revenue, might circumvent.

c. Learner Specificity and Inclusivity: Private AET centres have a notable inclination towards accommodating learners with moderate to severe disabilities and those who struggle within the traditional schooling framework. This specialisation indicates a tailored approach, possibly offering more personalised or adaptive learning environments suited to these unique learner needs. Conversely, public centres, adhering to a more traditional adult education model, might not exhibit the same level of adaptability or specialised focus.

d. Teacher Profile and Development: Both public and private AET centres commonly employ retirees as teachers, benefiting from their experience and expertise. However, private centres often supplement this with a younger, albeit less qualified, teaching cohort. This blend of experience and youthful dynamism can introduce a different energy and perspective to the learning environment, albeit with potential gaps in formal teaching qualifications. Public centres, primarily staffed by retired teachers, might offer a wealth of experience but could face challenges in integrating contemporary educational methodologies or technologies.

e. Curricular Materials and Business Orientation: Public AET centres frequently utilise educational materials developed with the involvement of private entities, reflecting the latter's business-oriented approach. This collaboration can lead to innovative content and teaching methods filtering into the public sector, albeit shaped by the commercial imperatives of the private providers. The business orientation of private centres might drive a more market-responsive curriculum, potentially offering more relevant or cutting-edge content but also raising questions about the commodification of education.

Despite these differences, it's noteworthy that learner performance across both public and private AET centres shows no statistical differences, suggesting that various factors – such as teaching quality, learner engagement, and curriculum relevance – might be balancing out the disparities in infrastructure, funding, and demographic focus. This equivalence in outcomes highlights the complexity of the AET sector, where diverse approaches and models contribute to a multifaceted educational landscape, each with its strengths and challenges in addressing the needs of adult learners.

In summation, the landscape of Adult Education and Training (AET) centres, both public and private, reveals a complex tapestry of challenges and adaptations, yet remarkably, there is no discernible performance gap between the two. This equivalence in outcomes underscores the resilience and dedication of educators across the spectrum who, despite facing systemic challenges, manage to deliver quality education. Their ability to maintain educational standards, irrespective of the varied demographics they serve, the financial models they operate under, or the infrastructural constraints they encounter, is indeed commendable.

However, this parity in learner performance also highlights a critical juncture for the AET sector. It calls for a reflective examination of existing practices and a concerted push for structural reforms that can enhance the efficacy and relevance of adult education. The need for curriculum realignment is evident, ensuring that it resonates with the diverse needs of learners in both settings. Embracing multilingual education could further democratise learning, making it accessible and engaging for a broader audience. Additionally, ensuring material coherence is paramount, as it would provide a consistent and reliable learning experience, irrespective of the institutional framework.

Recalibrating assessment protocols is another area ripe for innovation, offering a chance to ensure that evaluations are not just standardised but are also reflective of the competencies and skills that adult learners need to thrive. The qualitative insights gleaned from the current state of AET centres serve as a valuable roadmap for transformative change, guiding stakeholders toward interventions that can amplify the impact of adult education.

The absence of a performance gap, rather than signalling a status quo, should be viewed as a catalyst for reinvigorating the AET sector. It presents an opportunity to harness the strengths and mitigate the shortcomings of both public and private centres, paving the way for a more inclusive, adaptive, and effective adult education ecosystem that is equipped to meet the evolving demands of learners and the broader society.
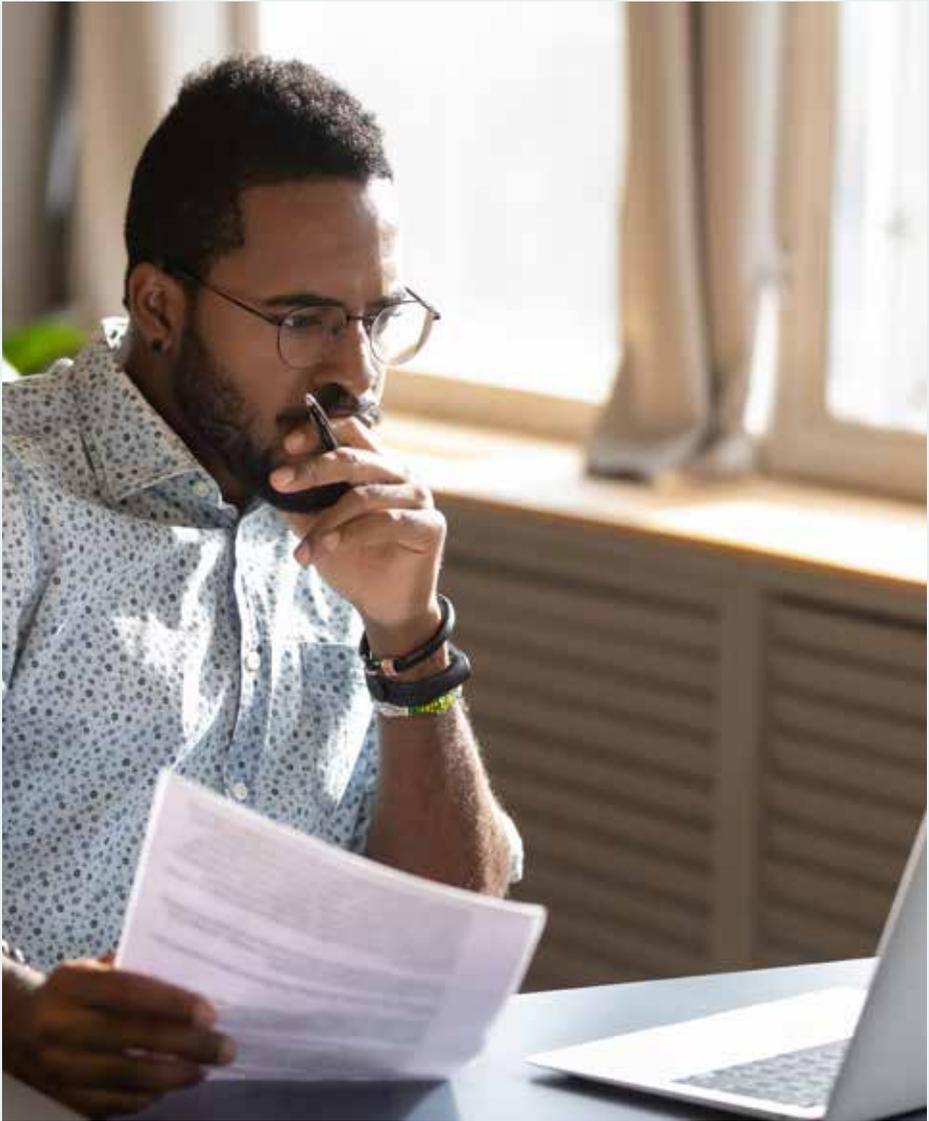
5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study lend themselves to actionable recommendations. In this section, summary of key finds is presented alongside the direct recommendation for action.

Section A: Findings and Recommendations from numerical insights

Curriculum Alignment

Finding: Data indicates a significant disconnect between the adult learners' needs and the current curriculum. More than half of the participants perceived a substantial misalignment.

Recommendation: We propose a comprehensive review of the current curriculum to make it more responsive to the adult learners' context. Collaborative workshops with educators and adult learners can yield insights into designing a curriculum tailored for their unique needs.

Effectiveness of Teaching Methods

Finding: The majority of participants have reservations about the current teaching methodologies, indicating that they might not be effectively enhancing understanding.

Recommendation: Periodic training sessions and workshops for educators can introduce and hone effective teaching strategies tailored for adult learning contexts. Integrating feedback loops from learners can also refine these methods over time.

Teachers' Training and Knowledge

Finding: Many educators feel there's room for improvement in their training and knowledge of the subject matter they teach.

Recommendation: Hosting refresher courses and advanced training programmes for educators can bridge any existing knowledge gaps. Mentorship programmes pairing experienced educators with newer ones can also foster knowledge exchange.

Learning and Teaching Materials

Finding: A significant proportion of participants are unsatisfied with the available teaching materials, deeming them inadequate.

Recommendation: Invest in sourcing or developing comprehensive teaching

materials that cater specifically to the needs of adult learners. Collaborative material development workshops can be a starting point.

Classroom Equipment

Finding: There is a prevailing sentiment that classrooms lack the necessary equipment to facilitate effective learning.

Recommendation: A dedicated fund can be established for upgrading classroom infrastructure and equipping them with modern, relevant tools.

Governance Systems

Finding: Concerns arise regarding the efficacy and inclusivity of current governance systems, especially regarding community involvement. Unlike the basic education sector, adult education centres lack structured management systems such as School Governing Bodies, Circuit Management, and District Management, which tightly regulate operations through multiple layers.

Recommendation: Governance structures for adult education centres must be revamped to ensure more community representation and effective oversight. Involving community structures, councils, or boards that oversee the community centre can enhance accountability and management. Specifically, the circuit manager should be made accountable for the centre, similar to the school system. This approach will create a locus of control and address operational challenges that hinder the smooth running of these centres. Additionally, periodic community forums can foster dialogue and collaborative decision-making, further strengthening the governance framework and ensuring that community voices are heard and considered in the management process.

Teaching and Learning through English

Finding: Using English as the sole medium of instruction poses challenges, with the majority not considering it effective.

Recommendation: Bilingual instruction, blending English with local languages, should be considered. This approach would cater to diverse linguistic competencies without compromising the quality of education.

Learners' Challenges with English

Finding: The majority acknowledge that learners face pronounced challenges when English is the medium of instruction.

Recommendation: Supplemental language support classes or resources should be integrated into the learning process, assisting learners in bridging any linguistic gaps.

Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Methods

Finding: There is a strong inclination among participants towards the benefits of mother tongue-based bilingual education methods.

Recommendation: Pilot programmes integrating bilingual methods, especially those incorporating local languages, should be initiated. Feedback from these can guide broader curriculum changes.

Section B: Findings and Recommendations from qualitative insights

Curriculum Alignment and Relevance

Finding: Narratives suggest a significant incongruence between the curriculum, unit standards, and teaching methods, especially with the prevalent use of English.

Recommendation: The curriculum needs to be restructured to cater to the diverse learner backgrounds. A combination of languages, prioritising learner-centric approaches, can lead to more meaningful engagements.

The Language Conundrum

Finding: The use of English often poses barriers, impacting the overall learning environment and learners' engagement.

Recommendation: Incorporate the technique of translanguaging, integrating both English and native languages, to ensure content accessibility and foster learner engagement.

Assessment Challenges

Finding: There's a pronounced disconnect between the teaching and assessment methods, with assessments often being overly demanding and not aligned with the taught content.

Recommendation: Realign assessments to ensure they are reflective of what's taught, focusing on real-world applicability and understanding rather than rote learning.

Inappropriate materials

Findings: The available teaching materials are often disjointed and lack relevance.

Recommendation: Collaborative efforts, involving educators, experts, and learners, should be made to ensure the materials are coherent, contextually relevant, and comprehensive.

Specific findings on learning and teaching materials

The specific findings on learning and teaching materials underscore evidence of curriculum disjuncture, highlighting a critical gap between the intended curriculum and the actual instructional resources utilised in the Adult Education and Training (AET) sector. This focus is paramount as it sheds light on the misalignment between educational objectives and the materials employed to achieve these goals, revealing inconsistencies that may hinder the learning process and outcomes. By identifying these discrepancies, the report aims to catalyse the development of more cohesive and effective educational strategies that align teaching materials closely with curriculum standards, thereby enhancing the overall quality and impact of AET programmes. Below are the findings:

Finding 1: The prevalent use of colonial languages like English in educational materials tends to marginalise the linguistic diversity of African contexts, disadvantaging learners who are not proficient in these languages and missing the benefits of mother-tongue instruction, which is crucial for deeper understanding and cognitive engagement.

Recommendation: Develop and utilise educational materials in African languages to counteract the monolingual bias, ensuring that learners can access content in their mother tongue to enhance comprehension and engagement.

Finding 2: The dominance of Western-centric knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum often overshadows indigenous knowledge systems, leading to content that may feel disconnected from the learners' realities, thus impacting the relevancy and engagement in the learning process.

Recommendation: Embed indigenous knowledge systems within the curriculum to challenge epistemic biases, making the learning experience more relevant and grounded in the learners' cultural and environmental context.

Finding 3: Educational materials frequently exhibit a cultural bias, imposing foreign norms and values that may not resonate with the learners' own cultural backgrounds, potentially resulting in a lack of engagement and a sense of disconnection from the content.

Recommendation: Ensure that educational content respects and reflects the cultural identities of learners, addressing the cultural biases that often alienate them from fully engaging with the material.

Actionable Steps on material development

There are three actionable steps that underpin the findings and recommendations on developing culturally sensitive materials:

a. Incorporating African Languages

Action Steps: Initiate programmes for material development in multiple African languages, incorporating linguistic experts and educators in the process to ensure the accuracy, relevance, and pedagogical effectiveness of these materials.

b. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems:

Action Steps: Collaborate with local communities, cultural experts, and academics to curate and integrate indigenous knowledge into educational materials, ensuring that this content is well-researched, authentic, and reflective of local wisdom and practices.

c. Promoting Cultural Relevance and Sensitivity:

Action Steps: Conduct regular reviews of educational materials with cultural consultants and community representatives to ensure cultural accuracy and relevance, and adjust the content to align with the diverse cultural backgrounds of the learners.

Taken together, the synthesised data and first-hand narratives underscore a compelling case for strategic interventions in the Adult Education sector. The unwavering dedication and remarkable adaptability displayed by educators in the face of existing challenges are indeed commendable. However, the insights gleaned from this analysis illuminate the urgent necessity for systemic reforms to address the deep-rooted issues of curriculum alignment, language inclusivity, and cultural relevance. The actionable recommendations presented, when supported and implemented effectively, hold the promise of catalysing transformative changes within the sector. These changes are not merely incremental adjustments but rather fundamental enhancements aimed at elevating the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of adult education programmes.

By embracing these recommended shifts, stakeholders can contribute to a more robust and responsive educational ecosystem, one that truly honours the diverse needs and rich cultural tapestries of the adult learner population. Consequently, the potential for adult education to be a powerful tool for personal growth, societal development, and cultural preservation can be fully realised, ensuring that learning becomes a lifelong journey that is accessible, engaging, and transformative for all involved.

6. CONCLUSION

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The synthesis of the data and insights gathered in this report illuminates a decisive pathway for reinvigorating the Adult Education sector in South Africa. While the commitment and resourcefulness of educators in this domain are laudable, the findings underscore a pressing need for comprehensive systemic reforms. These reforms are not just enhancements; they are imperative transformations required to align the educational offerings with the nuanced needs of adult learners, ensuring that the sector is not just a remedial space but a vibrant landscape of lifelong learning.

The convergence of the findings outlines a distinct roadmap for change, emphasising the critical intersections where targeted interventions could significantly uplift the sector. The report articulates a vision where curriculum alignment, linguistic inclusiveness, and assessment congruence form the cornerstone of a reformed adult education paradigm. This vision is underpinned by a commitment to integrate indigenous knowledge systems and embrace the rich linguistic tapestry of our society, thereby dismantling the monolingual, epistemic, and cultural biases that currently pervade the educational materials.

To materialise this vision, the recommendations delineated in the report advocate for a multifaceted strategy encompassing curriculum overhaul, enhanced teacher training, promotion of bilingual education, robust resource allocation, and governance reforms. These strategic interventions are envisioned not as isolated initiatives but as interconnected components of a holistic reform agenda aimed at catalysing transformative changes within the sector.

Embracing these recommendations implies embarking on a journey towards an educational framework that is not only reflective of the diverse tapestry of South African society but also responsive to the dynamic global landscape of the 21st century. It envisages an adult education sector that is a conduit for empowerment, economic upliftment, and personal growth, underlined by principles of equity, inclusivity, and cultural relevance.

The insights garnered from this comprehensive study provide a clarion call for action. It is a call to transcend traditional paradigms, to innovate pedagogically, and to re-imagine the possibilities of adult education.

With the collective will, collaborative effort, and strategic focus, the recommendations set forth can serve as the catalysts for transformative change, propelling the Adult Education sector towards a future where it is recognised not merely as a corrective measure but as a fundamental pillar of lifelong learning and societal advancement.

The time for incremental change is past; the sector is ripe for a renaissance that will redefine the landscape of adult education in South Africa, ensuring it is robust, resilient, and reflective of the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of its people.
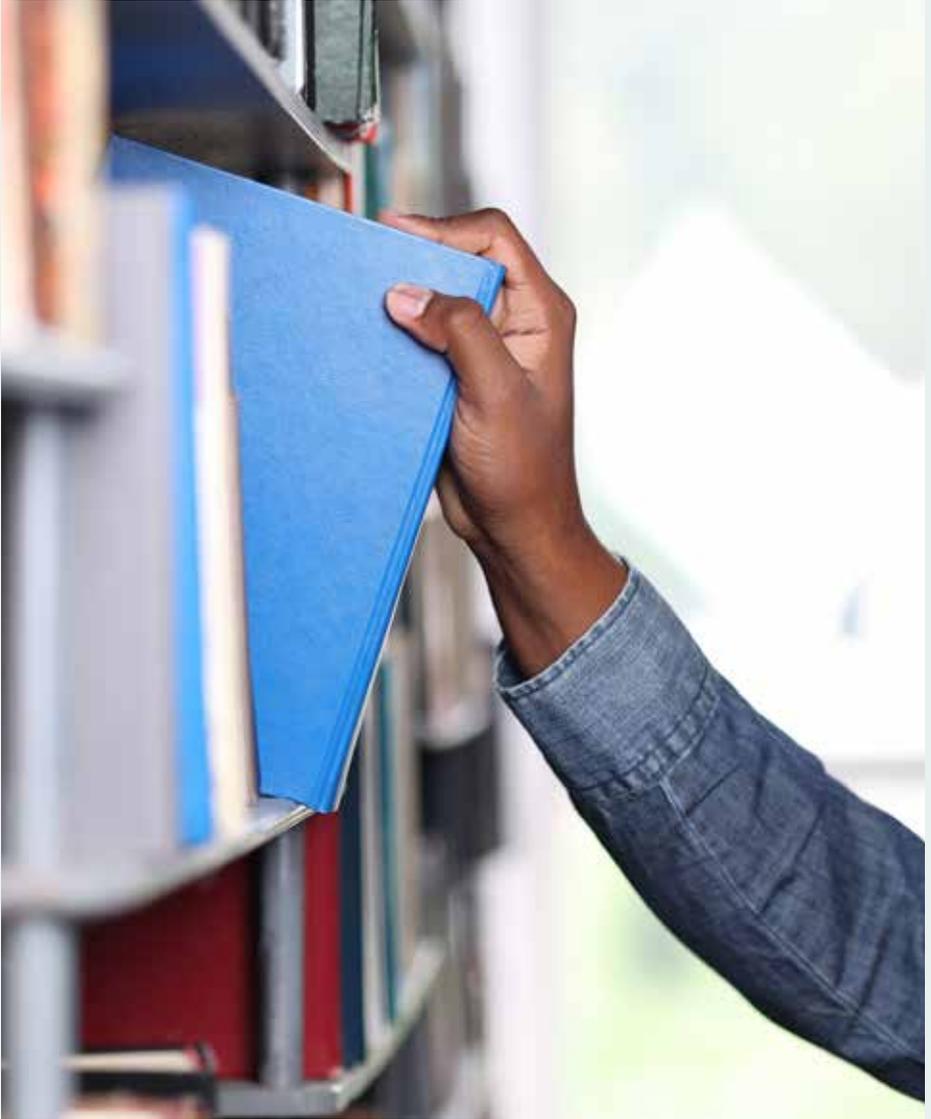
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