

18. ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In this document Adult Basic Education *and Training* (ABET) refers to the provision of education and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, to a level equivalent to the *General Education Certificate* to adults who have had little or no formal schooling.

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that about 15 million black adults (over one-third of the population) have had little or no education. This is a direct consequence of the inequalities in the provision of education and training. Less than 1 percent of the education budget is spent on ABE. ABE provision tends to be small-scale, uncoordinated and lacking any national standards or framework.

The lack of access to basic education, including literacy and numeracy, has consigned millions of our people to silence and marginalisation from effective and meaningful participation in social and economic development.

VISION

ABET has a key role to play in the reconstruction and development of our economy and society. The elimination of illiteracy must provide adults with the foundation for access to lifelong learning, to enable them to adapt and contribute to the process of social and economic development in a rapidly changing national and global order.

Learners need to be able to move between adult basic education and training and other parts of the education and training system. This will require the establishment of mechanisms to ensure articulation and equivalency between adult basic education and training and general education through an integrated qualifications framework. This will be modular and outcomes based to ensure flexibility and mobility.

PRINCIPLES

ABET is part of the national learning system which gives all citizens access to the higher levels of education and training. The South African Interim Constitution asserts the right of all citizens to basic education. The mass-scale provision of ABE is therefore a national priority to ensure that all citizens have a basic education. To achieve this we need to:

- Harness the resources of the national, provincial and local governments, employers, organised labour, NGOs, churches, civics, community service organisations and other resources behind a national plan for ABET
- *Target youth, women, workers, people living in informal settlements and rural areas, the unemployed, disabled people, and farmworkers*

- *Launch advocacy campaigns to make the availability of ABET widely known and encourage participation in learning groups*
- *Establish Community Learning Centres, using existing facilities where possible, to facilitate access to ABET*
- *Ensure that access for women is meaningful through provision of childcare and other support services*

POLICY PROPOSALS

Provision

A priority of the State will be to develop and expand provision of ABET to a level equivalent to the General Education Certificate (GEC). *A qualitative review of existing provision will be conducted with a view to developing a strategy for improving the provision.*

The ABET division of the Ministry of Education and Training, *and other relevant state departments*, will be responsible for the development of a national framework for the provision of ABET *aimed at adults and youth*. This will outline the operating guidelines for a national system of ABET provision, including:

- national curriculum frameworks, including materials development
- national qualifications, accreditation and certification structures for learners and educators
- financial frameworks
- delivery systems *for learners*
- *human resource development to meet human resource requirements for large scale ABET*
- *linkages with the Reconstruction and Development Programme*
- *career guidance and counselling*

Provincial and local authorities will be responsible for the provision, implementation and delivery of ABET in partnership with employers, the organised labour community, NGOs, higher education institutions and provincial training centres. *The state would be responsible for providing learning groups for the unemployed. The state would provide an enabling environment and capacity building programmes in the field of ABET for mass organisations, the ngo sector, and other educational institutions to enable them to play a greater role in ABET.* This will ensure the optimal and effective utilisation of resources. The provincial and local provision and delivery of ABET will be undertaken within the national framework developed by the State.

State facilities, schools, community centres, libraries and resource centres, will be made available for conducting ABET classes. These facilities will, where possible, operate as Community Learning Centres with a range of activities relevant to the social, educational, health and recreational needs of the community. The latter will ensure that ABET is linked to broader social and economic development projects. *The state will facilitate obtaining adequate funding for large scale provision of ABET.*

Workers, including farm and domestic workers, will have the right to paid time-off during working hours to attend ABET classes. The implementation of this right will be negotiated through the collective bargaining process

A national training programme with nationally recognised certificates will be established for *ABET educators/trainers/development (ETD) practitioners*. This will ensure that *ABET ETD practitioners* have access to a defined career path. *The possibility of using youth, on a mass scale, as ETD practitioners will be explored.*

Qualifications Structure

A national qualifications and accreditation structure will be developed by the South African Qualifications Authority in consultation with all major stakeholders.. There will be a single national qualification and accreditation structure for ABET leading to the General Education Certificate (GEC). This will ensure horizontal and vertical mobility between ABET and the formal education system.

There will be three nationally certificated attainment levels for ABET prior to the GEC. The attainment certificates will provide learners with measurable targets towards the GEC; address the needs of, and recognise the skills obtained by, learners who have specific and limited objectives such as developing basic literacy and numeracy or narrow job-related functional skills, and who do not want to obtain the GEC; and provide employers with criteria for assessing the skills levels of workers. *The methods of assessment in ABET programmes, including the language used, must be appropriate for adults and youth, and should take account of prior learning and experience.*

Since ABET and school-based General Education will lead to a common qualification (the GEC), mechanisms will be required to ensure the articulation and equivalence of the curriculum in both modes of learning. This will not mean that the content of the curriculum or teaching methods will be the same in both school and adult learning contexts.

A national qualifications and accreditation structure for ABET educator/trainer/development practitioners will be developed by the South African Qualifications Authority.

Curriculum

There will be a national curriculum *framework* for ABET which will be developed by the ABET Division of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (NICD).

The national curriculum *framework* will be modular and based on an outcomes approach as this maximises flexibility for horizontal and vertical mobility *and meeting different learning needs within the youth and adult constituencies*.

An outcomes approach defines the curriculum in terms of learning aims. The learning aims for each part of the curriculum would cover:

- application of a skill - both practical and intellectual
- understanding the principles underpinning an activity
- ability to transfer both the skill and the knowledge to another context

A modular approach divides the curriculum into separate and discrete learning aims. Learners receive a qualification by obtaining credits in a given number and range of modules. *The ABET curriculum will be designed in such a way that recognises the principle of accelerated learning for adults and youth..* The national curriculum *framework will have two components:*

- a general core curriculum focusing on the teaching of *skills and knowledge necessary for empowering learners for social, economic and political participation. The core curriculum will be committed to national development and social responsibility, to the development of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society and to the development of a national identity.*
- a functional curriculum with different options aimed at the teaching of *skills necessary for developing technical, practical and income-generating skills. The options will be related to particular learning needs*

The general core curriculum will consist of *skills and themes drawn from the following five subject areas:*

- Languages: learners will be expected to learn two languages, one as a language of learning.

The language of learning will be based on the three options outlined in the chapter on 'Language Policy in Education'.

- Numeracy
- Social Studies *including civic education*

- Development Studies *including solutions to different social problems such as racism*
- Science and Technology

The balance between the core and functional components of the curriculum at the various levels of the ABET continuum will be determined through democratic consultation with stakeholders.

Governance

Stakeholders will have a central role to play in the formulation and development of ABET policy through representation on the *ABET Council, a sub-structure of the Adult Education and Training Council, at national, provincial and local levels. The ABET Council will be a statutory, advisory body to the Minister and will have national, provincial and local sub-structures.*