

Investigating efficacy in adult learning centres: a multi-case study – Executive Summary

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Introduction

South Africa is currently in a phase of reconceptualising and renewing its post-school education system. This is being undertaken against a backdrop of structural challenges that have increasingly come to the fore around unemployment, inequality and poverty, particularly affecting large numbers of young people – 3.4 million according to Statistics South Africa (2011), with women disproportionately represented, who are not in employment, education or training.

This concern with post-school education preparing adult learners for the world of work is evident in a number of government initiatives. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013), acknowledging that the current system of Public Adult Learning Centres has not worked effectively, moves towards a new nomenclature and vision for adult learning sites within a Community College framework. In addition, new adult education qualifications are at various stages of development: the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and the National Independent Certificate (NIC), both Level 4 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework, and the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), an NQF Level 1 qualification, have been gazetted and processes of curriculum development have been initiated. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has developed new educator qualification frameworks for adult education and for vocational education and training. Given these developments, in 2016 DHET initiated a programme to build the capacity of universities in the areas of adult and vocational education so that they can produce educators for these sectors. These measures indicate the possibility, dependent on the political will and the efficacy of implementation, of a wide-ranging reform of adult education provision in the next five years.

In this context of change and renewal, there is a need for appropriate research to inform policy development and implementation. Relevant research areas include, but are not restricted to the following: the profile of existing adult educators, managers and learners; the relations among adult education, training and community development in South Africa; the assessment of adult learners; the efficacy of the new adult education curricula and qualifications; and examples of best practice within the adult education sector. It is with the latter that this research project is concerned. There is a paucity of information available on what makes an adult education centre effective and what we can learn from existing good institutional practices. This is probably because of the relative neglect of adult education within the education system and its subordination to schooling as a national educational priority, as well as the decline of adult education in tertiary institutions. DHET has now taken over adult education provision, which means that there is a greater focus and attention on this sector than previously.

Given the context set out above, Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, agreed in 2014 to fund a multi-case research project on the efficacy of purposively selected adult learning centres. Umalusi's own research focus has been largely around school qualifications. However, as the body responsible for adult education qualifications in the General and Further Education bands, it is well-positioned to support appropriate adult education research.

Focus and purpose of study

This multi-case study focuses on the institutional efficacy of selected, exemplary adult education centres from a range of sectors in four provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape. Institutional efficacy is understood here as the capacity of the adult education centre to achieve the desired results. The purpose of the study was to establish the factors that contribute

to the effective and efficient functioning of adult education centres in relation to three domains: governance; teaching and learning; and wider community and institutional relations. A secondary purpose was to identify the implications of the findings of the study for the accreditation of adult learning centres, specifically the private centres that Umalusi quality assures.

For the purposes of this study, governance encompasses how institutions are run and the structures, systems and procedures of management that are in place to make them function efficiently and effectively. It includes questions of leadership style and vision such as who leads the institution, how they lead, with what purpose and to what effect.

Teaching and learning is a broad area that entails what is taught, who teaches, how they teach, where and when teaching happens, for what purposes and with what results. It also encompasses the learners and what, why and how they learn, and the assessment of learning. Particularly pertinent are the roles of educators and learners, the relation between educators and learners, and the culture of teaching and learning in the institution.

Community and institutional relations focus on the relation of the institution to the wider community in which it is located, including community leaders and structures, local organisations and networks. Relations with other institutions include those with the department of education, examining bodies and host institutions.

One assumption of this study is that the efficacy of an adult education centre is evident in its governance, teaching and learning, and wider institutional and community relations. It is also assumed that these three areas are closely interwoven, with strengths and weaknesses in one areas informing the others. A third assumption is that external contextual factors also contribute to the efficacy of the centres. These include the state of the adult education field regarding resources, working conditions of educators, national curriculum and assessment systems, and so on. However, these wider concerns, while important areas of research, were not the primary focus of this study.

Research questions

What factors contribute to the effective and efficient functioning of adult education centres with regard to:

- a) governance;
- b) teaching and learning;
- c) wider community and institutional relations?

Methodology

The study adopted a multi-case study approach (Stake, 2006; Rule & John, 2011). Case study methodology provides the opportunity to develop rich “thick” descriptions of particular centres, drawing on multiple sources and perspectives. By focusing on the specific instance, it is particularly useful in exploring the uniqueness of the case in its particular context.

Regarding the selection of centres, purposive sampling was adopted in which centres were selected using the following criteria:

- performance in the General Education and Training Certificate: ABET Level 4 exams, or other relevant external national or provincial assessments;
- recruitment, retention and throughput of students;
- perceived efficacy according to key stakeholders in the adult education field.

An initial sampling of centres with a reputation for excellence was tested against actual performance in quantitative terms related to recruitment, retention, throughput and assessments and examination results, where available.

Twelve centres were investigated, three from each province (KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape and Limpopo), representing the range of sectors involved in adult education provision (government, industry, community/NGO) as well as both urban and rural contexts (See Table 1 below). The public centres included centres falling under DHET as well as prison-based centres falling under the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

Province	Centre	Location	Sector
Gauteng	St. Anthony's	Reiger Park, Boksburg (urban)	Church-based public
	KwaThema	KwaThema, Springs (urban township)	Public
	Woolworths	Midrand (urban)	Industry - Private
KwaZulu-Natal	Endleleni	Madadeni, Newcastle (peri-urban township)	Public
	Family Literacy Project	Underberg and surrounding areas (rural)	NGO
	Thandiwe	Ntuzuma, Ethekweni (peri-urban township)	Public
Limpopo	Thusano	Makhado (urban, small town)	Prison
	Motupakgomo	Motupa (rural village)	Public
	O R Tambo	Dennilton (urban, small town)	Public
Western Cape	Elsies River	Elsies River, Cape Town (urban township)	Public
	Malmesbury New Prison	Malmesbury (urban, small town)	Prison
	Maties Community Outreach	Stellenbosch (urban)	University-based NGO

Table 1. Selection of adult learning centres

The study does not claim that these are the best centres in the particular provinces or the only centres that might be considered efficacious. On the contrary, there are many other excellent centres which restrictions of geography and capacity did not allow this study to investigate. Nor does it claim that there were no weaknesses or areas for improvement at these centres. Given the resource-poor and neglected character of adult education in South Africa, this would hardly be credible. The centres selected were thus a sample of a range of good centres based on the criteria outlined above. A rationale for the selection of each centre is provided in the detailed case report.

The study used a range of data collection methods. These included interviews with managers, educators, learners and other stakeholders, focus group sessions with educators and learners, observations of sites and classes, and analysis of centre documents such as narrative reports, as well as analysis of statistical data such as enrolment and attendance figures, and exam results, where relevant and available. Using multiple methods and sources is good practice in case study research as it allows for a comparison and triangulation of findings (Yin, 2009). The study made use of both qualitative data, such as the views and perspectives of centre participants, and artefacts such as year- end reports and articles to enhance the trustworthiness of some of the qualitative data from the interviews/ observations. It also took into account the wider context and learner profile of each centre.

Data were analysed using continuing qualitative analysis in the form of thematic content analysis (Merriam, 1998). The themes arose from a process of deriving categories a priori from the research questions and in a bottom-up way from the data themselves, and coding the data according to these

categories. Themes were clustered under the four broad headings of Governance, Teaching and Learning, Community and Institutional Relations, and Context, as indicated in Figure 1 below. The first three headings came from the research questions. The fourth, 'Context', emerged as an important category during the course of data analysis. Given that context figures importantly within a case study approach and that each of the selected cases was profoundly influenced by its context, this was added as a category. Each theme was further divided into sub-themes; for example, the theme of Curriculum included sub-themes: Assessment; Content; Responsiveness; Standards setting.

Governance	Teaching and Learning	Community and Institutional Relations	Context
Administration Communication Finances Infrastructure Leadership Personnel Programme management Structures	Culture Curriculum Educators Gender Groups Materials Methods Philosophy Programmes Skills Support	Churches Councillors Community-based organisations Government departments Higher and further education Income-generating projects Local businesses Municipality Nature and purpose of relationship Profile in community Responsiveness to community Schools/host school Traditional authorities	Cultural Demographic Historical Institutional / organisational National policy and legislation Physical location Socio-economic

Table 2. Themes for data analysis

The final report is presented in the form of a series of case narratives followed by a discussion of cross-cutting trends and themes in relation to institutional efficacy.

Pen portraits of the 12 cases

The portraits below are organised alphabetically according to the four provinces. They provide a quick overview of each of the centres. The full case studies are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

Gauteng

KwaThema Adult Learning Centre

This public centre is situated in the township of KwaThema near Springs. Based at a local secondary school, it has two satellite centres and a large intake of nearly 3000 learners. Founded in 1979, the centre has enabled thousands of adult learners to take the next step regarding further studies and/or employment. It has a sustained record of academic achievement in national exams and has won numerous awards. It is notable for its innovative committee structure and for a curriculum that links academic study and livelihoods.

St Anthony's Education Centre

St Anthony's is a church-based adult education and training centre that was established in 1964 as a community library. It is situated at St Francis Catholic Church in Reiger Park, Boksburg, and has three satellite centres. Besides academic adult education programmes, it offers skills training and post-study support through its Job Advisory Centre. It has 450 learners enrolled for ABET Level 4. The centre is notable for its holistic, value-centred approach to curriculum, its ethos of care and its learning pathways that link basic and vocational education.

Woolworths

Woolworths runs an adult education programme at its warehouse in Midrand. The adult education and training provider, Media Works, runs the Adult Basic Education programme for Woolworths employees. The programme has a very high rate of learner retention and graduation. It is notable for its blended approach to learning, which includes both computer-based and face-to-face facilitation, its customised materials, its learner incentives and its strong articulation with workplace themes and contexts.

KwaZulu-Natal

Endleleni Adult Learning Centre

Endleleni, established in 1996, is based at a primary school in Madadeni township outside Newcastle. It offers ABET Levels 2 to 4 as well as Matric subjects to about 80 learners. It has a high certification rate among its GETC learners and nearly all learners pass at least one subject written. Endleleni has good relations with the community which it serves and a strong network of relations with local stakeholders.

Family Literacy Project (FLP)

FLP is a non-governmental organisation based in Underberg in the foothills of the Drakensberg. It works with rural communities in remote areas. Its innovative approach to family literacy connects the learning of its mainly female participants to family and community issues such as health, nutrition, human rights and child development. Participants in the family literacy groups each visit families in their community to share their learning. FLP is also notable for innovative learning materials, income-generating projects and promotion of reading in communities.

Thandiwe Adult Learning Centre

Thandiwe is based in the peri-urban township of Ntuzuma in Ethekeweni. It was the first public adult education centre in KwaZulu-Natal to offer Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a subject to adult learners. Its innovative approach is also reflected in its engagement with the local taxi association to provide a customised course for taxi operators. It is thus notable for its assessment of and responses to community needs.

Limpopo

Motupakgomo Adult Learning Centre

Motupakgomo, situated in the village of Motupa near Tzaneen, is a rural centre which has survived with relatively good results in a resource-poor rural environment. Like many rural centres, it has a small staff: four educators serve approximately 88 learners. Educators have to teach multiple subjects. The centre is notable for its good relations with the host school and local traditional leaders.

O R Tambo Adult Learning Centre

This centre is located in the small Limpopo town of Dennilton in the South-East of Limpopo. It serves a large population of adult learners and had the largest enrolment in the province for several years, despite being in a small town. It attracts learners from neighbouring villages because of its good reputation. It is notable for its committed staff and ethos of care.

Thusano

Thusano adult education and training centre is located in the privately run prison of Kuthama Sinthumele in the town of Makhado. It caters for 3024 adult male offenders, each of whom has his own education programme. The centre offers basic education, matric and vocational training. Offenders can also register for degrees through UNISA. The centre has very high retention

(unsurprisingly) and pass rates, and frequently wins provincial awards for its performance. It is notable for its comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, of which education is one component, and its efficient systems of administration and governance.

Western Cape

Elsies River

This public centre is located in the bustling working class suburb of Elsies River in the Cape Town metropolitan area. Though established in 2006, the centre found permanent premises in a disused primary school in 2009. It has an excellent record of achievement and won the national award for the best adult learning centre in 2012. It offers ABE and matric as well as skills training courses to approximately 700 learners. It is noteworthy for creating progression pathways for adult learners and assisting learners to develop their employability through skills training.

Malmesbury New Prison

The prison-based centre is located in the Malmesbury New Prison, a medium security correctional facility for 1300 adult males. The prison opened in 1998 and the “school” a year later. It offers an ABET programme as well as skills training courses. The centre is known for its emphasis on education for rehabilitation and for its excellent performance in Afrikaans.

Matie Community Services

This university-based centre started in 1964 as a medical student volunteer organisation. Linked to Stellenbosch University, it is also partly a non-profit organisation. It engages with the Stellenbosch community and surrounding areas. It has achieved excellent results over a sustained period with ‘second chance’ learners. It is notable for its ethos of care and its network of relations with organs of the university and non-governmental organisations.

Findings: factors contributing to the efficacy of adult learning centres

Governance

a) Visionary leadership

What good centres have in common is proactive and visionary leadership. Leaders of good centres differ in their leadership styles, backgrounds, experiences and approaches. However, they all have a clear understanding of what the centre is aiming to achieve and are able to advocate and communicate this vision to educators, learners and the wider community. The centres’ visions address the needs and concerns of the communities that they are working with. A vision on its own has no worth unless it is enacted, and good centres are able to enact their visions in ways that are clearly evident to their communities.

b) Planning

Good centres emphasise the planning process and using plans to guide and direct action. Planning typically happens at the beginning of a year or term. They are based on a review of previous work and are developed in the context of the centre’s vision and mission. These plans are realistic and have measurable and achievable outcomes. They are developed collectively and communicated effectively to all concerned. They are also flexible and can be adapted to respond to changes in context.

c) Monitoring

Management monitors the implementation of plans and assesses whether or not they are succeeding, and why. This enables the centre to respond quickly and appropriately to problems as they arise. Centre managers monitor the functioning of the centre as a whole so that they have an overview. They also monitor teaching and learning in individual classrooms or, if there are too many classes, they delegate heads of department to do this. This enables them to intervene where necessary and address problems as they arise.

d) Evaluating

Evaluation happens at the end of a year or a term. It assesses whether the centre has achieved its goals, as well as why and how it can improve in the future. Evaluation happens at different levels: the centre as a whole; a particular programme or structure; a subject area led by a head of department with his or her educators; or an individual subject educator; a class of learners reflecting on their experiences of teaching and learning. Evaluation can also consider different kinds of data: exam performance in the form of statistics; qualitative feedback from learners and educators; comments from the community. Evaluation is a culture that permeates a centre and indicates a commitment to reflective thinking as a basis for planning and acting.

e) Effective governance structures

Good centres have governance structures that support the centre leaders and managers, protect the integrity of the centre and pursue its vision. Depending on the type of centre, this governing structure might take the form of a centre governing body, an advisory board or a board of directors. Some centres also have particular structures for learners such as a Representative Council of Learners or a Peer Learning Support Committee. Some centres showed creativity in developing structures to address their particular contexts in the form of committees and task teams. For example, one centre established a Bereavement Committee to support learners whose family members had passed away. Another had an Administration Committee to deal with learner registration and general administration, a Task Committee to deal with curriculum issues, and an Exam Committee to set and moderate exam papers for internal assessment, and to monitor educators' preparation for School-Based Assessment (SBA) tasks.

f) Efficient systems

Efficient systems of record-keeping and financial management are crucial to the efficacy of centres. Centre managers paid attention to making sure that records such as class attendance and exam registration were kept meticulously. An NGO that was dependent on donor funding ensured that it kept accurate records of income and expenses, and monitored all payments scrupulously. While learners at public centres do not pay fees, centres that collected monies from learners for excursions or events made sure that they recorded these payments and handed out receipts.

g) Well-managed relations with host institution

The relation between the centre and the host institution, whether this was a primary or high school, a university, a church, a prison or a factory, is of vital importance to the effective running of the centre. Good centres managed this relationship well through a variety of mechanisms. These included having representation from the host institution on centre governance structures, sharing staff with the host institution and having clear channels of communication with the host institution in order to deal with problems as they arose. At one university-based centre, students from the university conducted research at the centre, thus strengthening mutual understanding. At a prison-

based centre, educators met with prison staff such as warders and social workers to discuss individual cases. At a factory-based centre, educators communicated with learners' line managers so that they understood their workers' learning timetables and commitments, and vice versa, and could support them as workplace learners.

h) Promoting professional development

Good centres pay attention to the development and progression of their staff. This may take the form of internal coaching and mentoring, workshops and training sessions, and external courses that build the capacity of staff members. Centres supported their staff in further studies through financial assistance, time off, opportunities to share their learning with other staff members and/or salary and promotion incentives. One centre set aside one day per month for staff training and development as part of its commitment to being a learning organisation.

i) Networking and relation-building

Centre managers made it a priority to build relationships with local institutions and organisations. While this aspect overlaps with Community and Institutional Relations, it relates to Governance in the sense that the centre as an institution values relations with its community and supports its manager and staff in developing these relations.

j) Team work and distributed leadership

Centre managers activated their staff and built their capacity by involving them in leadership activities and responsibilities. As one centre manager put it, "It's important for me not to drive the centre on my own." Good centre managers delegated responsibilities and built a strong and accountable team around them. They were also able to communicate the "memory" and ethos of the centre to staff and learners. This was evident in centres with a long history in their ability to maintain and develop excellence despite changes in leadership. One centre set up a "stokvel" among staff members which succeeded in providing each staff member with a laptop.

Teaching and learning

a) Knowledgeable and committed educators

All the centres shared the characteristic of having committed and knowledgeable educators. They demonstrated a love for their learners, for teaching and for their subjects. Many of them were veterans who had been teaching at the centre for many years and had witnessed numerous changes of curriculum and structure. Not all these educators were formally qualified but many had appropriate qualifications in teaching and/or adult education. Educators came from different backgrounds: some of them were former school teachers; some of them had themselves been learners at the centre and returned as educators; some of them came to adult education from other occupations. Given the difficulties in the adult education sector such as temporary and insecure contracts, non-payment or delayed payment of salaries, inadequate learning materials and resources, and an absence of departmental support in public centres, the resilience and staying power of such committed educators was remarkable and a sign of hope for the system.

b) Relevant curriculum

Good centres were able to make the curriculum relevant to their particular learners. They were able to do this by relating the curriculum to learners' lives and to their adult roles such as breadwinner, parent and family member, community participant, citizen and consumer. For example, one centre set up a clothing production workshop where learners doing subjects like Art and Culture could apply their knowledge and generate income. Similarly, a number of centres ran gardening projects where Agriculture learners could do practical work, grow vegetables and sell them to the community. Learners doing Ancillary Health Care were able to relate their learning to family issues such as health and nutrition, and those doing Early Childhood Development to the care of their own children. One NGO centre set up savings clubs among its learners which cultivated a culture of collective saving and empowered them financially.

What good centres had in common was the ability to relate adult learners' 'academic projects' to at least some of their other projects as adults (Illeris, 2011). These other projects, which are contextually situated and differ in specifics from one adult to the next, include adults':

- livelihood project with its aim of making a living and its associated roles of, among others, breadwinner, employee, worker and/or entrepreneur;
- family/relationship project with its aim to love and be loved and its roles, among others, of family member, care-giver, friend and lover;
- social project with its aim to participate in and contribute to the community and roles such as member of community organisation, local consumer and resident;
- leisure project with its aim of relaxing and having fun and roles such as team or club member and participant in a social circle;
- conviction project with its aim of creating a better future and its roles, among others, of citizen, advocate, activist and believer.

Figure 1 below sets out the academic project in relation to these other adult projects.

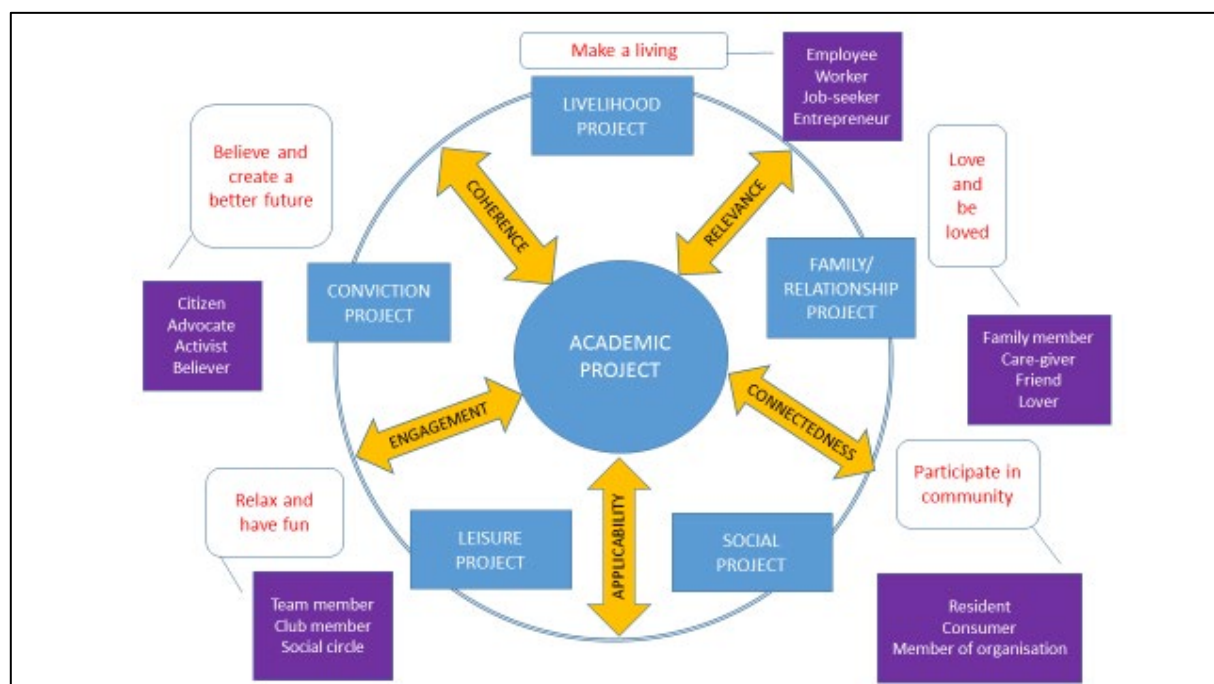


Figure 1: Academic project in relation to adults' other life projects

c) Holistic curriculum

Good centres recognised that the needs of their learners were not only academic but also emotional, social, physical and spiritual. Many centre managers and educators took on a counselling role to support learners with emotional and other problems. One centre established men's and women's soccer teams which played against other centres, thus addressing learners' physical and recreational needs. Others used social media such as WhatsApp to set up class support groups and strengthen solidarity among learners.

d) Learner support network

Learners attending good centres found themselves as part of a networked community which includes support of various kinds. A number of centres provided counselling for learners from troubled backgrounds or were able to refer learners to appropriate services, such as organisations dealing with substance abuse or HIV & AIDS. One centre had a Jobs Advisory Centre to assist learners who had graduated to find jobs and to monitor the numbers of job seekers and job finders. Other centres have links with Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and local businesses or industries to which they can refer suitable learners.

e) Ethos of care

All of the centres, in varying ways, showed that they cared for their learners and were concerned about them. This was reflected in the classroom where educators showed respect for learners as adults and took care to explain to learners who did not understand the first time, and answer their questions. It was reflected more widely in the centre's concern for "second chance" learners whose experience of the schooling system had been one of failure and disappointment. Centres help these learners to "pick up the pieces", not just academically but also socially and emotionally. Counselling and peer support further expressed this ethos. Since centre staff were often from the same communities as the learners, they understood the challenges that they faced and wanted to "make a difference" in their lives. As one learner said of her teachers at the centre, "they really carried us....they are my heroes." For some of the learners who were still teenagers and came from troubled backgrounds, a "tough love" approach from educators was appropriate – this established boundaries and clearly communicated what conduct was expected from young learners at the centre.

f) Accurate placement

Some centres had an application process in place which included diagnostic assessment. This happened through interviewing the learner and establishing his or her prior learning through a written placement exercise. This is particularly important for learners coming from a dysfunctional schooling system where grades passed might not correspond to actual competence, as well as for learners who have been out of school for a period and may have either gained new skills or lost what was learnt at school. Accurate placement can prevent learners wasting their time by learning at a level that is too difficult or too easy for them. It can also help learners who have failed matric and need to return to a level where they can fill in missing basic knowledge at a lower level before proceeding.

g) Continuing assessment

Continuing assessment was another feature of effective teaching and learning at centres. It involved the educator using a variety of assessment forms, including oral, written, self and peer, portfolios and examinations, and individual and group assessments, to gauge learning and intervene as appropriate in order to enhance learning. This continuous assessment took the form of formative

assessment for learning, rather than just summative assessment of learning. Feedback from assessment was particularly important for helping learners to correct their mistakes and improve their understanding and performance.

h) Culture of teaching and learning

Good centres developed, entrenched and enhanced a culture of teaching and learning by making sure that educators were present, on time, in class, and teaching. The centre manager played an important role in setting an example. Educators at one centre remarked that the centre manager was always “the first to arrive and the last to leave”, even during the period when he was not being paid by the department due to administrative hitches. Centres established high expectations of attendance and participation for learners as part of a centre that was “serious about learning”. This had a powerful influence on learners who often had not experienced such a culture at school, and established the centre as the “school of choice” for learners who would come from far afield to attend.

i) Adequate / minimal resources

Centres differed radically in the resources that they could offer learners. Some centres, such as a private industry-based centre, has customised materials and a mixed-mode learning format that included computer-based instruction. Another NGO centre generated its own print learning materials that addressed learners’ needs and contexts. A prison-based centre had its own library for learners. Other centres had no textbooks for learners and were dependent on the notes that the educator wrote on the board from a textbook borrowed from a school educator. There is no doubt that good learning resources enhance the efficacy of an adult centre, but what was surprising was how centres still managed to achieve relatively good results in resource-poor environments. This pointed to the role of the educator as the key resource for learning.

j) Progression pathways

The vertical articulation of bands and levels of learning is particularly problematic in adult education. For example, learners move from the GETC at ABET Level 4 (equivalent to Grade 9) into Matric programmes (Grade 12) without any established programmes at Grade 10 and Grade 11-equivalent. The horizontal articulation is also difficult: a learner may struggle to find ways of moving from an “academic” track to a vocational or skills-based track within a general education band. Some centres provided skills courses which learners could move to after completing basic education. One church-based centre had a variety of skills courses available to learners, including diesel mechanics. Another public centre liaised with a local TVET college to offer learnerships at the centre.

Community and institutional relations

a) Community advocacy

Good centres used various channels to raise community awareness about literacy and adult education. These included ward meetings and local ANC “War Rooms”, announcements at church services, and centre presence at funerals and other community occasions. One centre had an annual Open Day for pupils from local schools to discover the courses that the centre offered. Another published a story of a successful learner in the local newspaper, while others used their websites and annual reports to propagate these success stories. The informal, word-of-mouth advocacy of centre learners was perhaps most powerful in positively influencing family and community members

regarding the centre. All of these methods created awareness of the centre and its role, and generated community support for its efforts.

b) Proactive recruitment

Linked to advocacy, centres engaged in active recruitment. This included educators conducting door-to-door visits in the local community to explain what the centre offered and encourage attendance. They also called upon respected community members to champion the centre, including local councillors, traditional leaders and successful graduates of the centre. Centres also used their governing body members to recruit learners in the community. Again, as in advocacy, one of the most effective methods of recruitment proved to be word-of-mouth as centre learners told friends and acquaintances about the centre and its achievements, and their learning experiences at the centre.

c) Developing local networks

Each successful centre had a good understanding of relations with relevant local stakeholders and of networking effectively with them. This included developing relationships with the local circuit and/or district office of the Education Department, which helped with creating, advertising and filling educator posts, obtaining what resources were available to centres and running efficient exams. Relations with other government departments and programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme, might create work opportunities for learners. Another key stakeholder was local community leadership. Some centres had local leaders on their governance structures who served as liaison with, and promoters of the centre in the community. Developing relations with local businesses such as supermarkets helped with sponsorships and donations, with recruiting their workers as learners and with creating placement opportunities for graduated learners. One centre approached the local taxi association and customised a course for taxi operators. Liaising with TVET colleges created progression pathways for learners and opportunities to link academic and vocational learning. The diagram below captures some of the networking opportunities available to centres, depending on their particular contexts.

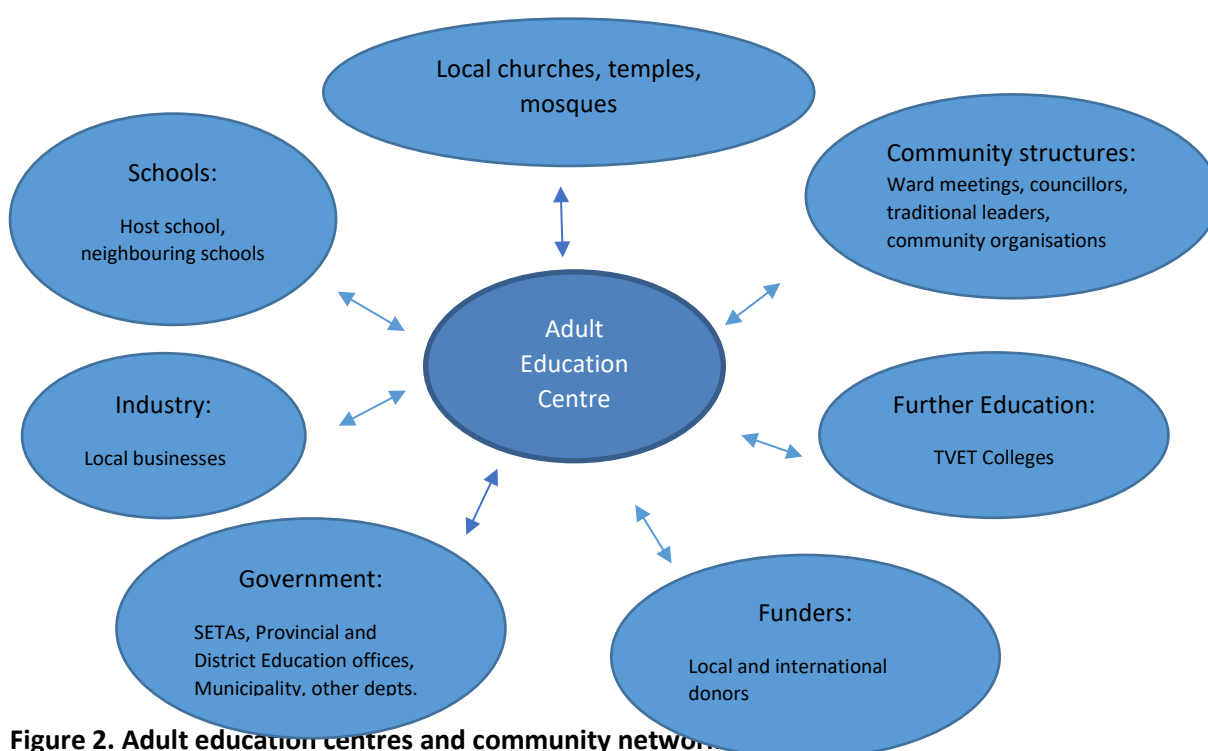


Figure 2. Adult education centres and community network.

d) Sharing the message

One dimension of community advocacy and recruitment lies in learners sharing what they have *learnt* with the wider community. One NGO centre has developed a system where its mainly women learners visit families in the community to share lessons learnt about topics such as family nutrition, child care and reading to young children. This raises the profile of the project in the community while at the same time contributing to the development of the community.

e) Using local resources

Seeing the learning potential in local resources also helps to build relations between the centre and the community. For example, learners at one centre visited the local clinic to conduct research as part of their Ancillary Health Care curriculum. Other centres drew on the resources and facilities of local schools, for example, a neighbouring primary school with secure premises housed a centre's computer laboratory. Many centre educators came from the local community and were known in the community as resource persons for adult learners and learning.

Centre efficacy: Six cross-cutting values

As explained above, the areas of focus within this study – Governance, Teaching and Learning, and Community and Institutional Relations – are closely related in the efficacy of a centre. Certain key values run across these focus areas and inform the attitudes and actions of all participants at the centre, whatever their particular locations and roles. These values are commitment, care, collaboration, community, core of instruction, and connected curriculum.

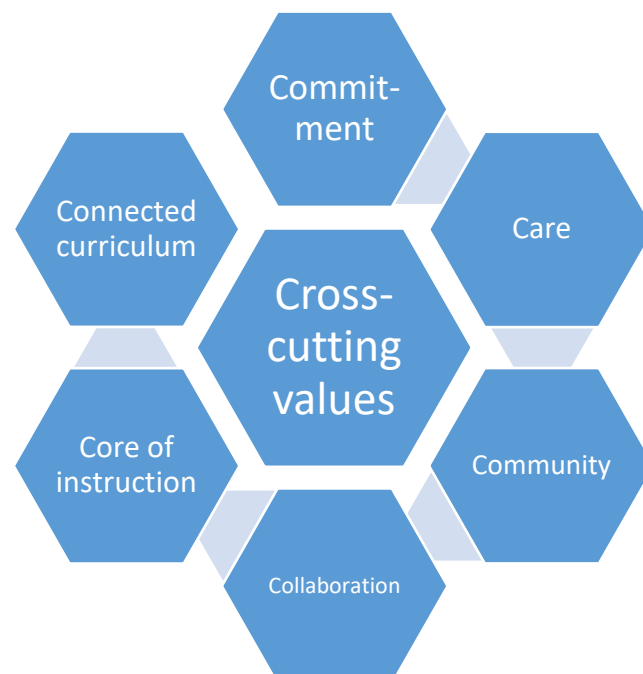


Figure 3. Cross-cutting values in the efficacy of adult learning centres

Commitment

This was evident in good centres among managers, educators, learners and other stakeholders. Managers and board members were committed to good governance, educators to their teaching, learners to their learning. Although educators varied in their experience and their qualifications, they shared a commitment to the centre and to the learners. Educator commitment found expression in practices such as being present in the full sense of the word, being punctual and being prepared for class. A number of centre managers indicated that commitment was the key factor that they looked for in an educator, and that a committed educator would gain qualifications and experience as he or she proceeded, if these were not initially present. The commitment of the centre manager inspired commitment in educators who in turn engendered learner commitment.

Care

Care was fundamental to the ways that learners experienced and appreciated a good adult learning centre. For many learners, the difference between the schools that they attended and the adult centre was that the educators cared about them and their learning, and this care extended beyond their identities as learners to whole persons with multiple roles and responsibilities. Care took many forms in these centres: educators taking care to explain again if learners did not understand; staff counselling learners or referring them to appropriate resources; the centre caring enough to address and act on inappropriate conduct; caring structures such as a Bereavement Committee and Jobs Advisory Centre; care among learners through peer learning systems; support mechanisms among staff such as a laptop stokvel. Care gave participants a sense of belonging to, and being valued by the centre.

Community

This related to the sense in which the centre was itself a community of learning in which all participants contributed. Centre leaders fostered a sense of community by celebrating achievements and affirming contributions of learners and staff members, for example, through prize-giving ceremonies, and articles in the local newspaper and on the centre's website. It also meant that the centre was related to the external community which it served, whether this was a civic, workplace or prison community. This was evident in centre representatives attending funerals of participants' family members, drawing community members into their governance structures, door-to-door recruitment of community members, sharing learning with the community through home visits and maintaining informal ties with former learners. Community was not just a context or a target group for these centres, but a value that informed how and why they operated. They thus paid attention to cultivating their own internal and external communities.

Collaboration

A sense of community fostered collaboration within the centres, which in turn built the centre community. Educators collaborated in staff and subject meetings, in planning and reflecting together, and in formulating and implementing ideas for improvement. The centre manager was key to developing a collaborative atmosphere by delegating leadership tasks and encouraging joint responsibility for the centre. Learners also collaborated with each other through peer learning and support structures, and within the wider centre community through learner representative structures.

Core of instruction

This refers to the attention to, and quality of, teaching and learning as the primary function of the centre, and lies at the heart of centre efficacy and at the core of its education *indaba*. If educators are not teaching effectively and learners not learning, then the best governance structures and strongest community and institutional relations are superfluous. Centre managers made sure that

teaching and learning were happening through, for example, regular monitoring of classes and careful attention to learner assessment and outcomes, with a view to improvement. In larger centres, a system of subject clusters with heads of department and subject heads provided support for teaching and learning. Many centres also encouraged educators to improve their own professional qualifications and knowledge of their subjects, and some provided avenues for educators to feed back their learning to other educators at the centre. Good centres used assessment not only to evaluate teaching and learning, but to inform its improvement.

Connected curriculum

This was one of the most striking values that contributed to centre efficacy. Valuing curriculum connectedness meant making links between the academic curriculum and learners' wider lives, so that learning became life-wide and life-deep, not just academic learning towards a qualification. One example was connecting the academic curriculum to learner's livelihood roles as job-seekers, employees or entrepreneurs, by linking the subject of Art & Design to a small clothing production unit on the centre campus, and Agriculture to a gardening project which produced food for the local community. Another example entailed linking subjects such as Ancillary Health Care to family issues such as parenting, children's health and nutrition. The connected curriculum helped to make learning relevant, and so meaningful, to centre learners.

Limitations of research

As in any case study design, there are limitations on the extent to which findings can be generalised. A multi-case study provides a stronger basis for generalisation than a single case study. However, in this multi-case study, only 12 centres were chosen from four provinces. Five provinces were not represented and there were severe limits on the range of centres regarding sector: only one private centre, one church-based centre, two NGO-linked centres and two prison-based centres were part of the study. There is no basis for considering these centres to be representative of the sectors in which they are located and strong evidence that their particular contexts and institutional locations informed the factors that contributed to their efficacy. The findings regarding factors that contribute to the efficacy of centres should therefore be used prudently. Although many of the factors appeared across several of the cases in this study, no single centre exemplified all the factors, and it is conceivable that other centres not studied would generate additional factors. There is therefore a need for further research on centre efficacy to broaden and deepen what this study has achieved.

While acknowledging these limitations, it is useful to distinguish between analytical and statistical generalisation (Yin, 2009). Whereas statistical generalisations drawn, for example, from surveys, can be applied to populations, analytical generalisations are about concepts and theories. This study helps us to understand the concept of adult learning centre efficacy and the factors that contribute to it, but does not, of course, claim to be the final word, only the beginning of a conversation that will hopefully continue.

Conclusion

This research study has found that adult education centres are able to perform excellently and stand as beacons of hope within their communities, often in difficult circumstances. Certain key values that contribute to the efficacy of centres cut across the areas of governance, teaching and learning, and institutional and community relations. These include commitment, care, community, collaboration, core of instruction, and connected curriculum. Regarding governance, two key factors are visionary leadership and strong administrative systems. All the centres in the study had strong,

visionary and committed leaders who had the ability to inspire others. All the centres functioned efficiently at the basic level of record-keeping and managing the relevant finances. Regarding teaching and learning, the presence of knowledgeable and committed educators was the key factor. This was closely linked with making the curriculum relevant to learners' lives and roles in terms of livelihoods, family, community, leisure and civic engagement. All the centres also demonstrated, in different ways, an ethos of care for learners. In the area of wider institutional and community relations, good centres saw themselves as part of the community with a role to play in developing the community. Key factors here were effective networking, advocacy and relationship-building with stakeholders.

While efficacy is a difficult concept to define in relation to adult education centres, it is clear from the study that it is underpinned by certain key beliefs and values. These include a belief, founded in the lifelong education approach, that adult learners who failed at and/or dropped out of school deserve a "second chance" at education; that education can help adults to contribute in the multiple roles that they play in the workplace, family, community and wider society; and that education as an academic enterprise has value in so far as it relates and contributes to adults' wider life projects.

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Investigating efficacy in adult learning centres: a multi-case study

Report

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Introduction

South Africa is currently in a phase of reconceptualising and renewing its post-school education system. This is being undertaken against a backdrop of structural challenges that have increasingly come to the fore around unemployment, inequality and poverty, particularly affecting large numbers of young people – 3.4 million according to Statistics South Africa (2011), with women disproportionately represented, who are not in employment, education or training.

This concern with post-school education preparing adult learners for the world of work is evident in a number of government initiatives. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013), acknowledging that the current system of Public Adult Learning Centres has not worked effectively, moves towards a new nomenclature and vision for adult learning sites within a Community College framework. In addition, new adult education qualifications are at various stages of development: the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and the National Independent Certificate (NIC), both Level 4 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework, and the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), an NQF Level 1 qualification, have been gazetted and processes of curriculum development have been initiated. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has developed new educator qualification frameworks for adult education and for vocational education and training. Given these developments, in 2016 DHET initiated a programme to build the capacity of universities in the areas of adult and vocational education so that they can produce educators for these sectors. These measures indicate the possibility, dependent on the political will and the efficacy of implementation, of a wide-ranging reform of adult education provision in the next five years.

In this context of change and renewal, there is a need for appropriate research to inform policy development and implementation. Relevant research areas include, but are not restricted to the following: the profile of existing adult educators, managers and learners; the relations among adult education, training and community development in South Africa; the assessment of adult learners; the efficacy of the new adult education curricula and qualifications; and examples of best practice within the adult education sector. It is with the latter that this research project is concerned. There is a paucity of information available on what makes an adult education centre effective and what we can learn from existing good institutional practices. This is probably because of the relative neglect of adult education within the education system and its subordination to schooling as a national educational priority, as well as the decline of adult education in tertiary institutions. DHET has now taken over adult education provision, which means that there is a greater focus and attention on this sector than previously.

Given the context set out above, Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, agreed in 2014 to fund a multi-case research project on the efficacy of purposively selected adult learning centres. Umalusi's own research focus has been largely around school qualifications. However, as the body responsible for adult education qualifications in the General and Further Education bands, it is well-positioned to support appropriate adult education research.

Focus and purpose of study

This multi-case study focuses on the institutional efficacy of selected, exemplary adult education centres from a range of sectors in four provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape. Institutional efficacy is understood here as the capacity of the adult education centre to achieve the desired results. The purpose of the study was to establish the factors that contribute

to the effective and efficient functioning of adult education centres in relation to three domains: governance; teaching and learning; and wider community and institutional relations. A secondary purpose was to identify the implications of the findings of the study for the accreditation of adult learning centres, specifically the private centres that Umalusi quality assures.

For the purposes of this study, governance encompasses how institutions are run and the structures, systems and procedures of management that are in place to make them function efficiently and effectively. It includes questions of leadership style and vision such as who leads the institution, how they lead, with what purpose and to what effect.

Teaching and learning is a broad area that entails what is taught, who teaches, how they teach, where and when teaching happens, for what purposes and with what results. It also encompasses the learners and what, why and how they learn, and the assessment of learning. Particularly pertinent are the roles of educators and learners, the relation between educators and learners, and the culture of teaching and learning in the institution.

Community and institutional relations focus on the relation of the institution to the wider community in which it is located, including community leaders and structures, local organisations and networks. Relations with other institutions include those with the department of education, examining bodies and host institutions.

One assumption of this study is that the efficacy of an adult education centre is evident in its governance, teaching and learning, and wider institutional and community relations. It is also assumed that these three areas are closely interwoven, with strengths and weaknesses in one areas informing the others. A third assumption is that external contextual factors also contribute to the efficacy of the centres. These include the state of the adult education field regarding resources, working conditions of educators, national curriculum and assessment systems, and so on. However, these wider concerns, while important areas of research, were not the primary focus of this study.

Research questions

1. What factors contribute to the effective and efficient functioning of adult education centres with regard to:
 - a) governance;
 - b) teaching and learning;
 - c) wider community and institutional relations?
2. What are the implications of the findings for criteria for accreditation of adult learning centres?

Research team

The research team comprised four coordinators and four research assistants. It drew on members from four institutions in three provinces. Dr Peter Rule from the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, was the national coordinator as well as the provincial coordinator for KwaZulu-Natal. Professor Doria Daniels from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University was the Western Cape coordinator. Mrs K. Vani Chatty from Umalusi coordinated Gauteng Province and Dr Gezani Baloyi from the Department of Adult Basic Education, Training and Youth

Development at the University of South Africa (Unisa) coordinated Limpopo. In addition, four M.Ed students assisted with the research: Ms Prem Bachan, Ms Levern Green, Ms Dorah Mutula and Ms Sibongile Zwane, all from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Methodology

The study adopted a multi-case study approach (Stake, 2006; Rule & John, 2011). Case study methodology provides the opportunity to develop rich “thick” descriptions of particular centres, drawing on multiple sources and perspectives. By focusing on the specific instance, it is particularly useful in exploring the uniqueness of the case in its particular context.

Regarding the selection of centres, purposive sampling was adopted in which centres were selected using the following criteria:

- performance in the General Education and Training Certificate: ABET Level 4 exams, or other relevant external national or provincial assessments;
- recruitment, retention and throughput of students;
- perceived efficacy according to key stakeholders in the adult education field.

An initial sampling of centres with a reputation for excellence was tested against actual performance in quantitative terms related to recruitment, retention, throughput and assessments and examination results, where available.

Twelve centres were investigated, three from each province (KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape and Limpopo), representing the range of sectors involved in adult education provision (government, industry, community/NGO) as well as both urban and rural contexts (See Table 1 below). The public centres included centres falling under DHET as well as prison-based centres falling under the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

Province	Centre	Location	Sector
Gauteng	St. Anthony's	Reiger Park, Boksburg (urban)	Church-based public
	KwaThema	KwaThema, Springs (urban township)	Public
	Woolworths	Midrand (urban)	Industry - Private
KwaZulu-Natal	Endleleni	Madadeni, Newcastle (peri-urban township)	Public
	Family Literacy Project	Underberg and surrounding areas (rural)	NGO
	Thandiwe	Ntuzuma, Ethekweni (peri-urban township)	Public
Limpopo	Thusano	Makhado (urban, small town)	Prison
	Motupakgomo	Motupa (rural village)	Public
	O R Tambo	Dennilton (urban, small town)	Public
Western Cape	Elsies River	Elsies River, Cape Town (urban township)	Public
	Malmesbury New Prison	Malmesbury (urban, small town)	Prison
	Maties Community Outreach	Stellenbosch (urban)	University-based NGO

Table 1. Selection of adult learning centres

The study does not claim that these are the best centres in the particular provinces or the only centres that might be considered efficacious. On the contrary, there are many other excellent centres which restrictions of geography and capacity did not allow this study to investigate. Nor does it claim that there were no weaknesses or areas for improvement at these centres. Given the resource-poor and neglected character of adult education in South Africa, this would hardly be credible. The centres selected were thus a sample of a range of good centres based on the criteria outlined above. A rationale for the selection of each centre is provided in the detailed case report.

The study used a range of data collection methods. These included interviews with managers, educators, learners and other stakeholders, focus group sessions with educators and learners, observations of sites and classes, and analysis of centre documents such as narrative reports, as well as analysis of statistical data such as enrolment and attendance figures, and exam results, where relevant and available. Using multiple methods and sources is good practice in case study research as it allows for a comparison and triangulation of findings (Yin, 2009). The study made use of both qualitative data, such as the views and perspectives of centre participants, and artefacts such as year- end reports and articles to enhance the trustworthiness of some of the qualitative data from the interviews/ observations. It also took into account the wider context and learner profile of each centre.

Data were analysed using continuing qualitative analysis in the form of thematic content analysis (Merriam, 1998). The themes arose from a process of deriving categories a priori from the research questions and in a bottom-up way from the data themselves, and coding the data according to these categories. Themes were clustered under the four broad headings of Governance, Teaching and Learning, Community and Institutional Relations, and Context, as indicated in Figure 1 below. The first three headings came from the research questions. The fourth, 'Context', emerged as an important category during the course of data analysis. Given that context figures importantly within a case study approach and that each of the selected cases was profoundly influenced by its context, this was added as a category. Each theme was further divided into sub-themes; for example, the theme of Curriculum included sub-themes: Assessment; Content; Responsiveness; Standards setting.

Governance	Teaching and Learning	Community and Institutional Relations	Context
Administration Communication Finances Infrastructure Leadership Personnel Programme management Structures	Culture Curriculum Educators Gender Groups Materials Methods Philosophy Programmes Skills Support	Churches Councillors Community-based organisations Government departments Higher and further education Income-generating projects Local businesses Municipality Nature and purpose of relationship Profile in community Responsiveness to community Schools/host school Traditional authorities	Cultural Demographic Historical Institutional / organisational National policy and legislation Physical location Socio-economic

Table 2. Themes for data analysis

The final report is presented in the form of a series of case narratives followed by a discussion of cross-cutting trends and themes in relation to institutional efficacy.

Pen portraits of the 12 cases

The portraits below are organised alphabetically according to the four provinces. They provide a quick overview of each of the centres. The full case studies are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

Gauteng

KwaThema Adult Learning Centre

This public centre is situated in the township of KwaThema near Springs. Based at a local secondary school, it has two satellite centres and a large intake of nearly 3000 learners. Founded in 1979, the centre has enabled thousands of adult learners to take the next step regarding further studies

and/or employment. It has a sustained record of academic achievement in national exams and has won numerous awards. It is notable for its innovative committee structure and for a curriculum that links academic study and livelihoods.

St Anthony's Education Centre

St Anthony's is a church-based adult education and training centre that was established in 1964 as a community library. It is situated at St Francis Catholic Church in Reiger Park, Boksburg, and has three satellite centres. Besides academic adult education programmes, it offers skills training and post-study support through its Job Advisory Centre. It has 450 learners enrolled for ABET Level 4. The centre is notable for its holistic, value-centred approach to curriculum, its ethos of care and its learning pathways that link basic and vocational education.

Woolworths

Woolworths runs an adult education programme at its warehouse in Midrand. The adult education and training provider, Media Works, runs the Adult Basic Education programme for Woolworths employees. The programme has a very high rate of learner retention and graduation. It is notable for its blended approach to learning, which includes both computer-based and face-to-face facilitation, its customised materials, its learner incentives and its strong articulation with workplace themes and contexts.

KwaZulu-Natal

Endleleni Adult Learning Centre

Endleleni, established in 1996, is based at a primary school in Madadeni township outside Newcastle. It offers ABET Levels 2 to 4 as well as Matric subjects to about 80 learners. It has a high certification rate among its GETC learners and nearly all learners pass at least one subject written. Endleleni has good relations with the community which it serves and a strong network of relations with local stakeholders.

Family Literacy Project (FLP)

FLP is a non-governmental organisation based in Underberg in the foothills of the Drakensberg. It works with rural communities in remote areas. Its innovative approach to family literacy connects the learning of its mainly female participants to family and community issues such as health, nutrition, human rights and child development. Participants in the family literacy groups each visit families in their community to share their learning. FLP is also notable for innovative learning materials, income-generating projects and promotion of reading in communities.

Thandiwe Adult Learning Centre

Thandiwe is based in the peri-urban township of Ntuzuma in Ethekweni. It was the first public adult education centre in KwaZulu-Natal to offer Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a subject to adult learners. Its innovative approach is also reflected in its engagement with the local taxi association to provide a customised course for taxi operators. It is thus notable for its assessment of and responses to community needs.

Limpopo

Motupakgomo Adult Learning Centre

Motupakgomo, situated in the village of Motupa near Tzaneen, is a rural centre which has survived with relatively good results in a resource-poor rural environment. Like many rural centres, it has a small staff: four educators serve approximately 88 learners. Educators have to teach multiple subjects. The centre is notable for its good relations with the host school and local traditional leaders.

O R Tambo Adult Learning Centre

This centre is located in the small Limpopo town of Dennilton in the South-East of Limpopo. It serves a large population of adult learners and had the largest enrolment in the province for several years, despite being in a small town. It attracts learners from neighbouring villages because of its good reputation. It is notable for its committed staff and ethos of care.

Thusano

Thusano adult education and training centre is located in the privately run prison of Kuthama Sinthumele in the town of Makhado. It caters for 3024 adult male offenders, each of whom has his own education programme. The centre offers basic education, matric and vocational training. Offenders can also register for degrees through UNISA. The centre has very high retention (unsurprisingly) and pass rates, and frequently wins provincial awards for its performance. It is notable for its comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, of which education is one component, and its efficient systems of administration and governance.

Western Cape

Elsies River

This public centre is located in the bustling working class suburb of Elsies River in the Cape Town metropolitan area. Though established in 2006, the centre found permanent premises in a disused primary school in 2009. It has an excellent record of achievement and won the national award for the best adult learning centre in 2012. It offers ABE and matric as well as skills training courses to approximately 700 learners. It is noteworthy for creating progression pathways for adult learners and assisting learners to develop their employability through skills training.

Malmesbury New Prison

The prison-based centre is located in the Malmesbury New Prison, a medium security correctional facility for 1300 adult males. The prison opened in 1998 and the “school” a year later. It offers an ABET programme as well as skills training courses. The centre is known for its emphasis on education for rehabilitation and for its excellent performance in Afrikaans.

Matie Community Services

This university-based centre started in 1964 as a medical student volunteer organisation. Linked to Stellenbosch University, it is also partly a non-profit organisation. It engages with the Stellenbosch community and surrounding areas. It has achieved excellent results over a sustained period with ‘second chance’ learners. It is notable for its ethos of care and its network of relations with organs of the university and non-governmental organisations.

Findings: factors contributing to the efficacy of adult learning centres

Governance

a) Visionary leadership

What good centres have in common is proactive and visionary leadership. Leaders of good centres differ in their leadership styles, backgrounds, experiences and approaches. However, they all have a clear understanding of what the centre is aiming to achieve and are able to advocate and communicate this vision to educators, learners and the wider community. The centres’ visions address the needs and concerns of the communities that they are working with. A vision on its own

has no worth unless it is enacted, and good centres are able to enact their visions in ways that are clearly evident to their communities.

b) Planning

Good centres emphasise the planning process and using plans to guide and direct action. Planning typically happens at the beginning of a year or term. They are based on a review of previous work and are developed in the context of the centre's vision and mission. These plans are realistic and have measurable and achievable outcomes. They are developed collectively and communicated effectively to all concerned. They are also flexible and can be adapted to respond to changes in context.

c) Monitoring

Management monitors the implementation of plans and assesses whether or not they are succeeding, and why. This enables the centre to respond quickly and appropriately to problems as they arise. Centres manage and monitor the functioning of the centre as a whole so that they have an overview. They also monitor teaching and learning in individual classrooms or, if there are too many classes, they delegate heads of department to do this. This enables them to intervene where necessary and address problems as they arise.

d) Evaluating

Evaluation happens at the end of a year or a term. It assesses whether the centre has achieved its goals, as well as why and how it can improve in the future. Evaluation happens at different levels: the centre as a whole; a particular programme or structure; a subject area led by a head of department with his or her educators; or an individual subject educator; a class of learners reflecting on their experiences of teaching and learning. Evaluation can also consider different kinds of data: exam performance in the form of statistics; qualitative feedback from learners and educators; comments from the community. Evaluation is a culture that permeates a centre and indicates a commitment to reflective thinking as a basis for planning and acting.

e) Effective governance structures

Good centres have governance structures that support the centre leaders and managers, protect the integrity of the centre and pursue its vision. Depending on the type of centre, this governing structure might take the form of a centre governing body, an advisory board or a board of directors. Some centres also have particular structures for learners such as a Representative Council of Learners or a Peer Learning Support Committee. Some centres showed creativity in developing structures to address their particular contexts in the form of committees and task teams. For example, one centre established a Bereavement Committee to support learners whose family members had passed away. Another had an Administration Committee to deal with learner registration and general administration, a Task Committee to deal with curriculum issues, and an Exam Committee to set and moderate exam papers for internal assessment, and to monitor educators' preparation for School-Based Assessment (SBA) tasks.

f) Efficient systems

Efficient systems of record-keeping and financial management are crucial to the efficacy of centres. Centre managers paid attention to making sure that records such as class attendance and exam registration were kept meticulously. An NGO that was dependent on donor funding ensured that it kept accurate records of income and expenses, and monitored all payments scrupulously. While

learners at public centres do not pay fees, centres that collected monies from learners for excursions or events made sure that they recorded these payments and handed out receipts.

g) Well-managed relations with host institution

The relation between the centre and the host institution, whether this was a primary or high school, a university, a church, a prison or a factory, is of vital importance to the effective running of the centre. Good centres managed this relationship well through a variety of mechanisms. These included having representation from the host institution on centre governance structures, sharing staff with the host institution and having clear channels of communication with the host institution in order to deal with problems as they arose. At one university-based centre, students from the university conducted research at the centre, thus strengthening mutual understanding. At a prison-based centre, educators met with prison staff such as warders and social workers to discuss individual cases. At a factory-based centre, educators communicated with learners' line managers so that they understood their workers' learning timetables and commitments, and vice versa, and could support them as workplace learners.

h) Promoting professional development

Good centres pay attention to the development and progression of their staff. This may take the form of internal coaching and mentoring, workshops and training sessions, and external courses that build the capacity of staff members. Centres supported their staff in further studies through financial assistance, time off, opportunities to share their learning with other staff members and/or salary and promotion incentives. One centre set aside one day per month for staff training and development as part of its commitment to being a learning organisation.

i) Networking and relation-building

Centre managers made it a priority to build relationships with local institutions and organisations. While this aspect overlaps with Community and Institutional Relations, it relates to Governance in the sense that the centre as an institution values relations with its community and supports its manager and staff in developing these relations.

j) Team work and distributed leadership

Centre managers activated their staff and built their capacity by involving them in leadership activities and responsibilities. As one centre manager put it, "It's important for me not to drive the centre on my own." Good centre managers delegated responsibilities and built a strong and accountable team around them. They were also able to communicate the "memory" and ethos of the centre to staff and learners. This was evident in centres with a long history in their ability to maintain and develop excellence despite changes in leadership. One centre set up a "stokvel" among staff members which succeeded in providing each staff member with a laptop.

Teaching and learning

a) Knowledgeable and committed educators

All the centres shared the characteristic of having committed and knowledgeable educators. They demonstrated a love for their learners, for teaching and for their subjects. Many of them were veterans who had been teaching at the centre for many years and had witnessed numerous changes

of curriculum and structure. Not all these educators were formally qualified but many had appropriate qualifications in teaching and/or adult education. Educators came from different backgrounds: some of them were former school teachers; some of them had themselves been learners at the centre and returned as educators; some of them came to adult education from other occupations. Given the difficulties in the adult education sector such as temporary and insecure contracts, non-payment or delayed payment of salaries, inadequate learning materials and resources, and an absence of departmental support in public centres, the resilience and staying power of such committed educators was remarkable and a sign of hope for the system.

b) Relevant curriculum

Good centres were able to make the curriculum relevant to their particular learners. They were able to do this by relating the curriculum to learners' lives and to their adult roles such as breadwinner, parent and family member, community participant, citizen and consumer. For example, one centre set up a clothing production workshop where learners doing subjects like Art and Culture could apply their knowledge and generate income. Similarly, a number of centres ran gardening projects where Agriculture learners could do practical work, grow vegetables and sell them to the community. Learners doing Ancillary Health Care were able to relate their learning to family issues such as health and nutrition, and those doing Early Childhood Development to the care of their own children. One NGO centre set up savings clubs among its learners which cultivated a culture of collective saving and empowered them financially.

What good centres had in common was the ability to relate adult learners' 'academic projects' to at least some of their other projects as adults (Illeris, 2011). These other projects, which are contextually situated and differ in specifics from one adult to the next, include adults':

- livelihood project with its aim of making a living and its associated roles of, among others, breadwinner, employee, worker and/or entrepreneur;
- family/relationship project with its aim to love and be loved and its roles, among others, of family member, care-giver, friend and lover;
- social project with its aim to participate in and contribute to the community and roles such as member of community organisation, local consumer and resident;
- leisure project with its aim of relaxing and having fun and roles such as team or club member and participant in a social circle;
- conviction project with its aim of creating a better future and its roles, among others, of citizen, advocate, activist and believer.

Figure 1 below sets out the academic project in relation to these other adult projects.

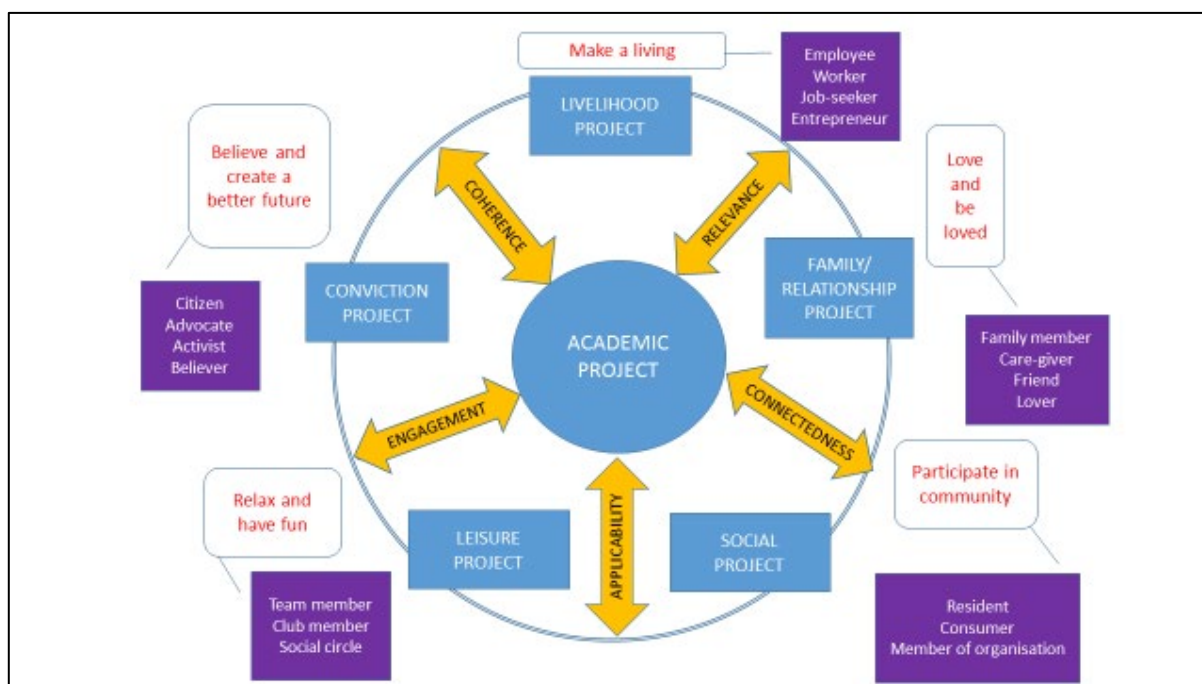


Figure 1: Academic project in relation to adults' other life projects

c) Holistic curriculum

Good centres recognised that the needs of their learners were not only academic but also emotional, social, physical and spiritual. Many centre managers and educators took on a counselling role to support learners with emotional and other problems. One centre established men's and women's soccer teams which played against other centres, thus addressing learners' physical and recreational needs. Others used social media such as WhatsApp to set up class support groups and strengthen solidarity among learners.

d) Learner support network

Learners attending good centres found themselves as part of a networked community which includes support of various kinds. A number of centres provided counselling for learners from troubled backgrounds or were able to refer learners to appropriate services, such as organisations dealing with substance abuse or HIV & AIDS. One centre had a Jobs Advisory Centre to assist learners who had graduated to find jobs and to monitor the numbers of job seekers and job finders. Other centres have links with Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and local businesses or industries to which they can refer suitable learners.

e) Ethos of care

All of the centres, in varying ways, showed that they cared for their learners and were concerned about them. This was reflected in the classroom where educators showed respect for learners as adults and took care to explain to learners who did not understand the first time, and answer their questions. It was reflected more widely in the centre's concern for "second chance" learners whose experience of the schooling system had been one of failure and disappointment. Centres help these learners to "pick up the pieces", not just academically but also socially and emotionally. Counselling and peer support further expressed this ethos. Since centre staff were often from the same

communities as the learners, they understood the challenges that they faced and wanted to “make a difference” in their lives. As one learner said of her teachers at the centre, “they really carried us....they are my heroes.” For some of the learners who were still teenagers and came from troubled backgrounds, a “tough love” approach from educators was appropriate – this established boundaries and clearly communicated what conduct was expected from young learners at the centre.

f) Accurate placement

Some centres had an application process in place which included diagnostic assessment. This happened through interviewing the learner and establishing his or her prior learning through a written placement exercise. This is particularly important for learners coming from a dysfunctional schooling system where grades passed might not correspond to actual competence, as well as for learners who have been out of school for a period and may have either gained new skills or lost what was learnt at school. Accurate placement can prevent learners wasting their time by learning at a level that is too difficult or too easy for them. It can also help learners who have failed matric and need to return to a level where they can fill in missing basic knowledge at a lower level before proceeding.

g) Continuing assessment

Continuing assessment was another feature of effective teaching and learning at centres. It involved the educator using a variety of assessment forms, including oral, written, self and peer, portfolios and examinations, and individual and group assessments, to gauge learning and intervene as appropriate in order to enhance learning. This continuous assessment took the form of formative assessment for learning, rather than just summative assessment of learning. Feedback from assessment was particularly important for helping learners to correct their mistakes and improve their understanding and performance.

h) Culture of teaching and learning

Good centres developed, entrenched and enhanced a culture of teaching and learning by making sure that educators were present, on time, in class, and teaching. The centre manager played an important role in setting an example. Educators at one centre remarked that the centre manager was always “the first to arrive and the last to leave”, even during the period when he was not being paid by the department due to administrative hitches. Centres established high expectations of attendance and participation for learners as part of a centre that was “serious about learning”. This had a powerful influence on learners who often had not experienced such a culture at school, and established the centre as the “school of choice” for learners who would come from far afield to attend.

i) Adequate / minimal resources

Centres differed radically in the resources that they could offer learners. Some centres, such as a private industry-based centre, has customised materials and a mixed-mode learning format that included computer-based instruction. Another NGO centre generated its own print learning materials that addressed learners’ needs and contexts. A prison-based centre had its own library for learners. Other centres had no textbooks for learners and were dependent on the notes that the educator wrote on the board from a textbook borrowed from a school educator. There is no doubt that good learning resources enhance the efficacy of an adult centre, but what was surprising was how centres still managed to achieve relatively good results in resource-poor environments. This pointed to the role of the educator as the key resource for learning.

j) Progression pathways

The vertical articulation of bands and levels of learning is particularly problematic in adult education. For example, learners move from the GETC at ABET Level 4 (equivalent to Grade 9) into Matric programmes (Grade 12) without any established programmes at Grade 10 and Grade 11-equivalent. The horizontal articulation is also difficult: a learner may struggle to find ways of moving from an “academic” track to a vocational or skills-based track within a general education band. Some centres provided skills courses which learners could move to after completing basic education. One church-based centre had a variety of skills courses available to learners, including diesel mechanics. Another public centre liaised with a local TVET college to offer learnerships at the centre.

Community and institutional relations

a) Community advocacy

Good centres used various channels to raise community awareness about literacy and adult education. These included ward meetings and local ANC “War Rooms”, announcements at church services, and centre presence at funerals and other community occasions. One centre had an annual Open Day for pupils from local schools to discover the courses that the centre offered. Another published a story of a successful learner in the local newspaper, while others used their websites and annual reports to propagate these success stories. The informal, word-of-mouth advocacy of centre learners was perhaps most powerful in positively influencing family and community members regarding the centre. All of these methods created awareness of the centre and its role, and generated community support for its efforts.

b) Proactive recruitment

Linked to advocacy, centres engaged in active recruitment. This included educators conducting door-to-door visits in the local community to explain what the centre offered and encourage attendance. They also called upon respected community members to champion the centre, including local councillors, traditional leaders and successful graduates of the centre. Centres also used their governing body members to recruit learners in the community. Again, as in advocacy, one of the most effective methods of recruitment proved to be word-of-mouth as centre learners told friends and acquaintances about the centre and its achievements, and their learning experiences at the centre.

c) Developing local networks

Each successful centre had a good understanding of relations with relevant local stakeholders and of networking effectively with them. This included developing relationships with the local circuit and/or district office of the Education Department, which helped with creating, advertising and filling educator posts, obtaining what resources were available to centres and running efficient exams. Relations with other government departments and programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme, might create work opportunities for learners. Another key stakeholder was local community leadership. Some centres had local leaders on their governance structures who served as liaison with, and promoters of the centre in the community. Developing relations with local businesses such as supermarkets helped with sponsorships and donations, with recruiting their workers as learners and with creating placement opportunities for graduated learners. One centre approached the local taxi association and customised a course for taxi operators. Liaising with TVET

colleges created progression pathways for learners and opportunities to link academic and vocational learning. The diagram below captures some of the networking opportunities available to centres, depending on their particular contexts.

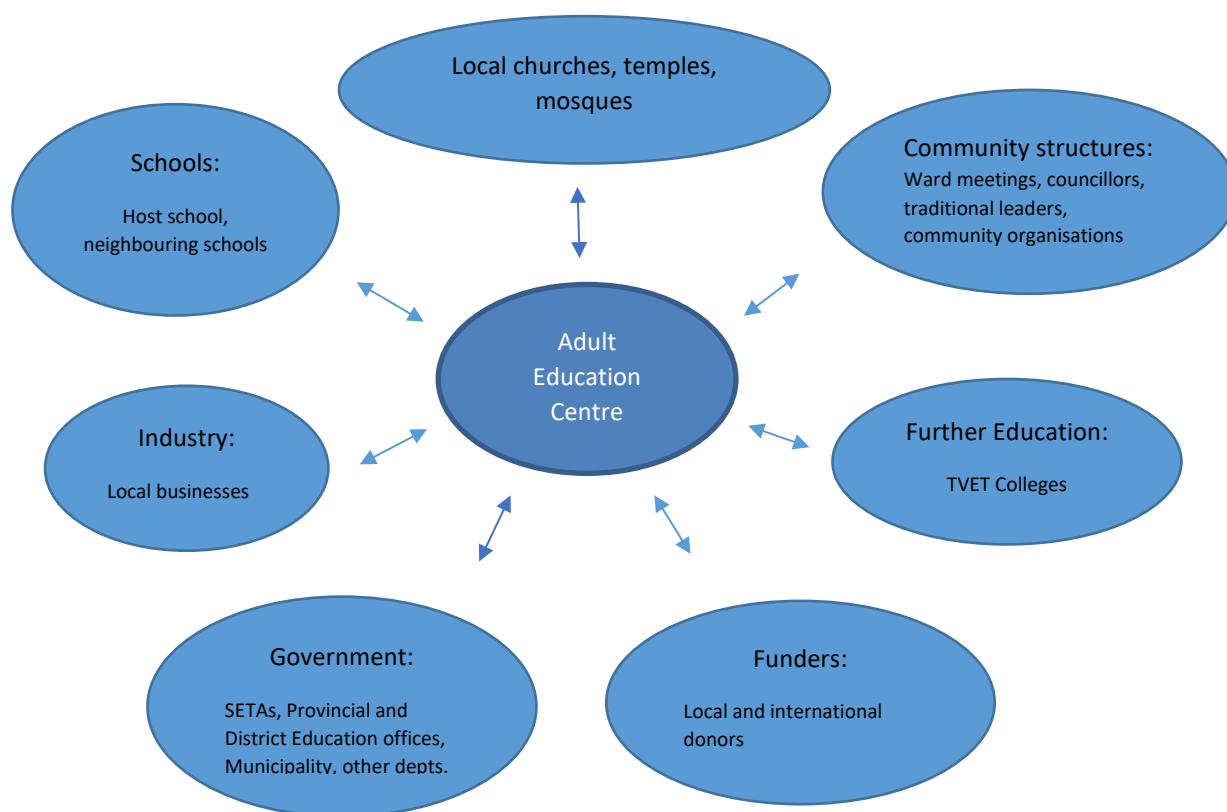


Figure 2. Adult education centres and community networking

d) Sharing the message

One dimension of community advocacy and recruitment lies in learners sharing what they have *learnt* with the wider community. One NGO centre has developed a system where its mainly women learners visit families in the community to share lessons learnt about topics such as family nutrition, child care and reading to young children. This raises the profile of the project in the community while at the same time contributing to the development of the community.

e) Using local resources

Seeing the learning potential in local resources also helps to build relations between the centre and the community. For example, learners at one centre visited the local clinic to conduct research as part of their Ancillary Health Care curriculum. Other centres drew on the resources and facilities of local schools, for example, a neighbouring primary school with secure premises housed a centre's computer laboratory. Many centre educators came from the local community and were known in the community as resource persons for adult learners and learning.

Centre efficacy: Six cross-cutting values

As explained above, the areas of focus within this study – Governance, Teaching and Learning, and Community and Institutional Relations – are closely related in the efficacy of a centre. Certain key

values run across these focus areas and inform the attitudes and actions of all participants at the centre, whatever their particular locations and roles. These values are commitment, care, collaboration, community, core of instruction, and connected curriculum.

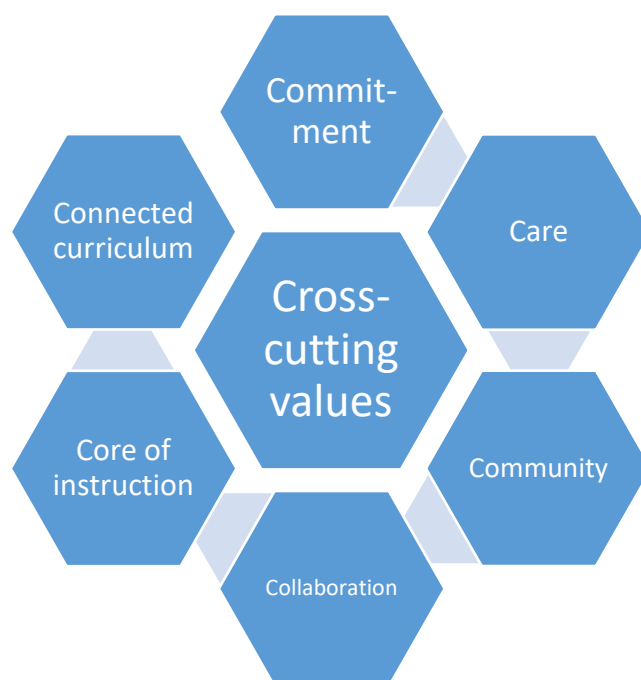


Figure 3. Cross-cutting values in the efficacy of adult learning centres

Commitment

This was evident in good centres among managers, educators, learners and other stakeholders. Managers and board members were committed to good governance, educators to their teaching, learners to their learning. Although educators varied in their experience and their qualifications, they shared a commitment to the centre and to the learners. Educator commitment found expression in practices such as being present in the full sense of the word, being punctual and being prepared for class. A number of centre managers indicated that commitment was the key factor that they looked for in an educator, and that a committed educator would gain qualifications and experience as he or she proceeded, if these were not initially present. The commitment of the centre manager inspired commitment in educators who in turn engendered learner commitment.

Care

Care was fundamental to the ways that learners experienced and appreciated a good adult learning centre. For many learners, the difference between the schools that they attended and the adult centre was that the educators cared about them and their learning, and this care extended beyond their identities as learners to whole persons with multiple roles and responsibilities. Care took many forms in these centres: educators taking care to explain again if learners did not understand; staff counselling learners or referring them to appropriate resources; the centre caring enough to address and act on inappropriate conduct; caring structures such as a Bereavement Committee and Jobs Advisory Centre; care among learners through peer learning systems; support mechanisms among

staff such as a laptop stokvel. Care gave participants a sense of belonging to, and being valued by the centre.

Community

This related to the sense in which the centre was itself a community of learning in which all participants contributed. Centre leaders fostered a sense of community by celebrating achievements and affirming contributions of learners and staff members, for example, through prize-giving ceremonies, and articles in the local newspaper and on the centre's website. It also meant that the centre was related to the external community which it served, whether this was a civic, workplace or prison community. This was evident in centre representatives attending funerals of participants' family members, drawing community members into their governance structures, door-to-door recruitment of community members, sharing learning with the community through home visits and maintaining informal ties with former learners. Community was not just a context or a target group for these centres, but a value that informed how and why they operated. They thus paid attention to cultivating their own internal and external communities.

Collaboration

A sense of community fostered collaboration within the centres, which in turn built the centre community. Educators collaborated in staff and subject meetings, in planning and reflecting together, and in formulating and implementing ideas for improvement. The centre manager was key to developing a collaborative atmosphere by delegating leadership tasks and encouraging joint responsibility for the centre. Learners also collaborated with each other through peer learning and support structures, and within the wider centre community through learner representative structures.

Core of instruction

This refers to the attention to, and quality of, teaching and learning as the primary function of the centre, and lies at the heart of centre efficacy and at the core of its education *indaba*. If educators are not teaching effectively and learners not learning, then the best governance structures and strongest community and institutional relations are superfluous. Centre managers made sure that teaching and learning were happening through, for example, regular monitoring of classes and careful attention to learner assessment and outcomes, with a view to improvement. In larger centres, a system of subject clusters with heads of department and subject heads provided support for teaching and learning. Many centres also encouraged educators to improve their own professional qualifications and knowledge of their subjects, and some provided avenues for educators to feed back their learning to other educators at the centre. Good centres used assessment not only to evaluate teaching and learning, but to inform its improvement.

Connected curriculum

This was one of the most striking values that contributed to centre efficacy. Valuing curriculum connectedness meant making links between the academic curriculum and learners' wider lives, so that learning became life-wide and life-deep, not just academic learning towards a qualification. One example was connecting the academic curriculum to learner's livelihood roles as job-seekers, employees or entrepreneurs, by linking the subject of Art & Design to a small clothing production unit on the centre campus, and Agriculture to a gardening project which produced food for the local community. Another example entailed linking subjects such as Ancillary Health Care to family issues such as parenting, children's health and nutrition. The connected curriculum helped to make learning relevant, and so meaningful, to centre learners.

Implications of the findings for criteria for accreditation of adult learning centres

Introduction

Umalusi has a legislative mandate, according to the General and Further Education Act of 2001 (as amended), to quality assure private providers of education and training qualifications that fall within the General and Further Education and Training bands. One way in which it does this is by accrediting such providers. It has developed a document, 'Application and Self-evaluation Provider Guideline' (Umalusi, 2015) to assist providers in this regard. The document sets out 'provisional accreditation criteria' in the following categories:

- Mission directed leadership and management
- Teaching and learning
- Learning and assessment
- Learner support
- Achievement and results

While it is not appropriate in this report to undertake a detailed analysis of the Guideline document, several issues arise from the study which are pertinent to the criteria and processes for accreditation of centres. These are presented below.

Compliance and quality

It is important to recognise that there cannot be a direct one-to-one relationship between the factors that contribute to the efficacy of adult learning centres as found in this study and the criteria for accreditation of centres. Centres have often developed their efficacy over a long period, in some cases over several decades. Their programmes, processes, personnel and structures have evolved through episodes of trial and error, and through considerable reflection on practice and in practice. Efficacy thus involves a duration and depth of engagement which cannot be expected from new centres applying for accreditation. Also, efficacy of a particular centre depends on a unique configuration of relations between internal and external factors. For example, although visionary leadership characterised excellent centres, what vision is appropriate and how this can be enacted in leadership are context-dependent.

On the other hand, because of poor government provision, many of the excellent centres in this study lacked basic resources such as learning materials and text books for educators, which could be considered as a basic requirement for accreditation. Rural centres had no Internet connectivity and hardly any computer facilities. Some classrooms were poorly equipped or in a state of disrepair. Because they shared facilities with a host school, many centres did not have an administrative space, beyond perhaps a filing cabinet, in which to keep records. Thus, because of contextual and systemic factors in the public sector, it is problematic to stipulate basic infrastructural requirements, even though these are necessary for learning. Is it ethical to stipulate requirements of private centres which are not met by the vast majority of public centres?

Nevertheless, a set of criteria, flexibly applied to accommodate contextual constraints, is essential in order for centres to understand what is required to run a centre effectively.

Regulatory and developmental roles

It is useful to distinguish between the regulatory and developmental roles of accreditation. Accreditation plays an important role in regulating basic requirements for a centre and setting an acceptable standard of what is expected with reference to explicit public norms. The regulatory role

might be played out through measures such as submission of key documents, inspection of facilities and fulfilment of minimum requirements regarding educator qualifications. While the regulatory role is essential for protecting the learners and educators at adult centres, and undergirding a public discourse of accountability around standards, the danger of tying accreditation to regulation alone is that centres might comply for the sake of accreditation rather than to ensure quality of provision. They might develop an ‘accreditation competence’ which does not necessarily translate into quality of provision.

On the other hand, accreditation can also have a developmental role in raising awareness of centre participants about what quality provision entails and why it is important. This developmental role should be continuing and incremental. Measures such as sharing of best practice in appropriate fora, providing feedback on centre performance in exams, and twinning established centres with new ones could be ways of enhancing the development of centre efficacy. In addition, a period of provisional accreditation which involves monitoring, feedback and centre self-reflection, can also help to build a culture of quality within centres. The process of accreditation can thus play an important role in developing centres’ understandings of and capacity to pursue quality and standards.

Given the potentially unlimited possibilities involved in both regulation and accreditation, there is a need to recognise the limitations of a body like Umalusi in effecting educational change, and to think strategically about what requirements and interventions are most strategic and effective regarding accreditation. The diagram below draws on findings from this study to suggest that certain basic requirements should fall within a ‘compliance baseline’, while others are developmental and might come about over time rather than be attained at the time of initial accreditation.

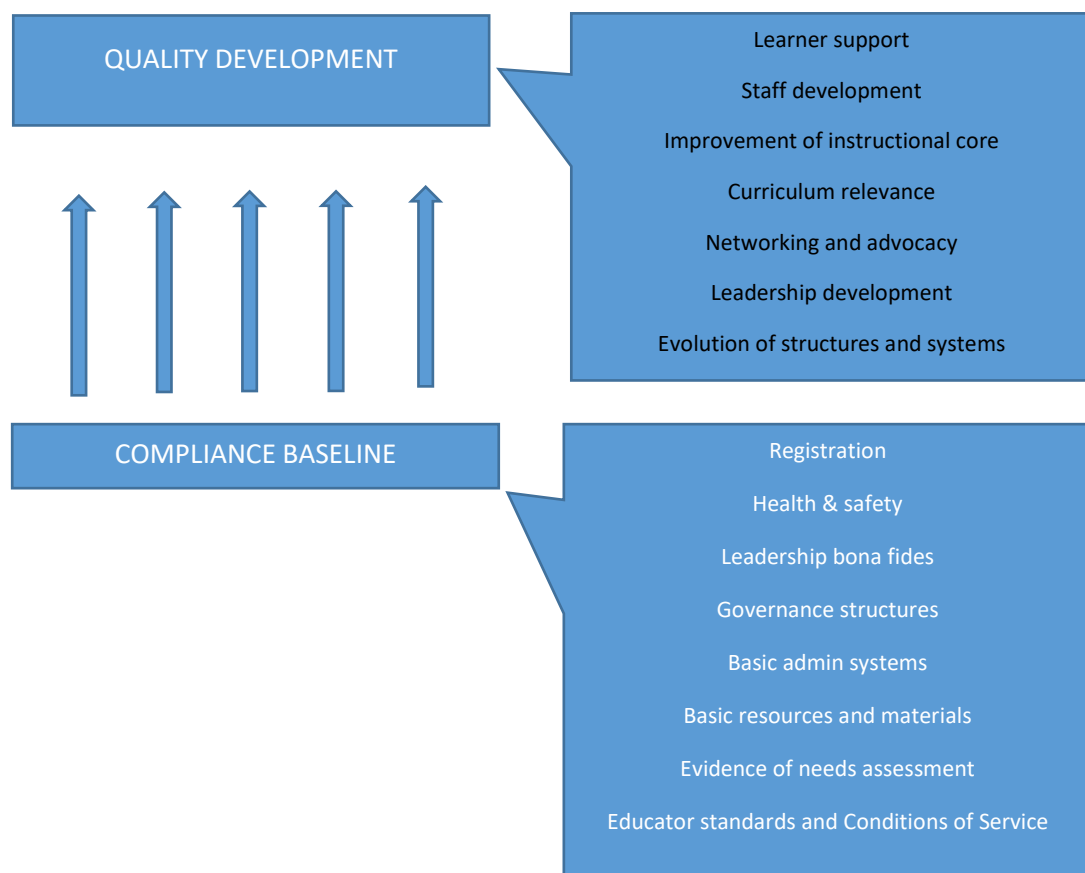


Figure 4. Accreditation implications arising from study

Recommendations regarding accreditation of adult centres

1. Situate accreditation within the context of national policy imperatives such as the White Paper for Post School Education and Training (DHET, 2013).
2. Avoid making accreditation so onerous, expensive and time-consuming that centres lose sight of quality issues in meeting bureaucratic requirements.
3. Balance regulatory and developmental emphases within accreditation.
4. Identify the core values underpinning accreditation and educate centres about these values.
5. Envisage and plan the accreditation process as a developmental one.
6. Draw upon and disseminate best centre practices and models as part of the developmental emphasis of accreditation.
7. Recognise that Umalusi has limited resources and has to use these optimally and strategically regarding accreditation.

Limitations of research

As in any case study design, there are limitations on the extent to which findings can be generalised. A multi-case study provides a stronger basis for generalisation than a single case study. However, in this multi-case study, only 12 centres were chosen from four provinces. Five provinces were not represented and there were severe limits on the range of centres regarding sector: only one private centre, one church-based centre, two NGO-linked centres and two prison-based centres were part of the study. There is no basis for considering these centres to be representative of the sectors in which they are located and strong evidence that their particular contexts and institutional locations informed the factors that contributed to their efficacy. The findings regarding factors that contribute to the efficacy of centres should therefore be used prudently. Although many of the factors appeared across several of the cases in this study, no single centre exemplified all the factors, and it is conceivable that other centres not studied would generate additional factors. There is therefore a need for further research on centre efficacy to broaden and deepen what this study has achieved.

While acknowledging these limitations, it is useful to distinguish between analytical and statistical generalisation (Yin, 2009). Whereas statistical generalisations drawn, for example, from surveys, can be applied to populations, analytical generalisations are about concepts and theories. This study helps us to understand the concept of adult learning centre efficacy and the factors that contribute to it, but does not, of course, claim to be the final word, only the beginning of a conversation that will hopefully continue.

Conclusion

This research study has found that adult education centres are able to perform excellently and stand as beacons of hope within their communities, often in difficult circumstances. Certain key values that contribute to the efficacy of centres cut across the areas of governance, teaching and learning, and institutional and community relations. These include commitment, care, community, collaboration, core of instruction, and connected curriculum. Regarding governance, two key factors are visionary leadership and strong administrative systems. All the centres in the study had strong, visionary and committed leaders who had the ability to inspire others. All the centres functioned efficiently at the basic level of record-keeping and managing the relevant finances. Regarding teaching and learning, the presence of knowledgeable and committed educators was the key factor. This was closely linked with making the curriculum relevant to learners' lives and roles in terms of

livelihoods, family, community, leisure and civic engagement. All the centres also demonstrated, in different ways, an ethos of care for learners. In the area of wider institutional and community relations, good centres saw themselves as part of the community with a role to play in developing the community. Key factors here were effective networking, advocacy and relationship-building with stakeholders.

While efficacy is a difficult concept to define in relation to adult education centres, it is clear from the study that it is underpinned by certain key beliefs and values. These include a belief, founded in the lifelong education approach, that adult learners who failed at and/or dropped out of school deserve a “second chance” at education; that education can help adults to contribute in the multiple roles that they play in the workplace, family, community and wider society; and that education as an academic enterprise has value in so far as it relates and contributes to adults’ wider life projects.

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