

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Investigating adult learning centre performance in the General
Education and Training Certificate in relation to district socio-
economic profiles in KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education,
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University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Lavern Natasha Green, declare that:

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ABSTRACT

Adult education became one of the areas of priority targeted by the government in the democratic era. The many years of neglect and the lack of a comprehensive system for adult basic education and training during the apartheid years had far-reaching consequences for the newly elected democratic government in 1994. Following the political transition in 1994, the South African government has put in place a number of policies and legislative frameworks to support Adult Basic Education (ABE) and to affirm its role in the process of social change and development. Access to Adult Basic Education was seen as a critical strategy for the alleviation of poverty, the eradication of adult illiteracy and as a tool to redress discrimination and past inequalities caused by the apartheid government.

Public Adult Learning Centres, in the post-apartheid era, were conceived of as institutions that offer general education to adults. At these centres, adults are offered the opportunity to register for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) qualifications, including the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), and Senior Certificate programmes.

The focus of this research is on the performance of adult learning centres in the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET) qualification in KwaZulu-Natal and the contextual factors informing this performance. Research paints a persuasive picture of the impact of the wider social context on students' learning and hence their academic achievement. Numerous studies have found that students who live in communities with a low average household income, lower education levels, and low employment levels often perform worse academically than students who live in communities with improved socio-economic backgrounds.

The study is a quantitative investigation and is underpinned by a critical realist paradigm which is a relatively new research paradigm in educational research. In order to address the key research questions, the study draws on data from Umalusi (Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training) in the form of the GETC: ABET examination statistics for the Adult Learning Centres in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), as well as data extracted from the 2011 census pertaining to the socio-economic profiles of the eleven educational districts in KZN.

The study found that the two districts with the best socio-economic profiles were always the top-performing districts. However, the converse did not hold, as some districts which were regarded as having a lower or disadvantaged socio-economic profile achieved relatively good results, and similarly there were districts with more favorable socio-economic indicators that did not perform well.

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1 Corinthians 2:9 *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."*

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
CETC	Community Education and Training Centre
CLC	Community Learning Centre
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
GETC: ABET	General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centre
SAQA	South Africa Qualifications Authority
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Educational and Training

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Adult education became one of the priority areas targeted by the government in the democratic era. The many years of neglect and the lack of a comprehensive system for adult basic education and training during the apartheid years had far-reaching consequences for the newly elected democratic government in 1994. The South African government of the past had put in place policies that were designed to limit access to education for Blacks¹ and very little attention was given to literacy (DHET, 2003). The apartheid system of education ensured that Blacks in South Africa received low-quality education that was intended to enforce obedience and enhance ethnic division in South Africa (McKay, 2007). Due to the economic and political pressures as well as the poor standard of education offered during the apartheid regime, an alarming number of learners dropped out of school before completing matric (Tsolo, 2001). As a result, a large number of South Africans had little or no formal education at the end of the apartheid era. The poor education offered during apartheid not only condemned millions of adults to illiteracy, but also effectively limited the intellectual and cultural development of the country as a whole.

Following the political transition in 1994, the South African government has put in place a number of policies and legislative frameworks to support Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and to affirm its role in the process of social change and development (McKay, 2007). The post-1994 education and training framework embraced the concept of lifelong learning, recognizing that learning takes place throughout a person's life and in many forms (DHET, 2013a). The efforts of the Department of Education to eradicate adult illiteracy were evident through campaigns such as the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign and the Masifundisane literacy campaign, and through the provision of adult basic education in public learning centres (*ibid.*). Various adult education initiatives and projects have also been offered by community-based organisations (CBOs), trade unions, social movements, the private sector and government departments.

The new democratic government reconfigured a system of Public Adult Learning Centres (PALC), based on the old night school system that had existed in the apartheid era, and

¹ In this study I use the term "Blacks" to denote South African persons of African origin.

created a legislative framework for their governance (ABET Act 52, 2000). Adult education has been provided by the Department of Education since 1997 through these centres (ETDP SETA, 2013). Access to adult basic education has been viewed by policy makers, scholars and development practitioners as a critical strategy for the alleviation of poverty, for the eradication of adult illiteracy, and as a tool to redress discrimination and past inequalities caused by the apartheid government (Aitchison, 2003; McKay, 2007; Moyo, 2014; DHET, 2013a). Adult education was also seen as essential for equipping adult learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and values that would enable them to function better in society and the workplace (DHET, 2013b).

PALCs are currently the only state-funded institutions that offer general education to adults (DHET, 2015). At these centres, adults are offered the opportunity to register for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) qualifications, including the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), and Senior Certificate programmes (DHET, 2013a).

1.2 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The focus of this research is on the adult learning centre performance in the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET) qualification in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the contextual factors informing this performance. The GETC: ABET is one of the qualifications that is offered at adult learning centres. The GETC: ABET is an officially recognized qualification in adult learning at the first exit level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 1) (Umalusi, 2013). The purpose of the General Education and Training Certificate in Adult Education is to equip learners with foundational learning by providing knowledge, skills and values in specified learning areas. Further aims of the qualification are to promote lifelong learning by enabling learners to continue with further learning, and to prepare learners to function better in society and the workplace (DHET, 2013b).

Despite the good intentions of government to provide adult basic education and to eradicate adult illiteracy, many scholars believe that the adult education sector has suffered from massive implementation failure and continues to be a marginalized education system (Aitchison, 2003; Rule, 2006; McKay, 2007). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training itself, the challenges in this sector have been enormous and in most instances the quality of the education being offered at adult learning centres has been poor (DHET, 2013a). The ABET system has generally been troubled by low uptake, poor

throughput and low performance on the final assessment (Umalusi, 2013). Various efforts to improve the performance of GETC: ABET qualification have been implemented by the DHET, including the increase in remuneration of educators and the provision of training and assessment for officials (*ibid.*).

Given this context, the purpose of this study is to investigate the performance of adult learning centres in the province of KZN. As the province is made up of eleven municipal districts which differ vastly in socio-economic status (SES), the study also aims to establish whether or not there is a relationship between the performance of adult learning centres, as determined by the learners' GETC examination results in selected learning areas, and the socio-economic profile of the districts — regarding income, unemployment and education — in which the centres are located.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

South Africa is currently in a phase of reconceptualising and renewing its adult education system. It has been widely accepted that the current system of Public Adult Learning Centres has not worked effectively, and therefore government has initiated the development of a new institution. As of April 2015, adult education was moved from the Department of Basic Education and the provincial departments of education, to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). PALCs were absorbed into Community Colleges as a new type of post-school institution (DHET, 2015). The primary intent of these new institutions is to promote education and training opportunities for those who have not completed their schooling or who have never attended school and who thus cannot qualify to enter universities or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

The introduction of the Community Colleges will take a phased approach and will be preceded by a pilot process to help inform further development of the concept and roll-out throughout the country. It is envisaged that all colleges will have their own premises with the necessary infrastructure and full-time staff and that the headcount enrollment will equal one million by 2030 — far more than the current PALC enrollments (DHET, 2013b). Community Colleges will be built on the current offerings of PALCs in order to expand vocational skills development and non-formal programmes (DHET, 2013b). Formal programmes will include the GETC and the Senior Certificate programmes currently offered, as well as the proposed new National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and occupational programmes funded by SETA or NSF (DHET, 2015). The Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No.

16 of 2006) is the legislation underpinning the provision of Community Education and Training Centres (CETC) and community learning centres (CLC). The act repeals the Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000) (RSA, 2006).

Given this context of change and renewal, there is a need to take stock of what has been achieved in adult education and, in particular, adult learning centres thus far. The proposed study focuses on the performance of KZN adult learning centres. The study forms part of a larger research project being conducted under the auspices of Umalusi where the focus is on institutional efficacy of selected, exemplary adult education centres from four provinces: KZN, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape (Rule, 2015). The purpose of the larger research project is 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. This study is not concerned with establishing factors which contribute to effective and efficient learning centers, but rather with determining the performance of adult learning centres in KZN in the GETC: ABET examinations. In addition, this study will examine the relationship between the socio-economic profile of the various districts in KZN and the GETC: ABET results produced by each particular district. While there are many variables which can be used to measure the performance of learning institutions, this study will employ the learners' summative assessment outcomes in the form of GETC: ABET examination results achieved over the years 2011 to 2013 as a means of measuring the performance of adult learning centres in KZN.

1.4. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

According to the White Paper on Post-School Education (DHET, 2013a), the current system of Public Adult Learning Centres has not worked effectively. Hence, a wide range of reform is envisaged for adult education in the next five years, as indicated above. There is a widespread acceptance for the need to assess and take stock of what has been achieved in education since 1994 (Chisholm & Wildeman, 2013). It is also important to establish what has been achieved in terms of performance of learners at adult learning centres prior to the envisaged changes, as this will enable one to evaluate whether the said changes do or do not affect the academic performance of adult learners.

Adult education in South Africa is generally an under-researched field (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009) and there is largely a lack of information available on what makes an adult education centre effective and what we can learn from good existing institutional practice. The role of adult basic education and training in a country where there are high illiteracy rates and low levels of education cannot be underestimated. There is an urgent need to improve the literacy rates and levels of education amongst adults; therefore, it is important that adult learning centres deliver education that is effective and efficient. Research has shown that high illiteracy rates and low levels of education often correlate with low productivity, low income, poor health and poor educational levels in the wider community, which stifle national development efforts (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009). Therefore, improved education is likely to result in positive spin-offs not just for individuals, but for the country as well. Education can be seen as a route out of poverty, and good-quality education will allow more rapid economic, social and cultural development for society as a whole (DHET, 2013a). Given the important role that adult learning centres play in delivering education, it is important to research what is being achieved in terms of the performance of adult learners and in so doing contributing to the adult education research outputs. Given the extreme differences in the socio-economic make-up of districts, there is an enormous need to conduct research on the relationship between SES and academic achievement, particularly with regard to whether or not there is a relationship between socio-economic variables and learner performance. Many studies have addressed this specific relationship in other contexts internationally (Rammala, 2009; Gandel, 2011; Akram & Ghani 2013; Okioga, 2013; Ghaemi & Yazdanpanah, 2014; Honey, 2015), however as far as I am aware none have been in the context of adult learning centres in KZN.

As a resident and an educator of the province of KZN, I am particularly interested in investigating the performance of adult learning centres in KZN. While I understand that there are many variables which determine the performance of adult learning centres, I am concerned with the final output, the GETC-ABET examination results produced, and what these results indicate about the performance of the adult learning centres in KZN. ABET is a valuable vehicle for empowering adults and youth who have been previously disadvantaged, and can be seen as a second chance to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will enable them to take their rightful place in society. It is therefore important to access what has been achieved via this medium of education. It is also hoped that the results of this study could be used to develop and enhance further the efficacy of adult

learning centres in KZN and in the country more widely. It is against this background that the following research questions have been formulated.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Primary Research Question

What do the GETC results indicate about the performance of Adult Learning Centres in KZN?

1.5.2 Key Research Questions

1. What is the performance of the province as a whole in the GETC: ABET examinations?
2. What are the patterns of performance among adult learning centres in the GETC: ABET examinations?
3. What is the relationship between the examination performance of adult learning centres and the socio-economic profiles of the districts in which these centres are situated?

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

An overview of the design and methodology is given here while Chapter Three of the dissertation details the methodology further. The study is a quantitative investigation and is underpinned by a critical realist paradigm, which is a relatively new research paradigm in educational research. In order to address the key research question, the study draws on two sources of data. The first is the official Umalusi GETC-ABET examination statistics for Adult Learning Centres in KZN (2011 – 2013). The second source of data is the statistical socio-economic data on the eleven education districts of KZN's drawn from Statistics SA and deriving from the 2011 census. In the study, I examine the GETC examination performance and the socio-economic indicators using the district as the unit of analysis. The rationale for this will be provided in Chapter Three.

Within each district there are numerous learning centres where adult learners attend classes and sit for their examinations. The GETC: ABET examinations cover a number of learning areas. Learners can take examinations for any number of subjects at any given sitting. For this reason it is difficult to attach a pass rate as in normal academic institutions. It has therefore been decided to consider Language, Literacy and Communication: English results and the Mathematical Literacy results to measure and compare performance of districts in

KZN. These two learning areas were selected as they form part of the fundamental component of the qualification and have proven to be the most popular choices by adult learners over the years. The pass rate in each subject is determined as the proportion of students who obtain at least 40%, out of the total number that sat for the subject. In addition to the two subjects mentioned above, the study also draws on data detailing the number of GETC: ABET certificates being attained in the province for the years 2011 – 2013.

The data analyses were divided into three stages. The first stage entailed the use of descriptive statistics to describe and compare the characteristics of the districts which formed part of the sample in the study. Each district was described in relation to the selected independent variables, that is, the educational levels, average household income, and the unemployment levels, as derived from the 2011 census. According to Suleman, Hussain, Khan and Nisa (2012), household income is pivotal in the definition and measurement of SES, but scholars differ in their selection of additional socio-economic factors. One strand includes parental education level and employment position/status, while the other strand of scholars augments this list with other factors such as single-parent households, family educational attainment, environmental factors, etc. (Jeynes, 2012; Saifi & Mehmood, 2011; Parson, Stephanie & Deborah, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the socio-economic position will be measured in terms of the district rather than the individuals or their families. According to Marks, McMillan, Jones and Ainley (2000), measures of socio-economic position may be derived directly from individuals or directly from the area in which they live. Area-based measures are often used as measures of socio-economic position when the focus is on the school rather than the individual students' achievement (Marks et al., 2000). When using an area-based measurement, the socio-economic position is estimated by using the information on the average characteristics of residents in the geographical area (*ibid.*). Typically, census data is used to generate area-based measures of socio-economic position (Marks et al., 2000). The socio-economic factors that are considered for this particular study as the variables that may inform performance are employment levels, average household income and educational levels per district.

The second stage in the data analyses involved the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendency (mean, mode, median) to describe, analyse, interpret and compare the data on the academic performance of adult learning centres. The learners' Language Literacy and Communication: English (hereafter "English") and Mathematical Literacy examination results and the number of GETC certificates

achieved by each district were used in this instance. Since the socio-economic variables were provided at district level, the pass rates in English and Mathematical Literacy and the number of GETC certificates achieved are also determined at district level so as to align the pass rates/achievement rates with the socio-economic indicators.

The third stage involved an attempt to investigate whether or not there was a relationship between the performance of districts and the socio-economic profile of each district in KZN. At this stage, data from the previous two stages were merged so as to establish whether or not there was a relationship between the specific independent variables (SES indicators) and the academic performance of adult learning centres as determined by the learners' achievement in English and Mathematical Literacy examinations. All data is discussed in narrative form and detailed in charts for each research question.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The use of quantitative data and the exclusion of human participants in this study are limiting as the inclusion of qualitative data from adult learners and educators would add richness and deep insights to the data collected. This limitation is addressed in the broader research project of which this study is a part. The broader study involves in-depth case studies of 12 adult learning centres based mainly on qualitative data. The present quantitative study then complements the broader multi-case study. The absence of triangulation techniques in the study is a further limitation as the data analysis and findings are based on only one form of data. This will be partly addressed by using two sources of statistical data: GETC: ABET results and census data. The GETC data is also taken across a number of years (2011 to 2013). It is acknowledged that the use of only academic results to measure performance is limited, as this does not give the whole picture with regard to performance or effectiveness (Sammons & Bakkum, 2011).

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter Two provides a review of literature related to the study as well as a discussion on the chosen theoretical framework. The chapter covers extensively the concept of adult education where particular reference is made to the South African context. The chapter also includes a discussion on the relationship between socio-economic status and performance. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the theoretical framework with some of the key characteristics of systems thinking: context dependency, interdependence, interconnectedness and the environment.

Chapter Three commences with a discussion on the research paradigm adopted in the study. The research style and the methods of data collection and data analysis are explained. A description of the sample follows. The final part of this chapter explains the issues of quality and the chapter concludes with the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Four provides a description of each of the districts in KZN and highlights the differences between districts with regard to the socio-economic indicators applied to this study: educational levels, average annual income per household, and unemployment levels. The chapter also includes information about the population size of each district.

Chapter Five begins by providing a description of the performance of the province in terms of the GETC: ABET certificates achieved by each district, and the performance of the districts in the English and Mathematical Literacy examinations. This is followed by a discussion detailing the patterns of performance among districts. The purpose of this chapter is to address key research questions one and two.

Chapter Six involves the analysis of the relationship between the performance of adult learning centres in each district and the socio-economic status of the districts. This chapter draws on the data from chapters four and five in an attempt to answer key research question three.

Chapter Seven is the final chapter and brings the study to a conclusion by responding to the three key research questions and identifying the limitations of the study. It also includes a discussion of systems thinking as a theoretical framework in relation to the findings, and a reflection on my own learning from the study. Finally, recommendations are made for future research and practice.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced adult education in the context of South Africa, outlining the background and rationale for the study. The key research questions were posed and the limitations to the study discussed. The basic methodological design was introduced and the chapter concluded with the structure of the dissertation. The next chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the study and develops an appropriate theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature relating to this research project. A literature review is “an interpretation of a selection of relevant published and/or unpublished information that is available on a specific topic” (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012, p.32). A literature review is essential as it enables the researcher to access the overall state of knowledge on the topic and to summarize the empirical evidence relating to the topic (Punch, 2009). By conducting a literature review, the researcher becomes familiar with the previous findings and research methodology used by other researchers on the topic (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012). In this way the researcher is also able to determine whether the topic is worth studying (Creswell, 2009).

The chapter begins with a discussion on adult education and the adult education system in South Africa. The second part of the chapter discusses literature relating to the socio-economic status and academic performance of learners. There is a general consensus among researchers that SES influences the academic performance of learners. The chapter concludes with a discussion of systems thinking as a theoretical framework for this study.

2.2 WHAT IS ADULT EDUCATION?

The concept of adult education has been defined in different ways and according to the different perspectives of various scholars. According to Indabawa and Mporu (2006, p.3), adult education is any learning or educational activity that occurs outside the structures of the formal learning education system and is undertaken by people who are considered to be adults in their society. Darkenwald and Merriam (as cited in Gboku & Lekoko, 2007, p. 20) describe adult education as a process whereby people with adult status engage in systematic and sustained learning activities with the intention of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitude, values and skills. Baatjes, Motala and Hamilton (as cited in ETDP SETA, 2013, p. 8) assert that adult education is a broad field. This field encompasses basic and continuing education, vocational and technical higher education, and professional development offered through formal, non-formal and informal education means and by a variety of service providers – the state, civil society organizations, and business, industry and private providers.

Who is an adult, or what constitutes an adult? This is a subject of much debate within the arena of adult education. Commonly and most generally, the term is defined purely in terms of age, and in most instances eighteen is used as the age to define who is an adult (Tight, 1996). According to UNESCO, an adult is considered to be one who is aged fifteen and above, while in terms of adult education in South Africa and in accordance with the Adult Education and Training Act of 2000 an adult is considered to be a person who is aged sixteen and above (UNESCO, 1997; Adult Education and Training Act of 2000). Knowles (as cited in Jarvis, 1995) believes that adulthood is not necessarily based on age but is an achieved status. By this he implies that one is an adult when, firstly, one behaves as an adult and perceives oneself as an adult. Secondly, one is regarded as an adult when other people's perception of them accords them with the status of adulthood. Other people's perceptions are shaped by the level of social maturity, responsibility and experience that is demonstrated by the person being accorded with the status of an adult.

The term Adult Education and Training (AET) has recently replaced Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). In international terminology ABET refers to education and training that is more or less equivalent to compulsory schooling. Thus, in South Africa, Basic education refers to general education (grades 1 to 9), however, in other countries basic education may be equivalent to twelve grades of schooling. It all depends on the length of compulsory schooling. AET covers all adult education and training at whatever level, formal or non-formal. For the purpose of this study, the term ABET is used as the GETC: ABET qualification refers to education and training for adults that is equivalent to school grades 1 to 9 (basic education).

2.3 PURPOSE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education hosts a broad array of purposes that are not only beneficial to the individual adult learner, but are extremely valuable at a national level. Moyo (2014) and Young (2000) believe that adult education contributes to the economic, political and social dimensions of development within any country. Adult education has been identified as a key role player, a vehicle for social change and transformation (Baumgartner, 2001; Young, 2000). Young (2000) advocates that adult education has the capacity to transform countries which experience the unacceptable conditions of hunger, malnutrition, preventable diseases and high rates of illiteracy. The training, education and development of individuals and society result in increased productivity and, hence, economic growth (National Education

Coordinating Committee (SA), 1993). Adult education is far more than basic knowledge, reading and writing skills and the use of numbers; it penetrates deeper into the seams of society and involves the promoting of democracy, justice, equality, and social and economic development, building a world which is free from violence and a culture that is based on justice (UNESCO, 1997).

Adult education provides opportunities for adults at any stage of their lives to learn and to enhance their personal growth and, in so doing, empowers people with skills which enable them to negotiate socio-economic problems of everyday life (Young, 2000; National Education Coordinating Committee SA, 1993). Access to basic education through the avenue of adult education is viewed as a crucial strategy for the alleviation of poverty and unemployment (Moyo, 2014; UNESCO 2009). Adult education is also identified as a means of stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, combatting racism and xenophobia, and raising awareness of human rights (UNESCO, 2009). According to UNESCO (1997), when adults are given the opportunity to gain basic education, they are better positioned to cope with work and family responsibilities, have access to information and think more highly of themselves.

On the contrary, Duke (2004) asserts that there is uncertainty about the effectiveness of adult education as a means of improving either living standards or equality. He adds that there is little evidence that suggests a direct causal relationship between adult education and improved living standards. Bhola (2004), Preece (2013) and Strassburg (2008) warn that adult education is only a contributory factor to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment and that adult education on its own will not end poverty. In addition to adult education, political and economic systems and structures of inequality need to be considered in order to enable poverty reduction, the alleviation of unemployment and overall development (Bhola, 2004).

In the context of South Africa, the purpose of adult education can be seen firstly as a means of eradicating the extremely high levels of illiteracy amongst adults. Secondly, the purpose of adult education can also be viewed as a political vehicle in that it is largely a means of promoting democracy, justice, equality, and social and economic development for the previously disadvantaged adults in the country (UNESCO, 1997).

2.4 ADULT EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Adult education as an agent of social transformation and development was identified as an important factor in the transformation of the South African society and a much needed element in serving a huge portion of the previously disadvantaged population, who had not benefited from schooling under the apartheid government (National Education Coordinating Committee SA, 1993). What follows is a discussion on the background of adult education in South Africa.

2.4.1 Background to Adult Education in South Africa

During the apartheid era there had been very little adult education in South Africa and no clearly defined policy regarding adult education in South Africa (National Education Coordinating Committee SA, 1993). The SA education system under the apartheid government was fragmented, discriminatory and uncoordinated, and therefore resulted in a disparate delivery of education (Tsolo, 2001). The apartheid system of education was tailored to ensure that Blacks in South Africa received low-quality education that was designed to enforce obedience and enhance ethnic division in South Africa (McKay, 2007). According to McKay (2007), apartheid had far-reaching consequences, and as a result an extremely large portion of the population had little or, in some instances, no schooling at all. The majority of these adults were Black Africans from rural areas in South Africa (Rule, 2006). Needless to say, the new democratic government inherited a major challenge with regard to the high number of adults who were functionally illiterate (McKay, 2007). Based on the vision of providing a better life for all South Africans and redressing the inequalities produced by the apartheid government, the new government placed great emphasis on developing a fully-fledged adult education system (Aitchison, 2003; McKay, 2007). This sentiment is echoed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) which states:

Everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Since the dismantling of the apartheid regime, the South African government has put in place a number of policies and legislative frameworks to support Adult Basic Education (ABE) and to affirm its role in the process of social change and development (McKay, 2007). The

Department of Education released the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act 52 of 2000 on 15 December 2000. The intention of the act was to:

- regulate adult basic education and training,
- provide for the establishment, governance and funding of Public Adult Learning Centres,
- provide for the registration of private adult learning centres, and
- provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in Adult Basic Education and Training (RSA, 2000).

The act was equivalent to the SA Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, with the only difference being that the Schools Act regulates all schooling processes for children in mainstream education, while the ABET Act regulates all schooling for adults in need of basic education (Dladla, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the Adult Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000) has since been repealed and replaced by the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (RSA, 2006) which is the current legislation underpinning the provision of Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) and Community Learning Centres (CLCs). Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) can be described as the foundation for justice and equality, and thus conforms to the core values adopted by South Africa.

2.4.2 Development of Adult Learning Centres

The promulgation of the ABET Act in 2000 enabled the establishment of Public and Private Adult Learning Centres, reconfiguring the night schools that had existed under apartheid. These adult learning centres were introduced to offer general education to adults and are currently the only state-funded institutions that offer general education to adults (DHET, 2013a). Adult learning centres provide adults with learning opportunities ranging from basic literacy to grade 12.

According to the ABET Report (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu Natal, 2012), there are approximately 1 094 Public Adult Learning Centres across 12 districts in KZN. At these learning centres, adult learners have the opportunity to register for a formal Adult Basic Education and Training programme which results in obtaining a nationally recognized certificate known as the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC).

2.4.3 The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC)

The National Department of Education provides a formal adult education programme from level one to level four which culminates in a GETC (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011). “The primary purpose of the GETC is to equip adult learners with values, knowledge and skills that will enable or enhance meaningful participation in both society and the workplace, contribute towards developing sustainable communities, and provide a basis for learning in further education” (SAQA, 2001, p. 16). In South Africa, Adult Basic Education (ABE) has been identified as critically important, and should provide adults with a basic general education (SAQA, 2008).

2.4.3.1 Curriculum

The Adult Basic Education and Training curriculum consists of four levels as outlined in Table 2.1 below. Each level is equivalent to a set of grades within the normal schooling system. Adult learners exiting at level 4 are granted a qualification of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1. This qualification is equivalent to grade nine in the schooling system and is a necessary qualification for learners who wish to continue studying at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges or studying any NQF level 2 programmes (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011). ABET level 4 examinations were conducted externally under Department of Education’s control, though they will in future be run by the Department of Higher Education and Training. At the completion of all four levels, learners are granted a qualification of National Qualifications Framework level 1 and may use this qualification to gain access to TVET colleges or any NQF level 2 programme (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011).

Table 2.1: Adult Basic Education and Training in the National Qualification Framework Structure

NQF	Qualification	Equivalent Grades	ABET Level
NQF 1	General Education and Training Certificate	Grade 8 – 9	ABET 4
		Grade 6 – 7	ABET 3
		Grade 4 – 5	ABET 2
		Grade R - 3	ABET 1

Source: (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011).

Adult Basic Education and Training level 1, 2 and 3 curriculum is made of three learning areas, namely:

- Fundamentals which include communication and numeracy,
- Integrated Studies which encompass modules of Human and Social Sciences, Health, Natural Sciences and Economic and Management Sciences, and
- Skills Programmes which involve learning skills necessary for survival (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011).

Learners at ABET Level 1 are required to do the Fundamentals. At ABET levels 2 and 3, Fundamentals and Integrated Studies are compulsory learning areas. Learners have the option of selecting any Skills Programme as an additional learning area to progress to ABET level 4.

The ABET level 4 consists of three components, namely Fundamentals, Core and Electives. The GETC qualification is awarded to any candidate who has complied with the following learning area requirements:

- **Fundamental Component**

This is a compulsory learning area, and candidates must complete from this group one Language, Literacy and Communication learning area and either the Mathematical Literacy or Mathematical and Mathematical Science learning area.

- **Core Component**

The core component consists of Life Orientation, which is a compulsory learning area.

- **Elective Component**

Candidates must complete a minimum of two approved learning areas from the Academic and/or Vocational learning area groups.

Candidates registered for the GETC qualification must complete the internal and external assessments for not fewer than five learning areas selected from the fundamental, core and elective components of the GETC qualification.

2.4.3.2 Assessment

This section gives an overview of assessment requirements within the GETC. Assessments are grouped into three components (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011).

- **Initial or Placement Assessments**

These assessments are aimed at assessing prospective learners' levels of education and assist in the placing of learners in the correct ABET level.

- **Formative or Continuous Assessment (CASS)**

Formative assessments take place on a regular basis throughout the learning process and are carried out in the form of standardized Site-Based Assessment tasks. These assessments are moderated at cluster, district and provincial level. Continuous assessments contribute 50% of the final pass mark for the awarding of the GETC qualification.

- **Summative Assessment/Final Examination**

Final examinations are conducted at ABET level 4. These examinations are conducted through the National Department of Education and moderated by Umalusi. The final examination constitutes 50% of the final pass mark for the awarding of the GETC.

ABET level 4 is the exit point for the ABET programme. The GETC is a credit-based certificate and a minimum of 120 credits from those listed must be achieved for the awarding of the qualification (SAQA, 2008). Umalusi issues the GETC where a candidate has met the minimum requirements for the award of the GETC qualification. Where a candidate has not met the minimum requirements for the issuing of the GETC but has met the 40% pass requirements of a learning area or learning areas, Umalusi will issue a learning area certificate (Umalusi, 2013).

2.4.3.3 International Comparability

The General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training was compared with similar qualifications in the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, Finland and the United Kingdom (UK). These developed countries were chosen because they offer best practice models of adult learning programmes (SAQA, 2008). While there are similarities between the USA, Canada, Finland and South African adult education models, the SA model is most similar to the Australian and UK models. Both the UK and SA models include academic and vocational learning areas, though the UK model has a wide selection of vocational subjects. The Australian model is similar to the SA model in that it consists of a core and elective component (SAQA, 2008).

2.4.4 The Critique of Adult Education in SA

Despite the good intentions of and the overwhelming benefits that could emerge from adult education, ABET initiatives have been met with numerous challenges in SA. Lack of funding, poor implementation of programmes and the use of unqualified personnel are common features and stumbling blocks in the path of adult education (Castle and Kiggundu, as cited in Moyo, 2014). It has been over twenty years since the advent of democracy, and to date SA still has an adult education system that does not offer enough places to the many youth and adults seeking basic education (DHET, 2013a). Despite the efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy through the provision of Adult Basic Education in public learning centres, the educational opportunities have been insufficient, and in most instances the quality of the education has been generally poor (DHET, 2013a). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training, the challenges in this sector have been enormous and vary between governance, management, teaching, curriculum issues and infrastructure challenges (DHET, 2013a). Moyo (2014) highlights that adult education in SA has not been effective in fulfilling its key purpose of poverty alleviation, as many in SA are still living in poverty.

While a great deal of attention and effort has been placed on policy development in adult education, the adequacy of the state's role in the provision of adult education and the effective implementation of policy has been a key point of contention in the literature (Aitchison, 2004; McKay, 2007; Rule, 2006).

The general consensus amongst scholars is that adult education is generally in decline. The number of adult learners enrolled in basic education programmes has dwindled over the years (McKay, 2007; Aitchison, 2004; Rule, 2006). In addition, the resource allocation to adult learning centres and the number of Public Adult Learning Centres have also declined significantly over the years (McKay 2007; Rule, 2006). According to the 2013 General Household Survey, there was a decrease in the levels of participation in adult basic education and training between 2002 and 2013. Given that the number of Public Adult Learning Centres operating has declined significantly over the years and that less than 1% of the education budget is allocated to ABET, Rule (2006) concludes that there has been no significant progress in reducing adult illiteracy since the end of the apartheid era.

According to the official ABET Sector Skills Plan final report in 2013, statistics show that the participation in ABET programmes remains low, the annual attrition rate remains at 50%, and the throughput rate of those achieving the GETC qualification is extremely low (ETDP SETA Report, 2013).

2.5 PERFORMANCE

Performance involves aspects which determine what has been achieved and measures the quality of an institution or particular learner's achievement (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). Within the realm of schooling, performance is an outcome of education, the extent to which students, teachers and the institution have achieved their goals. Among the existing measures of school performance, student achievement in the form of formative and summative assessments is the predominant means of measurement (Gupta & Vohra, 2010). Learner achievement is used to identify differences in performance between educational institutions, and differences within educational institutions (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

2.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Observations that students with low income, with low educational attainment, or working in low status jobs performed more poorly academically, led to the emergence of the concept of

SES and subsequent studies based thereon (NCES, 2012). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), socio-economic status is described as the social standing or class of an individual or group. Mueller and Parcel (as cited in Caro, 2009, p. 559) define SES as the “relative position of individuals or families within a hierarchical social structure based on their access to wealth, prestige and power”. SES as defined by Aikens and Barbarin (2008, p. 238), is a combination of factors including income, education and occupation. According to Aikens and Barbarin (2008), SES is a way of assessing how individuals or families fit into a society. SES can be measured by a single indicator, by several indicators which are used separately, or by combining several indicators to form an index. Commonly used indicators include income, education, and occupational status (White, as cited in Sirin, 2005).

2.6.1 Income Levels

Income is commonly used to measure SES as it is easy to calculate (Okioga, 2013). Income refers to wages, salaries, profits, rents and any flow of earnings received by a household (Simiyu, 2001). Income can also come from social grants, pensions, interest, dividends or royalties. Household income gives an indication of the standard of living and of the life chances of individuals or households (Duncan, Daly, McDonough & Williams, 2002). Scholars believe that income is a factor which plays an important role in students’ academic performance. Much research points to a distinct relationship between the income of a community and the academic performance of students, and also asserts that low income is a major hindrance to academic success and the development of students (Honey, 2015; Ghazi, Nawaz, Shahzad & Shahzada, 2013). Lacour and Tissington (2011, p.522) state that “low income affects the resources available to students, and due to a lack of resources students struggle to reach the same academic achievement levels of students with high income levels”.

2.6.2 Educational Levels

Education is an important determinant of an individual’s work and economic circumstances (Duncan et al., 2002). Education plays an important role in the acquisition of skills for acquiring jobs, as well as the specific qualities that separate people with higher SES from those with lower SES (Ominde, as cited in Okioga, 2013). Research shows that educational levels of parents and of the community are strong predictors of academic success. Educated parents are more involved and engaged in their children’s schooling and this is likely to have a positive influence on the academic achievement of the children (Suleman, Hussain, Khan &

Nisa, 2012). Research also suggests that students who live in communities with lower educational levels perform worse in school than students who live in communities with higher levels of education (Baker, McGee, Mitchell and Stiff, 2000; Shumow, Vandell and Posner, 1999).

2.6.3 Occupational Status

Occupational status is summarized as the power, income and educational requirements associated with various positions in the occupational structure (Burgard and Stewart, 2003). Occupational status reflects the outcome of one's educational attainment and provides information about the skills and credentials required to obtain a job (Burgard and Stewart, 2003). According to Okioga (2013), occupations are ranked according to high status and low status. High status occupations involve more challenging work and greater control over working conditions. Such occupations include doctors, lawyers and accountants (Okioga, 2013). Low ranking occupations pay less, are more labour-intensive and provide less autonomy to workers.

In South Africa, unemployment is a major socio-economic problem. South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world (South African Reserve Bank, 2015). According to Statistics SA, the official definition of an unemployed person is "someone aged 15 – 64 who is without work but who looks for work and is available to take up employment or open a business" (Statistics SA, 2014).

2.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Performance in school is not only dependent on a student's mental and physical ability, but is also hugely influenced by factors such as the student's family background and socio-economic status (Brečko, 2004). According to Barry (2005), a student's socio-economic status is one of the strongest predictors of their scores in tests and examinations. Studies on the relationship between SES and educational achievement have been covered for more than nine decades and date back to 1916 with research conducted by Holley (NCES, 2012). The academic performance of adult learners is not only linked to school-related factors, but is to a large extent also influenced by the socio-economic environment from which learners come (Ekber & Polat, 2013). According to Lareau (2003), socio-economic status can be classified according to three categories: high, medium and low socio-economic status. People from low

SES households and communities develop academic skills at a much slower pace than people from high SES households or communities (Morgan, Farkas, Hillimier and Maczuga, 2009). Aikens and Barbarin (2008) add that students from low socio-economic regions face educational difficulty not known to wealthier communities. It is generally believed that educational institutions in high and medium SES communities achieve better than those in low socio-economic communities (Ahmar & Anwar, 2013). Schools in low socio-economic communities are often under-resourced, and this is likely to affect students' academic performance.

Studies carried out in a wide variety of countries and contexts have examined the influence of SES on academic achievement and performance. The results have repeatedly found that a learner's socio-economic background affects their performance in terms of examination and test scores. Results have also indicated that learners from low SES areas are at increased risk of educational failure and under-achievement. The studies below illustrate this point.

Ghaemi and Yazdanpanah (2014) examined the relationship between socio-academic status and academic achievement among Iranian university students studying English Translation. Interestingly, the results of this study found that there was a negative relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement among university students. These results were opposite to the assumptions of the researchers. Ghaemi and Yazdanpanah (2014) believe that these findings may be due to the fact that mid/high-SES students possibly are not motivated to achieve academically and therefore don't make the effort to spend time learning as they have welfare in their life. On the other hand, low-SES students may wish to have a good life and are therefore more motivated, and so try harder to achieve academically. The findings in this study go against the general consensus mentioned above. These findings are an indication that socio-economic status is not the only factor, but that other factors, such as motivation, can also play a crucial role in learner performance.

Both Akram and Ghani (2013) and Okioga (2013), in their analysis of university students in Pakistan and Kenya, concluded that the students' socio-economic background influenced their academic performance. Higher-SES students were far more motivated and positive than low-SES students, who were mostly anxious and lacking in confidence. High-SES students were also better placed in terms of parental involvement and the purchasing of books and other support material to enhance their performance.

Boden (2008), Brečko (2004), Khayyer (1994) and Mdanda (1997), in the context of primary and secondary schools, all find that learners from advantaged home environments, i.e. where parents are employed and highly educated, are more often than not high academic achievers.

A study carried out in twenty school districts in Kent in the United States of America (USA) found that in almost all instances the districts with the lowest income had the lowest scores in standardised tests (Honey, 2015).

Researchers in North Carolina in the USA investigated the performance of students in relation to the average unemployment levels in the areas in which they went to school. The researchers concluded that learners in communities with high unemployment rates tended to have lower test scores, even if the unemployment was not within their own families per se (Ananat, Francis, Gassman-Pines & Gibson-Davis, 2011). A study in Limpopo Province (South Africa) revealed the same results, where high unemployment and the negative consequences of unemployment were factors that contributed to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners (Rammala, 2009).

Baker, McGee, Mitchell and Stiff (2000) studied how a variety of community characteristics affected the academic scores of eighth-graders across public schools in Virginia, USA. The results showed that community educational levels and students' socio-economic status were the strongest predictors of academic success. In a similar study conducted by Shumow, Vandell and Posner (1999), the findings showed that students who lived in neighbourhoods with low average household income and lower adult educational levels performed worse in school than students who lived in neighbourhoods with more socio-economic resources. The study was conducted over three years and it was observed that the older the children became, the more their performance was influenced by the community in which they lived.

Perhaps most pertinently for this study, Hugo, Jack, Wedekind and Wilsonal (2010) examined the matric (grade 12) pass rate in relation to the poverty index score of each of the districts in KZN. The results found that there was a positive but very weak correlation between poverty and the pass rate. The results also showed that the districts with the lowest on the poverty index score were ultimately the districts who achieved the best matric pass rates in 2009. However, there were exceptions, as some schools in the poor communities achieved good results and, similarly, there were schools in the more affluent communities that did not perform well. My study differs in that its focus is on adult learning centres, which may have their own dynamics.

2.8 SYSTEMS THINKING AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a systems thinking framework in order to interrogate the relationship between assessment performance and socio-economic status. According to systems thinking, systems exist everywhere (Waring, 1996). Kay and Foster (1999, p. 168) define systems thinking as the study of objects as wholes, and synthesizing all the relevant information regarding an object in order to have a sense of the whole. Similarly, Czarnecki (2012, p.22) says that “systems thinking is the process of understanding how a group of interacting, interrelating, interdependent components influence each other within a whole”. McNamara (1999) suggests that systems thinking is useful as it enables the viewing of the world from a broad perspective that includes structures, patterns and events, instead of just focusing on the events themselves.

The “core concept of a system is one of relationship between components, which together comprise a whole” (Watson & Watson, 2011, p. 65). Systems thinking is concerned with gaining an understanding of a system. This involves identifying the components that make up the system, understanding relationships between the components, and understanding how the components impact the larger system (Watson & Watson, 2011). Ziegler and Phillipson (2012) believe that it is possible to understand the whole when the discrete components are understood. Czarnecki (2012) and Meyer (1983) explain that systems thinking serves as an organized conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between things. Some of the key characteristics of systems thinking are the following: context dependency, interconnectedness, interdependence and the environment.

2.8.1 Context dependency

Systems thinking is always concerned with the context in which the system operates, as the components of the system show very different responses to different environments (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012). The interaction with the environment and the components of a system determine the end point of such interaction.

2.8.2 Interconnectedness

All systems are made up of interconnected, interacting elements. As a result, changes in behaviour of one part will result in an effect of another part (Green, 2013). Likewise,

modifications or transformations to any part of the system will have an influence on the entire system (*ibid.*).

2.8.3 Interdependence

Interdependence implies that any changes or events that affect the individual components of the system will always affect the larger system. Ziegler and Phillipson (2012) state that modifications do not happen in isolation; rather, changes to individual system components will always have an effect on the larger system. Changes to any one element will effect a series of secondary changes within the system (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012). Czarnecki (2012, p. 22) explains the concept of interdependence using the analogy of the human body. She explains that “systems like the human body have parts and the parts affect the performance of the whole”. All parts are interdependent but can be studied singly. This idea of interdependence also applies to the relationship between the system and its environment, i.e. changes in the environment will affect the system and changes to the system will affect the environment (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012).

2.8.4 Environment

Mizikaci (2006) suggests that one of the major characteristics of a system is its environment, and the environment has to be considered as an influencing factor when applying a systems approach. “Systemic approaches assume that individuals and their (social) action contexts cannot be meaningfully examined in isolation from one another” (Ziegler & Philipson, 2012, p. 18). System approaches suggest that individuals and their contexts be viewed as one analytical unit.

2.8.5 Application of Systems Thinking in the Study

Systems thinking helps to locate the phenomenon studied (performance in examinations) in relation to systemic factors (in particular, socio-economic factors) that might influence it. The context and environment in which adult learning centres were embedded are seen as factors which might influence the performance of those learning centres. Therefore, by comparing the performance of centres to the socio-economic context and environment in which those centres are located, one may ascertain the nature of the relationship between examination performance of districts and the socio-economic context/environment of those districts.

As mentioned previously, all systems consist of interconnected, interacting elements and, as such, changes in one part will result in an effect on another part, and transformations to one part of the system will have an influence on the entire system. In this study, I consider the interconnectedness and interdependency between the examination performance and the socio-economic profile of each district by observing whether changes in socio-economic indicators result in changes in examination performance.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a review of literature pertaining to this study. In this chapter, adult education and its purpose were discussed. Particular emphasis was paid to adult education in the South African context and the GETC qualification. The chapter also reviewed literature relating to socio-economic status and its relationship to academic performance. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the systems thinking framework and some of its key characteristics. The next chapter will examine the research methodology that was used in conducting this research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three provides a detailed description and discussion of the research design and methodology applied to this study. The chapter unfolds by unpacking research paradigms and, more specifically, critical realism as the paradigm selected for the research. Also in the chapter, a discussion on the description of the sample, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations is presented.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the overall plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Gray, 2014; Punch, 2009). The research plan describes the purpose of the study, the chosen research paradigm, the kinds of questions being addressed, the techniques for collecting data, the sampling techniques used, and how the data was analysed within the particular study (Gray, 2014).

3.2.1 Paradigm

A paradigm can be described as a set of assumptions about the world and what constitutes proper techniques for enquiring into that world (Punch, 2009). This world view influences the research process as it guides researchers regarding “what should be studied, how research should be conducted and how the results should be interpreted” (Bryman, 2008, p. 696). Paradigms differ in their ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological views. Guba (1990) explains ontology to be the assumptions one has about the nature of reality, while epistemology is concerned with questions of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge. Methodology is concerned with the process and producers by which we create knowledge claims (Guba, 1990), and axiology is concerned with the values that underpin the paradigm.

The dominant paradigms applied in the social sciences have been the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. The positivist paradigm is concerned mainly with testing and confirming generalizable theories about objective reality (Chua in Wynn and Williams, 2012). Research conducted in the interpretivist paradigm is guided by an epistemological position that requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of the social action

(Bryman, 2008). In recent years, critical realism has emerged as an alternative to the more prevalent positivist and interpretivist research paradigms (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

This study will be aligned within a critical realist paradigm. The critical realist paradigm is a relatively new paradigm, and since its inception it has been applied in various disciplines, including economics, sociology, management, and environmental studies (Easton, 2010). This paradigm is largely based on the work of British philosopher Bhasker, which has since been enhanced by Archer and Sayer (Fraser, 2014). Critical realism can be understood as a “middle-ground research philosophy” as it is neither purely positivist nor purely interpretivist in its design (Fraser, 2014, p. 49). Using a critical realist paradigm allows the researcher to draw on the strengths of both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms and therefore provides researchers with new approaches to developing knowledge (Fraser, 2014; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Fraser (2014) believes that using the complementary element of positivism and interpretivism leads to better quality research outcomes and brings the researcher closer to the truth.

Critical realism maintains a strongly realist ontology. Its ontological assumptions are that there is a real world out there which is independent of observers (Easton, 2010). Critical realists believe that this world is complex, differentiated and made up of events and structures which have power (Easton, 2010 and Fraser, 2014). This differs from the positivist ontology, which reduces the world to that which can be empirically observed and measured, and the interpretivist belief which reduces the world to human knowledge (Mingers, Mutch & Wilkocks, 2013). From an epistemological point of view, critical realism does not accept a simplistic correspondence between knowledge and reality. It sees knowledge as evolving in relation to a dynamic reality, and calls for an exploration of relations beneath the surface (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Knowledge is viewed as provisional and subject to change. The axiological assumptions of critical realism are broadly emancipatory, value-cognizant, and conscious of valuing human equality and empowerment (Naess, 2015; Fraser, 2014). Methodologically, critical realism embraces both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and advocates a mixed-methods approach, when appropriate (Fraser, 2014). Wynn and Williams (2012) maintain that critical realist methodologies offer researchers new opportunities to investigate complex phenomena in a holistic manner.

A critical realist research paradigm has been chosen because, by using this paradigm, the researcher can go beyond merely measuring the performance of adult learning centres and

can move to exploring what determines or leads to the kind of performance that has been achieved in learning centres. The most fundamental aim of critical realism is to provide explanation (Sayers as cited in Easton, 2010). Using an interpretivist paradigm would limit one to commenting on human experiences, beliefs or understanding, while a positivist paradigm would limit one to commenting on what is empirically observed or measured. Researchers using a critical realist paradigm are positioned to provide more detailed causal explanations as they have the opportunity to draw on both the researchers' interpretations and empirically observed evidence (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

3.2.2 Research Approach

In order to examine the performance of adult learning centres in KZN and to establish possible relationships between performance of learning centres and the socio-economic profile of districts, a quantitative investigation was undertaken. An investigation was appropriate for the study as to investigate is to conduct an examination in order to discover facts or gain information about a particular phenomenon.

3.2.3 Research Style

Quantitative and qualitative styles are the two main styles used in research. Prior to the mid-1970s, the quantitative approach was the dominant approach for conducting social research (Bryman, 2012). The increased use of the qualitative style from the mid-1970s meant a decrease in the use of the quantitative approach (*ibid.*). The two styles differ in respect to their epistemological foundations and in other respects (Bryman, 2012).

Qualitative research acknowledges the value-laden nature of enquiry and the aim of this style is to establish the socially constructed nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research is subjective in nature. The data in qualitative research is presented in language instead of numbers. Quantitative research, on the other hand, entails the collection and evaluation of numerical data which is analysed using statistical procedures (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). The emphasis of this method is on the measurement and analysis of the causal relationship between variables within a value-free context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). According to Stainback and Stainback (as cited in Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005), the purpose of quantitative research is not to deal with everyday life, but rather is concerned with truth-finding and the abstraction of reality. The researcher using the quantitative style strives to be as objective as possible in assessing the aspect being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

This study was conducted in a quantitative style. The quantitative style was chosen because the aim of the study is to measure the performance of adult learning centres using numerical data in the form of the GETC results produced by adult learning centres. Once the performance had been determined, the performance was then compared to the socio-economic variables, viz. income, educational levels, and employment status of the districts, to ascertain the possible relationship between these variables and the academic performance of learning centres per district.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The sample consists of the entire population of adult learning centres in KZN. KZN is one of nine provinces in South Africa and is situated on the eastern coastline of the country. The province is the third smallest province, taking up 7.7% of South Africa's land, and is home to the second largest population, with over ten million people living in the province (Census, 2011). A total of 21.3% of the population of South Africa lives in KZN (KZN Online, 2015). Pietermaritzburg, which forms part of the Umgungundlovu district, is the capital city of the province, and Durban, which forms part of the eThekweni district, is the major city of the province of KZN. The principal language spoken in KZN is isiZulu, followed by English and Afrikaans. The province boasts a mix of Zulu, Indian and Afrikaans traditions, giving it a rich cultural diversity (KZN Online, 2015).

KZN contributes 15.8% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the economy of SA. This makes the province the second highest contributor to the SA economy, after Gauteng (Southafrica.info, 2015). KZN has a diverse industrial sector. The major industries are agriculture, forestry, and aluminium and steel production. The aluminium industry is located in Richard's Bay, which is also the second largest exporter of steam coal in the world (KZN Online, 2015).

The 2011 census found that the average annual household income for KZN was R83 053. This amount was lower than the national average annual household income for South Africa, which amounted to R103 204 in the same year. In comparison with the other provinces, KZN was ranked in fourth place in terms of the highest average annual household income (Stats SA, 2011).

In KZN, approximately 33% of the economically active population is unemployed. This means approximately 1.6 million people across the province are without employment (Stats

SA, 2011). Nationally the unemployment rate is 29.8% and KZN is ranked as one of the top three provinces with the highest unemployment rates (Southafrica info, 2015).

In comparison to the other provinces, KZN has the highest number of people aged twenty years and older with no schooling. The total percentage of people with no schooling is higher than the national percentage of people with no schooling, which was 8.6% in 2011. The following table illustrates the levels of educational attainment for persons aged twenty years and older in the province of KZN.

Table 3.1: Persons aged twenty years and older by highest level of education completed

Level of Education	Number of People	Percentage
No Schooling	621 199	10.7%
Some Primary	784 305	13.6 %
Complete Primary	240 411	4.2%
Some Secondary	1 802 050	31.1%
Grade 12/Std 10	1 784 358	30.8%
Higher	537 664	9.3%
Other	16 097	0.3%
Total	5 786 084	100%

Source: (Census, 2011)

The province of KZN is divided into one metropolitan municipality (eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality) and ten district municipalities. Figure 3.1 shows the geographical locations of the districts within the province. There were in excess of 1 000 adult learning centres spread across these districts in KZN in the years 2011 to 2013 (South Africa. Department of Education: Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012).

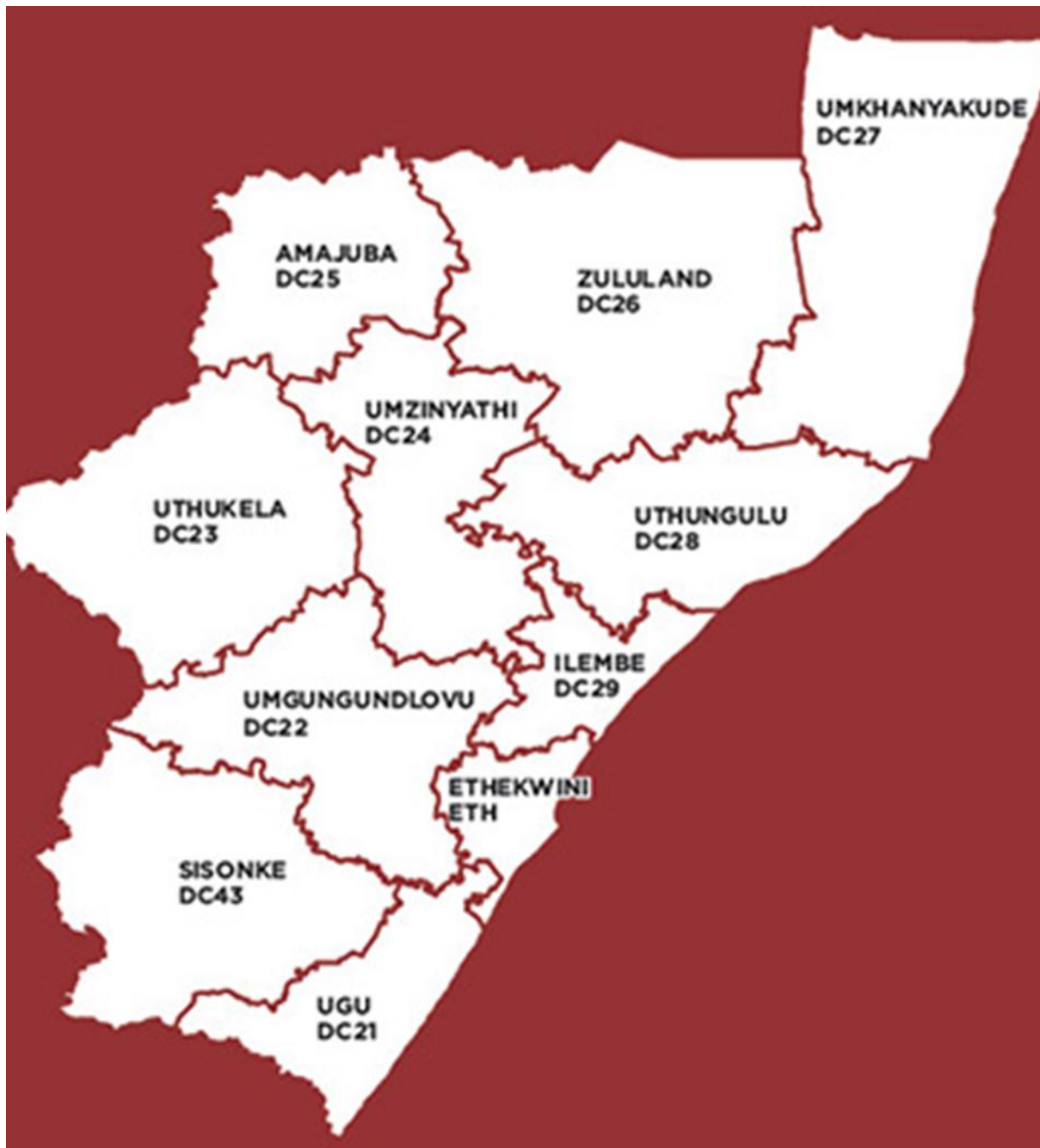


Figure 3.1: Districts in KZN²

Source: (Local Government, 2015)

²The boundaries of education districts are the same as municipality boundaries except in the case of eThekweni which, owing to its population size, was divided into two education districts called Pinetown and Umlazi.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

In order to address the key research question in this particular study, secondary data was analysed. Secondary data can be described as information collected by researchers, agencies or institutions other than the researcher for some purpose other than the one currently being considered (Welman et al., 2005). Secondary analysis is therefore an empirical exercise based on data already collected. There are two main sources of secondary data. These are, first, data collected by other researchers and, second, official statistics collected by government departments in the course of their work or specifically for statistical purposes (Bryman, 2012). There are numerous benefits associated with using secondary data. The first is the advantage of saving time and money, as data collection is a time-consuming and costly exercise (Gray, 2014 and Bryman, 2012). Secondly, the use of secondary data offers the researcher the opportunity to analyse high-quality data that is based on large samples, and most researchers are otherwise not in a position to produce data of comparable quality or volume (Bryman, 2012; Dale, Wathan & Higgins, 2008).

The study draws on two sources of secondary data. The first is the official Umalusi GETC statistics for adult learning centres. It is important that secondary data is sourced from reliable bodies. In South Africa, Umalusi is the council for quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training. The Umalusi Council sets and monitors standards for General and Further Education and Training in South Africa in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67 of 2008 and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58 of 2001, making Umalusi a credible source for quality data. The data covered the period 2011 to 2013. It was intended at the onset of the study to include the 2014 GETC examination results; however, after investigation of inconsistencies with Umalusi itself, the 2014 KZN data was found to be unreliable and was therefore excluded.

The second source of data is the statistical socio-economic data drawn from Statistics SA and deriving from the 2011 census. The three indicators, namely average annual household income, educational levels and unemployment levels, were studied in order to form a socio-economic profile for each of the districts in the study. These three indicators were selected as they are the indicators most commonly used to measure socio-economic position (White, as cited in Sirin, 2005).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This is a quantitative study and the aim is to analyse various categories of statistical data pertaining to GETC results in KZN adult learning centres. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendency (mean, mode, median) were used to describe, analyse and interpret the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In order to ensure accuracy in calculations (provided data had been captured correctly), Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets (a computer software programme), was used as a tool to analyse the data. Data was presented in tables and graphs in order to facilitate easy reading of records and the identification of trends. The purpose of the analysis is firstly to calculate the performance of adult learning centres for each district, and secondly to identify trends over time with regard to the examination results of each district. The results of these tests were then used to assess and examine the relationship between the performance of each district and the socio-economic profiles of the districts.

As there were close to 1 000 learning centres across the province, districts were used as the unit of analysis as opposed to the individual learning centres being used. The number of learners who wrote in each centre varied significantly, ranging from a minimum of one student in some centres to a maximum of one hundred or more students in other centres. This would have made it difficult to obtain a reliable comparison of performances between the various centres. In addition, the socio-economic data provided by Statistics SA was related to the districts; therefore, the district performances could be compared to the district socio-economic profiles.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

It is important that research be conducted in a manner that ensures that the reader is certain that they can trust the research findings. When conducting quantitative research, reliability and validity are the two main technical criteria used for ensuring and judging the quality of research (Punch, 2009).

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and relates to the credibility of the findings (Welman et al., 2005). Reliability revolves around consistency, that is, whether a technique applied repeatedly to the same objects would yield the same results each time (Hammersley, 2008; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Welman et al. (2005) explains that if the research findings can be repeated, then the research can be deemed reliable. In order to

ensure the reliability of this study, the data was given to an experienced quantitative analyst to see whether consistent conclusions could be reached.

Validity in quantitative research refers to whether one can draw meaningful and insightful inferences from the analysed data (Creswell, 2009). Validity can also be seen as the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening (Welman et al., 2005).

Using secondary data in the form of the actual GETC results provided by Umalusi and the census data secured from Statistics SA enhanced the validity of this research. Both sets of data were appropriate for the research and the data from these sources was suitable for answering the research questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

3.7 ETHICS

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of KZN ethics committee (*see Appendix A*). As there was no direct contact with individuals, ethical considerations were minimized. Permission for the use of secondary data in the form of the GETC results from adult learning centres and the Census 2011 data was requested and granted by Umalusi and Statistics SA respectively. Even though researchers conducting secondary analysis do not face the ethical obligations and responsibilities involved in the data collection process, they inherit the responsibility as a result of access to the data, and must therefore cooperate in ensuring the confidentiality of the data (Dale, Wathan & Higgins, 2008). Due to the nature of the study, there was no need to obtain the consent of or to create pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a description and discussion of the research design and methodology applied to this study. The chapter also included a discussion on the description of the province of KZN. The next chapter provides a description of each of the districts in KZN, as well as the differences between the districts in regard to their socio-economic profiles.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISTRICT ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of each of the districts in KZN, as well as to highlight the differences between districts with regard to the socio-economic indicators, namely educational levels, average annual income per household, and employment status, which are the socio-economic indicators being applied to this study. The chapter also includes information about the population size of each district.

The districts are unique in their demographic and socio-economic make-ups. eThekweni is the only area that is regarded as a metropolitan municipality, which means that this municipality is able to execute all the functions of local government. In the other 10 districts, local government is divided into district municipalities, which are further divided into 50 local municipalities. Approximately 54% of the KZN population lives in rural areas, with the following districts being declared as rural districts: Ugu, Umzinyathi, Zululand and Umkhanyakude (KZN Health Annual report, 2010). KZN is also home to six of the country's most deprived districts. These are Uthukela, Ugu, Sisonke, Zululand, Umzinyathi and Umkhanyakude, with the latter two being classified as the poorest districts in the country (KZN Health Annual Report, 2010). From these classifications, there is a clear association between rurality and poverty among districts in the province. Districts with the highest HIV prevalence were Ugu (41.7%), Umkhanyakude (41.1%), Sisonke (39.9%) and Umgungundlovu (39.8%) (KZN Health Annual Report, 2010).

4.2 POPULATION

According to the 2011 census, there were approximately 10.6 million people living in KZN in 2011. One third of these lived in eThekweni, which made this the largest district in terms of the total number of people dwelling in the district. Sisonke was the smallest in terms of population size. Figure 4.1 shows the size of each district in terms of the number of people living in the district.

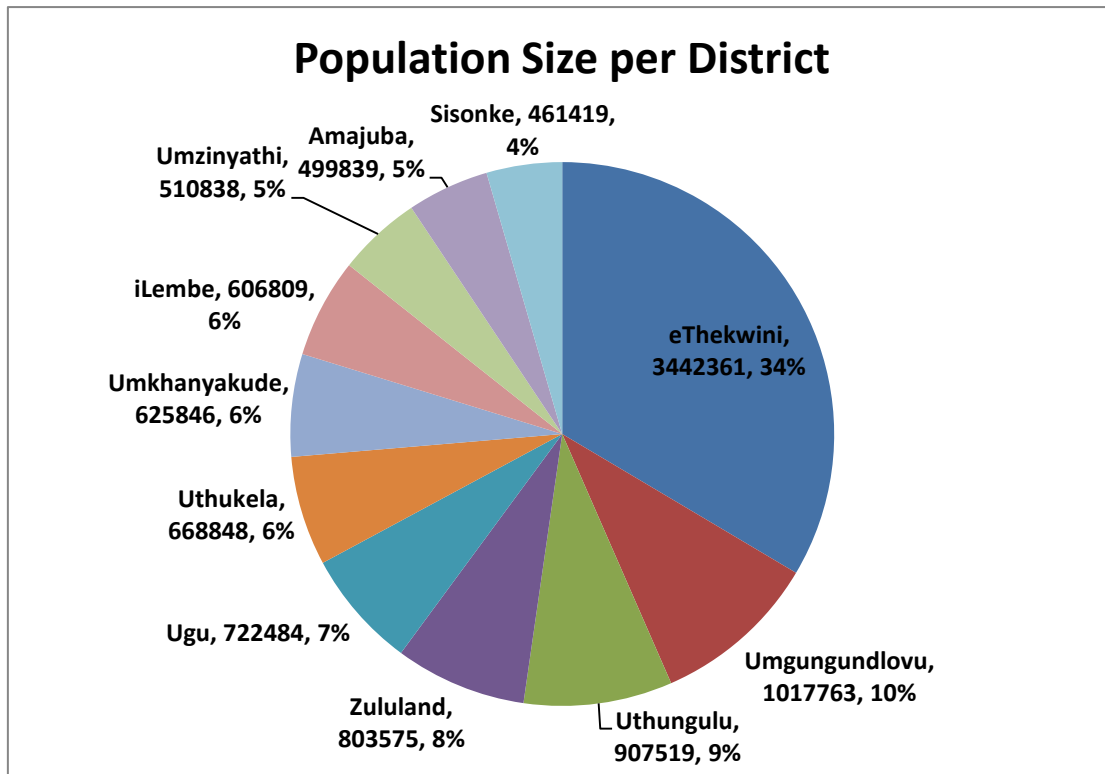


Figure 4.1: Population Distribution per District

4.3 INCOME LEVELS

According to Census 2011, there was a total of 2 538 890 households in the province with an average annual income per household of R83 050, that is, approximately R6 920 per month (Census 2011). eThekweni and Umgungundlovu were the only two districts in KZN in which the average annual income per household exceeded the provincial average of R83 050 per year. Sisonke, the smallest district in terms of population size, had the lowest annual average income per household. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of households and average annual income per household for each of the districts sorted according to the average annual income per household in descending order. Figure 4.2 shows the comparison of the average annual income across the districts.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Districts by Average Household Income

District	No. of Households Per District	Average Annual Income Per Household
eThekwini	956 173	R112 830
Umgungundlovu	272 666	R92 986
Uthungulu	202 976	R80 054
Amajuba	110 963	R66 785
iLembe	157 692	R61 587
Ugu	179 440	R61 337
Uthukela	147 286	R56 316
Zululand	157 748	R53 400
Umkhanyakude	128 195	R47 201
Umzinyathi	113 469	R46 637
Sisonke	112 282	R45 903
KZN	2 538 890	R83 050

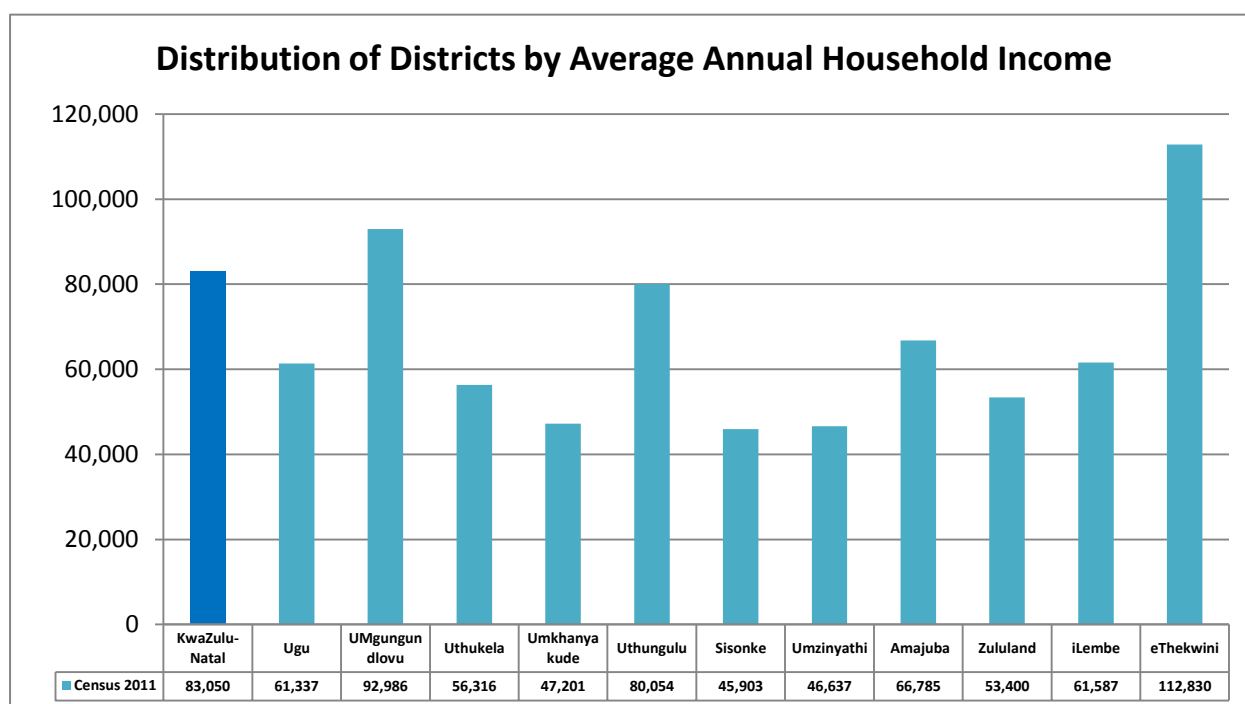


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Districts by Average Annual Household Income

What is notable from the distribution above is the extreme inequality among districts regarding household income. Five of the districts, including three of the four which were categorized as rural, have an annual household income of less than half of that of eThekwini.

4.4 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS

Table 4.2 highlights the numbers of people who were employed and unemployed per district. The figures are based on the economically active population aged 15 – 64. The unemployment rate for the province of KZN according to the 2011 census was 33%.

Table 4.2: Employment Status per District

Employment Status (Economically Active Population Aged 15 – 64)			
District	Employment Status	No. of People	%
Amajuba	Employed	79 638	60.94%
	Unemployed	51 035	39.06%
iLembe	Employed	114 841	69.40%
	Unemployed	50 628	30.60%
Uthukela	Employed	89 734	60.41%
	Unemployed	58 800	39.59%
eThekwini	Employed	992 560	69.76%
	Unemployed	430 318	30.24%
Sisonke	Employed	61 896	64.04%
	Unemployed	34 760	35.96%
Ugu	Employed	116 420	64.83%
	Unemployed	63 169	35.17%
Umgungundlovu	Employed	245 379	69.57%
	Unemployed	107 346	30.43%
Umkhanyakude	Employed	58 924	57.19%
	Unemployed	44 104	42.81%
Umzinyathi	Employed	50 548	63.39%
	Unemployed	29 191	36.61%
Uthungulu	Employed	148 281	65.30%
	Unemployed	78 811	34.70%
Zululand	Employed	83 361	58.87%
	Unemployed	58 247	41.13%

Source: (Census 2011)

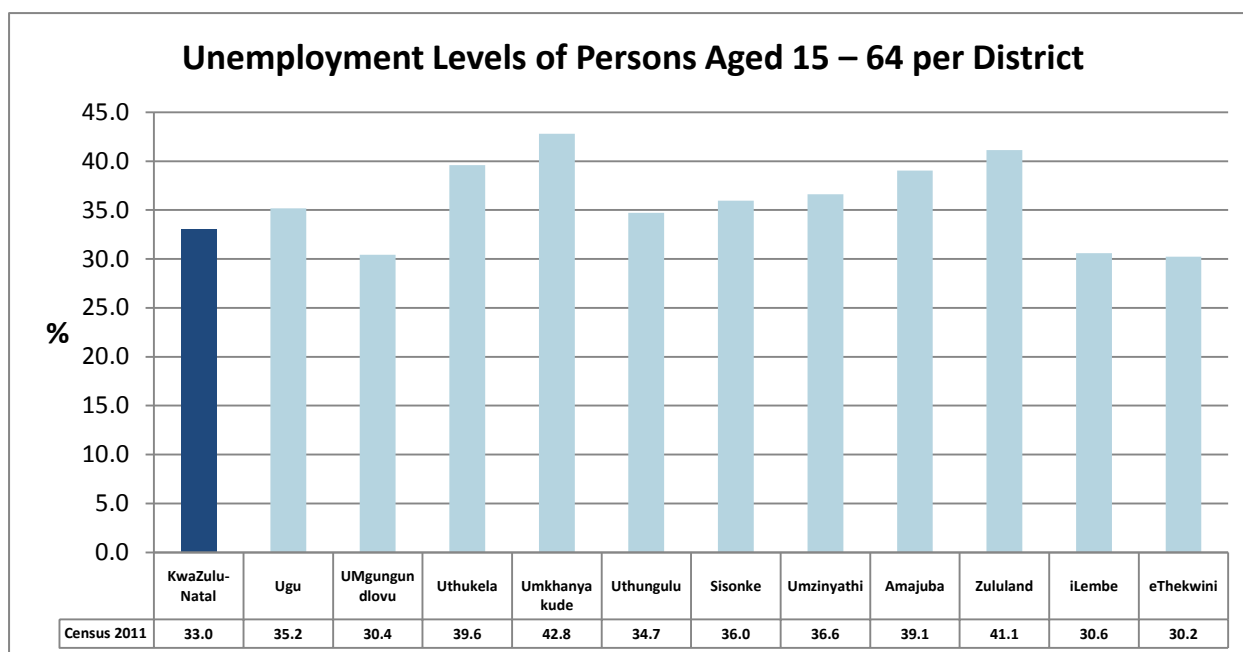


Figure 4.3: Unemployment Levels of Persons Aged 15 – 64 per District

According to Figure 4.3, the district with the highest unemployment rate was Umkhanyakude (42.8%), followed by Zululand with an unemployment rate of 41.1%. eThekweni, Umgungundlovu and iLembe were the only districts in which the unemployment rate was lower than the provincial unemployment rate of 33%.

Again it is notable that the districts with the lowest unemployment rates (Umgungundlovu and eThekweni) had the highest annual average household income and were predominantly urban. On the other hand, the two districts with the highest unemployment rates (Umkhanyakude and Zululand) were also among the districts with the lowest household income.

4.5 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

KZN was reportedly the province with the highest illiteracy rate after the apartheid era. According to the 2011 census, 10.77% of the total population aged twenty and above had no schooling whatsoever, 13.59% had completed some primary school, 4.17% had completed primary school, 31.23% had completed some secondary school, 30.92% had completed matric (grade 12), and 9.32% had higher education qualifications. Table 4.3 shows the levels of education of people twenty years and above for each district in the province of KZN.

Table 4.3 Levels of Education of Persons Aged Twenty Years and Above

Educational Levels (Age: Twenty and Above)			
District	Category	No. of People	%
Amajuba	No Schooling	21 523	7.97%
	Some Primary	39 477	14.62%
	Completed Primary	11 391	4.22%
	Some Secondary	88 446	32.76%
	Grade 12/Std 10	83 593	30.96%
	Higher Education	25 555	9.47%
iLembe	No Schooling	51 150	15.39%
	Some Primary	53 104	15.98%
	Completed Primary	15 790	4.75%
	Some Secondary	103 432	31.12%
	Grade 12/Std 10	89 033	26.79%
	Higher Education	19 857	5.97%
Uthukela	No Schooling	47686	14.04%
	Some Primary	56 178	16.54%
	Completed Primary	16 810	4.95%
	Some Secondary	106 901	31.47
	Grade 12/Std 10	91093	26.81%
	Higher Education	21066	6.20%
eThekwini	No Schooling	93 451	4.20%
	Some Primary	210 487	9.47%
	Completed Primary	77 975	3.51%
	Some Secondary	737264	33.17%
	Grade 12/Std 10	827 693	37.24%
	Higher Education	275 531	12.40%
Sisonke	No Schooling	22 214	9.780%
	Some Primary	54 253	23.88%
	Completed Primary	15 438	6.80%
	Some Secondary	78 270	34.46%
	Grade 12/Std 10	43 914	19.33%
	Higher Education	13 062	5.75%
Ugu	No Schooling	49988	12.82%
	Some Primary	75 617	19.40%
	Completed Primary	19 237	4.93%

	Some Secondary	122 555	31.44%
	Grade 12/Std 10	94104	24.14%
	Higher Education	28311	7.26%
Umgungundlovu	No Schooling	52 179	8.55%
	Some Primary	81 203	13.30%
	Completed Primary	26 093	4.28%
	Some Secondary	200 130	32.79
	Grade 12/Std 10	183 503	30.06%
	Higher Education	67 251	11.02%
Umkhanyakude	No Schooling	73 300	25.34%
	Some Primary	43 732	15.12%
	Completed Primary	12 068	4.17%
	Some Secondary	72 192	24.96%
	Grade 12/Std 10	73 671	25.47%
	Higher Education	14 269	4.93%
Umzinyathi	No Schooling	60 848	25.68%
	Some Primary	41 691	17.59%
	Completed Primary	10 891	4.60%
	Some Secondary	60 848	25.68%
	Grade 12/Std 10	51 166	21.59%
	Higher Education	11 545	4.87%
Uthungulu	No Schooling	76 134	16.07%
	Some Primary	66 906	14.12%
	Completed Primary	18 032	3.81%
	Some Secondary	129 458	27.32%
	Grade 12/Std 10	142 752	30.10%
	Higher Education	40 566	8.50%
Zululand	No Schooling	72 725	19.23%
	Some Primary	61 658	16.31%
	Completed Primary	16 687	4.41%
	Some Secondary	102 554	27.12%
	Grade 12/Std 10	103 836	27.46%
	Higher Education	20 653	5.46%

Source: (Census 2011)

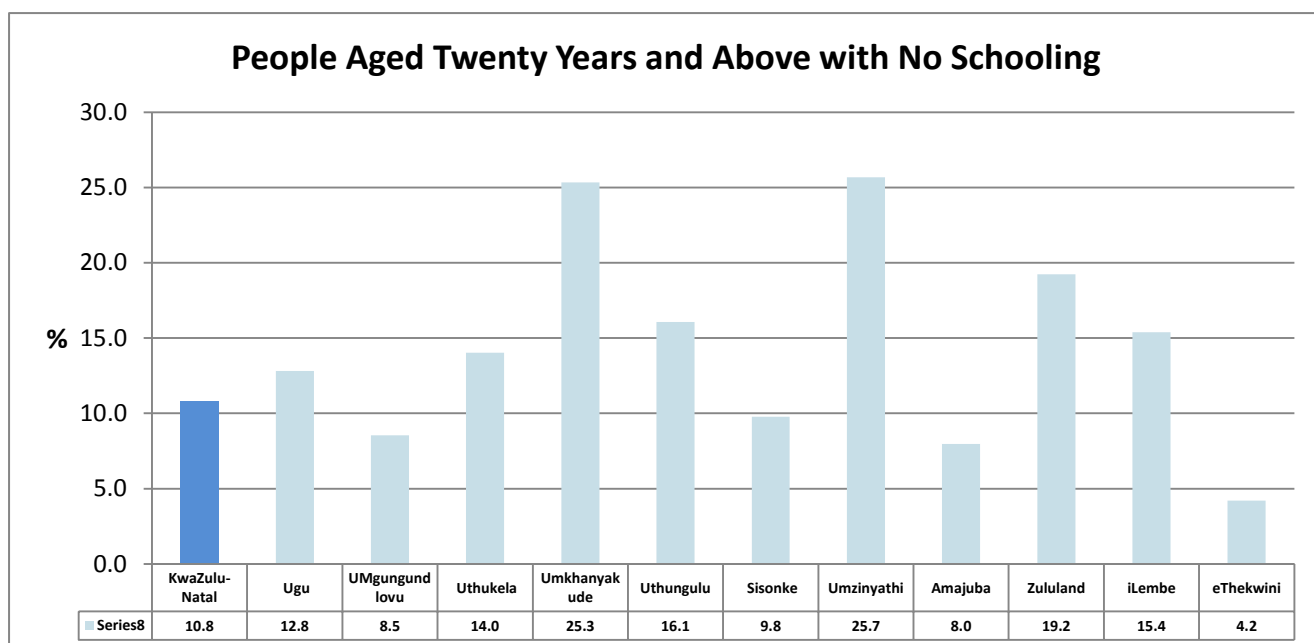


Figure 4.4: People aged 20 years and above with no schooling

Figure 4.4 shows the total percentage of people aged 20 and above with no schooling per district in KZN. The majority of the districts reflected a percentage higher than the provincial percentage of 10.8%. The district with the highest percentage of people aged 20 and above with no schooling was Umzinyathi, followed by Umkhanyakude and Zululand. The figures of eThekweni, Amajuba, Umgungundlovu and Sisonke all appeared below the provincial percentage, with eThekweni having the lowest percentage of people aged 20 and above with no schooling.

4.6 CONCLUSION

From the socio-economic variables above it is evident that the eThekweni and Umgungundlovu districts appear to be the most advantaged districts, as they were the districts with the highest annual average household income, the lowest level of unemployment and the least percentage of people with no schooling. In addition, these two districts were among the districts with the highest percentage of people who had completed grade 12 and the highest percentage of people in possession of higher education qualifications. On the contrary, the Umzinyathi, Umkhanyakude and Zululand districts exhibited high percentages of people with no schooling, accompanied by high levels of unemployment and low levels of average annual income per household in comparison with the other districts. These three districts were among the districts that were classified as the most deprived districts in the country (KZN

Health Annual Report, 2010) and were also found to be the districts with the highest poverty index scores by Hugo et al. (2010).

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a detailed discussion of the districts involved in the study, highlighting the differences between districts with regard to the socio-economic indicators, namely educational level, average annual income per household, and employment status, which are the socio-economic indicators being applied. This chapter will begin by providing a description of the composite performance of the province in the GETC: ABET examinations, followed by a discussion on the analysis of the patterns of performance among districts, and finally an analysis of the relationship between centre performance and the socio-economic status of the districts.

The key research questions posed for this study were:

What do the GETC results indicate about the performance of adult learning centres in KZN?

1. What is the performance of the province as a whole in the GETC: ABET examinations?
2. What are the patterns of performance among adult learning centres in the GETC?
3. What is the relationship between the examination performance in adult learning centres, and the socio-economic profiles of the districts in which these centres are situated?

In addressing the first research question, the following process was followed when analyzing the data:

- Results were computed to determine the composite performance of the province of KZN over a three-year period 2011 to 2013,
- An analysis of the performance at district level for the period 2011 to 2013 was conducted, and
- An examination of the performances in English and Mathematical Literacy learning areas over the period 2011 to 2013 was carried out.

The second research question was addressed by analyzing the data in order to establish patterns of performance for KZN and across the various districts in KZN. The third research question was addressed, with findings presented in the following chapter.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROVINCE IN THE GETC: ABET EXAMINATIONS

What follows is a discussion and comparative analysis of the performance of adult learners in the 2011 – 2013 GETC: ABET examinations at a district level. The data consists of the number of learners who wrote the GETC examinations; the number of learners who achieved a GETC: ABET certificate; the number of learners who did not qualify for the certificate as they had too few subjects passed; and the number of learners who failed all subjects that they wrote in each year. Percentages of these categories are also included. Found in this section is also an analysis of the English and Mathematical Literacy results for the years 2011 to 2013. According to the GETC: ABET certification requirements, adult learners are required to achieve a minimum of 40% in a learning area in order to pass (Umalusi, 2013).

5.2.1 Overall Performance of the KZN Province in the GETC: ABET Examinations

Table 5.1: Overall Results in the GETC: ABET Examinations for KZN

Year	Number Who Wrote	% Achieving a GETC Certificate	% Who Did Not Qualify for a Certificate (Too Few Subjects)	% Who Failed All Subjects
2011	12 473	22.02	70.19	7.78
2012	23 103	19.08	45.80	35.12
2013	20 650	26.87	65.31	7.83
Total	56 226	22.59	58.38	19.03

As seen in Table 5.1, a total of 56 226 adults in KZN wrote the GETC: ABET examinations over the three-year period that was studied. Less than a quarter (22.59%, that is, approximately 12 701 adults) of those who wrote over the three years achieved the GETC certificate. That is just 3.56% more than the number who failed all subjects they wrote. The

number of adult learners who wrote the GETC examinations increased significantly from 2011 to 2012. However, there was a decrease in the number of learners who wrote from 2012 to 2013. While the year 2012 showed the highest number of adult learners writing the examination, this was notably also the year where 35.12% of learners failed all the subjects which they wrote. The percentage of learners who failed all subjects was considerably higher than the percentage of GETC achievements in 2012. In terms of performance, 2011 and 2013 can be seen as the better years, because in these years the percentages of learners achieving the GETC certificate were 22.02% and 26.87% respectively, and the numbers of learners who failed all subjects were 7.78% and 7.83% respectively.

The largest portion of learners each year falls within the “Too Few Subjects” category. This means they passed at least one of the subjects that they wrote; however, they had not accumulated enough subjects to qualify for the GETC certificate. As part-time students, adult learners do not necessarily write all the subjects in the same year, but rather accumulate subjects and, as such, it might take them several years to obtain the GETC certificate. While the data showed how many students registered each year for the GETC examinations, one was not able to ascertain from the data how many of these students were actually first time writers or how many credits had been accumulated over the years by each candidate. This limitation made the data not analyzable in a way one might senior certificate results.

5.2.2 Overall Performance in the GETC: ABET Examinations: A Comparison at District Level

Figure 5.1 shows a comparison between the percentages of learners who received the GETC: ABET certificate in each district over the years 2011 to 2013. The performances of districts mirror that of the province in that, in the year 2013, the highest percentage of GETC certificates was achieved. In the year 2011, five districts, viz. Pinetown, Umlazi, Umkhanyakude, Ugu and Amajuba, achieved a higher percentage of GETC certificates than the 22.06% of GETC certificates achieved by the province as a whole. In the same year, the Umgungundlovu and Umzinyathi districts were the worst-performing districts, achieving less than 5% GETC certificates. The Pinetown, Umlazi and Ugu districts achieved above the provincial percentage of 19.08% in 2012, while Umgungundlovu, Umzinyathi and Uthukela achieved less than 5% GETC certificates. In the year 2013, the districts that performed above the provincial percentage of 26.87% GETC certificates were Pinetown, Umlazi, Ugu,

Umkhanyakude and Zululand. Once again, Umgungundlovu and Umzinyathi achieved less than 5% GETC certificates.

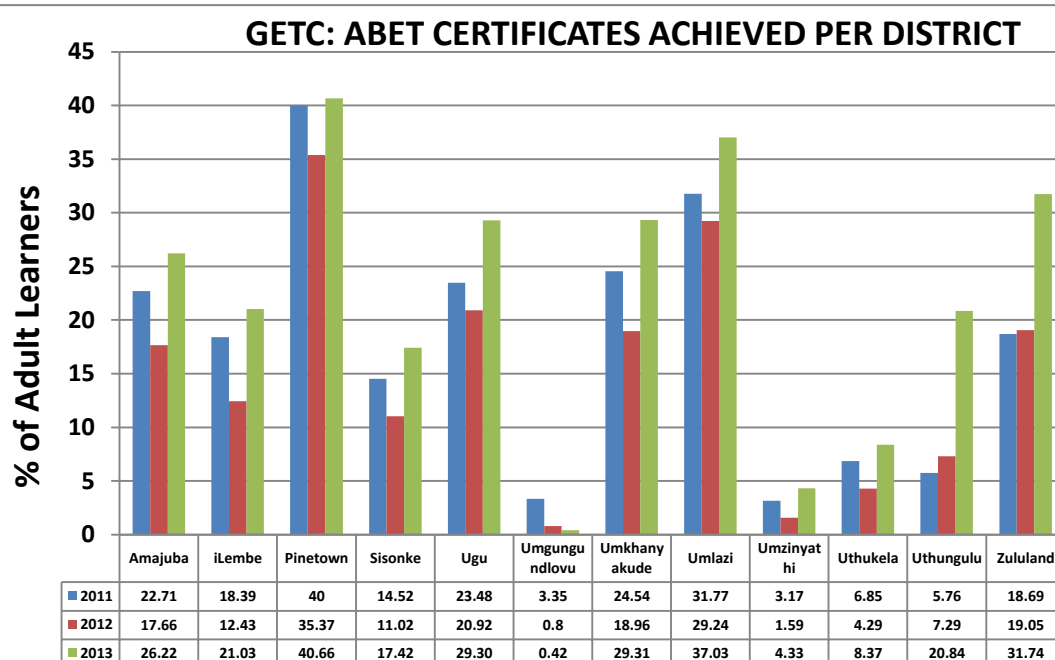


Figure 5.1: Percentage of Learners Who Achieved a GETC: ABET Certificate per District

Figure 5.2 unpacks the numbers of learners who failed all subjects they wrote in a year according to each district. In 2011, iLembe, Umlazi, Pinetown and Uthukela were the only districts in which the percentages of learners who failed all subjects were less than the provincial failure rate of learners failing all subjects, which was 7.78%. The year 2012 was the year in which the highest number of learners wrote the GETC examinations. However, this is also the year which proved to have the highest failure rate in terms of the percentage of learners who failed all subjects. The percentage of learners who failed all subjects in this year was far greater than those of the other years in the study. The average percentage of students who failed all subjects was 35.77% in this year. Sisonke had the highest number of students failing all subjects (40.03%) and Pinetown had the lowest (28.84%). The percentage of learners who failed all subjects in the province for the year 2013 was the second lowest percentage for the three-year period of the study. Umgungundlovu had the highest percentage of learners failing all subjects (14.7%) and Pinetown once again had the lowest percentage of

learners who failed all subjects (4.73%), compared to the provincial total of 7.83% of learners who failed all subjects for the year.

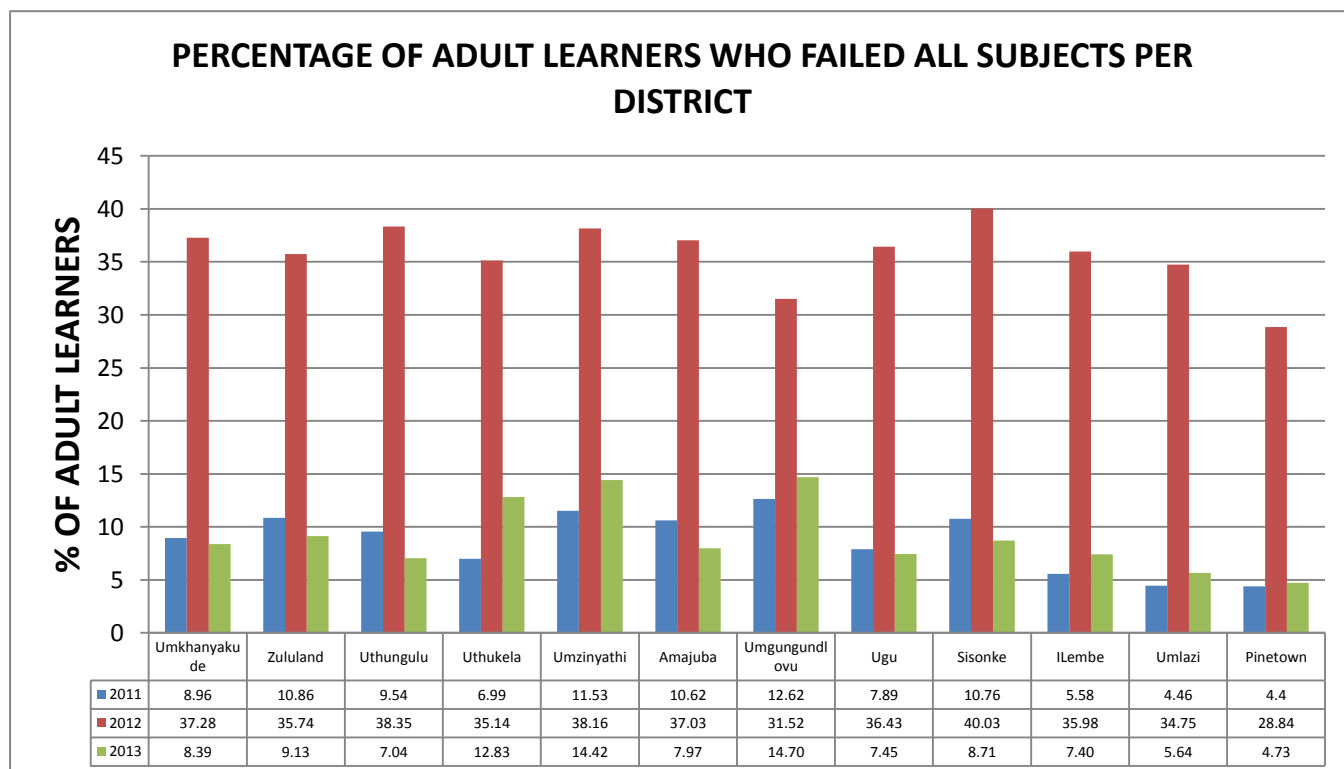


Figure 5.2: Percentage of Learners Who Failed All Subjects per District

5.2.3 Performance of the Province in Language and Literacy: English Examinations

Table 5.2: English Examination Results for KZN from 2011 to 2013

Year	No. of Learners Who Wrote	No. Below 40%	% Below 40%	No. Above 40%	% Above 40%
2011	8 855	1 574	17.78	7 281	82.22
2012	18 218	7 723	42.39	10 495	57.61
2013	13 566	2 074	15.29	11 492	84.71
Total	40 639	11 371	27.98	29 268	72.02

A total of 40 639 adult learners wrote the Language and Literacy: English examination in the province of KZN between the years 2011 and 2013. As seen in Table 5.2, there was a significant increase from the year 2011 to 2012, and thereafter a decrease, in the number of learners who wrote the English examinations. Of the 40 639 candidates who wrote the examinations, 72.02% passed these examinations. In terms of the performance in these

examinations, the highest percentage pass rate was achieved in the year 2013 with a pass rate of 84.71%; this was followed by the year 2011 with a pass rate of 82.22%. While the year 2012 had the largest number of candidates writing the English examination, the performance was the lowest of the three years. The percentage of learners who failed the examinations was 42.39%, which is 27.1% more than that of the year 2013, which is recorded as the best year in terms of the number of learners who passed the English examination.

5.2.4 Performance in Language and Literacy: English Examinations: A Comparison at District Level

Table 5.3: Comparison of the Performance in the English Examinations from 2011 to 2013

District	2011		2012		2013	
	Wrote	% Pass	Wrote	% Pass	Wrote	% Pass
Umkhanyakude	969	80.08	2 295	52.94	1 640	82.50
Zululand	559	72.99	1 327	55.01	854	81.85
Uthungulu	684	76.02	1 588	51.45	1 461	83.78
Uthukela	511	84.15	626	57.35	416	84.38
Umzinyathi	156	80.77	443	59.59	279	83.15
Amajuba	439	82.00	964	58.71	687	87.92
Umgungundlovu	274	89.05	494	57.09	397	85.89
Ugu	774	84.88	1 546	58.09	1 097	83.04
Sisonke	725	81.24	1 393	54.85	979	84.88
iLembe	552	80.08	956	56.28	607	83.36
Umlazi	1 241	86.06	2 444	58.84	1 782	87.32
Pinetown	1 971	84.07	4 142	63.35	3 367	85.65
KZN	8 855	82.22	18 218	57.61	13 566	84.71

Table 5.3 outlines the performance of each district over the three years 2011 – 2013. The overall performance of learning centres in the 2011 English examination was exceptionally good, with Umgungundlovu achieving an almost 90% pass rate. Ten out of the 12 districts achieved a pass rate around 80%. The worst-performing district in the English 2011 examination was Zululand (72.99%), followed by Uthungulu (76.02%). The performance in the English 2012 examinations decreased significantly from the 2011 performance. The adult

learning centres in the Pinetown, Umzinyathi and Umlazi districts were the top-performing centres, while those in Uthungulu, Umkhanyakude and Sisonke were the poorest-performing. The performance in the English 2013 examination marked another exceptional year in terms of performance. All districts managed to achieve a pass rate above 80%. The difference between the highest-performing district (Amajuba, 87.92%) and the lowest-performing district (Zululand, 81.85%) was merely 6.07%.

5.2.5 Performance of the Province in Mathematical Literacy Examinations

Table 5.4: Mathematical Literacy Examination Results for KZN

Year	No. of Learners Who Wrote	No. Below 40 %	% Below 40 %	No. Above 40 %	% Above 40 %
2011	9 402	4 554	48.44	4 848	51.56
2012	18 819	11 602	61.65	7 217	38.35
2013	14 761	4 402	29.82	10 359	70.18
Total	42 982	20 558	47.83	22 424	52.17

According to Table 5.4, the total number of candidates who wrote the Mathematical Literacy examinations across KZN during the years 2011 to 2013 amounted to 42 982. Of these learners, 52.17% were successful at achieving the minimum requirement of 40% to pass this subject. The number of learners who wrote the examination doubled from 2011 to 2012. However, the number of learners decreased in 2013. The year 2012 recorded the highest number of examination candidates, but 61.65% of those candidates achieved below the 40% pass requirement. The province achieved its best pass rate (70.18%) in 2013.

5.2.6 Performance in Mathematical Literacy Examinations: Comparison at District Level

Table 5.5: Comparison of the Performances in the Mathematical Literacy Examinations from 2011 to 2013

District	2011		2012		2013	
	Wrote	% Pass	Wrote	% Pass	Wrote	% Pass
Umkhanyakude	1 054	49.34	2 305	35.88	1 754	70.87
Zululand	647	43.89	1 310	35.34	906	66.34
Uthungulu	735	44.35	1 618	30.16	1 538	70.94
Uthukela	507	51.28	694	38.47	589	68.25
Umzinyathi	234	45.73	393	31.30	383	62.40
Amajuba	452	50.44	1 065	35.21	786	69.72
Umgungundlovu	255	62.75	430	44.42	522	59.77
Ugu	838	40.81	1 719	33.57	1 234	63.37
Sisonke	847	47.11	1 812	33.61	1 261	64.08
iLembe	518	56.56	1 057	40.30	548	74.27
Umlazi	1 390	57.63	2 423	41.56	1 761	73.14
Pinetown	1 925	58.60	3 993	46.68	3 479	75.83
KZN	9 402	51.56	18 819	38.35	14 761	70.18

Table 5.5 outlines the performance of each district in the Mathematical Literacy examinations over the three years. The provincial percentage pass for the 2011 Mathematical Literacy examination was 51.56%. Four of the 12 districts performed above the provincial total. These were Umgungundlovu (62.75%), Pinetown (58.6%), Umlazi (57.63%) and iLembe (56.56%). The district with the lowest percentage of learners who passed the Mathematical Literacy examination in 2011 was the Ugu district, which had a 40.81% pass rate. The results across all districts decreased from 2011 to 2012. However, given this decline, Umgungundlovu, Pinetown, Umlazi and iLembe were still the better-performing districts in 2012. The adult learning centres in Uthungula (30.16%), Umzinyathi (31.30%) and Ugu (33.57%) were among the poorest performing in this year. There was a great improvement in the provincial Mathematical Literacy results from 2012 to 2013. Once again, the adult learning centres in Pinetown, Umlazi and iLembe were among the top-performing centres. Interestingly, Umgungundlovu moved from the second highest performing district in 2012 to the worst-

performing district in 2013, and the Uthungula district moved from being the worst-performing district in 2012 to the fourth highest performing district in 2013.

5.3 Patterns of Performance in the GETC: ABET Examinations

5.3.1 Patterns of Performance of the Province in Regard to the GETC: ABET Certificates Achieved

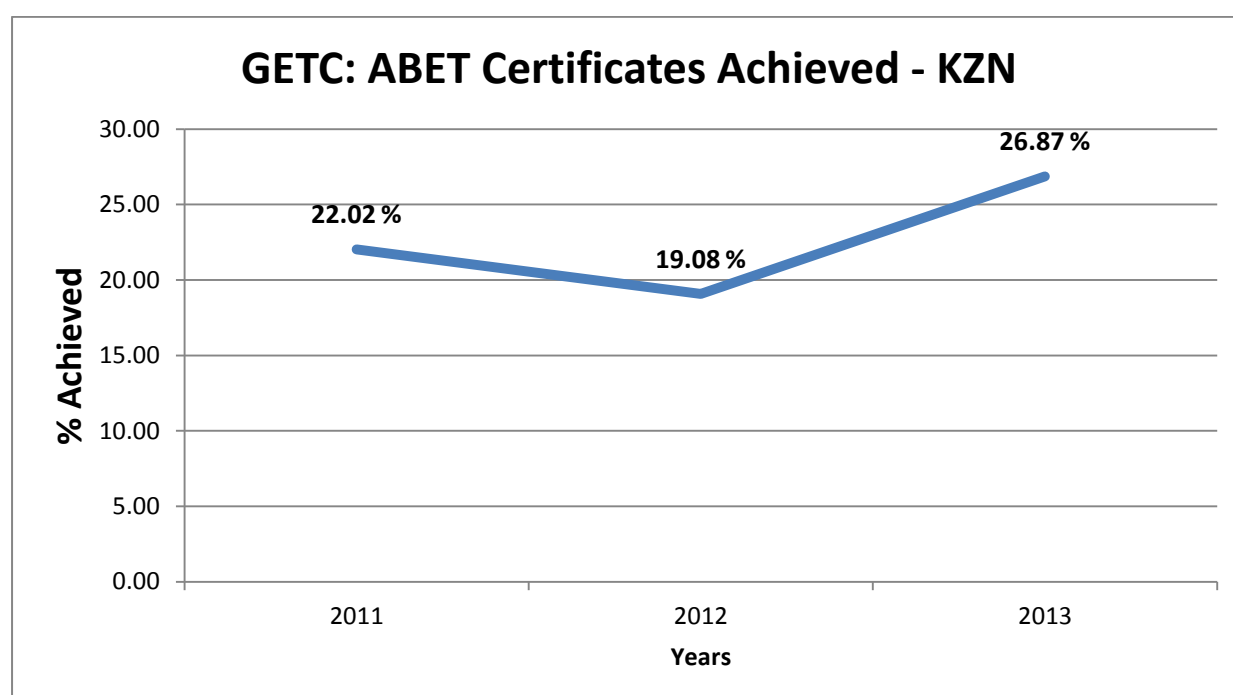


Figure 5.3: GETC: ABET Certificates Achieved in KZN for 2011 – 2013

Figure 5.3 shows the pattern in the number of learners who qualified for the GETC certificate over the years 2011 to 2013. The patterns of performance for those achieving the GETC certificate over the three years were inconsistent. In the year 2013, the most GETC certificates were awarded.

There was also a striking variation in the results with regard to the percentage of learners who failed all subjects each year. While the rise in failures from 2011 to 2012 might be attributed to the increased number of those who wrote the examinations, the total number of those who obtained the certificate also declined (Figure 5.1). Although the answers to this phenomenon lie outside the scope of this study, one could suggest that the standard of the examinations were inconsistent from one year to the next. One might also suggest very difficult examination papers in 2012 and/or a massive standardization failure. Results should not vary so much, as generally the academic ability of students do not change radically from one year to the next. It could also be suggested that examiners overcompensated in 2013 for

the poor results in 2012, and thus we see an increase in the percentage of learners who achieved the GETC certificate and a huge decrease in the percentage of learners who failed all subjects.

5.3.2 Patterns of Performance for the Districts

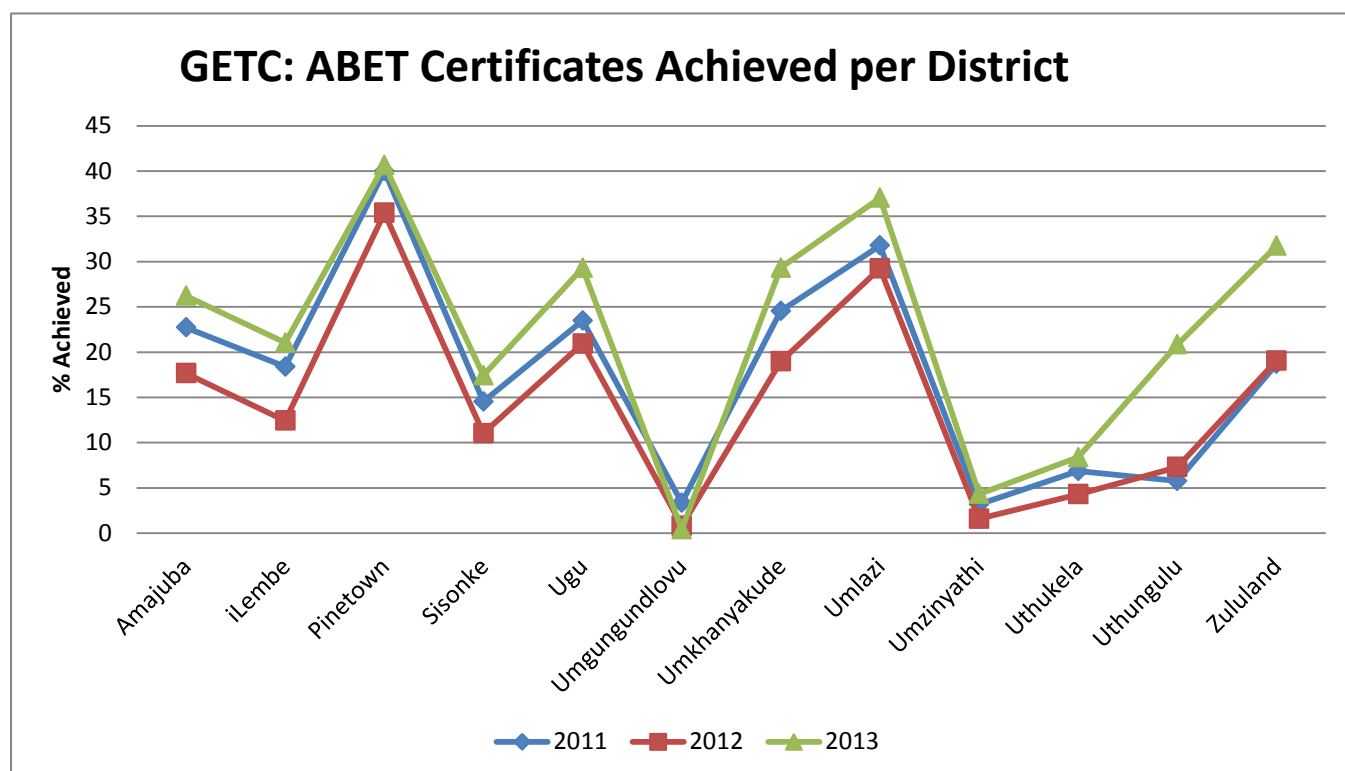


Figure 5.4 Percentage of GETC: ABET Certificates Achieved per District

For all districts, the best performance was recorded in 2013, with the exception of Umgungundlovu, which had the best performance in 2011. In all years, Pinetown and Umlazi outperformed the other districts; furthermore, during all these years Pinetown had the best performance. Umgungundlovu recorded the worst performance throughout the entire period. For all districts, excluding Umgungundlovu, the performance dipped from 2011 to 2012, then picked up in 2013. Umgungundlovu, Umzinyathi and Uthukela were always amongst the worst-performing districts. A remarkable increase was noted in the Uthungulu district, where the percentage of certificates increased from just 7.29% in 2012 to 20.84% in 2013. Zululand also enjoyed a sizable increase in performance from 2012 to 2013. Overall, the highest-recorded performance in any of the three years was 40%, which was achieved by the Pinetown district.

While the overall achievement of the districts in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates being achieved was relatively low for KZN, districts such as Umgungundlovu, Umzinyathi and Uthukela were disturbingly low. This was an unanticipated outcome for a district such as Umgungundlovu, which is seen as a more urban district. The low percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved by this district contradicts the excellent performance this district achieved in the English and Mathematical Literacy examinations. It is also observed that a large portion of the learners in these three districts were shown to have insufficient subjects to qualify for the GETC: ABET certificate.

Table 5.6: Performance of Districts Ranked According to the Percentage of GETC: ABET Certificates Awarded from 2011 to 2013

PERFORMANCE OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD PER DISTRICT							
District	No. Who Wrote	No. GETC Cert.	% GETC Cert.	No. Not Enough Subjects	% Not Enough Subjects	No. Failed All Subjects	% Failed All Subjects
Pinetown	11 090	4 259	38.40	5 243	47.28	1 588	14.32
Umlazi	6 789	2 216	32.64	3 423	50.42	1 150	16.94
Ugu	4 302	1 048	24.36	2 393	55.63	861	20.01
Umkhanyakude	6 170	1 476	23.92	3 406	55.20	1 288	20.88
Zululand	3 486	810	23.24	1 939	55.62	737	21.14
Amajuba	3 187	697	21.87	1 828	57.36	662	20.77
iLembe	3 062	511	16.69	1 972	64.40	579	18.91
Sisonke	5 115	720	14.08	3 255	63.64	1 140	22.29
Uthungulu	5 758	711	12.35	3 871	67.23	1 176	20.42
Uthukela	2 714	173	6.37	2 002	73.77	539	19.86
Umzinyathi	1 600	48	3.00	1 182	73.88	370	23.13
Umgungundlovu	2 953	35	1.19	2 308	78.16	610	20.66
Total	56 226	12 704	22.59	32 822	58.38	10 700	19.03

When performance is ranked according to the number of adult learners who achieved the GETC certificate over the three-year period in adult learning centres per district (Table 5.6), the results show that the adult learning centres in the Pinetown district were the most successful in producing candidates who complied with the requirements for the awarding of the GETC certificate. The Umlazi district was the second most successful district, and the Ugu district was the third most successful, in terms of the number of GETC certificates achieved over the three years. On the other end of the spectrum, the adult learning centres in the Umgungundlovu, Umzinyathi and Uthukela districts were the least successful in

producing adult learners who complied with the requirements for the awarding of the GETC certificate.

Table 5.7: Performance of Districts Ranked According to the Percentage of Learners Who Failed All Subjects from 2011 to 2013

PERFORMANCE OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD PER DISTRICT							
District	No. Who Wrote	GETC Cert.	% GETC Cert.	No. Not Enough Subjects	% Not Enough Subjects	No. Failed All Subjects	% Failed All Subjects
Umzinyathi	1 600	48	3.00	1 182	73.88	370	23.13
Sisonke	5 115	720	14.08	3 255	63.64	1 140	22.29
Zululand	3 486	810	23.24	1 939	55.62	737	21.14
Umkhanyakude	6 170	1 476	23.92	3 406	55.20	1 288	20.88
Amajuba	3 187	697	21.87	1 828	57.36	662	20.77
Umgungundlovu	2 953	35	1.19	2 308	78.16	610	20.66
Uthungulu	5 758	711	12.35	3 871	67.23	1 176	20.42
Ugu	4 302	1 048	24.36	2 393	55.63	861	20.01
Uthukela	2 714	173	6.37	2 002	73.77	539	19.86
iLembe	3 062	511	16.69	1 972	64.40	579	18.91
Umlazi	6 789	2 216	32.64	3 423	50.42	1 150	16.94
Pinetown	11 090	4 259	38.40	5 243	47.28	1 588	14.32
Total	56 226	12 704	22.59	32 822	58.38	10 700	19.03

When the performance is ranked according to the number of learners who failed all subjects over the three years (Table 5.7), the Pinetown and Umlazi districts, which were also the districts with the highest number of GETC certificates achieved, prove to have had the lowest failure rate overall. The Umzinyathi district, which was one of the districts with the lowest percentages of GETC certificates awarded, had the highest percentage of students who failed all subjects. Interestingly, the Umgungundlovu district, which only produced thirty-five (1.19%) GETC certificates over the three years, did not appear among the districts with the highest numbers of learners who failed all subjects. This shows that while the learners in this district were not necessarily achieving the GETC certificate, they were passing the examinations. However, they had not accumulated enough subjects to be awarded the certificate.

5.3.4 Patterns of Performance in the English and Mathematical Literacy

Examinations

Table 5.8: Summary of the Performance of Districts in the English Examinations for 2011 – 2013 (Ranked in Order of Performance from Highest to Lowest)

District	Wrote		Passed		Failed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pinetown	9 480	23.33	7 165	75.58	2 315	24.42
Umgungundlovu	1 165	2.87	867	74.42	298	25.58
Umlazi	5 467	13.45	4 062	74.30	1 405	25.70
Uthukela	1 553	3.82	1 140	73.41	413	26.59
Amajuba	2 090	5.14	1 530	73.21	560	26.79
Ugu	3 417	8.41	2 466	72.17	951	27.83
Umzinyathi	878	2.16	622	70.84	256	29.16
Sisonke	3 097	7.62	2 184	70.52	913	29.48
iLembe	2 115	5.20	1 490	70.45	625	29.55
Uthungulu	3 733	9.19	2 561	68.60	1 172	31.40
Umkhanyakude	4 904	12.07	3 344	68.19	1 560	31.81
Zululand	2 740	6.74	1 837	67.04	903	32.96
KZN	40 639	100	29 268	72.02	11 371	27.98

Table 5.9: Summary of the Performance of Districts in the Mathematical Literacy Examinations for 2011 – 2013 (Ranked in Order of Performance from Highest to Lowest)

District	Wrote		Passed		Failed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pinetown	9 397	21.86	5 630	59.91	3 767	40.09
Umlazi	5 574	12.97	3 096	55.54	2 478	44.46
Umgungundlovu	1 207	2.81	663	54.93	544	45.07
iLembe	2 123	4.94	1 126	53.04	997	46.96
Uthukela	1 790	4.16	929	51.90	861	48.10
Umkhanyakude	5 113	11.90	2 590	50.66	2 523	49.34
Amajuba	2 303	5.36	1 151	49.98	1 152	50.02
Uthungulu	3 891	9.05	1 905	48.96	1 986	51.04
Zululand	2 863	6.66	1 348	47.08	1 515	52.92
Umzinyathi	1 010	2.35	469	46.44	541	53.56
Sisonke	3 920	9.12	1 816	46.33	2 104	53.67
Ugu	3 791	8.82	1 701	44.87	2 090	55.13
KZN	42 982	100.00	22 424	52.17	20 558	47.83

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 show a summary of the ranked performance of districts in the English and Mathematical Literacy examinations over the three years. Over 20% of the total number of candidates who wrote the English and Mathematical Literacy examinations from 2011 to 2013 were from the Pinetown district. The performances in the English examinations were overall better than the performances in the Mathematical Literacy examinations. When the performance is ranked according to the districts with the highest pass rates over the three-year period, Pinetown is placed as the top-performing district in both examinations. This is followed by Umgungundlovu and then Umlazi in the English examination, and Umlazi and then Umgungundlovu in the Mathematical Literacy examinations. Interestingly, the Ugu district ranked as having achieved the fourth highest pass percentage in the English examinations but the lowest pass percentage in the Mathematical Literacy examinations. A

similar trend was noticed with the Umkhanyakude district, where the performance in English was ranked eleventh out of 12 districts but sixth out of the 12 districts in Mathematical Literacy. The learning centres in the Sisonke, Zululand and Umzinyathi districts were in both instances classified amongst the poorest-performing learning centres. When comparing the overall performance of the districts in the GETC examinations, the analysis shows the Umgungundlovu district to have produced the lowest number of GETC certificate candidates over the three years; however, its performances in English and Mathematical Literacy were among those of the top three performing districts. Generally, across the two learning areas that were studied, the overall GETC performance shows that 2012 stands out as the year with the highest number of candidates who wrote the examinations and the year with the highest failure rate amongst candidates. The year 2013 recorded the best performance across all three areas that were investigated.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a description of the composite performance of the province and a discussion on the analysis of the patterns of performance among districts. It was found that the output in terms of GETC: ABET certificates is extremely low. However, a large percentage of the adult learners are meeting the pass requirements for English and Mathematical Literacy. It was also observed that the performance in KZN was almost 20% better in the English examinations than in the Mathematical Literacy examinations. The same patterns of district performance were evident across the three years, with Pinetown, Umgungundlovu and Umlazi performing best, and Umzinyathi, Zululand and Sisonke at or near the bottom of the performances, but with some striking differences between English and Mathematical Literacy performance. Another observation concerning the striking variation in performance across the period of three years was a noticeable rise in the failure rate from 2011 to 2012 and the sharp decrease in the failure rate from 2012 to 2013. The next chapter discusses the performance of districts in relation to the three socio-economic variables, namely average household income, unemployment levels and educational levels.

CHAPTER SIX

DISTRICT EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four provided an analysis and description of each of the 12 districts of KZN, and Chapter Five discussed the findings in relation to the GETC: ABET examination performance of each district. The purpose of Chapter Six is to discuss the examination performance of each district in relation to socio-economic indicators, viz. income, education and employment.

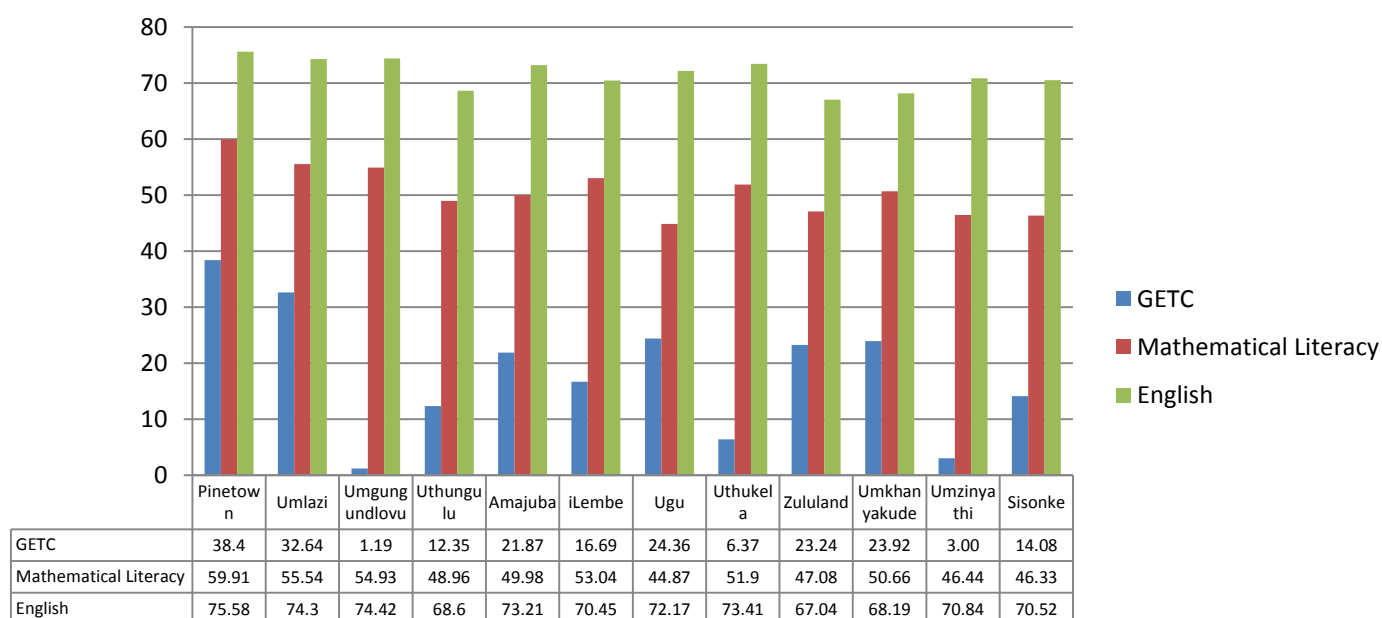
6.2 PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVELS

Table 6.1 shows the performance of each district over the three years. The percentages indicate the achievement of the GETC certificate, as well as the pass rates achieved in the two key subjects of English and Mathematical Literacy, as percentages of the total number of students who wrote the GETC examination in each district. The table also includes the average annual household income of each district, where districts are ranked in order of their income from highest-earning to lowest-earning. Figure 6.1 shows a graphical representation of the same information.

Table 6.1: Performance in Relation to Average Household Income

District	Performance (2011 – 2013)			Average Household Income
	% GETC Achieved	% Pass Mathematical Literacy	% Pass English	
Pinetown	38.40	59.91	75.58	R112 830
Umlazi	32.64	55.54	74.30	R112 830
Umgungundlovu	1.19	54.93	74.42	R92 986
Uthungulu	12.35	48.96	68.60	R80 054
Amajuba	21.87	49.98	73.21	R66 785
iLembe	16.69	53.04	70.45	R61 587
Ugu	24.36	44.87	72.17	R61 337
Uthukela	6.37	51.90	73.41	R56 316
Zululand	23.24	47.08	67.04	R53 400
Umkhanyakude	23.92	50.66	68.19	R47 201
Umkhanyathi	3.00	46.44	70.84	R46 637
Sisonke	14.08	46.33	70.52	R45 903

Performance in Relation to Income Levels



DISTRICTS RANKED ACCORDING TO INCOME FROM HIGHEST-EARNING TO LOWEST-EARNING

Figure 6.1: Performance in Relation to Average Household Income

6.2.1 General Education and Training Certificate and Income

According to the 2011 census data, the eThekweni municipal district (Pinetown and Umlazi) had the highest average annual income per household. The average household income of R112 830 was more than double the amount earned within the Sisonke district which displayed the lowest annual average income per household. According to the GETC performance, the eThekweni district produced the highest percentage of General Education and Training Certificates over the three years of the study, with Pinetown achieving 38.4% and Umlazi achieving 32.64% certificates during the three years. The Umgungundlovu district earned the second highest annual average household income; however, this district was the worst-performing district (1.19%) in terms of the number of General Education and Training Certificates achieved over the same period. A similar observation was made on the Uthungulu district, which indicated the third highest average annual income (R80 054); however, this district was among the poorest achievers, attaining only 12.35% certificates over the three-year period. Interestingly, the findings show that Sisonke District, as the poorest district in terms of annual average household income (R45 903), was not the district with the lowest percentage of certificates achieved during the three years. With 14.08% of students obtaining certificates, it ranked eighth out of the 12 districts.

6.2.2 Mathematical Literacy and Income

When comparing the performance in Mathematical Literacy and average annual household income, the district with the highest annual average income (eThekweni) proved to be the best-performing district, achieving a pass rate of 59.91% in Pinetown and 55.54% in Umlazi. The district with the second highest average annual income (Umgungundlovu) was the district with the second best pass rate (54.93%) for Mathematical Literacy over the years 2011 – 2013. The Sisonke and Umzinyathi districts were the districts with the lowest average annual household income, and these two districts were among the three worst-performing districts. The overall worst-performing district was Ugu; however, this district had the sixth best average household income.

6.2.3 English and Income

The English examination results revealed a similar trend to that of the Mathematical Literacy results with regard to Pinetown, Umlazi and Umgungundlovu: the districts with the highest annual average household income were the three top-performing districts. However, the same cannot be said about the Uthungulu district, which ranked third with regard to its annual

average household income but was placed among the worst-performing districts in the English examinations. The two districts with the lowest annual average household income (Umzinyathi and Sisonke) achieved better pass rates in the English examinations than those of four other districts. Zululand, while being the worst-performing district (67.04%) overall, was not the district with the lowest average household income.

6.2.4 Summary of Performance in Relation to Income

The results of this analysis reveal that there is a relationship between the average household income earned per district and the examination performance in the top-earning district. This is evident in the fact that Pinetown and Umlazi, the two areas within the eThekweni district, which was the highest-earning district, were in all instances the top-performers. This pattern of high income and high results is also evident in the case of the Umgungundlovu district with regard to the Mathematical Literacy and English results, but not with regard to the GETC: ABET certificate attainment. The pattern of high income and high performance is not plainly evident in the remaining districts, nor is that of low income and low performance.

Sisonke is the district that was most disadvantaged in terms of average household income. There is clearly no pattern in this instance, as the lowest income did not necessarily result in the lowest achievement. Across all three datasets, this district was never the worst-performing, albeit it did in the case of the Mathematical Literacy results place eleventh out of the 12 educational districts.

If the districts are ranked according to their average annual household income, the Ugu district appears in the middle of the set. The performance of this district in relation to its income also shows no distinct pattern. Concerning percentages of GETC: ABET certificates, Ugu achieved the third highest percentage of certificates. According to its performance in English, this district was ranked sixth out of the 12 educational districts, and twelfth out of 12 for Mathematical Literacy.

These findings do not match with the findings mentioned by Honey (2015), who reports on the analysis carried out by the Schools News Network in twenty school districts in Kent in the United States of America. Honey (2015) reports that in almost all of the instances in the study, the districts with the lowest income had the lowest scores in standardized tests. As seen in the previous discussion, this was not always the case with the districts in KZN. In this study, in almost all instances the districts with the lowest income did not produce the lowest results.

6.3 PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS

Table 6.2 shows the performance of each district during the three years, as in Table 6.1. The table also includes the level of unemployment of persons aged 15 – 64, within each district, where districts are ranked from having the lowest percentage of unemployment to having the highest percentage of unemployment. Figure 6.2 shows a graphical representation of the same information.

Table 6.2: Performance per District in Relation to the Unemployment Levels of Persons Aged 15 – 64

District	Performance			% Unemployed
	% GETC Achieved	% Pass Mathematical Literacy	% Pass English	
eThekwini: Pinetown	38.40	59.91	75.58	30.24
eThekwini: Umlazi	32.64	55.54	74.30	30.24
Umgungundlovu	1.19	54.93	74.42	30.43
iLembe	16.69	53.04	70.45	30.60
Uthungulu	12.35	48.96	68.60	34.70
Ugu	24.36	44.87	72.17	35.17
Sisonke	14.08	46.33	70.52	35.96
Umzinyathi	3.00	46.44	70.84	36.61
Amajuba	21.87	49.98	73.21	39.06
Uthukela	6.37	51.90	73.41	39.59
Zululand	23.24	47.08	67.04	41.13
Umkhanyakude	23.92	50.66	68.19	42.81

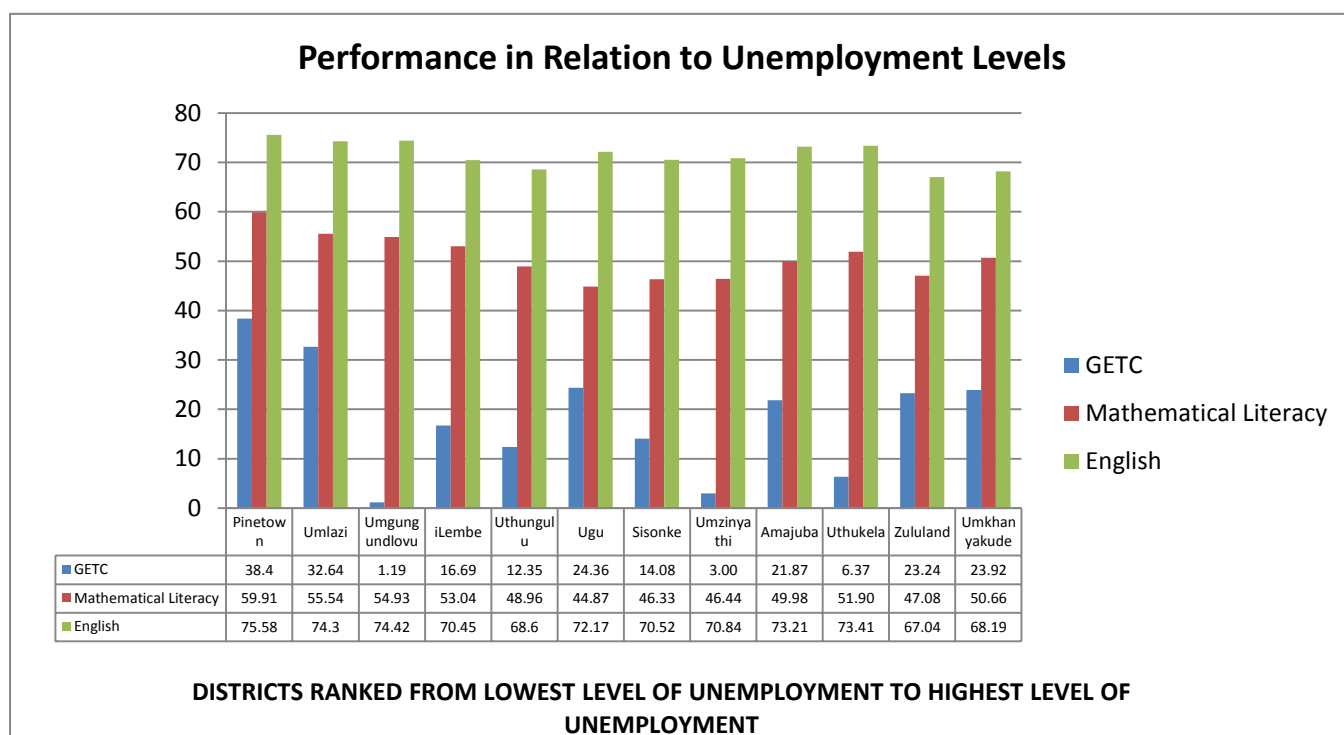


Figure 6.2: Performance per District in Relation to the Unemployment Levels of Persons Aged 15 – 64

6.3.1 General Education and Training Certificate and Unemployment Rate

According to the 2011 census data, the eThekweni municipal district (Pinetown and Umlazi) had the lowest level of unemployment (30.24%), and the analysis of the results shows that the two districts within the eThekweni municipal area achieved the highest percentage of General Education and Training Certificates in the three years. The Umgungundlovu district had the second lowest unemployment rate (30.43%); however, this district achieved the lowest percentage of General Education and Training Certificates. The iLembe and Uthungulu districts had the third and fourth lowest percentages of people aged 15 – 64 unemployed, yet their performances ranked lower down the order. The two districts with the highest unemployment levels, Umkhanyakude and Zululand, placed in the top five with regard to the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved.

6.3.2 Mathematical Literacy and Unemployment Rate

With regard to the performance in Mathematical Literacy, it was noted that Pinetown, Umlazi, Umgungundlovu and iLembe, the four districts with the lowest unemployment levels, were also the four districts with the highest percentage pass rates in Mathematical Literacy. The Umkhanyakude district, having the highest unemployment level, achieved the

sixth best pass rate in Mathematical Literacy, and Ugu, the district with the fifth lowest unemployment level, was the worst-performing district.

6.3.3 English and Unemployment Rate

On comparing the English results with the percentages of unemployment per district, it was again noted that eThekweni, the district with the lowest unemployment rate, was the district which achieved the best pass rate (75.58% in Pinetown and 74.3% in Umlazi). The district with the second lowest percentage of unemployment (Umgungundlovu) achieved the second highest pass rate in the English examinations over the period 2011 to 2013. The iLembe and Uthungulu districts had the third and fourth lowest percentages of people aged 15 – 64 being unemployed, yet their performances placed lower down in the order. Zululand and Umkhanyakude were the districts with the highest unemployment rates, and were also the districts with the lowest pass rates in English. Although Umkhanyakude had the highest percentage of unemployment, it performed slightly better than Zululand.

6.3.4 Summary of Performance in Relation to Unemployment Levels

The analysis shows that there was a pattern of relationship between low unemployment and high performance, as is evident in the case of the top-performing district: Pinetown and Umlazi featured as the top-performers in all three of the focus areas in the investigation. The relationship between low unemployment and high performance was also evident in the Umgungundlovu district, the district with the second best socio-economic profile with regard to unemployment. However, this was the case only with the Mathematical Literacy and English results.

The analysis also reveals that there was no consistent pattern between poor performance and high unemployment. The Umkhanyakude district was the district with the highest unemployment level, yet it was observed that this district outperformed many districts in regard to its performance in Mathematical Literacy and the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates it achieved. It is worth mentioning that this district achieved the fourth best output in terms of percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved between 2011 and 2013.

When the districts are ranked according to their levels of unemployment, Sisonke is the district that appears in the middle of the dataset. Out of the 12 educational districts, this

district placed eighth in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates, eleventh for Mathematical Literacy and eighth for English.

These findings mostly do not match with the research conducted by professors from the Duke University (North Carolina, USA), where the researchers investigated the performance of students in relation to the average unemployment levels in the areas in which they went to school. The researchers concluded that learners in communities with high unemployment rates tended to have lower test scores, even if the unemployment was not within their own families per se (Ananat et al., 2011).

The results of this study also do not correspond with the research findings of Rammala (2009), who conducted a study to investigate factors that contribute toward the poor performance of grade 12 learners in Limpopo Province. The findings of the study revealed that the high unemployment rate and the negative consequences of unemployment were factors that contributed to the poor academic performance of grade 12 learners.

6.4 PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

Table 6.3 shows the performance of each district for the three years. The table includes the level of education for each district, where the level of education was calculated as a percentage of the population aged twenty years and above who had not completed grade 12. The districts are ranked from having the lowest percentage of people aged twenty and above who had not completed grade 12, to having the highest percentage of people aged twenty and above who had not completed grade 12. Figure 6.3 shows a graphical representation of the same information.

Table 6.3: Performance in Relation to Educational Levels per District

District	Performance			Educational Levels (% Who Have Less Than Grade 12)
	% GETC Achieved	% Pass Mathematical Literacy	% Pass English	
eThekwini: Pinetown	38.40	59.91	75.58	50.35
eThekwini: Umlazi	32.64	55.54	74.30	50.35
Umgungundlovu	1.19	54.93	74.42	58.92
Amajuba	21.87	49.98	73.21	59.57
Uthungulu	12.35	48.96	68.60	61.32
Uthukela	6.37	51.90	73.41	67.00
Zululand	23.24	47.08	67.04	67.07
iLembe	16.69	53.04	70.45	67.24
Ugu	24.36	44.87	72.17	68.59
Umkhanyakude	23.92	50.66	68.19	69.59
Umzinyathi	3.00	46.44	70.84	73.55
Sisonke	14.08	43.33	70.52	74.92

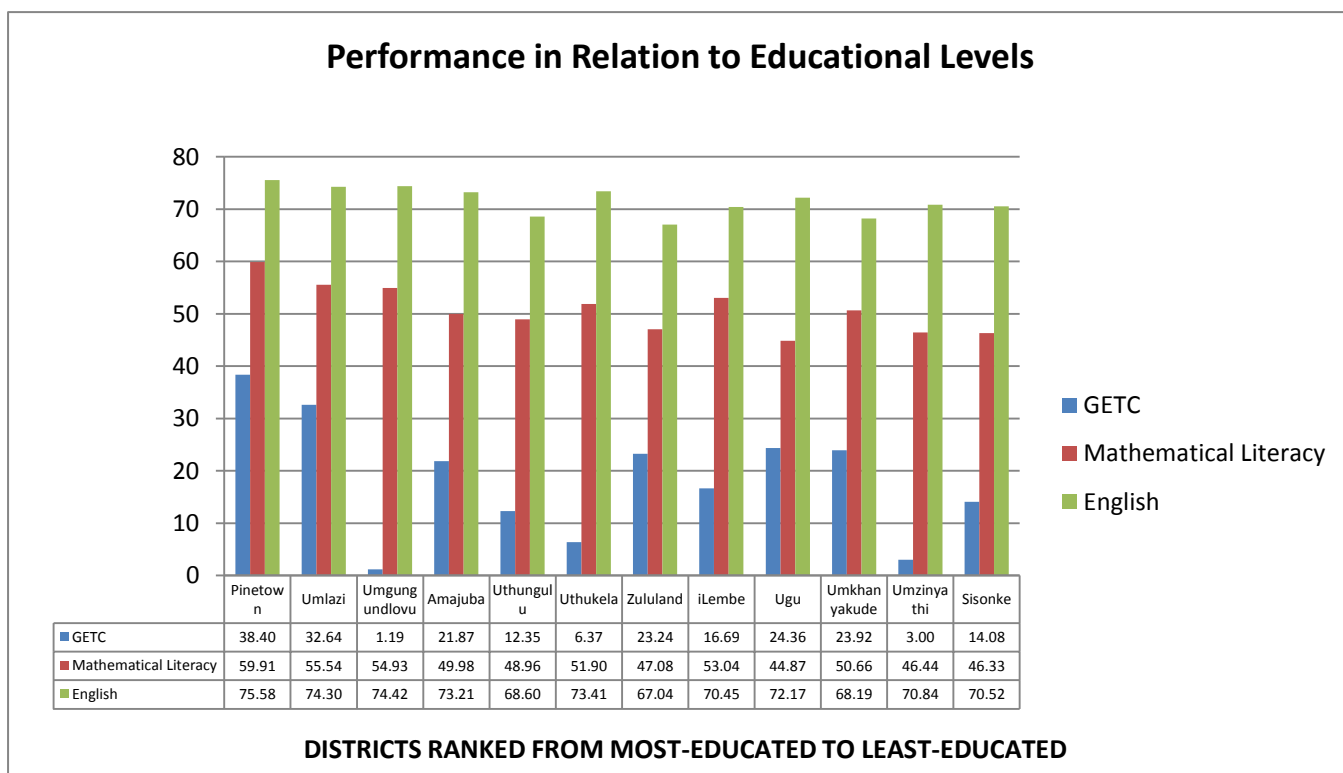


Figure 6.3: Performance in Relation to Educational Levels per District

6.4.1 General Education and Training Certificate and Educational Levels

The district with the lowest percentage (50.35%) of people with less than a grade 12 level of education was eThekweni, and the district with the highest percentage (74.92%) of people with less than a grade 12 level of education was Sisonke. A comparison between the percentages of General Education and Training Certificates achieved and the educational level of each district shows that the two areas in the eThekweni district were overwhelmingly the areas which attained the highest percentages of certificates in the GETC: ABET examinations. Despite Umgungundlovu's being the district with the second best educational level in the province of KZN, it was the worst-performing district overall in terms of percentage of General Education and Training Certificates achieved. Sisonke, the district with the worst level of education, outperformed Umzinyathi, Uthukela, Uthungulu and Umgungundlovu. Notably, Uthungulu and Uthukela were among the top five districts in terms of their levels of education, but in terms of their performance they were among the worst-performing districts, achieving an average of only 12.35% and 6.37% GETC certificates respectively.

6.4.2 Mathematical Literacy Results and Educational Levels

The comparison between the Mathematical Literacy results and the educational levels per district is no different to the aforementioned results, in terms of the eThekwini district, being the district with the best educational level, achieving the best results. The Umgungundlovu district had the second best educational level and achieved the third highest pass rate in the English examinations over the period 2011 to 2013. The Sisonke and Umzinyathi districts were the districts with the lowest educational levels, and these two districts were among the three worst-performing districts. The worst-performing district in Mathematical Literacy was Ugu; however, this district had better educational levels than those of Umkhanyakude, Umzinyathi and Sisonke.

6.4.3 English Results and Educational Levels

When comparing the English results and the educational levels per district, Umgungundlovu features as the district with both the second best educational level and the second best performance. The eThekwini district had the lowest percentage of people with less than a grade 12 level of education, and the Pinetown area recorded the best performance in English over the three years. The Uthungulu and Zululand districts appear toward the top of the order in terms of their educational levels; however, these districts were among the worst-performing districts overall in the English examinations. In contrast, the Umzinyathi and Sisonke districts were in this instance the districts with the highest percentage of people with less than a grade 12 level of education, yet they were not the worst-performing districts in these examinations.

6.4.4 Summary of Performance in Relation to Educational Levels

The comparison between the performance and the educational levels per district shows that the two districts with the highest educational levels (eThekwini and Umgungundlovu) also had the highest performance (except in the case of the GETC: ABET certificates). In regard to the other districts, however, a consistent pattern between educational levels and performance is not seen.

There is no steady pattern between low education and low performance, as the district with the lowest educational level (Sisonke) outperformed a number of districts in the case of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved and in English. However, in the case of Mathematical Literacy, this district outperformed only one district. The district with the

second lowest level of education, Umzinyathi, also displayed an inconsistent pattern as it featured among the bottom three achievers for Mathematical Literacy and for the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved, yet much higher up the order for English.

When the districts were ranked according to their educational level, the Zululand district appeared in the middle of the dataset. According to the performance for the years 2011 to 2013, this district achieved the worst pass rate in the English examinations, placed ninth out of the 12 districts for Mathematical Literacy, and placed fifth out of the 12 district for the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved.

Baker et al. (2000) studied how a variety of community characteristics affected the academic scores of eighth-graders across public schools in Virginia. The results showed that community educational levels and students' socio-economic status were the strongest predictors of academic success. While this seems the case in some instances in this study, the results did not consistently show that low district educational levels equaled poor performance. In a similar study conducted by Shumow et al. (1999), the findings showed that students who lived in neighbourhoods with low average household income and lower adult educational levels performed worse in school than students who lived in neighbourhoods with more socio-economic resources. The study was conducted over three years and it was observed that the older the children became, the more their performance was influenced by the community in which they lived. It is noteworthy that the findings of the study conducted by Shumow et al. (1999) corroborate with the findings in this study relating to some of the districts, where districts with lower educational levels performed worse than districts with the highest educational levels.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter Six has discussed the performance of districts in relation to the three socio-economic variables, namely average household income, unemployment levels and the educational levels. The findings were consistent with the theories and findings of previous studies in the literature review chapter with regard to the eThekweni district. This suggests that high average income, high employment rates and high educational levels are associated with high GETC achievement at a district level. However, low average household income, low employment rates and low educational levels are not necessarily associated with poor GETC performance at a district level. The next chapter concludes the study by highlighting the main limitations encountered, and also puts forth recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated adult learning centre performance in the General Education and Training Certificate in relation to district socio-economic profiles in KZN. Data for the study was collected from two sources, namely Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, and Statistics SA. The data obtained from Umalusi consisted of the official GETC: ABET examination results for the years 2011 to 2013. The data from Statistics SA, drawn from the 2011 census, gave a breakdown of the average annual household income, the unemployment/employment levels, and the educational attainments of each district in KZN. The data was then sorted and analysed, and the results presented and discussed in chapters five and six. This chapter of the research will reach conclusions based on the main results obtained. Additionally, the limitations of the research will be mentioned and recommendations will be made for future research. I will then reflect on what I have learnt from the research process.

7.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS

The major findings of the study were intended to respond to the research questions as stated in Chapter One.

Research Question 1: What is the performance of the province as a whole in the GETC: ABET examinations?

A total of 56 226 adult learners wrote the GETC: ABET examinations over the period 2011 to 2013 in the province of KZN. Of those writing the examinations, 12 207 (22.59%) were successful at satisfying the requirements necessary for the awarding of the certificate. More than half (58.38%) of the students who wrote the examinations in this period did not meet the requirements for the awarding of the certificate as they had too few subjects. The portion of students who failed all subjects amounted to an alarming 19.03% (10 700 students).

At district level, Pinetown was the district that had the highest number of candidates sit for the GETC: ABET examinations over the three years studied. A total of 11 090 candidates from this district wrote the examinations, which is almost 20% of the total number of learners in the province who wrote during the years 2011 to 2013. Of the 11 090 candidates who wrote the examinations, 4 259 (38.4%) met the requirements for the awarding of the

certificate. This was the highest percentage achieved during the three years. The Umlazi district had the second largest number of candidates (6 789) write the GETC: ABET examinations during the period studied. Of these candidates, 2 216 (32.64%) were successful at achieving their certificate. Therefore, collectively within the eThekweni municipal district, 17 879 learners wrote the examinations, and of these candidates 6 475 (36.22%) were successful in meeting the requirements for the awarding of the GETC: ABET certificate. A total of 31.80% of the candidates who wrote the examinations in KZN during the years 2011 to 2013 were from the eThekweni municipal district. This is far more than that of any of the other districts in KZN.

Amongst the districts, the Umgungundlovu district was the worst-performing district with regard to the achievement of certificates. Of the 2 953 candidates who wrote the examination from 2011 to 2013, only thirty-five (1.19%) met the requirements for the awarding of the GETC: ABET certificate.

A total of 40 639 learners wrote the English examination from 2011 to 2013. The majority of the students (72.02%) passed those examinations. Over the three-year period, in all districts, more than 65% of the learners achieved a mark higher than the required 40%. Most districts achieved an above-70% pass in English, with the Pinetown district achieving the highest-percentage (75.58%) pass rate in the three years and Zululand the lowest-percentage (67.04%) pass rate. Overall, the percentages of learners in each district who passed English were closely grouped.

Concerning the Mathematical Literacy examinations in KZN, a total of 42 982 adult learners wrote the examination across the 12 districts in the three-year period from 2011 to 2013. The failure rate for these examinations was high, with close to half (47.83%) of the learners in the province failing the Mathematical Literacy examinations. A comparison between the districts reveals that no district was able to achieve a pass rate in this subject above 60% over the three-year period. Yet again, Pinetown was the top-performing district, achieving a pass rate of 59.91%. The Ugu district was recorded as the poorest-performing district, where 55.13% of the adult learners who had written the Mathematical Literacy examinations during the period 2011 to 2013 had failed.

From these results, we can conclude that the overall performance of the KZN province in the GETC examinations was weak, in that only 22.59% of candidates achieved certificates. A further 58.38% passed some subjects, but not enough to achieve the certificate. Given that

students are part-time and might not enter for all the subjects in the same year, might indicate a cumulative process through which students achieve the certificate over two or more years. Alarming, 19.03% of candidates, totaling more than 10 000 learners, passed no subjects at all. The overall performance in English and Mathematical Literacy indicates that adult learners perform better at English than Mathematical Literacy. The pass rate of 72.02% in English is evidence of this and indicates that this learning area is a strong area of teaching and learning in the province, while the pass rate of 52.17% in Mathematical Literacy shows that this is a weak area of teaching and learning in the province.

Research Question 2: What are the patterns of performance among adult learning centres in the GETC: ABET examinations?

The highest percentage of GETC: ABET certificates awarded was in 2013; however, this was not significantly higher than the other two years. A similar pattern was noted amongst the districts where the best year of performance in terms of the number of GETC: ABET certificates awarded was 2013. This is with the exception of the Umgungundlovu district, which experienced its best year in 2011. While there was a decrease in performance from 2011 to 2012, there was a marked improvement from 2012 to 2013. In some instances there was an increase of more than 10% from 2012 to 2013.

Notably, the Pinetown district was the top-performing district in all three assessment areas studied. The Umlazi district was the second best performing district in both the GETC certificates attained and Mathematical Literacy, and the third best in English examinations. It was also noted that the Umgungundlovu district, despite its exceptionally poor performance at the achieving of GETC: ABET certificates, achieved the second best results in the English and the third best in the Mathematical Literacy examinations. The worst-performing district in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates (1.19%) was Umgungundlovu. In English, Zululand was worst-performing (67.04%), while in Mathematical Literacy, Ugu performed worst (44.87%).

While the adult learning centres are not producing many candidates who satisfy the full requirement for the GETC: ABET certificate, the majority of the adult learners are meeting the 40% pass requirements for English and Mathematical Literacy. This is consistent with the current national ABET provision data which indicates that most candidates collect a few learning area certificates but very few adults acquire the full GETC qualification (DHET,

2014). The performance of the adult learning centres in the English examinations was generally better than the performance in Mathematical Literacy.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the examination performance of adult learning centres and the socio-economic profiles of the districts in which these centres are situated?

In response to this question, the study examined data related to three socio-economic indicators for districts in KZN: average annual household income, employment, and education. Here I summarize district GETC performance in relation to each indicator in turn. When the average income earned per district was compared to performance over the three years in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates attained, the English examination results and the Mathematical Literacy examination results, the district with the highest average household income (eThekweni, incorporating Pinetown and Umlazi) was in all instances the top performer. Umgungundlovu was the district with the second highest average household income, but according to the GETC data was the worst-performing district in terms of GETC: ABET certificates achieved. However, it did have the second best performance in the English examination and the third best in the Mathematical Literacy examination. Umkhanyakude and Umzinyathi were among the three lowest-earning districts. However, there were instances where they outperformed several other districts. The district with the lowest average household income (Sisonke) was never, although near the bottom in some instances, the worst-performing district.

The findings concerning the eThekweni district show similarity with the results of Honey (2015), who found that the districts with the higher income had the higher test scores. However, the findings concerning the remaining districts differ from the results of Honey (2015), where in almost all instances in that study the districts with the lowest income had the lowest test scores. It is worth noting that the findings of this study do, however, match the findings of Cheers (as cited in Considine and Zappalá, 2002), who found that students from non-metropolitan areas are more likely to have lower educational outcomes in terms of their academic performance than students from metropolitan areas; this is seen consistently where the learning centres in the eThekweni metropolitan area outperformed those in all the other districts, and where eThekweni and Umgungundlovu, the two most urbanized districts, outperformed the other districts in English and Mathematical Literacy.

When the unemployment level per district was compared to performance over the three years in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates attained, as well as the English and Mathematical Literacy examination results, the district with the lowest unemployment rate (eThekweni) was in all instances the top performer. It was noted that higher unemployment rates did not necessarily mean lower academic performance, as was the case with the two districts at the lower end of the unemployment spectrum, Uthukela and Umkhanyakude, whose performances were in a number of instances better than those of other districts. According to Gandel (2011), learners in communities with high unemployment rates tended to have lower test scores. As seen in this study, this was not always necessarily the case in the districts in KZN, as there were districts with high unemployment levels that performed comparatively well.

When the educational level per district was compared to performance over the three years in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates attained, the English examination results and the Mathematical Literacy examination results, the district with the highest educational levels (eThekweni) was in all instances the top performer. It was, however, noted that this pattern of high educational levels did not always mean high educational outcomes, and low levels of education did not always imply low educational achievement. A case in point is the Ugu district, which had the fourth lowest educational level but was among the top three performers in terms of the percentage of GETC: ABET certificates achieved. Studies conducted by Baker et al. (2000) showed that community educational levels were the strongest predictors of academic success. Once again, the findings of this study did not necessarily agree fully with the study of Baker et al.

Overall, the findings of this study best compare with the conclusions of the research conducted by Hugo et al. (2010), who examined the matric (grade 12) pass rate in relation to the poverty index score of each of the districts in KZN. The results showed that Pinetown, Umlazi and Umgungundlovu, the three districts which were the lowest on the poverty index score, were ultimately the districts who achieved the best matric pass rates in 2009. In addition, the research conducted by Hugo et al. (2010) found that there was a positive but very weak correlation between poverty and the pass rate. This implied that the poverty of the communities around the schools did influence the matric pass rate. However, there were exceptions, as some schools in the poor communities achieved good results and, similarly, there were schools in the more affluent communities that did not perform well. These exceptions at both ends of the continuum were also evident where districts with favourable

socio-economic profiles performed poorly and in some instances districts with lower socio-economic profiles performed better.

7.3 SYSTEMS THINKING AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK REVISITED

This study adopted a systems thinking framework in order to investigate the relationship between the performance and the socio-economic profile of adult learning centres in KZN. The “core concept of a system is one of relationship between components, which together comprise a whole” (Watson & Watson, 2011, p.65), and using systems thinking enables one to gain an understanding of a system. The socio-economic components of this study, namely average annual household income, levels of unemployment and levels of education, were used to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between these components and the academic performance of adult learning centres at a district level. A systems thinking framework was apt as it enabled the viewing of adult learning centres from a broad perspective that included relationships and patterns, as opposed to the focusing exclusively on the performance of learning centres.

Systems thinking is always concerned with the context and environment in which the system operates (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012). As seen in this study, each district operated from a unique socio-economic background, and the use of this framework allowed for each district to be analysed in relation to its context or socio-economic profile. The study indicated that there is some relation between the interlocking systems of household income, employment and educational achievement on the one hand, and GETC examination performance on the other, in the most advantaged districts. Candidates in the districts with the highest household income and employment levels, and highest educational levels, were likely to perform better in the GETC examinations than candidates from the other districts. However, it is important to recognize that this relation is not necessarily a causal one. The district with the highest household income, employment level and educational level might generate a context of enabling factors which contribute directly to better examination performance, such as better-qualified educators and more learning resources. However, such factors lie beyond the scope of the study and require further investigation.

According to academic literature, interdependency and interconnectedness are also key concepts of systems thinking. All systems consist of interconnected, interacting elements and, as such, changes in one part will result in an effect on another part, and transformations to any part of the system will have an influence on the entire system (Green, 2013). This was

characterized in this study by how a change in a socio-economic indicator had a direct effect on the changes in performance. For example, in this study it was evident that adult learning centers embedded in affluent districts produced more GETC certificates. Conversely, adult learning centres found in adverse socio-economic environments produced somewhat unsatisfactory performances.

One might argue that the systems that impact upon adult education centre performance include some that were not examined in this study. These might include institutional systems around governance, curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment at various levels, including macro-level (National Education Department), meso-level (provincial, district and circuit levels) and micro-level (adult learning centres). Another set of systems might relate to culture and language. To gain a fuller systemic picture of GETC examination performance, it would be necessary to investigate how these institutional systems articulate with the wider socio-economic and cultural context.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON RESULTS

If community characteristics are strongly associated with students' achievements (Holloway, 2004), efforts to improve the results of underperforming adult learning centres or districts must focus on the communities as a whole, and not just on the adult learning centres. In addition, the improvement of students' achievement will be limited if reform affects focus solely on students in the classroom. Instead, policy makers must also look at the broader picture. They must consider how to increase the community's capacity to support its youth and adults so that their experience outside of school will enhance the teaching and learning inside the academic environment (Baker et al., 2000).

As seen in this study, there was no distinct pattern in terms of performance and the socio-economic profiles of districts. This indicates that each district is unique and efforts to improve the performance of each district should be based on the unique characteristics of that district or community.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following were considered limitations of the study:

- The study only draws on quantitative data. The use of a mixed-methods approach would have added richness and deep insights to the findings.

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- Not all the 2014 performance results were available from Umalusi, and therefore the most recent performances of adult learning centres could not be included in the study.
 - The use of only academic results to measure performance is narrow, as it does not give the whole picture with regard to performance.
 - There was a lack of available contemporary research in the field of adult education, particularly pertaining to performance and its relationship to socio-economic variables. This made it difficult to compare the findings of this research with studies of a similar nature.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The recommendations for future research are as follows:

- Research can be conducted to compare the performance of each of the different provinces in SA. In this way, one would be able to ascertain whether the performance of KZN is aligned with nationally.
- A study can be conducted using a mixed methodology and a sample of adult learners in each district to establish whether socio-economic factors are influencing their academic performance. This type of study, via triangulation of results, will provide a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the factors which affect the performance of adult learners.
- Gibson (2002, p. 3) found that while “neighbourhoods do influence academic outcomes, neighbourhoods determine only a small portion of the variation in individual outcomes, and that family background matters more”. Future studies can compare family background of students to their academic performance to determine the relationship that exists between these two variables.
- The use of solely academic results to measure performance is myopic and does not provide a comprehensive picture with regard to performance. Future research should include other variables, for example, school leadership, teacher motivation and availability of resources.

7.7 REFLECTIONS ON MY OWN LEARNING IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

During this process I have learnt much about research. The following are a few of the points which sum up my experiences and lessons during my research journey:

- **The value of a sound research proposal**

The research proposal acted as a compass guiding the journey of the research. Having a well-planned, well thought-out proposal mapped out a route for the study. However, I also learnt that the proposal was not cast in stone and events and processes that unfolded called for rethinking of the original plan. For example, initially the plan was to use statistical tests to establish correlations between the performance of each district and its socio-economic profile. However, the data sets that were obtained were inappropriate to conduct such statistical tests.

- **Importance of reliable data**

I have learnt that it is extremely important to obtain reliable data, as incorrect data could result in inaccurate findings and conclusions. I have also learnt that data acquired even from reliable sources must be checked. By checking and cross-checking data, one can detect errors, and if the data appears to be nonsensical it should be verified.

- **Inability to reduce performance of adult learning centres to socio-economic determinants**

There are many factors that influence academic performance. This study looked at three such factors. However, I have learnt from this study that the performance of adult learning centres cannot be reduced to socio-economic factors alone; the sum of factors involved creates a far more complicated situation, which would require deeper analysis. it is far more complicated than that which will require deeper analysis.

- **The importance of being passionate about the area of research**

Being passionate about my research is a driving force as it enabled me to be continuously motivated and interested in the research. This passion fuelled the determination to reach a conclusion based on the research questions.

- **The value of being a lifelong learner**

This research process has taught me that there is a great wealth of knowledge and experiences in the world and that it is important, especially as an educator, to engage with and keep abreast with what is occurring both locally and globally. I have also come to realize that the problems and experiences I have as an educator are not unique, and that by engaging with literature I could be exposed to new methods or solutions in education.

7.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the purpose of this research was to investigate the performance of adult learning centres in the GETC examinations in relation to the socio-economic profiles of the districts in KZN. The findings indicate that, within the province of KZN, a very small portion of the adults who registered for the GETC: ABET qualification met the requirements for the full GETC qualification each year. Concerning the relationship between performance and the socio-economic profiles of districts, it was interesting to note that the district with the best socio-economic profile was in all instances the top-performing district. However, the district with the worst socio-economic indicators was not necessarily the worst-performing district.

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ACTS OF PARLIAMENT

Republic of South Africa. Adult Basic Education and Training Act 52, 2000.

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

Republic of South Africa. The Continuing Education and Training Act 16, 2006.

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



15 May 2015

Mrs Lavern Green 210551927
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear M's Green

Protocol reference number: HSS/0441/015M

Project title: Investigating adult learning performance in General Education and Training Certificate in relation to district socio-economic profiles in KwaZulu-Natal.

Rectangular Stamp

No Risk Approval

In response to your application dated 30 April 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/sx

cc Supervisor: Dr Peter Rule
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu, Ms T Khumalo & Mr S Mthembu

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