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How Can Value Elicitation in Adult Basic Education Support Learners' Success in Goal-Setting Policy?

Alma H Biba, *University of Florida*

Michael P Johnson, Jr.

HOW CAN VALUE ELICITATION IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION SUPPORT LEARNERS' SUCCESS IN GOAL-SETTING POLICY?

Alma H. Biba

Michael P. Johnson, PhD

**McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies
University of Massachusetts Boston**

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Background

- Adult Basic Education
- Learner Goal Setting
- Federal and State Accountability Requirements

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Problem Statement

- ABE learner outcomes, represented as 'goals', reflect an emphasis on return-on-investment strategies
- Currently, a greater emphasis is placed on that subset of adult learners' goals that are easily measured, attainable, and that are associated with public outcomes.
- Current performance standards often do not capture learners' self-defined goals.



Purpose

Reveal and disentangle the conflicting preferences fueled by outcome-based accountability requirements

Understand and examine ABE learners' and teachers' values associated with the goals setting policy

Provides valuable insights for ABE local stakeholders and policy makers

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Significance

In the last two decades Mass DOE has made learners' goal setting and outcome assessment a centerpiece of data reporting

ABE learners' self-defined goals should drive learners' success and are often missing from current ABE accountability measures.

Gives a voice to the study population & influences the ongoing debate about whether and how adult learners' voice could be incorporated into accountability.

WHO ARE ABE LEARNERS?

Approximately 2.5 million adult learners per years are enrolled in ABE;
This number represents only 6% of the estimated population that
are in need of services

In Massachusetts, in FY2012, 21,391 students were served. 60% of the student body is
comprised by ESOL Learners

The wait-list in Massachusetts is almost as long as the number of students served –
17,145 adults are still waiting to enroll in one of the ABE classes

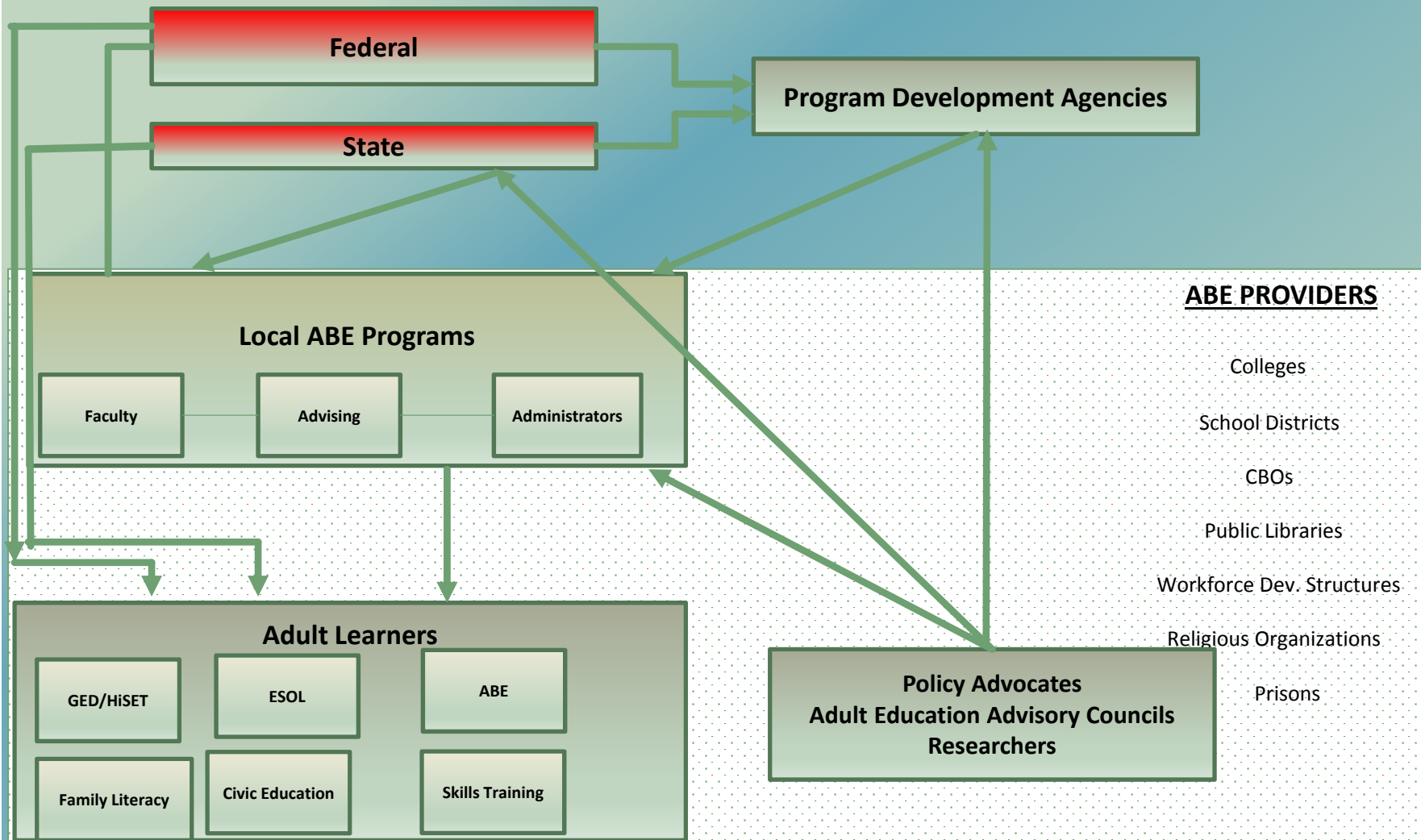
“Workers who study”

Mostly women

Low-income

Mostly immigrants

ABE STAKEHOLDERS



Student's Name: _____					Column A Student Goal Sheet		Date: _____	
Countable Outcomes Requiring Valid and Reliable Data/Documentation								
Student Goal	Main	Date Set	Date Met	Quarterly Follow Up		Definition	Required Documentation	
1a. Enter Employment				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Currently unemployed student gets a job and earns wages one quarter after the goal has been set.	Data match if SSN is provided Survey student if SSN is not provided	
1b. Retain New Employment				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Student who gets a job continues to be employed in the third quarter after the Retain Employment goal has been met.	Data match if SSN is provided Survey student if SSN is not provided	
2. Retain Current Employment				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Student who is currently employed continues to be employed in the third quarter after the Retain Current Employment goal has been set.	Data match if SSN is provided Survey student if SSN is not provided	
3. Obtain GED				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Achieves score that qualifies for GED during enrollment; or up to 8/5 in prior fiscal year ending 6/30; or after 8/5 in current fiscal year up to 6/30.	Data match regardless of whether or not SSN is provided	
4. Complete some adult HS credits and/or MCAS tests toward ADP				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Achieves or successfully completes required high school course work for an Adult Diploma Program or External Diploma Program.	Transcript from adult high school	
5. Obtain ADP				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Achieves high school diploma granted by local school committee. Must meet state competency determination as well as local requirements.	Survey student to obtain either: (1) copy of diploma; (2) student's transcripts signed by the principal or director; (3) student's permanent record card.	
6a. Enter ABE Transition to Community College program				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Student in a Community Adult Learning Center program enrolls in a program specifically designed to enhance a student's chance of succeeding in post-secondary education for at least 3 months in duration.	Copy of an acceptance letter or other written verification from transition program on the school's letterhead.	
6 b. Complete ABE Transition to Community College program				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Student in a Transitions to Community College program successfully completes a transitional program of at least 3 months in duration. Meets requirements as determined by the program that indicates that a student can be enrolled as a matriculating student in a program leading to a certificate, certification, or Associates degree.	Signed letter or other document on the school's letterhead confirming enrollment.	
1. Obtain More Satisfying/ Appropriate Employment				Jan-Mar Jul-Sep	Apr-Jun Oct-Dec	Student obtains a job that is better suited to the individual's interests, skills, time schedule, prior training. Improved employment may also provide personal growth, career path, better or more healthy	Student documents this goal by demonstrating improved employment by either: (1) providing evidence in writing, or a portfolio, or a video, or an audio tape,	

MASSACHUSETTS' ABE GOAL INDICATORS

Column A (Federal NRS Outcomes)	Column B	Column C
Enter/Retain Employment	Participate in community activities	Be removed from public assistance
Obtain more Satisfying Employment	Buy a domicile	Retain current job by meeting new requirements
Obtain HiSET	Start a business	Apply for a job
Enter Community College	Register to Vote	Go on a job interview
Apply for U.S. Citizenship	Get a drivers' license	Learn about debit and credit card use

- Quantifiable
 - Promotes 'creaming' of SMART Goals
- Difficult instrument to be used with the learner
 - Limits the necessary dialogue
 - Ignores mutable, changing goals

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

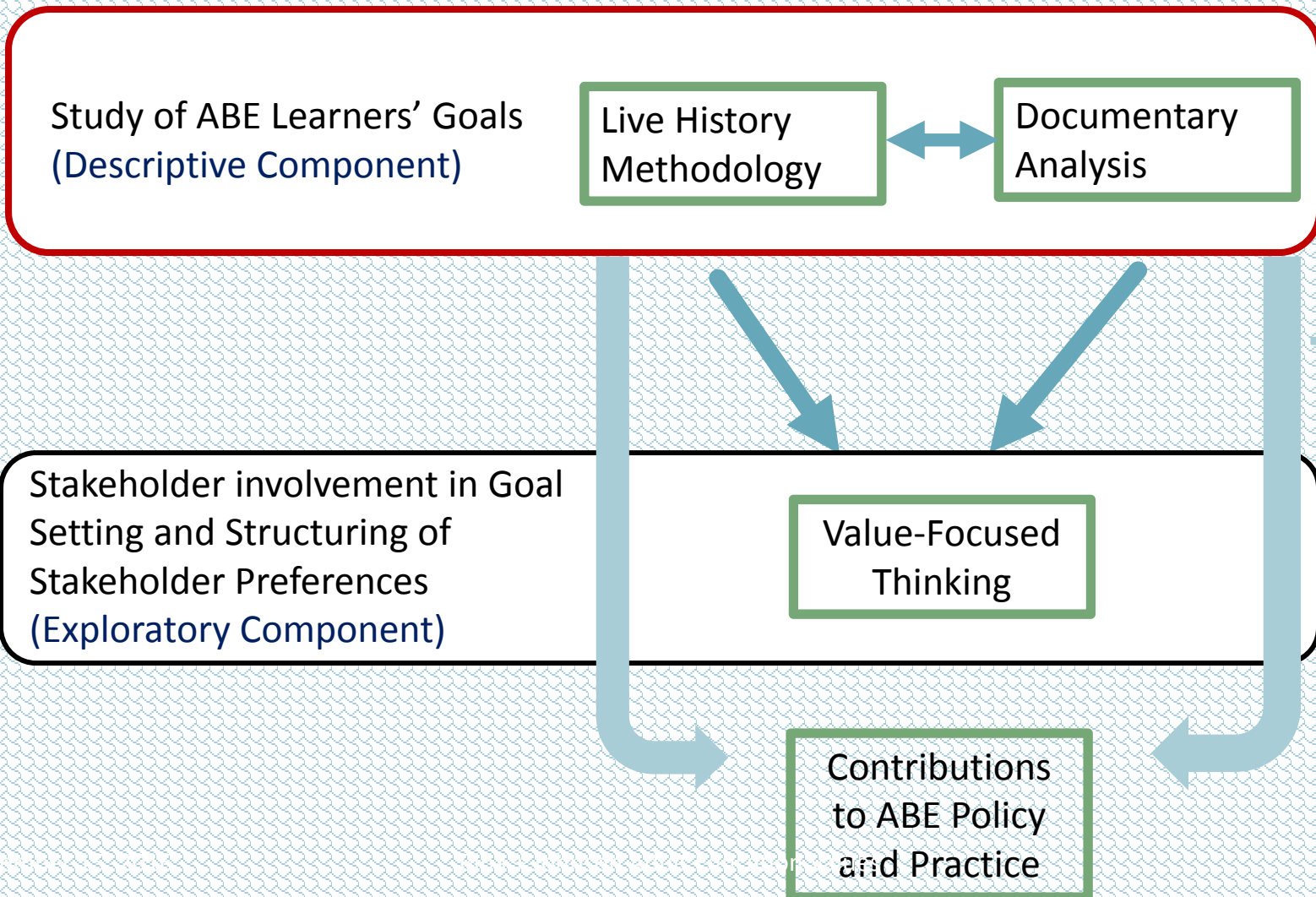
Which goals do learners in ABE programs see as fundamental and how congruent are ABE stakeholders' perspectives on learner goal setting?

- 1) What are the goals that ABE adult learners set while participating in ABE local programs? Are these goals met one year after participation?**
- 2) Which goal-related objectives do ABE learners and teachers see as means to an end?**
- 3) How congruent are ABE stakeholders' perspectives on learner goal setting?**

STUDY DESIGN SUMMARY

Conceptual Framework

Analytic Method



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Proposition 1: ABE Learners Goals are intrinsic factors that affect motivation, retention and gain
- Proposition 2: ABE Learner Goal Setting could be envisioned as a decision problem between stakeholders whose conflicting interests could be articulated and negotiated.

Research Questions

- Which goals do participants in ABE programs see as fundamental and how congruent are ABE stakeholders' perspectives on learner goal setting?

Research Design: Mixed-Method

- **Descriptive phase:** life history methodology and documentary analysis to explore internal and external determinants that influence learner goal setting.
- **Exploratory phase:** decision analytic framework to identify ABE learners' and teachers' preferences and gain insights into stakeholder involvement.

STUDY LOGISTICS: DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENT



12 ABE
learners: 10
foreign-
born, 2 US-
Born

STUDY LOGISTICS: DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENT

12 ABE
Learners; 10
Foreign-
Born; 2 US
Born

6
Caucasians
2 Hispanics,
2 Asians, 2
African; all
living in
Worcester,
MA

STUDY LOGISTICS: DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENT

12 ABE Learners,
age 18 and
above; 10
Foreign-Born; 2
US Born

6 Caucasians,
2 Hispanics, 2
Asians, 2
African; all
living in
Worcester,
MA

Semi-
structured, in-
depth
interviews with
12 ABE Learners

STUDY LOGISTICS: DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENT

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Learners, age
18 and
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Worcester,
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Semi-
structured,
in-depth
interviews
with 12 ABE
Learners

Observation
of adult
learner
portfolios
and program
documents
pertaining to
learner' goal
setting

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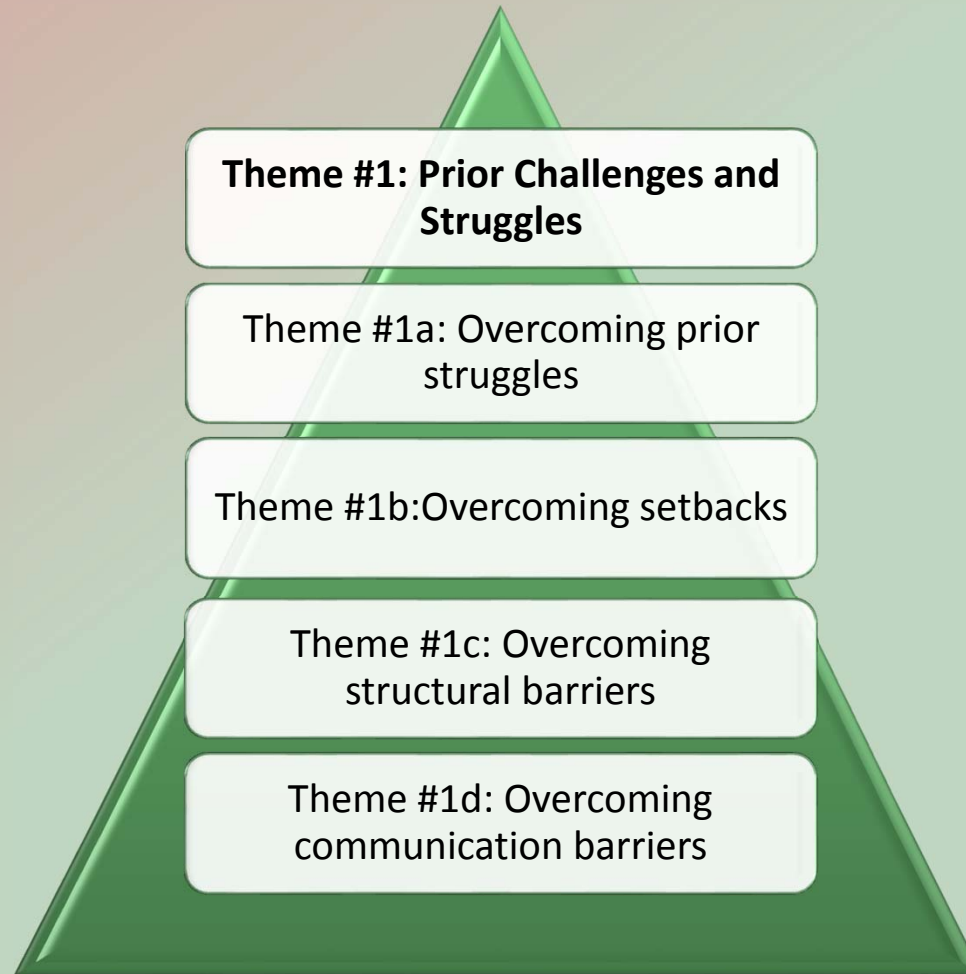
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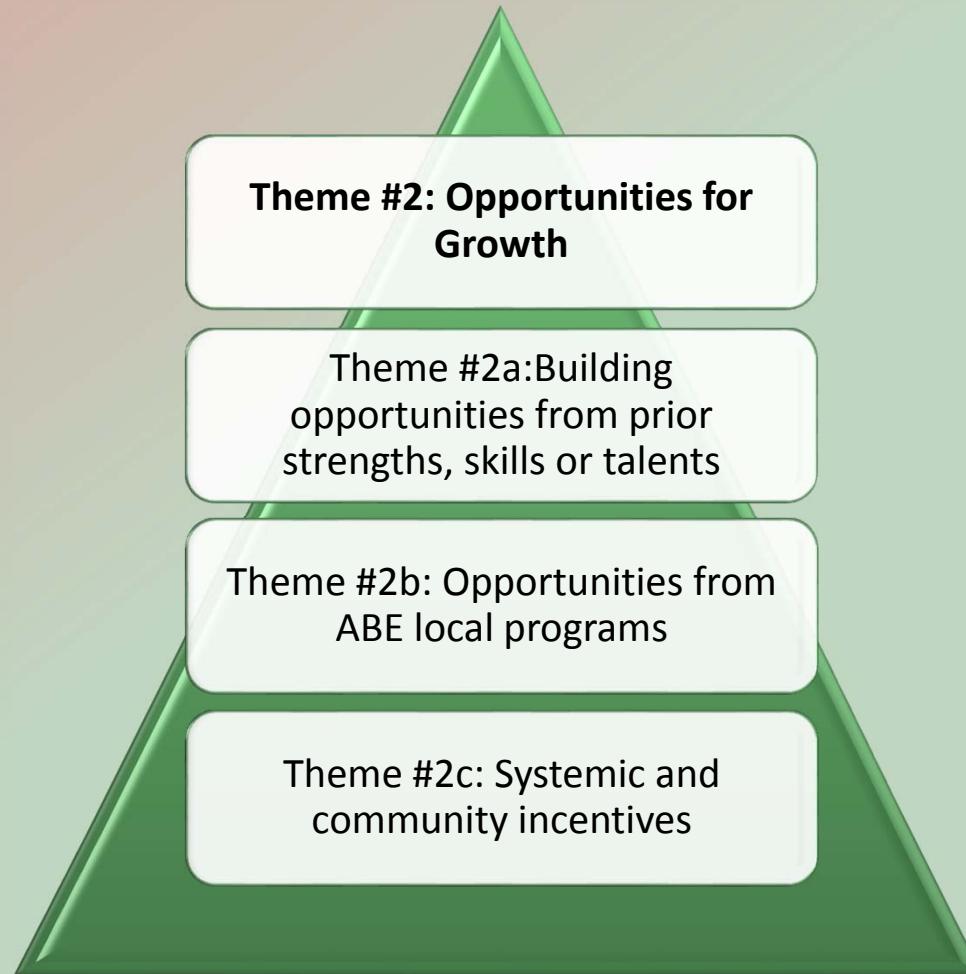
Observation
of adult
learner
portfolios
and program
documents
pertaining to
learner' goal
setting

Focus on
perspectives
of ABE adult
learners as
they set and
meet their
goals

ABE LEARNERS' GOALS: DETERMINANTS



ABE LEARNERS' GOALS: DETERMINANTS



ABE LEARNERS' GOALS: DETERMINANTS



STUDY DESIGN SUMMARY

Conceptual Framework

Analytic Method

Study of ABE Learners' Goals
(Descriptive Component)

Live History
Methodology

Documentary
Analysis

Stakeholder involvement in Goal
Setting and Structuring of
Stakeholder Preferences
(Exploratory Component)

Value-Focused
Thinking

Contributions
to ABE Policy
and Practice

WHAT STEPS ARE INVOLVED IN REVEALING AND MAPPING OBJECTIVES?

Value Focused Thinking Methodology: What steps are involved in revealing stakeholders objectives

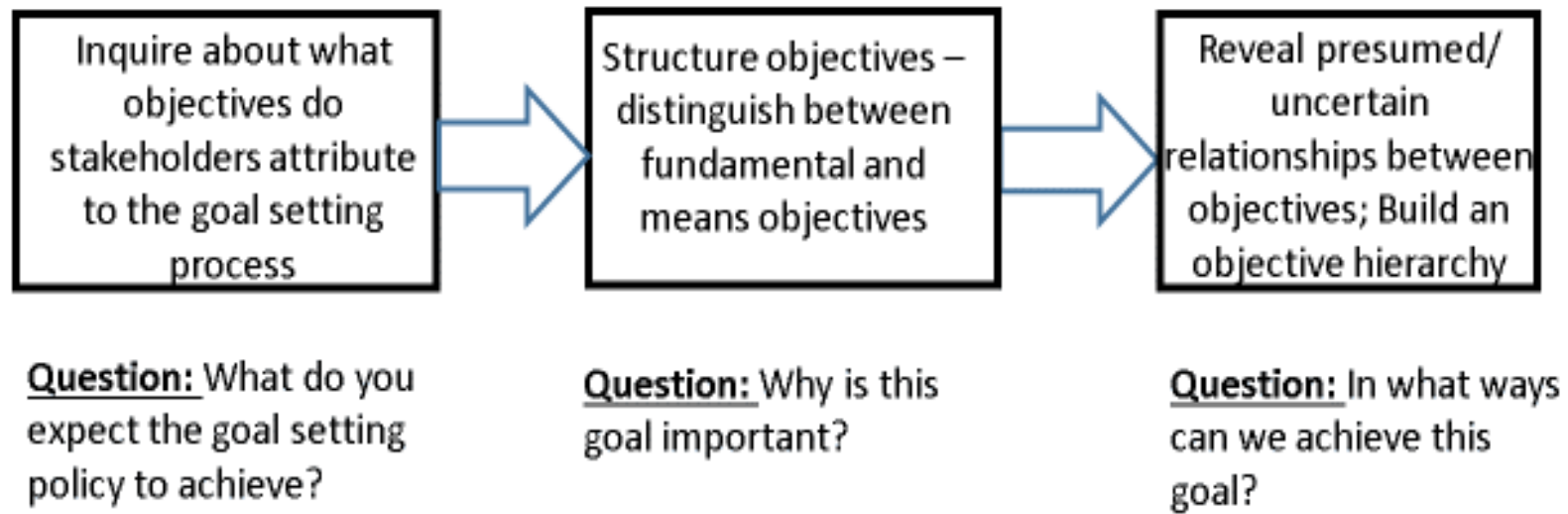


Figure 2: Map of steps involved in VFT methodology (adapted from Sheng et al., 2010)

STUDY LOGISTICS: EXPLORATORY COMPONENT

Ex-post
analysis of
interviews
with ABE
learners, to
extrapolate
values
associated
with their
goals

Value-
Focused
Thinking
Workshop
with 9 ABE
Teachers

STUDY LOGISTICS: EXPLORATORY COMPONENT ABE LEARNERS

Ex-post
analysis of
interviews
with ABE
learners, to
extrapolate
values
associated
with their
goals

VFT
methodology
performed for
a
representative
sample,
deriving
preliminary
finding

Analysis
repeated for
more
students, until
saturation

Aggregated
value
structures and
modelled a
means-end
network and a
fundamental
hierarchy

Investigated
current
metrics
associated
with learners'
goals

STUDY LOGISTICS: EXPLORATORY COMPONENT ABE TEACHERS

9 ABE
teachers
participated
in a value-
focused
thinking
workshop

Data
analysis of
in-person
discussions ,
research-
only analysis
sessions,
and multiple
rounds of
drafts of
objective
hierarchies

Modelled a
means-ends
network and
a
fundamental
values'
hierarchy

Investigated
current
metrics
associated
with ABE
teachers'
values

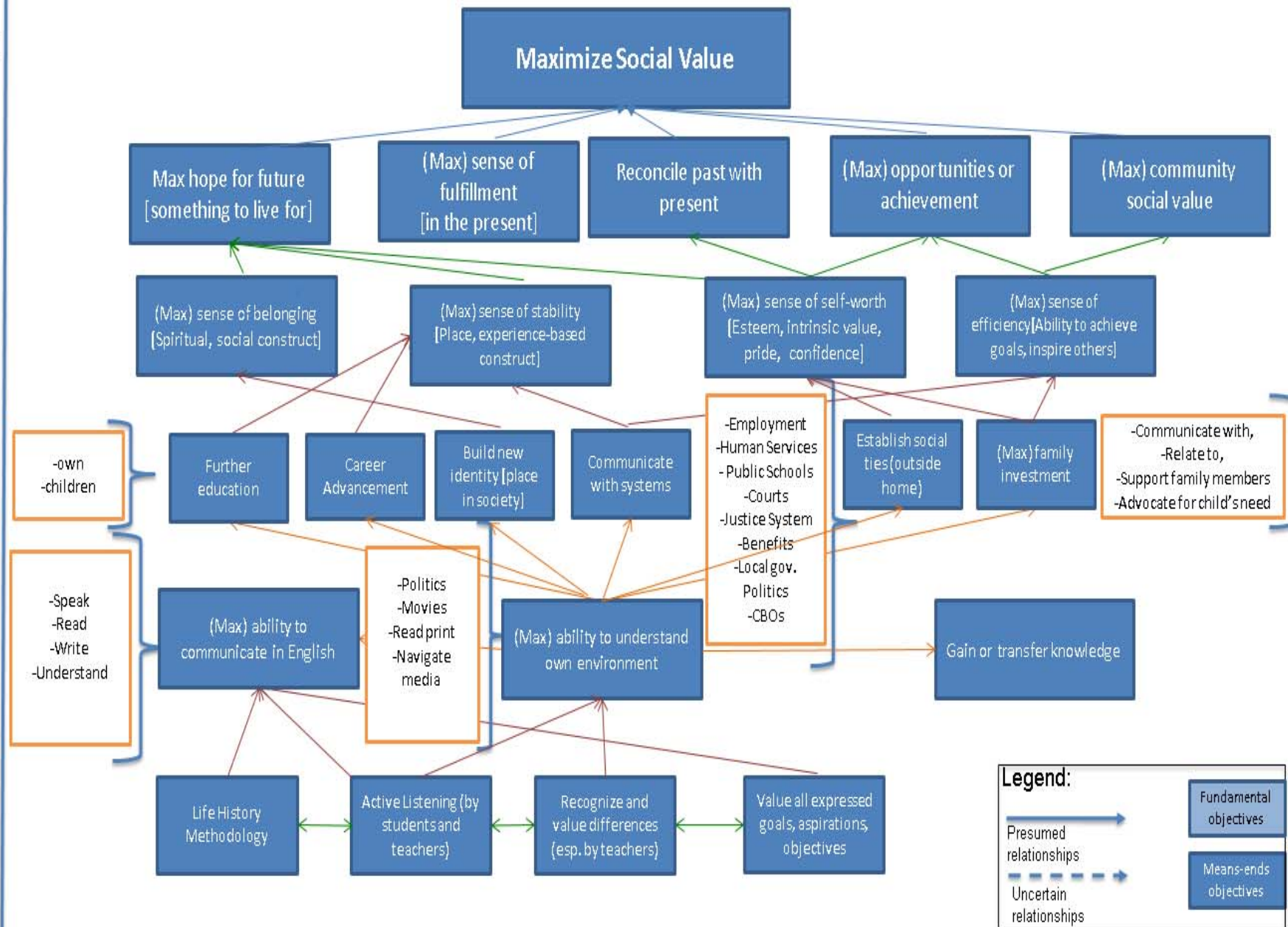
Reflected on
congruence
of ABE
learners'
and
teachers'
values

ABE LEARNERS' MEANS-ENDS NETWORK

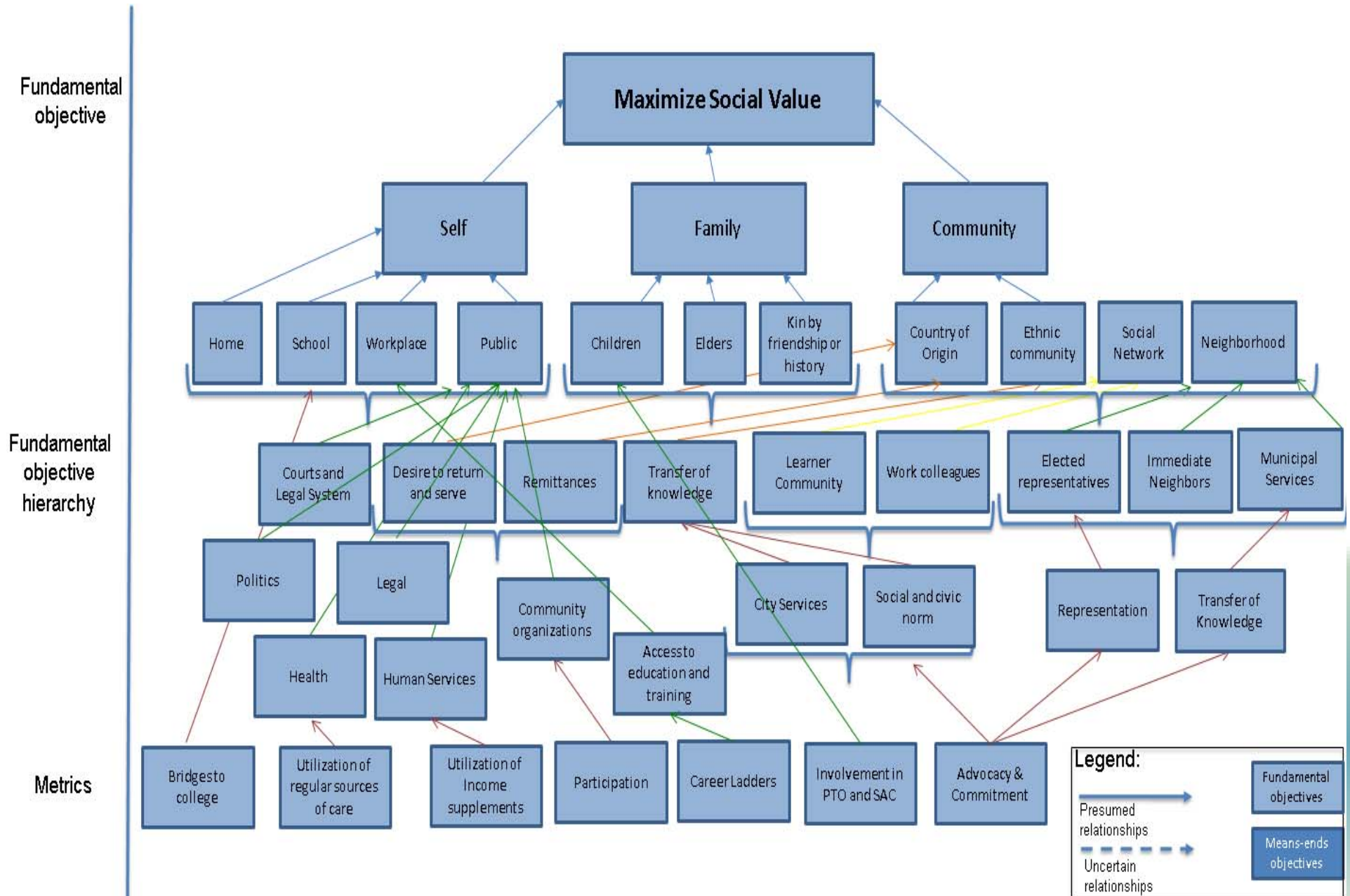
Fundamental
objective

Means-Ends
Objective
Hierarchy

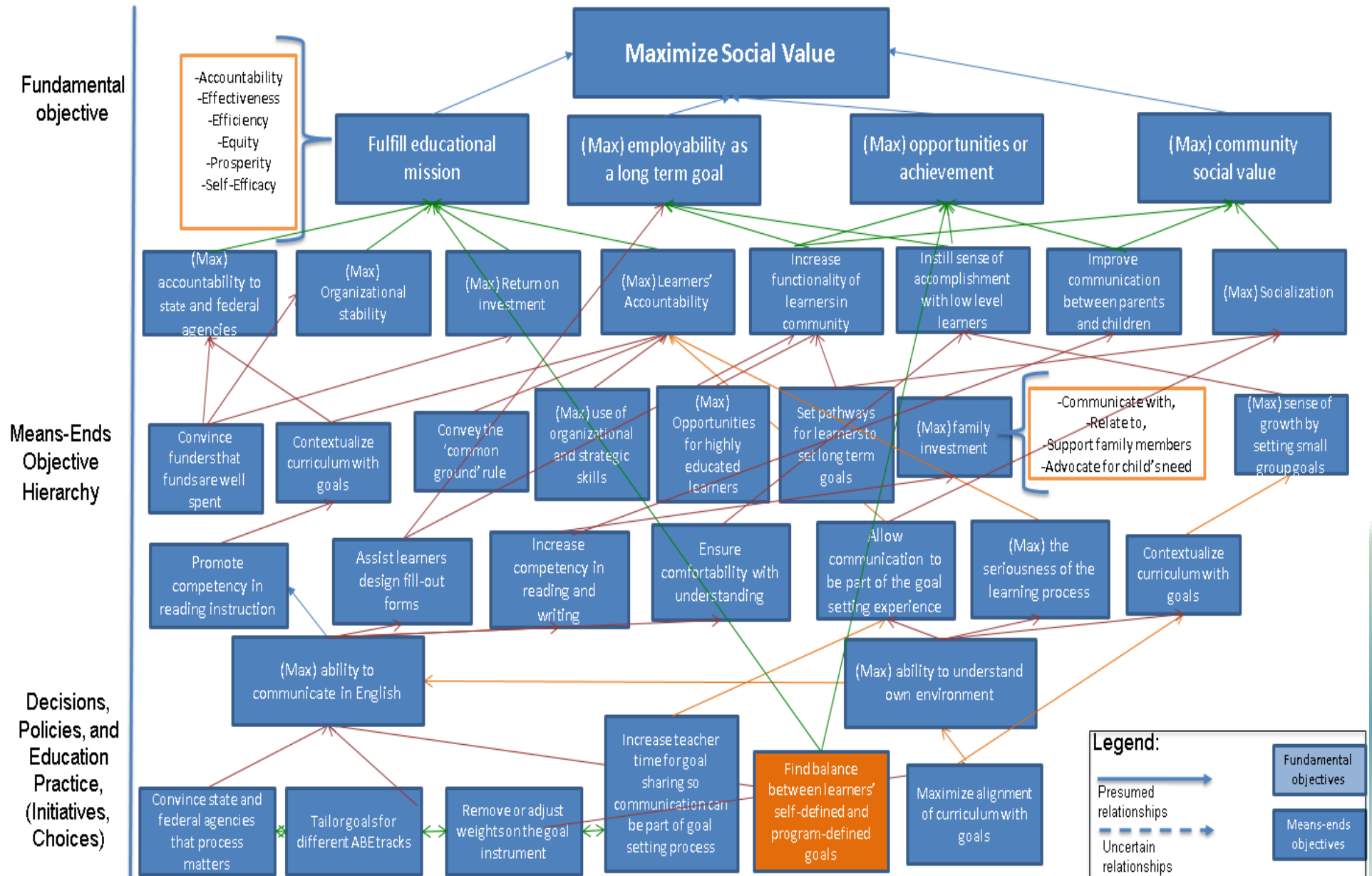
Decisions,
Policies, and
Education
Practice,
(Initiatives,
Choices)



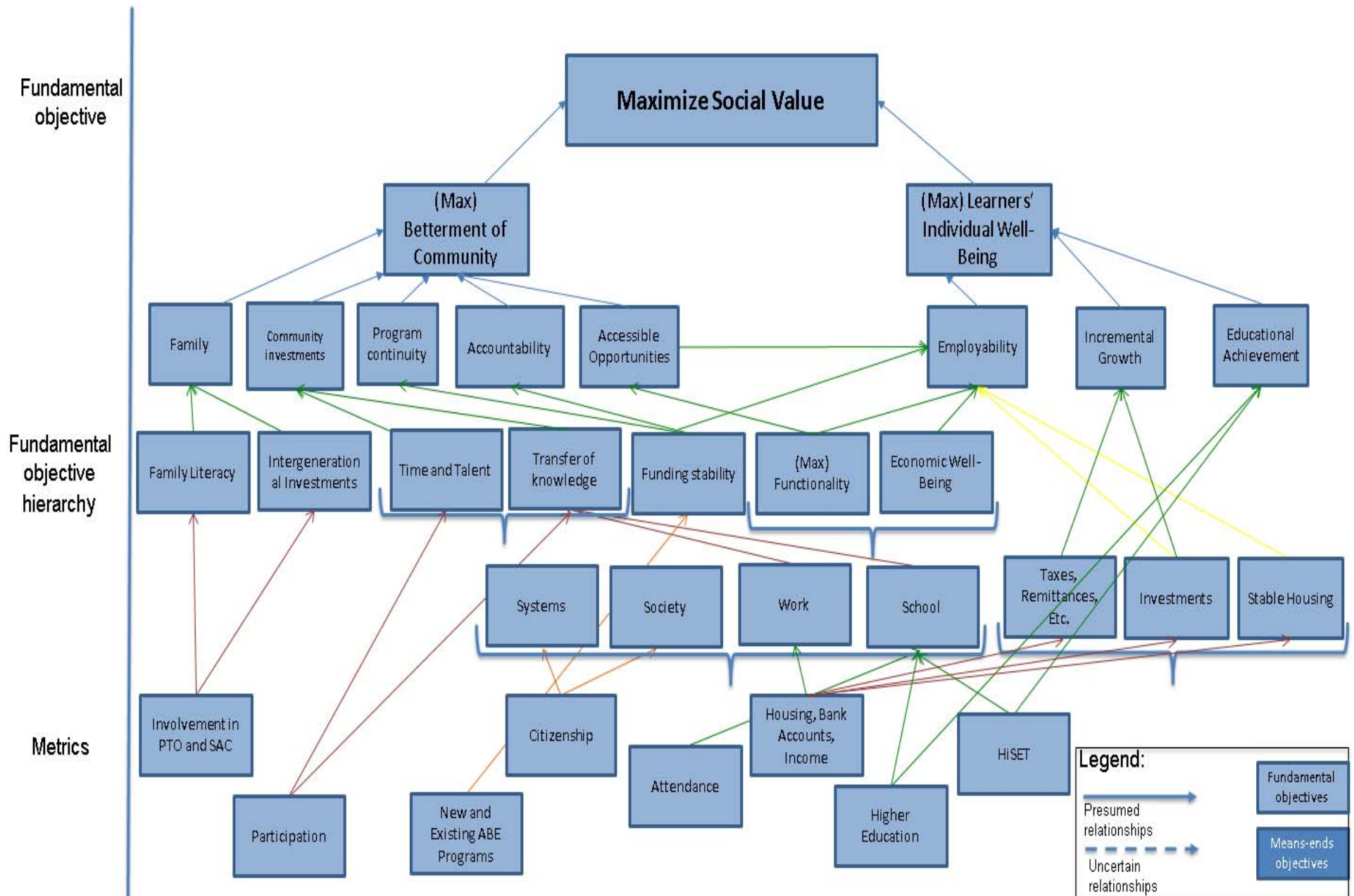
ABE LEARNERS' FUNDAMENTAL VALUES HIERARCHY



ABE TEACHERS' MEANS-ENDS NETWORK



ABE TEACHERS' FUNDAMENTAL VALUES HIERARCHY



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(Exploratory Component)

Value-Focused
Thinking

Contributions
to ABE Policy
and Practice

ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

- Present a new conceptual framework to explain ABE learner goal setting;
- First multi-disciplinary, mixed method study of ABE learner goal setting;
- Findings generated by this study are a useful addition to the growing literature of decision modeling in education.

POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

- Influence the ongoing debate about whether and how adult learners' voices and experiences be incorporated into accountability;
- Promote use of decision analysis in solving other problems that involve uncertainty within ABE programs;
- Renew the debate at the ABE state and federal level, of policies that promote mutual or multiple stakeholders' accountability;
- Contribute to the discussion between educators and learners about learners' self-defined goals.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Similar research in other states, in order to examine the relationship between implementation of local accountability policies and learners' goal setting.
- Comparative studies between states that exhibit differences in the learner goal setting policy and practice.
- New opportunities for action research studies by other practitioners and researchers engaged with the day-to-day practice and delivery of ABE programs.
- Modeling of values for other stakeholders involved in the goal setting process, such as ABE program administrators, counselors, and state directors.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Research investigating metrics of interest to ABE learners may come up with alternative performance measurement systems for the goal setting policy;
- Similar research on foreign-born, immigrant, ABE learners may provide interesting insights to ABE practitioners and policy makers;
- Examination of power and influence of stakeholders in ABE, using stakeholder theory and stakeholder analysis.

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Questions and Feedback