Motivation and willingness to learn: Factors influencing non–participation in Adult Education Degree Programme at Zimbabwe Staff College

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the extent to which various barriers deter adults from participating in programmes designed by different institutions offering adult education in Zimbabwe, but focusing only on the Adult Education Degree offered at the Zimbabwe Staff College (ZSC) specifically for uniformed forces. The study used the qualitative case study research design. Seven students and two administrators were selected to participate in individual and focus group interviews, using purposeful sampling, for it is informed by the Non-Probability Theory. Data was generated and critically analysed. Data was also generated from documentary analysis. The study found that institutional barriers were found to be more restricting for the officers, in terms of the full time nature of the programme, which limits the officers in time and space, who have competing and conflicting interests. Secondly, the initial selection criterion, which is high to ensure quality control, expected of associate colleges limited the enrolment. Thirdly, the subsidiary status assigned to academic adult education programmes compared to military mainstream programmes did not only demotivate the prospective candidates but also created negative image of the discipline. Finally, tying promotion to the military mainstream programmes discouraged the prospective candidates in trepidation of losing out on promotion while undertaking a degree programme, which is voluntary and not mandatory. Although there were other dispositional and situational barriers, institutional barriers affected participation more than all the other barriers. Recommendations focus on revision of the policy framework and the way the policies are implemented at national and local levels. A review of the implementation of policy is imperative if the restrictions responsible for the invisibility of adult education in the country and adult education programmes at ZCS are to be removed.

Key Terms: Adult Education; defence forces education; Lifelong Learning policy; Higher education; barriers to participation; motivation; Qualitative methods; NVivo

Introduction

Evidently, more adults are engaged in learning and educational activities these days than ever before. Adult programmes are no longer confined to a purely educational locale. Learning is taking place in diverse environments, such as commercial, industrial, governmental, non-governmental and private institutions, and in many other settings that do not target provision of education as their core business. In the African context such adult education activities are often designated as human resources development or referred to by some other term that makes the educational element less significant. As stated by (Mpfou 2003 in Youngman and Singh 2005:45) “adult education includes virtually all activities in which the capabilities of the adults are developed for specific purposes”.

From the developed world’s perspective, lifelong learning has become a central theme of adult education and training policies across the advanced, industrialized nations. “It is endorsed by a wide range of inter-governmental bodies, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The European...
Commission (EU), The United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO)” (Schemmann, 2007:146). Although lifelong learning has become an overarching policy framework which offers solutions to a number of economic and social changes in countries in the EU, some critics have noted the inherent tension between economic competitiveness and the social good. However, in developing countries adult education is political fragile and economical unstable.

Statement of the problem

The low participation in the BA(ED) programme by the defence force personnel prompted this study which endeavours to ascertain why the programme does not receive the patronage it deserves, even though it develops work related skills. The skills developed would improve the productivity and the standard of living for the defence force personnel and also promote economic growth. The diploma in Adult Education is a pre-requisite for enrolment in the BA (ED) Degree programme. The BA(ED) is the only degree programme designed specifically for the defence personnel after wide consultations with the relevant stakeholders. Uniformed officers do not pay for tuition, accommodation or food as these are all provided for by the Ministry of Defence.

Theoretical framework

The motivation for the investigation is guided by the constructivist theory in the quest to establish the rationale for low enrolments in the only adult education degree offered at ZSC. The degree was introduced to cater specifically for officers who hold the Diploma in Adult Education. The findings of this study would be used to improve practice. The philosophy of constructivism is reported to have developed as a reaction to the dominant traditional philosophy based objectivist epistemology. According to (Crotty, 1998:42) “constructivism postulates that knowledge cannot exist outside our minds; truth is not absolute; and knowledge is not discovered but constructed by individuals based on experiences”.

Thus, constructivist orientation to the study was considered suitable because of its ontological perspective that claims that while individuals do not have direct access to the real world, their expression of knowledge through the observation of the world is still meaningful (Carson, Gilmore & Gronhaug, 2012). This view concurs with Guba and Lincoln (1994) who assert that the constructivist worldview has some basic traits such as the argument that realities are local and specific. This means that reality varies between diverse groups of individuals.
Therefore, it is acceptable to an interpretive researcher that the distinction between facts and value judgment are less clear (Carson, et al. 2012). This emanates from the fact that a researcher is also an instrument of data gathering, as a result, feelings and reason direct his or her actions. This study, therefore, was structured from a constructivist point of view and interpreted through constructivist lenses to accommodate multiple realities from students and administrators on the lack of patronage for the adult education programme at ZSC.

Literature review

Related literature on motivation and barriers to participation were reviewed to reveal motivational drivers and impediments to adult education participation programmes nationally, regionally and internationally. The theoretical framework was reviewed also to provide the literature review a theoretical underpinning.

According to Malhotra, Shapero, Sizoo and Munro (2007), Lewin’s 1951 Force Field Analysis contends that behaviour is a result of competition between driving and restraining forces. In the same vein, Miller (1967) posited a push-pull theory in which positive driving forces push an adult to participate in degree programmes while negative, restraining factors pull the prospective student away. Therefore adult participation depends on the degree of congruence or conflict between the prospective candidates’ needs and the perceived strength of the social and situational factors in the decision making process.

On the other hand, Catalano (1985) provides a third dimension based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) and Herzberg (1959) motivators and hygiene factors, Catalano argues that the adults’ decision to participate will be ranked of the priority needs in the person’s life. Catalano’s theory highlights opportunity cost that includes tuition, books and supplies, income forgone, time spent studying, loss of social activities and the effort applied to planning and pursuing a degree.

After examining the theories and models underpinning motivation to participate, the review focused on the motivators to participate from scientific studies reviewed although many were descriptive summary findings which revealed the following:

- Workers and students learn mainly to make career transitions, home makers and retirees learn to make family transitions and for leisure (Aslanian and Brickwell, 1980);
- As income rises, adults learn more for career reasons (Mishler and Mass, 1986);
- As occupational level rises, adults learn more often for career reasons (Mishler and Moss, 1987);
- Adults who have attended four year college learn more often for their careers, while adults who have attended high school or junior colleges learn most often for family or leisure activities (Cross, 1981);
- Adults below the typical retirement age of 65 learn mainly because of leisure and family transitions (Cross, 1981); and
- Adults who are single, married or divorced learn mostly because of their careers, while widowed persons learn mostly because of their family activities and leisure (Aslanian and Brickwell, 1980).

Explanatory research on motivation drivers in the work of Houle (1961) revealed that participation in adult learning was induced by goal-oriented, activity oriented or learning oriented types of motivation. In the same vein, Burgess (1971) through factor analysis on adult motivation found seven categories of motives as that is desire to know; desire to reach a personal goal, desire to reach a social goal; desire to reach a religious goal;
desire to escape; desire to take part in an activity and desire to comply with formal requirements.

Subsequently, Boshier’s (1971) factor analysis found 14 motivations that were later reduced to six by Morstain and Smart (1974) as follows: social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation and cognitive interest. Furthermore, Beder and Valentine (1987) found 10 basic motivations for participation, including the following: self-improvement, family responsibility, diversion, literacy development, community church development, job advancement, economic need and educational advancement.

Reasons for non-participation are crucial in this study because the adult education degree being evaluated failed to attract students who had already done a qualifying course offered by the same college. Generally, barriers to participation have been investigated through the census type surveys where respondents were reported to have volunteered reasons for non-participation. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) found that barriers could be categorized as situational, which are external to an individual’s control, and dispositional oriented, based on personal attitude. While Carp, Peterson and Roelfs (1973) ranked barriers in order of significance as follows: cost, not enough time, not wanting to attend college full-time, home responsibilities, job responsibilities and amount of time required to finish the programme.

Gallay and Hunter (1979) from their study of adults who did not return to college added the dimensions of entrance examinations, poor academic records, red tape and fear of failure as reasons for non-participation. In the same vein, Shipp and McKenzie (1981) found seven reasons for non-participation as resistance to change and education, alienation, marginality, social non-affiliation, confusion, programme non-relevance and activity from factor analysis.

Cross (1981) also added institutional barriers to Carp Peterson and Roelfs situational and dispositional barriers. This study is going to adopt Cross (1981) model of classification of barriers to participation because it enjoys a widespread support of authorities (Brookfield), 1986). From the related literature reviewed it can be concluded that barriers to participation are internal and external to the adult learner, therefore, curriculum designers and educational institutions have to address that mental resistance of conflict between motivation and deterrents.

**Methodology**

In this investigation, the researcher seeks to develop a detailed understanding of the role of policy in the processes of curricular design and delivery through the students’ experiences, perceptions and their interpretation of the lack of patronage for the adult education degree at ZSC. Such detailed understanding of the phenomena is hoped to provide useful information that can inform policy on curriculum improvement and might give voice to the “silenced” students with regards to the Bachelor of Adult Educator Degree Programme.

Qualitative research was deemed suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to obtain an insider perspective on social action (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Thus, the researcher intends to gain insider perception on the rationale for the lack of patronage for the adult education degree at ZSC from a policy perspective. In adopting the naturalistic epistemology, propounded by Krauss (2005), the researcher is acknowledging that students at ZSC are not mere observers or passive recipients of the transmission model of learning and teaching but are active in their experience of the process of curriculum development and implementation and non participation.
In non-probability sampling the researcher selects individuals because they are available, convenient and represent some characteristics the investigator seeks to study (Creswell, 2008). This study, therefore, utilizes a purposeful sampling procedure deemed suitable since values, beliefs, perceptions and experiences of students on non participation were going to be investigated in order to reveal illumination and understanding of complex issues of motivation and barriers to participation in the only degree programmed at ZSC. In this exploratory study, selection of informants was accomplished by the use of purposeful sampling, namely, maximum variation, critical case and typical case sampling techniques as postulated by Patton (1990). The merits of purposive sampling are the reduced costs and time involved in acquiring the informants. In addition to reducing costs and time, the power and logic of purposeful sampling is derived from the fact that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic (Creswell, 2008).

Two administrators and seven students were chosen using purposeful sampling to provide useful information about the drivers of motivation and reasons for non participation in the only degree programmed at Zimbabwe Staff College. Two administrators and seven students provided information about motivation for participation and deterrents to participation in the degree programme by the officers by answering individual and group focused interview questions. Finally, curriculum documents were gleaned to obtain information about the aims and objectives of the programme and other relevant information that might assist in establishing the rationale for the low enrolment for the degree programme.

Engagement with the data through post structural ideological perspective was achieved through the aid of a computer aided qualitative data analysis software, namely, NVivo. Flick (2009) identifies the advantage of using NVivo that made the software suitable for this investigation. The software permits the researcher to have access to all research documents, such as field notes or audio, transcripts, diagrams and report of findings in one place. Symith (2006) concur with Flick (2009) in noting that the software has the capacity of managing effectively large amounts of qualitative data. In addition to effective management, it was also observed that NVivo has the capacity to construct relational networks, identifying the content and structure of respondents’ opinions.

**Data presentation**

**Motivation for (Non) participation in the programme**

This theme examined the various aspects of motivation, or lack of it towards participation in the adult education programme. Emergent themes are outlined in figure 12 below;

Motives were given for participation and the reasons for non-participation. Attitudes towards adult education also revealed factors reinforcing (none) participation in the programme

Motives for joining the programme depicted by participants

Participants revealed different reasons for participation; these were: vicarious

![Figure 1: Motivation for participation in the programme](image)
motivation, linked to greener pastures, compensation for lost time, intrinsic motivation, bridging course and directed or forced participation. Figure 13 below illustrates these reasons.

Intrinsic motivation was the learner’s own ‘self-motivation, self-derived’ interest in the programme. This was revealed by Admin1 below;

It would not attract so much attention and so much interest and motivation. Not extrinsic motivation but intrinsic, self-motivation, self-derived, expressed and reflected by most of the officers.

This sentiment was also shared by Admin2 who revealed that the officers went through an intrinsic process of finding the worth of the programme;

Most of those involved in training find it relevant to attend the programme. So they feel they have something to benefit from the diploma programme. There is also the opportunity to advance them academically, and they feel this is the chance… some find the need to come and they come, it’s really voluntary programme and most of the officers volunteer… It’s a voluntary programme, you either opt to come or not.

Given below are some of the sentiments from the former students showing their intrinsic motivation to participate in the programme:

**Student3:** I liked to be a teacher, so my aim was, in doing this course I can also come and teach others, now that we have such departments here and I was thinking one day that if resources permit, this should be decentralised to provinces because we had educational departments in all provinces and why not also have even this department decentralised and have qualified people there so that the programme is covered all over.

**Student4:** Firstly I wanted to have a degree in adult education and that was my strength

**Student5:** I was into teaching and having something that would; a qualification in that area was going to be of great help.

**Student7:** I realised that those are the areas that I needed to improve as somebody already a trainer.

Some were vicariously motivated by observing others who have benefited or have gone through the programme. Admin1 revealed that the pioneer group became role models for others to follow suit:
“It has ended up influencing everybody else to want to pursue degrees from the commander defence forces down the ladder everybody is now at school. I am not surprised that the products of the ZSC influenced the setting up for the national defence college today” (a new institution for the army in Harare as well).

This idea of learning from others was also substantiated by other students. Student3 was vicariously motivated by someone who had gone through the programme and he also felt that this vicarious learning and motivation was eventually instrumental in attitude change towards the programme as well.

“I wrote my boss and requested that I am also getting into the programme but it was because somebody had gone through it and I met that somebody and he also showed me the subjects that he had covered in that diploma programme….

Students 5 and 2 also echoed the same sentiments.

Student 5: because of the products of the adult education programme, people are now beginning to realise and appreciate but initially it wasn’t like that

Student 2: After the programme all my work began to attract attention up there, something that I liked and pushed upwards.

Therefore, some participants were motivated by those who had completed and doing well in their jobs and lives. Some of the students revealed that they were motivated by their projected and perceived links to greener pastures:

Student 4: With that degree, maybe I will look for opportunities somewhere else outside this organisation for development or for greener pastures.

Student 3: Economically I will also be improved

Some of the students joined to compensate for the lost time, especially during the liberation war. Admin1 and Student1 revealed this:

Student 1: Initially, I thought because one way or the other I was disadvantaged to go to school and therefore through this adult education programme

I came back from the war and pursued my education privately during night studies and I attained 6 ‘O’ levels and went on for teacher training and further to the university because it was that policy which the government had adopted.

However, others participated because they were nominated and instructed to pursue the programme, and therefore did that involuntarily. Students 4 and 6 confirmed this below:

Student 4: First diploma I was instructed, ‘you are going to do a diploma!’ They need O level English. They just go and check the CB; who is it? It’s ok, then it’s not a matter of motivation but you will be directed… In our system, it’s not that you want to go, you don’t normally volunteer, but you are instructed.

Student 6: …when I went for it, to be honest I wasn’t prepared for it, it wasn’t the right time for me. There were some sought of; I was selected for the programme without consultation, and I ended up forcing myself to go there just because they had already placed my name without consulting me. I didn’t choose

Reasons for non-participation in the programme

The reasons for non-participation were divided into three categories, namely, situational, dispositional and institutional barriers. These reasons for non-participation are outlined in Figure 14 below. In order to provide deep insights into reasons that influence non-participation Cross’s (1981) typology of situational, institutional and dispositional barriers was adopted.
Institutional barriers to participation in the programme

The national policy provision on adult education in Zimbabwe and the ZSC policy provision on staff development have a bearing on non-participation in the adult education degree (Defence Education offered at ZSC). The following quality assurance measures by ZSC constituted institutional barriers: overlapping programmes, preferential treatment of military studies, work commitment and opportunity cost. In addition, subsidiary status given to adult education plays a contributory role.

Quality Assurance by ZSC

In its endeavor to maintain quality, ZSC became restrictive in terms of entry qualifications, as a result limiting the number of potential applicants. Admin 2 confirmed this below:

...restrictive in the sense that quality assurance would prefer those who would have passed with merits and they are not very many, ZSC’s quality control has been restrictive from the beginning. For the diploma, there is also a restrictive measure of allowing the ranks of majors and above:

**Student 1:** Yes it is a requirement. As a control measure...At ZSC the junior ranks are not required because of its own standing working procedures, all officers are allowed. By officers I mean to say the ranks from Lieutenant up to even the general if he wants to take that programme, he is accepted. But those who have other ranks, those are non-commissioned officers, they are not supposed to come and do programmes at the ZSC.

**Student 5:** Initially it was for Majors and above, maybe, they could not raise the numbers, we could not raise the adequate number hence we have some captains coming in... because the ZSC is only Captains and above

**Student 5 (FGD):** yes most of them are institutional, I have indicated that where you are deprived of going there

**Student7:** Anyone with the qualifications can join
Some participants felt that others fail to participate because of their work in the institution. Students 1 and 5 felt that those who have ‘very high responsibilities in the organisation’, who are confined in the service find it difficult to enroll;

**Student 1:** I can say confinement in the service, the Zimbabwe National Army; they don’t want to look outside the Zimbabwe National Army.

**Student 5:** …people who were having very high responsibilities in the organisation

The other reason is that the institution treat Adult Education programme as a subsidiary programme;

**Admin 2:** I would say the military also values a lot their military staff development programmes, the one that we call mainstream courses, the academic courses are subsidiary, the main courses are military courses like the junior staff course, the joint command staff course… The student may opt to defer the academic programme to do the mainstream programme, the opportunity, once you miss that opportunity you might not get it… You can be promoted without the academic courses…is better positioned to link well to the community whilst weak on the Zimbabwe Defence Forces community

**Student 1:** So you find out that no wonder why, such bias to defence studies is there because people don’t understand what adult education is.

**Student 2:** This is what I wanted to say, it’s not very pronounced, it’s like when we were the first group and so many officers were looking at us and say these people are now at the university, let’s see what will happen. After we left, the second also moved very fast, and that’s when I thought, ah, nothing was coming out, so that’s… if we do a joint command staff course, we are assured of movement upwards and people are trying all tricks to find entrance into that course and once you are done with it, a year or two years you are up… promotion was after both, but the strength is in the military course… then the commitments,

**Student 3:** Somebody will say I better do this, it’s more recognised so that I get what I want… Initially, people have wrong perception about adult education; there are some who still think it’s something inferior, so I better take this one which is quickly recognised.

**Student 5:** First one is that the programme is not being appreciated out there in the organisation, so why would one do something that is not being recognised and understood… no, I was not promoted. My promotion was not a result of this degree… It’s not because when I left, completed the degree, I then went to Mutare, worked in Mutare only to be promoted in December 2010 after I had completed in 2008, It was two years later, so I cannot say I was promoted because of the degree...

**Student 7:** Usually the targeted population is depended on voluntary basis. There are those people who are willing to take the programme. One of the barriers is that this programme is not yet aligned to promotion in the defence forces. Even if you do it people will not realise that you have got a qualification… But the thing is in the organisation they would rather do other courses that are relevant to their promotion rather than doing the degree in adult education.

The focus group concurred with the individual responses concerning the subsidiary status of adult education:

**Student 5:** People now preferred the diploma in defence and security studies than adult education… the importance that the organisation puts on the programme… people will not go for a programme which is not recognised.

**Student 1:** lack of knowledge starts from the top. If those guys on top are conversant… they would talk more of it… give people more chance to undertake the programme but simply because they lack that knowledge, they won’t advertise…So it’s a lack of knowledge of the programme.
Student 4: On the part of those in positions to...influence and to support...

Student 5: when people are graduating... teachers or facilitators who are the directing staff... will be called up... I... joined them. One guy asked, ‘what programme did you do, you?’ I said adult education, you know what happened? He laughed! Showing that lack of knowledge of the programme! ...He is a big man!

Student 1: So how can he influence the participation of people, when he himself is laughing at it?

The focus group was in agreement with the individual interviewees that adult education programme has a subsidiary status at ZSC. The focus group brought in the dimension of lack of marketing of the adult education at ZSC and even at UZ and in the whole country.

Potential students do not prefer adult education because students for military studies are better catered for than those doing adult education. Student7 expressed the following complaint:

The other thing is the location of this programme, such that it only favours people who have got accommodation in Harare. When you get to the institution you are just housed there for lessons. The college does not give that maximum care which is given to other students who come for other programmes. It seems now; the treatment that is given to the military courses versus adult education is not the same.

Since adult education is undervalued in the military, potential students find it costly to spend time pursuing a programme that will reduce their chances of being promoted. Admin2 and Student 7 confirmed this:

Admin 2: the fact that the degree programme is two years it means that the students will not be doing anything else other than the degree for those two years and this means that while he is on this course he might not be considered for promotion because he is still undertaking a programme, he can only be considered upon completion

Student 7: The other thing is that some of them would feel that they lack time to spend maybe two or three years doing adult education whilst they could do other military courses that are designed for their needs

The institution also has competing programmes that split the attention of potential applicants; as a result it reduces the number of people who would eventually apply for the programme. Student5 pointed the split over the Captains below:

The programme at ZSC is restrictive and requires the students to religiously follow its requirements, timetables; thereby living inadequate room for students to explore other areas of their lives. Admin 2 stated the following in this regard:

Admin 2: its only restrictive in that it’s a full time programme and does not really give some of these adult students latitude to then timeously respond to some of their social needs such as KUMUNDA (farming) or business ventures and so forth because you are now restricted, this is what we call sticking to the yellow, abide by the yellow, it’s more like your movement... it’s definitely an institutional barrier

Disposition barriers to participation

Dispositional factors are job satisfaction, age, taking a break, lack of understanding of the benefits of the programme and lack of incentives.

Job satisfaction was one of the reasons why some potential applicants fail to apply for the degree programme. Admin1 and Student 5 revealed this below:

Admin 1: job satisfaction... soon after diploma, they are taken by institutions who are satisfied by their job performance, they are promoted on the grounds that they have done the diploma, a person is transferred to the school of infantry in Balabala, beyond Bulawayo there, and there he is busy, respected, running programmes effectively, he gets job satisfaction and employment
satisfaction. That person will not come back, because he is enjoying, he has fulfilled his wish and maybe he is kept down by the job description

**Student 5:** Initially when you look at the intakes prior to ours, you would find that it was maybe for those who were very old; those a bit challenged maybe in their performance at work

Admin1 also felt that some people fail to apply for the degree programme because their own desire is to take a break and rest;

**Admin 1:** Yes I have passed the diploma, but look I need some rest, I will take it next year, don’t worry and that person is actually employed within the geographical proximity of the college and that person is coming because of that. Others will not come because of family pressures

Age was also mentioned as a deterrent to applicants. Student5 and Admin1 revealed that the diploma programme did not pick ‘on those who were fairly young.’ As a result it attracted those who were relatively older. Admin1 concurred that ‘others are defeated by age’ and they just wanted to end with the diploma;

**Student 5:** …not picking on those who were fairly young

**Admin 1:** Others are defeated by age. I am tired, I don’t want to learn anymore, I have done, what I have done is enough, Why worry I am ok!

Lack of understanding was largely viewed as the reason for non-participation. Student1 felt that those who have acquired the diploma still lack an understanding of the benefits of the degree; they do not believe in the efficacy of the qualification in the enhancement of their quality of life.

**Student 1:** …the major reason, some people do not understand, or they do not know how they are going to utilise what they have acquired at diploma level and no wonder why they are not progressing… Yes they don’t understand, they don’t want to link this course and other courses to be done at the ZSC.

They don’t even know why ZSC introduced this programme… if they have done the defence courses and so forth, looking forward for their promotion through those courses, but not knowing that if one progresses in adult education it becomes easier to do those courses of defence at ZSC.

Students 3, 5 and 6 concurred with Student1 that lack of understanding is a barrier to participation at the degree level;

**Student 6:** They seem not to understand the value of that course

**Student 3:** Initially, people have wrong perception about adult education

**Student 5:** first one is that the programme is not being appreciated out there in the organisation, so why would one do something that is not being recognised and understood.

Focus group responses concurred with sentiments raised in the individual interviews that lack of understanding and appreciation of the programme is a major impediment to participation:

**Student 5:** But the developmental programmes and informational programmes, definitely there will be a problem because people they will not appreciate how adult education programmes can be discharged

**Student 3:** No wonder why he was saying somebody was saying to you, ‘you did this course, so what next, what are you trying to achieve’ because they don’t have that knowledge (they all agreed).

**Student 5:** And also the other thing is lack of knowledge of the programme, now that becomes the individual

**Student 4:** Because this programme is underrated I think even at UZ they don’t understand what adult education is. It’s not only within us; the confines of the military, even civilian life, people don’t understand what adult education is all about. It’s… something which had not been heard, not been advertised…

The focus group also made recommendations of creating awareness of
relevance of adult education in higher education and in the society in general. They recommended that those who have gone through the programme should market it by demonstrating competence in their field of work:

**Student 5:** we must really market it by way of our performance, wherever we are working or deployed. We must do it and then they will ask which discipline? Then they will say he is an adult educator! … I think it is being advertised… at the graduation ceremonies… they… indicate who has done the programmes. But also, the fact that…the numbers even at the UZ… very small. The group is usually small. So whilst we can try and advertise it, we can start within the organisation like we are doing… as we are doing our things, there must be a difference.

**Student 4:** even if you look at Huni, (a graduate of ZSC, not his real name) is running the administration at ZDF headquarters. Everybody looks up to him because of this programme. Otherwise if he had not done this programme we could have heard of some limitations somewhere. But this programme enhances, you are not afraid of any task.

**Student 5:** Even within the organisation, if you look at the majority of the guys who did the programme, most of them were promoted, most of them, save for one or two who are maybe waiting for their promotion very soon.

**Student 1:** I wanted to say even outside there, we have these big ministers, they passed through this programme, but fun enough, I don’t know how they should advertise this programme... All we know is that Chamboko (not his real name) did this, I know Minister Chenai (not his real name) did this, but I don’t know why it is not coming out, like e.g. social work is so prominent compared to adult education, but we have those big guys who can influence things, but I don’t know what is happening!

Career guidance was also suggested by the focus group as one of the strategies, which can be used to create awareness of the significance of adult education in a society or a country;

**Student 4:** Going out to schools conscientising people,

**Student 1:** Career guidance

**Student 4:** Career guidance, programmes that they can take at University, I don’t think adult education is going out to market itself. Because engineers go out to schools, doctors go out to schools.

Student 2 felt that there is lack of incentives to do the programme;

...one other reason is that the incentives…First because there are no incentives to do that, then the commitments, for no price...

**Situational barriers to participation**

Situational barriers include preference for other courses, family pressures, adults’ competing interests and distance.

Preference for other courses after the diploma was highly noted as the major factor behind non-participation, people prefer to diversify;

**Admin 1:** …the syllabus that is introduced at the diploma level is very wide. It is a social science and you find there are so many social science degree programmes that opened up in state, faith based and private universities, this is diversity now, I have done adult education which is good for me… If the industry invites me, I will be employable, but now I want to do international relations and that person will not come back for the bachelor’s degree, because the social science opens up big fields to be pursued and individual interests… pursuing different programmes, diversification

**Student 4:** Some will opt for other programmes; you know if you have a diploma in adult education, you can opt for other programmes not necessarily adult education

**Student 5:** Others would then use it to venture into other areas.
**Student 7:** But the thing is in the organization they would rather do other courses that are relevant to their promotion rather than doing the degree in adult education.

Distance was also said to be another factor causing non-participation;

**Admin 1:** the distance between the school of infantry and the ZSC is very long, same applies to a person at Zimbabwe Military academy in Gweru, as applies to a person who is now in Nyanga there, that one factor.

**Student 3:** I think those who had done it (Diploma) maybe, they have been posted, because you find out that somebody who was here in Harare, will be now in Mutare, Masvingo, where these programmes are not being offered

**Student 7:** The other thing is the location of this programme, such that it only favours people who have got accommodation in Harare

Family pressures were also cited as another factor.

**Admin 1:** Others will not come because of family pressures

People also had other competing interests that compounded the non-participation;

**Student 2:** Then the other reason is you know as adults competing interests, sometimes do not go hand in hand with the commitment. Some of us we have small ventures which we need to attend to and we need to be there on a daily basis. First because there are no incentives to do that, then the commitments...

These competing interests are reinforced by inflexibility of the institutional regulations that are restrictive and require the students to abide ‘by the yellow’;

**Admin 2:** It... does not really give some of these adult students latitude to then timeously respond to some of their social needs like KUMUNDA (farming) or business ventures and so forth because you are now restricted.

**Discussion and interpretation**

In response to the question of whether students were motivated to participate in adult education degree programme, most of the participants concurred with the two administrators that the participants were motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically. Most of the participants expressed positive sentiments that the motivating driver was the idea of gaining a university qualification, first of its kind in the defence forces. No doubt, the students’ self-esteem was boosted too by being a force to reckon with at the work place, by being recognized as competent workforce.

In addition to accomplishing a qualification, all the participants held the view that the adult education programme provided them with an opportunity for a second chance to education. It was compensatory learning and education after their schooling was disrupted by the war of liberation. The participants were offered a second chance to learning and education through enrolling for the diploma in adult education initially, gaining a qualification as instructors or administrators. Embarking on the degree programme was now career development in preparation for life in the army and life after the army, after retiring from the army at the age of 50 years, which is mandatory for uniformed forces.

In other words, the initial diploma in adult education was a pre-requisite for entry into university training. It acted as the bridging course for all the participants. Administrators concurred with students’ sentiments that for some participants, the motivating driver was vicarious. Admiration for those officers who had completed the programme before them was a push factor into enrolment as well. Therefore, vicarious motivation was eventually instrumental in attitude change towards the programme. The pattern, which emerges from the interview sessions, is
consistent with studies on factors that influence participation in adult education in general. After investing time and energy in the programme adult learners expect corresponding reward. The three most common reasons for learning were found to be developing a career, gaining a qualification, a desire to satisfy interests and getting a new job (Callender, 2006).

In responding to the query on reasons for non-participation in the adult education degree programme at ZSC, most participants referred to the negative attitude of lack of recognition of adult education as the major reason for non-participation in the only degree programme at ZSC. Perhaps, the invisibility of adult learning and education as a discipline is a barrier for some prospective degree candidates.

From the participants’ narratives, adult education is equated to literacy education or night school both in the country and at ZSC. This serious problem of perception of adult education, which is prevalent in developing countries and acute in Africa, has led to indecisive policies on the structure and management of adult education (Omolewa, 1995) in Youngman and Sigh, 2005). The lack of social recognition for adult education has serious implications for the professionalization of adult education in Zimbabwe as well (Mpofu and Amin: 2003). The authorities or superiors at ZSC have not done a buy in of the degree programme. The superiors do not understand how the degree programme could add value to the vision and mission of ZSC because academic programmes are considered subsidiary. The main courses are the military ones, which are referred to as the junior staff course and the joint command staff course. These programmes have courses, which are directly linked to the officer’s employment proficiency. Therefore, the aim is to enhance their performance as staff officers.

In responding to the same issue as discussed above, one of the administrators implied that, it is evident that the superiors are biased towards military programmes that are not accredited to any institution of higher learning. Moreover, military programmes only offer certificates, which only have internal validity yet the degree has both internal and external validity because the degree also enables the officers to embark on further studies, such as master’s degrees as a result of the associate status with UZ.

According to one of the participants, the original idea was to start with the diploma in adult education at ZSC before moving to the senior staff courses. This is said to be the original idea when they signed the memorandum of understanding with UZ in 1999. It was a brilliant idea to have the diploma in adult education as the entry point or prerequisite for academic programmes before the military courses because the diploma is considered a requirement for instructors or officers in training establishment. The assumption is that the original idea did not work because of its bias towards military courses.

All the participants and administrators interviewed are in agreement that, the degree empowers the officers with skills for effective training in any adult education situation in the army. In addition to empowerment, it was also observed that, once the officers are offered positions of responsibility, they become assets to the department and the organization. Certainly, it appears that, there is a discrepancy between the value of the course and the value accorded to graduates. Both administrators and participants concurred that, the graduates are recognized once they complete the degree programme because they are given positions of responsibility both in training and administration.

It can be concluded, therefore, that the diploma in adult education is relevant to the core business of the army, which is training. The organization values the diploma more than the degree programme and the officers
are aware of the negative attitude towards the degree programme. In addition to being a pre-requisite for trainers, the diploma in adult education offers the officers an opportunity to advance themselves academically. The diploma in adult education serve as bridging course, the stepping stone for officers interested in University degree programmes not only in adult education as a discipline but in other fields of practice. Thus, after completing the diploma in adult education, which is a requirement, most of the diploma holders, do not feel compelled to pursue a degree in the same field of adult education when they qualify to study degrees in other fields, such as International relations, Disaster management, and Conflict and peace Management.

Furthermore, the degree programme’s full time nature restricts prospective candidates who have conflicting interests as adult learners. The institutional restriction does not give some of the adult learners, latitude to respond timeously to their social and business ventures to augment their meager salaries. It is also restrictive in the sense that quality assurance measures require enrolment of only those students who obtained merits and above. Students who pass with merits are reported to be few. The final restrictive institutional barrier is opportunity cost; those students who enroll for the degree programme would not be considered for promotion. The officer can only be considered for promotion in the army upon completion of the degree programme.

From documentary analysis and participant interviews it was found that at ZSC, one can be promoted without academic courses because the military values military staff development programmes. Most of the participants said that they were promoted after completing the military courses not on the basis of academic programmes. The academic programmes compliment the military staff courses. Promotion, therefore, is not tied to academic programmes.

Institutional barriers militant against participation in the adult education degree programme as discussed from the perspective of ZSC policy provision. Officers obsessed with defence courses, perhaps, they do not believe that degrees in adult education would enhance the quality of their life socially, politically and economically. This dispositional barrier seems to be formidable for the officers confined to the service.

In addition to lack of belief that adult education degree can add value to the officers’ lives; age is another dispositional barrier to participation. These sentiments of age as a barrier to participation are consistent with findings in developing and developed countries where age and negative experiences in prior education are used as reasons for not participating (Cross, 1981; Keogh, 2009; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2002).

Granted, for many adults there seems to be lack of correspondence between participation and a return on the investment of time and money in adult learning and education as noted in some developed countries (Strewe, 2007 in Keogh, 2009). At ZSC, participation in the adult education degree programme does not seem to offer visible immediate returns after investing in time and energy because the promotion is not tied to the degree but to military courses.

Keogh (2009) concurs with findings at ZSC by observing that the prevalence and status of adult education as a subject in higher education is patchy throughout Europe, North America and Israel. Norway national report in Keogh, for example, declares that adult education has a low profile as an academic field, and Israel national report in Keogh as well, notes that adult education is not a subject in any university in the country. Armenia national report in Keogh, notes that nobody is interested in the course because of its low status in that country.

However, Finland national report, notes the existence of a professorship of adult education in seven universities and the
emergence of new courses in social pedagogy concerned with non-formal and informal adult learning and education (Keogh, 2009). The marginal status noted in developed countries is prevalent in developing countries in general and Africa in particular and ZSC is a case in point.

The last but not least barrier to participation is the situational category, which is characterized by distance, job commitments, adults’ competing interests and income generation projects.

These situational barriers were revealed by studies carried out by Cross, (1981), Ahmed (2009) and Torres (2009). Ahmed (2009) from the Asian Pacific Regional review notes that economic, political, social and structural barriers constrain the poor, older adult women and ethnic minorities who are as a result, are deterred from participating in adult education. In this study, the gender dimension is not an issue because the sample is made up of men only, due to the nature of the defence forces.

It can be concluded that reasons for non-participation at Zimbabwe Staff College range from adult education policy’s marginal status, which restricts visibility and purpose of adult education provision, institutional practices and structures, which are devoid of provision of motivation and attitude change mechanisms to individual disposition factors towards participation in the adult education degree programmes.

Secondly, the initial selection criterion, which is high to ensure quality control, expected of associate colleges limited the enrolment. Thirdly, the subsidiary status assigned to academic adult education programmes compared to military mainstream programmes did not only demotivate the prospective candidates but also created negative image of the discipline. Finally, tying promotion to the military mainstream programmes discouraged the prospective candidates in trepidation of losing out on promotion while undertaking a degree programme, which is voluntary and not mandatory. Although there were other dispositional and situational barriers, institutional barriers affected participation more than all the other barriers.

The study also shows that dispositional barriers in the form of job satisfaction after being promoted to a position of an instructor after obtaining a diploma in adult education are a limitation. Age, lack of understanding of the benefits of the adult education programme, the inferior status associated with the discipline and lack of incentives were also found to be some of the psychological barriers that interfered with participation. Lastly but not least, the situational barriers, namely, preferences for other degree programmes outside ZSC after the diploma programme, family obligations, and distance from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe to other cities deterred participation.

Findings

Barriers to participation in the Bachelor of Adult Education Degree

Institutional barriers were found to be more restricting for the officers, in terms of the full time nature of the programme, which limits the officers in time and space, who have competing and conflicting interests.

Conclusion

The study found that both the national policy and ZSC policy provision on adult learning and education created institutional and psychological barriers to participation for prospective candidates, who completed a diploma in adult education as a prerequisite for the degree programme. Lack of recognition of adult education as a discipline created psychological barriers that interfered
with participation at ZSC. However, ZSC institutional impediments were found to be more responsible for barriers to participation than dispositional and situational barriers.

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