

Participation and barriers to participation in adult learning at a Community College in the
Western Cape: A Chain-of-Response Model

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Abstract

This study investigates “why adults participate in learning activities” and “what barriers deter adults from participating in learning activities.” Learning activities can include informal learning initiatives and formal education programmes. According to Larson and Milana (2006) “the question of why some people participates in adult education and training while others don’t thus” (p. 2) is as relevant and urgent as ever as we want to make lifelong learning accessible for everybody. While working at a Community College in the Western Cape (South Africa), for the period October 2007 until June 2010, I have observed and noticed that many of the learners who entered the different programmes were all of a certain age. Many of them experienced an excess of barriers deterring them from participation in learning. For the purpose of this study, I am going to use the Chain-of-Response (COR) Model by Cross (1981a) to investigate specifically the situational barriers affecting those learners. Cross (1981a) developed the COR model. The rationale behind it was to better understand what urges people to participate in higher education or learning institutions. This model can be seen as cyclic, and involves seven steps developed by Cross (1981a) which have different impacts on the decision-making process of whether to enter or participate and persist in an adult learning course. Cross (1981a) argues that “an adult’s participation in a learning activity is not an isolated act but is the result of a complex chain of responses based on the evaluation of the position of the individual in their environment” (p. 36). Responses leading to participation tend to originate within the individual, as opposed to outside forces; it can either encourage or discourage participation in learning.

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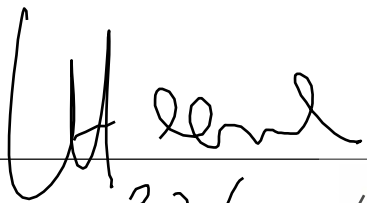
I would also like to thank my wife Joe-an for her patience, abiding faith, constant encouragement and loving sacrifice during the completion of the research paper.



Declaration

I, Vivian Lester Hearne hereby declare that this research paper, Participation, and barriers to participation, in adult learning at a community college in the Western Cape is my own work. I have not submitted it before to any other university for any other degree.

I am submitting this research paper in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Adult Education and Global Change at the University of the Western Cape. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.



Date: 22/05/2018



Glossary of terms

COR	Chain of Response
CC	Community College
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NQF	National Qualification Framework
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
NCES	National Centre for Education Statistics
UWC	University of the Western Cape
AGRISETA	Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority
PPP	Plant Production Programme



Table of Contents

Key words	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Declaration	iv
Glossary of terms	v
Table of Contents	vi
SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
Background and context	1
Rationale	3
Research problem.....	3
Research aims	3
Research question	3
Limitations.....	3
Overview	4
SECTION 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	5
Conceptual framework.....	12
SECTION 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	25
Research question	25
Research approach	25
Research site	25
Research instrument	26
Method of data-gathering.....	27
Selection of participants.....	27
Data capturing.....	28
Data analysis.....	28
Research ethics statement.....	29
SECTION 4 – DATA ANALYSIS.....	32
A brief background of each participant	34
SECTION 5 – SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	59
List of References.....	66
APPENDICES	71

Appendix A 71
Appendix B 74
Appendix C 75
Appendix D 77
Appendix E 78
Appendix F 79
Appendix G 80



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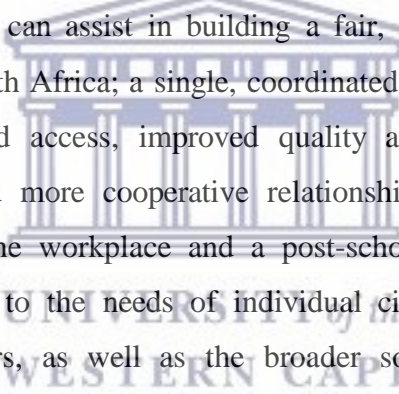
SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

In this section I briefly discuss the status of post-school education and training in South Africa after 1994. Broadly the post-school sector refers to the institutions that cater for the training needs of people who left the basic education system. This sector includes higher education, further education, adult education, vocational education, continuing education and professional education.

Background and context

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, the South African government has embarked on a variety of transformation-oriented initiatives to effect institutional change across post-school landscapes. The newly-elected government committed itself to transforming higher education and institutionalizing a new social order, which would enact a culture of lifelong learning.

According to the DHET (2013), education for adults in South Africa has been marginalized and neglected, and has seldom provided a vocational component for those seeking to enhance their occupational skills. In its White Paper on Post-School Education (2013) the government sets out a vision for:



a post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa; a single, coordinated post-school education and training system; expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision; a stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace and a post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, as well as the broader societal and developmental objectives. (p. 4).

Therefore, it is clear that the government aims to expand opportunities for post-school education and training, for post-secondary education and for higher education in South Africa. Badat (2010) claims that “due to apartheid, knowledge production in South Africa has been predominantly the preserve of white men” (p. 21). He also argues that “the democratization of knowledge” (p. 21) requires uncommon measures to include previously excluded social groups such as black people and women in South Africa into the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The DHET (2013) states that the reasons for excluding previously disadvantaged people from higher education are complex, but are relatively well-known. According to the DHET (2013), these reasons are as follows:

There continues to be significant inequality in the schooling system, especially in terms of access to high-quality schooling for the poor and for those living in townships in rural areas; linked to this, school leavers are generally not well-prepared for university study; student-to-staff ratios are too high at undergraduate level, particularly for first-year students; early-warning systems and other methods of recognizing students who need support are not adequate; factors that impact on student success are diverse and include inadequate funding, poor living conditions, and insufficient support for both academic and social adjustment to university life; and support for professional development and recognition of academic staff in the area of undergraduate teaching is generally weak. (p. 32).

The DHET (2013) suggests that “in order to address these problems, participation in universities must increase to give easy access to more students” (p. 35). For them, even if post-school institutions such as the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and community colleges would carry the main responsibility for expanding post-school access, plans to expand the university sub-system already exist. The DHET (2013) further proposes that “as the university and post-school sector grows, it will be essential to facilitate student access to the right programmes and institutions” (p. 35). According to the DHET (2013), it is also important that as participation increases, universities must simultaneously focus their attention on improving student performance.

The DHET (2013) also emphasised the need for the post-school sector to cater “for a very wide variety of potential student needs, including mature adult learners who have to study and work at the same time, as well as younger people who may have dropped out of the schooling system due to financial, social, learning or other barriers” (p. 48). The DHET (2013) further suggests that:

Such students require access not only to a diverse range of programmes, but also to appropriate modes of provision which take into account their varying life and work contexts, rather than requiring them to attend daily classes at fixed times and at central venues. (p. 48).

Therefore the DHET (2013) proposes that institutions which offer vocational and adult education should make their courses more flexible for those who are able to take advantage of this type of provision. The DHET (2013) argues that “in particular the Senior Certificate subjects, the National Senior Certificate for Adults, and NCV subjects should be offered flexibly to learners, including through distance education, in order to increase the opportunities for all South Africans to obtain these certificates” (p. 51). For the DHET (2013) this could be done by considering distance education for community colleges.

Rationale

While working at a Community College in the Western Cape (South Africa), for the period October 2007 until June 2010, I observed that many of the learners who entered the Plant Production Programmes (PPP) were between 20 and 50 years old and that many of them reportedly experienced a plethora of barriers deterring them from succeeding in learning. As my conceptual framework, I will utilise the Chain-of-Response (COR) Model conceptualized by Cross (1981a) to frame my study and to investigate specifically the situational barriers.

Research problem

Situational factors can affect participation in adult learning. Little is known about the way that situational factors can create opportunities, and barriers to participation in adult learning. Understanding the nature of such factors can enable policymakers, educators and adult learners to create situational conditions that reduce barriers, and increase participation in adult learning.

Research aims

- (1) To investigate the situational barriers to participation that adult learners in the PPP experience at the Community College; and how these barriers affect the learners.
- (2) To generate new theoretical insights about adult learners' situational barriers to participation in adult learning.

Research question

What situational barriers do adult learners in the PPP (NQF Level 1-5) experience at the community college?

Limitations

Currently, there are only twenty learners registered in the PPP at the Community College. They recently completed NQF Level 1 and will soon start with Level 2. Thus, the results for this study will be limited to the responses of individuals from this specific population. Therefore, to generalise the results for larger

groups, the study should have involved larger numbers of participants at different levels. Most of the learners reside on different farms and informal settlements in the Western Cape, and must rely on unreliable public transport. I liaised with the Community College to conduct the interviews with the participants on campus. Access therefore to research participants depended on their availability and on their means of transport. The group selected as participants consists of fifteen males and five females, which means that the females are under-represented in the group.

Overview

In section one, I briefly discuss the status of post-school education and training in South Africa after 1994.

In section two, I review relevant literature on participation and barriers to participation in adult learning which informed my selection of the Chain-of-Response Model as my conceptual framework.

In section, three I discuss the research design and provide a description of the methodology used for this study. This includes a motivation for the research approach, research site, research instrument and methods of data collection.

In section four, I present the data-analysis using themes that emerged in each of the different categories and how it related to the debates in the literature.

In section five, I present a summary, findings, new theoretical perspectives and insights, recommendations for future studies and conclusions.



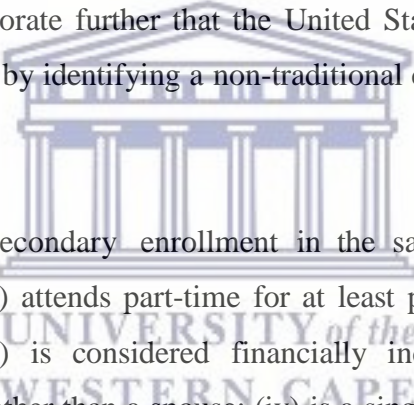
SECTION 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I review relevant literature on participation and barriers to participation in adult learning which informed my selection of the Chain-of-Response Model as my conceptual framework. This section explains the different conceptual frameworks and theories on participatory behaviour of adult learners in educational activities and programmes.

Opportunities and barriers to participation

Participation in formal and non-formal adult education

The study by Hudson, Bhandari, Peter and Bills (2005) reveals that in the United States researchers and educational theorists in the last decade believe that people who are most likely to participate in non-formal and formal education are in the age group 45 to 54 years. Hudson et al. (2005) state that “the definitions of adult education that are being used in literature reflect diversity of the educational and learning activities that constitute this form of learning” (p. 28). However, Jameson and Fusco (2014) observe that “common stereotypes of a traditional college student is one between the ages of 18 and 22 years who attends classes fulltime and lives on campus, whereas any student older than 22 years is thought of as non-traditional” (p. 307). Jameson and Fusco (2014) elaborate further that the United States Department of Education (1998) provides a more modern interpretation by identifying a non-traditional college student as one who has one or more of the following characteristics:

- 
- (i) Does not enter post-secondary enrollment in the same year that he or she completed high school;
 - (ii) attends part-time for at least part of the academic year and works full-time;
 - (iii) is considered financially independent from a legal guardian, has dependents other than a spouse;
 - (iv) is a single parent, and/or does not have a high school diploma. (p. 307).

Many researchers view adult education as informal and unstructured forms of learning, but still most research on participation in adult education focuses on the more formal structured activities. The research findings about the characteristics of adult learners are constantly under review and profiles of adults who are participating in adult education were developed to answer questions about who participated in adult learning and their reasons for participating in learning.

Participation, adult learning and the post school sector

Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2010) state that:

Adult participation in formal learning has reached unprecedented levels within the last decade, due to technological advancement, innovative educational programming, the exploitation of adults as a profitable learning market, widespread social acceptance of globalization as a challenge to national economic sustainability, and awareness among middle-income adults that education is the vehicle to career enhancement. (p. 25).

However, according to the authors, if you examine access through the lens of income, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and degree completion, troubling disparities and challenges emerge. According to them, the most underserved group in adult education is the poor.

The authors propose that in workplace learning, similar discrepancies exist in whose learning gets supported, with business prioritising learning programmes for top management and knowledge workers rather than low-skilled, low-income learners. They further mention that at least 50% of the people living in poverty in the United States are African American or Hispanic, U.S. Department of Labour (as cited in Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2010, p. 25) and these groups are the ones with the least access. According to the authors, these statistics reflect the legacy of historical injustices and the great difficulty of achieving equity in a discipline committed to adult education. They reveal the complexity of knowing what to do to enhance access and participation for all adults.

Cross (1981b) mentions that “community colleges were established as comprehensive post-secondary institutions, with the intention of providing education for careers as well as general education, and that intention is firmly established in the faculties and curriculum of most community colleges” (p. 115). However, what is surprising according to her is that the founding principle of community colleges namely “equal access” (p. 115) does not make the top five “Should Be” (p. 115) goals of the community colleges she researched. She further emphasises that the Community College Goals Inventory (CCGI) which was conducted by the Educational Testing Service in the United States labelled accessibility as:

Maintaining costs to students at a level that will not deny attendance because of financial need, offering programmes that accommodate adults in the community, recruiting students who have been denied, have not valued, or have not been

successful in formal education, and with a policy of open admissions, developing worthwhile educational experiences for all those admitted. (p. 116).

According to Smith (1998, 2010), participation in adult and continuing education is patterned according to key social dimensions. For him thus, there is a division in subject interests, for example, between men and women, differential rates of participation between different ethnic groups (with an overall participation rate affected by higher unemployment and racism in the labour market) and, most significantly of all, striking differences along class and age lines – particularly in relation to organized education provision. Tight (2002) argues that “access to and through further and higher education for adult students lacking the conventional entry qualifications is possible by many other means than access courses” (p. 141). These include access through examination or assessment, through liberal adult education provision, through the assessment of prior learning and through probationary enrolment.

Tight (2002) further assumes that most institutions of further and higher education in Britain and many other countries are currently using one or more of these methods and sometimes use it as a combination. Subsequent research by Dench and Regan (2000) suggest that “It is widely recognized that people will need to continually update and learn new skills if they are to remain competitive in the labour market, and for the national economy to compete effectively in international markets” (p. 1). Because of the trend of globalization of the world economy, it will have a definite impact on the social demand of higher education. Therefore, international competitiveness will greatly depend on the capacity to produce and absorb knowledge. To achieve this, the higher education sector will have to play an important role in the production, distribution and absorption of knowledge.

Participation in adult learning and economic activity

Desjardins, Milana and Rubenson (2006) state that “industrial countries are undergoing a period of fundamental economic transformation in which knowledge and information are becoming the foundations for economic activity” (p. 18). They further hold the view that the education system, broadly defined, can be viewed as a creator both of the requisite skills for the new economy and of the social cohesion necessary to permit its stable development. For the authors (2006) “the new economy holds the promise of increased productivity and improved standard of living” (p. 19). Desjardins et al. (2006) propose that “adult learning can promote competencies to adapt to the demands of the new economy and to allow full participation in social and economic life” (p. 19). Lifelong learning therefore will give citizens the chance to acquire adequate skills to prevent low-paid jobs from becoming life cycle traps.

Cross (1981b) claims that “the intellectual orientation goal of the CCGI includes items concerned with teaching students how to solve problems, synthesize knowledge, think openly about new ideas, and undertake self-directed learning” (p. 116). The author also highlighted the goal of developmental/remedial preparation and that it should include recognising, assessing, and counselling students with basic skills needs, providing developmental programmes that recognise different learning styles and rates, assuring that students in developmental programmes achieve appropriate levels of competence, and evaluating basic skills programmes. According to Cross (1981b), the “developmental/remedial preparation of students is a recent and special instructional goal for community colleges, and dissatisfaction with current attention to it is evident” (p. 117).

Participation in adult learning and the importance of educational attainment

Boudard and Rubenson (2003) maintain that educational attainment is by far the best predictor of participation in adult education. The more education a person has, the more likely he or she is to have participated in some form of organised adult education or training program. Boudard and Rubenson (2003) state that this relationship, “reflects a stratified process that starts early in life and progresses through schooling and working life” (p. 267). They further stress that a strong link exists between an individual’s level of functional literacy, and the literacy culture of the family in which the individual grows up.

According to McGivney (1990), the reasons that prompt adult learners to engage or not to engage in learning projects are often mixed and can operate at a number of levels. She provides a summary of some of the better-known theories that is very useful for understanding why adults participate or do not participate in educational activities. However, in 1998 the United States Department of Education’s National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) published a review of selected Conceptual Frameworks of participatory behaviour, which was more up to date.

According to the United States Department of Education (1998), the frameworks in review were chosen based on two considerations: “an attempt to represent a diversity of disciplinary approaches and conceptual emphases”, and a “preference to examine frameworks that have guided or informed at least one known empirical study” (p. 11). They further postulate that the models were selected from a literature review that targeted both frameworks on participatory behaviour in general and education participation in particular. The United States Department of Education (1998) holds the view that “this review was intended not to be an exhaustive discussion of conceptual frameworks concerning adult education participation or participatory behaviour in general, but rather one that illustrates both the differences and common aspects of approaches and the variables implied” (p. 11). The different conceptual frameworks that the United States Department

of Education (1998) published, directly or indirectly influenced adult education, but for the purpose of this study, I briefly interrogate only six of the conceptual frameworks. The United States Department of Education (1998) started with early adult education participation theories that draw impetus from social psychology and social field theory. The reason behind the discussion of the older theories is that these theories or conceptual frameworks also stress the importance of changes in life roles in decisions to participate in adult education, and that change to life circumstances such as layoffs or fear of layoffs, divorce, and parenting can be a motivator as well as a barrier.

I start with the early theories of the Life Cycle/Role of Knox and Videbeck (1963). For the United States Department of Education (1998) the major emphasis is on the “adult life cycle as related to participation” (p. 43). The United States Department of Education (1998) view educational activities as one of a number of “related participatory domains defined as a cluster of participatory acts and social relationships related to life role” (p. 43). For them, participatory behaviour is open to changes in life circumstances. According to the United States Department of Education (1998), the variables to measure are: “(i) measurement of variables related to life space; (ii) organization of life space defined as one’s role and status configuration; (iii) availability of participatory opportunities and personal and environmental strictures or restraints influencing one’s participatory alternatives; (iv) importance of change in life circumstances” (p. 43).

Secondly, I make brief reference to the Adult-Education-adaptation of Lewin’s Force-Field Analysis of Miller (1967). According to this theory, educational activity is the behavioural outcome of interplay between personal needs and social structures (class value systems, technological change, association structures). For the United States Department of Education (1998) variables measured are both personal need and social structures (class values, technology, association structures). The United States Department of Education (1998), for example points out that:

When both personal need and social structures drive to get education, likelihood is high; when personal need drives to get education but social structure support is, low participation will be erratic or non-existent; and when personal need is low and social structure high then adults may not persist; when personal need and social structure support are opposing each other then it is conflicting. (p. 43).

A third theory I discuss briefly is the Expectancy-Valence Perceived Opportunity Recruitment Paradigm by Rubenson (1977). This theory, according to the United States Department of Education (1998), is linked to cognitive motivational theory of Expectancy-belief that claims that certain actions will lead to certain

outcomes. Valence-value on the other hand is the positive, neutral, or negative perceptions a person places on an outcome. The United States Department of Education (1998) further advocates that this is a cognitive approach, “which views perceptual components as more important determinants than structural ones” (p. 44).

The United States Department of Education (1998) stresses that variables to measure in this theory are:

- (i) Personal variables that include prior experience, personal attributes, and current needs related to developmental tasks that confront a person in a life cycle;
- (ii) environmental variables, which include control over one’s situation, norms and values of individual and reference groups, available study possibilities. (p. 44).

According to the United States Department of Education (1998), the variables cannot in and of themselves explain participation. The model proposes that the influence on the individual’s experience is mediated by the individual’s response to meaning resulting in active preparedness, perception and interpretation of the environment and experience of needs. These interact to determine the perceived values (valence) of activity, the probability of participating and the expected benefit from it (expectancy). Power of expectancy and valence will ultimately determine the motivation to participate.

The fourth theory or model which I outline briefly is the Psychosocial Interaction Model by Darkenwald and Merriam (1982). The focus for the United States Department of Education (1998) is on the “participatory behaviour as a set of responses to internal and external stimuli” (p. 46) that are presented as a linear continuum of seven constructs. The socio-economic status is the first and most dominant variable in the continuum and the impact of it is mediated by a number of other factors.

The second concept in this model is the learning press. The United States Department of Education (1998) proposes that this is the “extent to which environment requires or encourages further learning” (p. 46). Other factors are attitudes and perceptions about value and utility of education, general readiness for social participation, and barriers to participation. According to the United States Department of Education (1998), “the inter-relationship of these factors is important in determining the likelihood of participation” (p. 46). Barriers to participation in this theory are listed, as the seventh and final component of the theory and instead of the Chain-of-Response Model’s three, there are four barriers to participation which are: (i) situational, (ii) institutional, (iii) psychosocial and (iv) informational. For the United States Department of Education (1998) the “expanded concept of psychosocial barriers emphasizes the potential learner’s possibly negative attitude toward the utility, appropriateness and pleasurable of engaging education activities” (p.

46). In part, this is influenced by socio-economic factors. The United States Department of Education (1998) acknowledges that the key deterrent variables measured in this theory are: “disengagement (inertia, apathy, negative attitudes); lack of quality (dissatisfaction with quality of educational opportunities); cost; family constraints; lack of benefit (doubts about worth and need for participation) and work constraints” (p. 46). Later research by the United States Department of Education (1998) listed six general factors: “lack of confidence; lack of course relevancy; time constraints; low personal priority; cost and personal” (p. 46).

The fifth theory to which I refer is the Psychological Framework of Henry and Basile (1994). Here the major focus for the United States Department of Education (1998) is on the “comprehensive framework of participation in adult education, combining psychological theory and restraints” (p. 47). This model stresses the complexity of the individual’s decision to participate. Henry and Basile (1994) studied a sample of motivated participants and non-participants in adult education classes at a university and they found that the learners’ interest in adult education is mostly motivated by work-related reasons and not by general interest. The variables that are being measured in this theory according to the United States Department of Education (1998) are:

(i) type of motivation work related or general social reasons; (ii) learning for own sake and sources of information about the courses; (iii) mailed brochures, friends, co-workers, supervisor, radio, television or newspaper advertisements; (iv) course attributes - type of course, length or course period, number of meetings, instructor, location, time of course, and content; (v) institutional deterrents - time and costs, distance to class, travel time, availability and (vi) institutional perception - the feeling the individual has about the organization offering the courses, attitude about the organization, experience with the organization, etc. (p. 47).

Henry and Basile (1994) further state that demographic characteristics of the target population are also likely to have an effect on participation.

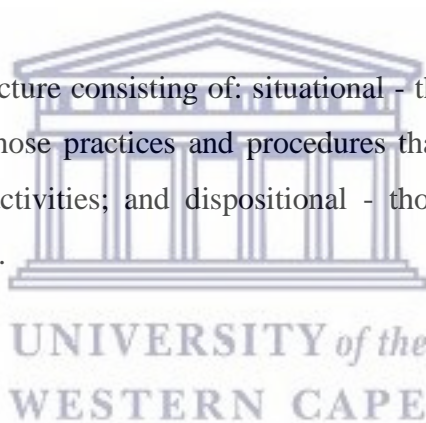
The sixth theory that I will discuss is the Chain-of-Response (COR) model by Cross (1981a). This is the model that I use as the conceptual framework for this study as indicated in Section 1. According to the United States Department of Education (1998), this is a composite model that “represents adult participation as a result of complex chain of responses to environmental conditions” (p. 45) as perceived by individuals. It also uses the concepts of expectancy and valence. In this model, internal variables interact with and influence the expectancy and valence associated with participation. There is explicit recognition of life

transitions. Creel (1996) stated that “the notion of transitions is common to all models of adult development” (p. 67). The author further argues that transitions occur throughout the lifespan and are a time of reappraisal and therefore adults often turn to educative activities in response to a transition.

For Cross (1981a), depending on a combined motivational force of variables, the individual interacts with opportunities and barriers associated with the educational activity being carried out. According to the United States Department of Education (1998) the variables to be measured are the different chain of responses, which includes:

(A) Self-concept and (B) attitude to education. Antecedent to and impinging upon A and B are social environmental factors. These internalized factors then interact with (C) expectancy associated with participation and these are further acted on by (D) life transitions. The decision to participate is acted on by (E) the concrete opportunities and barriers and (F) the information one has for decision making. (p. 45).

Cross also formulated a barriers' structure consisting of: situational - those that arise from one's situation in life at a given point; institutional - those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage adults from participating in organized learning activities; and dispositional - those related to the attitudes and self-perceptions about one-self as a learner.



Conceptual framework

Chain-of-Response (COR) model

In the 1980s Cross developed her Chain-of-Response model as a conceptual framework aimed at explaining what makes some people participate in adult education and training while others do not.

The rationale for the Chain-of-Response model developed by Cross (1981a) is to understand what urges people to participate in higher education or learning institutions. This shows that already more than 35 years ago, educationalists focused their attention on the different reasons why people sought higher education beyond high school. This model can be seen as cyclic, and Cross (1981) developed seven steps that would have different impacts on the decision-making process of whether to enter or participate and persist in an adult learning course.

Cross (1981a) advocates that “an adult's participation in a learning activity is not an isolated act but is the result of a complex chain of responses based on the evaluation of the position of the individual in their

environment” (p. 36). The study by Cross (1981a) states that the responses leading to participation tend to originate within the individual, as opposed to outside forces and it can either encourage or discourage participation in learning. The model examines how the psychological variables of self-perception (A) and attitude towards education (B) influence personal values, goals and the expectations for participation in learning activities (C). These expectations are affected by life transitions and experiential variables throughout various stages in life (D). Opportunities and barriers (E) and the availability of information (F) determine whether an individual will participate in learning activities (G). According to her, the relations between different experiences in life will affect whether adults will participate or not. Cross (1981a) begins with the relationship between the self-perception and self-evaluation of the adult learner together with the developed attitude towards learning.

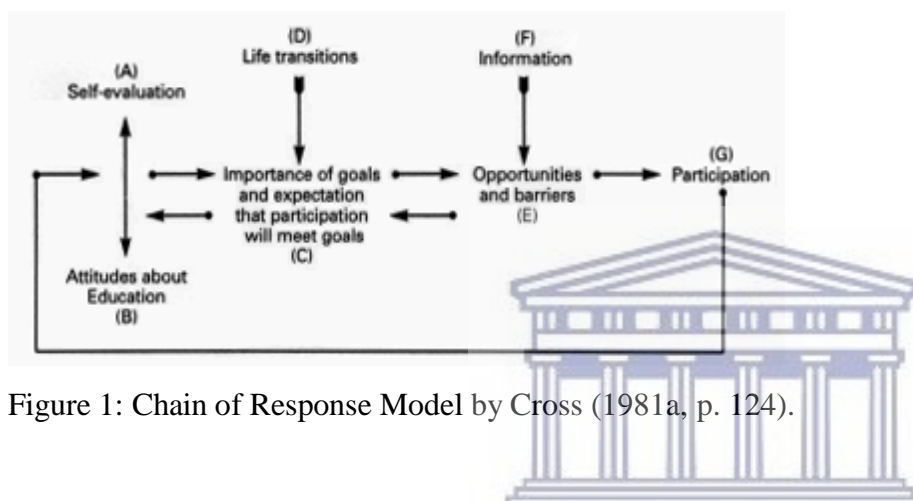


Figure 1: Chain of Response Model by Cross (1981a, p. 124).

According to the model, as illustrated in figure 1, factors like life transitions, information, and opportunities and barriers further influence whether or not an individual ends up participating in adult education and training. Cross (as cited in Larson and Milana, 2006) stresses that “the importance of the barriers towards participation in adult education and training, in the end depends of how strong an interest the individual has in adult education and training” (p. 2). The author also states that before looking at barriers, the individual must already have an interest in adult education and training.

Cross (1981a) includes different sets of barriers to participation in her Chain-of-Response model, which I will discuss later in the study.

In essence, the Chain-of-Response model begins with the concept of self-evaluation and ends with participation. However, the Chain-of-Response model shows many similarities with the earlier work of Knowles (as cited in Hiemstra, 1994, p. 3) on self-directed learning where he provides foundational definitions and assumptions like:

- (a) Self-directed learning assumes that humans grow in capacity and need to be self-directing;
- (b) learners' experiences are rich resources for learning;
- (c) individuals learn what is required to perform their evolving life tasks;
- (d) an adult's natural orientation is task or problem-centered learning;
- (e) self-directed learners are motivated by various internal incentives, such as need for self-esteem, curiosity, desire to achieve, and satisfaction of accomplishment that guided much subsequent research pertaining adult participation to learning. (p. 3).

Larson and Milana (2006) further suggest that:

The starting point in the model is the learning-oriented individual, and if not from the onset motivated for participation in adult education and training, it is very unlikely a person will participate, no matter how much is done to eliminate barriers external to the individual. (p. 2).

Reynolds (as cited in Hiemstra, 1993, p. 2) went a step further and explains how Cross outlined some common elements from earlier participation models for her COR model such as:

- (a) Motivation to participate is the result of an individual's perception of both positive and negative forces;
- (b) certain personality types are difficult to attract to education because of low self-esteem;
- (c) there is congruence between participation and anticipated learning outcomes;
- (d) higher order needs for achievement and self-actualisation cannot be fulfilled until lower-order needs for security and safety are met;
- (e) expectations of reward are important to motivation. (p. 2).

Hiemstra (1993) further elaborates on the COR model by explaining how the arrows in the Chain-of-Response model show one or two-way relationships among the seven elements of the model including:

- (a) self-evaluation, which was interrelated with (b) attitudes about education,
- (c) importance of making and meeting goals, which were affected by (d) life transitions, with (c) also interrelated with (e) opportunities and barriers, which were affected by

(f) information about the environment, with (e) also impacting on (g) participation and (g) impacting back on (c). (p. 46).

According to Cross (1981a), her model should not be viewed as linear, although her two-dimensional illustration is visually linear. However, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) suggest, it is “also a reciprocal model in that participation in adult education (G) can affect how one feels about education (B) and oneself as a learner (A)” (p. 68). They further argue that “although this model does have environmental components, it is primarily a psychological model with its focus on the individual progressing through the chain of response” (p. 68).

Stanard (2013) refines and explains the seven steps of the Chain-of-Response model as follows:

A). Self-perception or Self-evaluation focuses on the self-esteem and confidence of the learner, and persons who lack confidence in their own abilities avoid putting themselves to the test and are unlikely to opt for learning which might challenge their sense of self-esteem. B). Attitude refers to the feelings and perceptions of the participants similar to self-evaluation, individuals with positive prior educational experiences are more likely to participate in future initiatives. Other factors include the feelings and attitudes of family members and friends, which can also influence a learner’s perception and decision to participate. C). Goals and expectations imply that participation ties to individuals abilities to accomplish their goals through adult learning initiatives. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to be successful because they expect to succeed and are confident in their abilities. D). Life transitions refer to learners who participate in adult education initiatives to meet their own needs. For example, a person who wants to open a day-care centre may seek learning opportunities that teach them the steps required to obtain a certification in childcare case issues. E). Opportunities and barriers focus on the effect of income, food, and shelter on adult participation. Another potential barrier is the location of the study venue in relation to the location of the learners’ home, transportation, etc. Opportunities for learning must be convenient and accessible by the learner. F). Information refers to knowledge of learning opportunities. An adult who knows about programmes and courses are more likely to participate in learning activities. (p. 19).

According to Merriam (2005), “transitions are periods of change in our lives that seem to alternate with periods of stability” (p. 3). She further argues that a transition may have a negative or a positive effect on the adult learners’ self-esteem, sense of security and stability, and self-confidence. Cross (1981a) stated that “without accurate information, point E in the model is weak because opportunities are not discovered and barriers become bigger” (p. 127).

Barriers to participation

For the purpose of this study I focus on the opportunities, life transitions, self-evaluation and barriers or deterrents that hamper the educational attainment of adult students. Many adults sometimes experience mixed feelings and emotions about returning to school or participating in job-related training. The concept of barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities has been important in the adult education literature over the past 50 years. Cross (1981a) suggests that “It is just as important to know why adults do not participate as why they do” (p. 97). She further argues that it is usually the poorly educated individuals who need education the most, who fail to participate and therefore understanding the barriers to participation should be important.

Johnson and Rivera (1965) classified barriers to participation firstly as situational, which were out of the individuals’ control and secondly as dispositional, which were related to the individuals’ personal attitude. For them age, gender and socio-economic status were of the utmost importance when determining the barriers to educational participation. However, Cross (1981a) added a third category, institutional barriers to participation to arrive at a barrier structure of: situational, institutional and dispositional.

Different theorists on adult participation in education classified barriers to participation in different categories, but Cross (1981a) classified three, namely:

Situational barriers to participation, which are those arising from one’s situation in life at a given time. This barrier to participation can include lack of money; lack of childcare; lack of transportation; no place to study and friends or family who do not like the idea.

Institutional barriers to participation, which consist of all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities.

Dispositional barriers to participation, which are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner. Many older citizens, for example, feel that

they are too old to learn; also adults with poor educational backgrounds frequently lack interest in furthering their studies. (p. 98).

Titmus (1989) holds the view that situational barriers to participation like “competing occupational obligations and work schedules, family obligations, financial constraints, attitudes towards learning and participation, unreasonable expectations from the learning process” (p. 528) are all factors impacting negatively on adult learner’s participation. Furthermore, environments that are not conducive to learning, distance from the study location, absence of tutors and facilitators and childcare and other family responsibilities can block adult learners from participating. Women, elderly and married people, who do not have the support of their family and partners, are especially affected by these factors.

MacKeracher, Suart and Porter (2006) classified barriers to participation as “situational, institutional, dispositional or attitudinal, and academic” (p. 2). These barriers to participation can be located within the learner (dispositional), within the centre of learning (institutional), within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context (situational). MacKeracher et al. (2006) highlight the fact that “for most adults, participation in learning activities is a matter of choice that must be fitted into work, family and community responsibilities, and other interests and obligations” (p. 10). The authors further indicate that “the barriers to participation in learning activities that are routinely reported in the literature describe problems that participants and potential participants encounter when trying to gain access to and complete these activities” (p. 10).

These barriers to participation manifest themselves in different ways and only become obvious when learning breakdown occurs or when learners ‘drop out’ of the system. Sometimes it is possible to identify permanent barriers to participation in the learner or the system, which can be addressed through enabling mechanisms and processes. However, barriers to participation may also arise during the learning process and are seen as transitory in nature. Falasca (2011) believes that “despite these barriers to participation, research has shown that adult learners of any age can learn and succeed in their pursuits” (p. 587) if they are afforded the opportunity, assistance and support they need. The author suggests that in order for adult educators to be successful in doing so, they should resort to strategies such as “seeing support for learners as an entitlement, not an optional extra” and “flexibility to suit adults’ circumstances and schedules” (p. 587).

Opportunities for participation

Cross (1981a) observes that “although there is a general trend now toward granting tuition-free opportunities to the elderly on a space-available basis, young people are actually more likely than old people to mention

cost as a problem” (p. 101). On the one hand, the reason why younger people complain about cost may be due to competing demands on the income of those just starting homes and families and also the fact that younger people often aspire to relatively high-cost degree programmes. On the other hand, the majority of older people can express more interest in non-credit, low cost community education programmes. Cross (1981a) further suggests that “older people grew up in times when education did not receive the extensive public support that it does today, and they may expect to pay for the ‘privilege’ of education whereas younger people may question why they should have to pay for the ‘right’ to education” (p. 101).

Cross (1981a) also stresses that “institutional barriers to participation, usually subconsciously erected by providers of educational services, rank second in importance to situational barriers to participation, affecting between 10 and 25 percent of the potential learners in most surveys” (p. 104). She further holds the view that institutional barriers to participation exist primarily in that segment of adult education that was originally devised for full-time learners - that are in colleges and universities; but barriers to participation are rapidly being lowered by colleges seeking to attract the adult market. Ruyle and Geiselman (as cited in Cross, 1981, p. 104) note that making college programmes accessible to working adult students through devices such as scheduling classes when and where working adults can attend, granting credit through examination for non-collegiate learning, and creating more flexible admissions procedures are common ways to reduce institutional barriers to learning.

According to Cross (1981a), the “real importance of dispositional barriers to participation is probably underestimated in survey data and there are several methodological problems in understanding the actual role of dispositional barriers” (p. 106). For her, lack of interest was a leading barrier deterring adults from participating in learning activities.

Chao (2009) indicates that “the reasons and purposes why adults learn are varied at different stages of the learner’s life” (p. 909). For him it could be to fill in educational gaps, to develop personally, to perform a job better, enhance employment opportunities, or simply to join the job market but whatever the reason it could be classified as intrinsic, extrinsic or a combination of both. He further states that the adult learners’ reasons and purposes for learning create the motivation to engage in adult learning for these individuals. He goes further and divides adult learners into three groups namely; employed adults; unemployed adults and retired people.

According to Chao (2009), each of these three groups have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations towards participating in adult learning programmes, also taking into consideration their individual personal and

social life. In practice, this means that an employed adult can engage in adult learning programmes on his own initiative or through the initiative of his employer. However, unemployed adults either engage in learning to gain new competencies to participate in the job market and are motivated by their own desire or forced by society through the corrective act of the withdrawal of unemployment benefits for non-participation in adult learning, which is the case for most welfare states.

Chao (2009) also states that “new immigrants can engage in adult learning through extrinsic pressures of the government in order to integrate learning by their host countries culture, language and history in order to assist with their own personal development” (p. 910). Retired adults have different reasons for engaging in these programs and they use it to find something to do for personal fulfilment or simply the quest for knowledge. Individuals at different stages of life will have their own reasons and purposes for engaging in adult learning and according to Chao (2009) it would be almost impossible to list all the reasons. Barnett (2010) is in agreement with Chao (2009), and advocates that the prior experiences that many adult students bring to the classroom may actually increase their capability to become successfully integrated into an educational programme and accomplish their personal goals.

According to Kenner and Weinerman (2011), adult learners beginning their post-secondary education are likely to have a gap in their academic development process. The gap between the time they graduated from high school or earned their General Education Diploma (GED) and their first day of college or university could be significant. Kenner and Weinerman (2011) aver that “by having an awareness that adult learners may be using tools that, while useful in their daily lives, are inappropriate for acquiring academic knowledge” (p. 91) the developmental educator should be mindful of the frustration adult learners may experience as they fail to assimilate material presented in the traditional academic fashion.

Keillor and Littlefield (2012) developed a list of best practices for the promotion of adult’s readiness to learn which include: “create a safe, welcoming learning environment for learners; create a culture of empathy, respect, approachability, authenticity; collaborate on the diagnosis of learning needs; collaborate on developing learning objectives and instructional planning and ensure the practicality of learning activities” (p. 2). Furthermore, it seems that adults learn effectively when they want to; they learn best when they are treated like adults and not just learners. For adults to excel in learning there must be mutual respect, trust, comfort, collaboration and the freedom to participate should characterize their learning environment and programme.

February and Koetsier (2007) in their research on “support” and “success”; came to the conclusion that although support by employers and universities were perceived as important incentives towards the successful completion of university studies, more personal factors such as “determination and confidence, support by family and friends, hard work and dedication” (p. 6) stood out as decisive factors that contribute to academic success for adult learners. According to St. Clair (2006) “there is strong evidence that family background makes a significant difference to participation” (p. 32). For him, this could range from the positive end, where having a highly educated family can support participation at all levels, through general family unease, to the negative end of family violence or lack of support.

St. Clair (2008) also cautioned adult educators and administrators to understand and respond strategically to the choices adult students make to participate in learning, and to play a substantial and central role in extending higher education possibilities to those who do not fit the traditional student mould. St. Clair (2008) further points out that “it would be helpful to have a way of understanding participation as an active choice that makes sense for certain individuals in their particular context, but perhaps not for others” (p. 1).

According to Malhotra and Shapero (2007) “adult learners’ participation in higher education is a complex phenomenon involving varied reasons” (p. 82). They further state that adults are often affected by situational barriers to participation such as jobs, health problems, financial or legal difficulties, personal or family problems that may not be under their control. Furthermore, dispositional factors of expectations, self-esteem, level of family support, and prior educational experience can deter participation. Likewise institutional red tape, program fees, scheduling, and procedures are institutional factors that can either help or hinder participation.

Boeren (2009) hypothesizes that “the Chain-of-Response model is almost similar to the Expectancy Valence model of Rubenson where the importance of the value dedicated towards the participation by the adult learner himself together with the expectancy that participation will keep one’s promises” (p. 160). Boeren (2009) claims further that these expectancies and values are influenced by life transitions which the individual underwent, and they interact with the opportunities and barriers to participation experienced by the adult. According to Boeren (2009), participation in a programme can lead to certain life changes like “an increase of job success; increase of income; broaden the social contacts and better enactment within daily activities” (p. 160).

On the same topic, Larson and Milana (2006) indicate that:

The starting-point in the Chain-of-Response model is the learning-oriented individual. If not from the onset motivated for participation in adult education activities, it is very unlikely a person will participate, no matter how much is done to eliminate barriers external to the individual. (p. 2).

For the authors, the first link in the Chain-of-Response model thus, consists of individual self-evaluation and attitudes toward education. They go further and identify that the model moves on to more and more external factors like opportunities and barriers to participation. According to them (2006), “the next step stresses the importance of a belief that participation in education and training will lead to some goals considered important” (p. 2). Larson and Milana (2006) continue that “according to the model, factors like life transitions, information, and opportunities and barriers to participation further influence whether or not an individual ends up participating in adult education and training” (p. 2). Larson and Milana (2006) highlight the importance of the barriers towards participation in adult education and training, according to the Chain-of-Response model and for them it would depend on how strong an interest the individual has in adult education and training.

Bamdas (2014), however, holds the view that “by examining the continued value and usefulness of the Chain-of-Response model, the significance emerges from the deep, rich data about institutions wanting to provide higher education and individuals wanting to receive higher education” (p. 247). Bamdas (2014) further stresses that “this model however has yet to fulfil the promise of providing enough data on discrimination against under-represented populations” (p. 247). For her in particular “what knowledge and skills and how abilities and expertise are transferred into communities are proving most useful” (p. 247). Bamdas (2014) suggests that “an analysis of the Chain-of-Response model components should continue to provide data leading to opening doors into the future and to emerging trends in formal higher education” (p. 247).

Bamdas (2014) revisited the Chain-of-Response model to see how the model has been used in the 21st century and to examine its continued value. A second purpose according to the author remains for the exploration of its continued usefulness in other countries for adults seeking continuing and further higher education. She questions the timeliness of the model and its significance in today’s educational systems for under-represented populations in higher education including graduate education, which has been less pronounced in the literature. According to her, this is largely due to the increasing predominance of policy-making and educators attempting to understand and influence policies at many levels. Bamdas (2014) proposes that “one question to ponder is the need for the Chain-of-Response model to have a political arm or

framework; a second question focusses on the benefits that the components could have for adult and community education” (p. 248).

Brookfield (as cited in Bamdas, 2014, p. 248) outlines four criteria for models to be valued namely:

Distinction, separateness, and discreteness of whatever phenomenon is being described; extent to which the phenomenon is grounded in observable and documented evidence; comprehensiveness of all aspects of the phenomenon; and extent to which the phenomenon can be examined for accuracy and validity by researchers other than the originator. (p. 248).

Furthermore, Brookfield (1995) defines three different trends that he believed would be influential in the 21st century, namely; “the cross-cultural dimensions of adult-learning; adults engagement in practical theorizing and the ways in which adults learn within the systems of education (distance education, computer assisted instruction, open learning systems) that are linked to recent technological advances” (p. 5). He also emphasizes that the literature base of cross-cultural adult learning still was sparse at that specific time. Nevertheless, over the years for Bamdas (2014), the Chain-of-Response model more than meets the four criteria set in Brookfield’s valuation. She further advocates that while other authors have studied models of participation, Cross (1981) is one of the most longstanding theorists in the literature who proposed the Chain-of-Response model for understanding why adult learners are motivated to participate in formal educational activities. The focus for Cross was on students at the post-secondary or early college experience, with high ‘at risk’ populations who experienced different barriers to participation in adult learning. Although the model is linear, most researchers show a fluid interaction between each component of the model. For example, an individual evaluates his or her own strengths of interest in learning a new language (i.e. self-evaluation), although that interest may have come about from the influence of the mother who believed that an education that consists of learning two languages was most important for participating in education.

Research studies of the past two decades using or adapting the Chain-of-Response model have focused largely on assessing the situational (motherhood with child care concerns); dispositional (self-efficacy or negative thoughts about abilities to learn), and institutional (lack of ability to earn financial aid or have a graduate assistantship or fellowship or scholarship to help finance one’s educational) barriers to participating.

Bamdas, (2014) further posits that “although the model clearly fits the value of a workable model, the Chain-of-Response model has not been without its wait-and-see proponents” (p. 248). She, however, also proposes that although the Chain-of-Response model rarely has been used in the past few years, it is still a viable model. According to her, the problem that triggered the need for its creation remains inequity in participating in continuing higher education. She further argues that very little research on this problem has been done in African, Asian or Muslim countries where the model could be very useful for better understanding under-represented adults in education. However, Bamdas (2014) believes that Cross (1981) has provided an open, interactive model from which to continue examining individual processes of widening participation to make education more, rather than less inclusive in these times of having less and competing with the more privileged. She also mentioned that the Chain-of-Response model should be updated to bring a political frame in which to view widening participation. With the ongoing politicizing of education around the world, adding an arm to the model and repackaging it for discussion could prove even more beneficial in the next decade.

Hiemstra (1993) said that he was waiting for additional processing of the specific Chain-of-Response model’s A-G elements by other researchers. This indeed was accomplished in the 20th century and significantly advanced the Chain-of-Response model in the 21st century. However, the question still remains, whether the Chain-of-Response model could continue to be used for better understanding of, widening or analysing the variables of graduate education programs or to solve some of the problems connected to adult education, such as lowering attrition rates.

Critique of the Chain-of-Response Model

The Chain-of-Response model, as well as other models, has been critiqued by various researchers. The critique is not understanding nor sufficiently predicting the many complex and changing adult motivations for participating in adult education according to Courtney (as cited in Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2010, p.28). While Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2010) rated a few North American authors’ studies that used the Chain-of-Response Model, it is rarely used now in the United States as much as in international context.

Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2010) argue that “no individual theory or model provides scientific predictability, evidence for the unquestionable and obvious fact that analysing adult participation in its many forms such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) leaves the poor and least formally educated with the most personal and social barriers to participation” (p. 29). However, the Chain-of-Response model can help individuals in other ways, such as through organised training programs, through self-directed learning, and through collaborative learning methods.

Furthermore, adult educators claim that the model is underdeveloped. One area of under- development was with individuals of colour who worked in the community. According to Bamdas (2014), Ross-Gordon (1991) an expert on adult education, brought this knowledge to the fore and this awareness continuous to fuel current research that gives educational leaders insight into non-Western learners' perspectives. Additionally, research in the field of adult education and adult learning has been criticized for the large Caucasian/White sample populations (Ross-Gordon, 1991).

Bamdas (2014) further stresses that according to Ross-Gordon (1991), “numerous community populations such as nurses, faculty executives, and entry-level community colleges have been examined through the Chain-of-Response model and it showed increasing numbers of underrepresented populations entering formal education and training programs” (p. 249). Croll and Attwood (2013), like Ross-Gordon (1991), also note that students having less advantaged social backgrounds still rank high in the reasons for lack of educational attainment. According to them, however, the Chain-of-Response model has withstood the test of time as researchers from around the world now have explored and discovered meanings of motivation, barriers, expectations, attitudes, skills, goals and self-identity categories. Each found the model's component parts to be useful for evaluating the variables within the seven component parts (A-G). Some researchers from around the world referred to the Chain-of-Response model as influential. Connell (2008) argues that “the model was a useful and an effective tool and was most often adapted to research a wide variety of sites and sample populations” (p. 258). Some researchers are of the opinion that the model continues to draw lingering interest from established researchers, theorists, and practitioners along with newly interested scholars into an ever-widening, multi-dimensional exploration. It is frequently used as a ‘conceptual framework’ from which researchers adapt the model to superimpose site, population, research questions, and research designs.

Although the Chain-of-Response model captures the complex interaction between an individual and his or her environment, the model does not account for the effects of personal and social history on participation in learning activities and education. Much research still needs to be done in this regard.

SECTION 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section I discuss the research design and provide a description of the methodology used for this study. This includes a motivation for the research approach, research site, research instrument and methods of data collection. The last step in this section is a discussion on the selection of the participants, data collection, data analysis and research ethics statement.

Research question

What situational barriers do adult learners experience in the PPP (NQF Level 1- 5), at a Community College?

Research approach

I used a qualitative research approach because the study was aimed at understanding why adults participate in learning and what barriers discourage adults from participating in learning activities. Bryman (2008) states that qualitative research has different approaches to social research which derive from their epistemological and ontological positions. O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) maintain that “qualitative research is not discipline-specific and its progress and application have been influenced multi-directionally by academics/researchers from a range of backgrounds” (p. 1). These authors further argue that the history of qualitative research is complex and has developed different parallel strands within different disciplines and different geographical locations. The qualitative approach enabled me to gain an understanding of the situational barriers to participation in adult learning while the qualitative data collections are based on the narrative of the participants through the individual interviews.

The study made use of an interpretivist epistemology, which according to O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015), refers to as “the importance of interpretation as well as observation in attempts to understand the social world” (p. 11). They assert that researchers operating from a position of interpretivism attempt to “discover and understand how people perceive, feel and experience the social world and aim to achieve an in-depth meaning of individuals’ behaviour and motivations for the social world they live in” (p. 11). Thus, interpretivists emphasise the importance of interpretation as well as observation in attempts to understand the social world in which people live.

Research site

The site for this study was a community college in the Western Cape, South Africa. A farmer and his wife in the Western Cape established the community college (CC) in 1994. Their generous gift of land, infrastructure and funding were made to serve the farming communities in the Western Cape. The

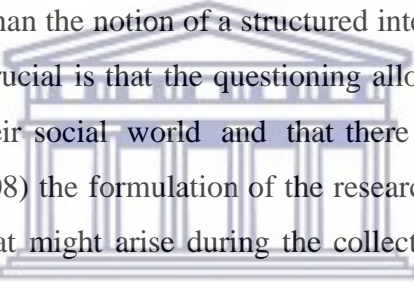
community college is an integrated rural development organization offering training programmes focusing particularly on economic and social development in that area.

The college has seven departments, namely: Adult Basic Education, Agriculture, Finance, Resources, Small Business Development, Quality Management Systems and a Health Department. Most heads of department started at lower levels in the organization and worked themselves into positions of responsibility and authority.

The organization employs 25 permanent and 10 contracted staff members. In addition, approximately 100 social workers and caregivers are contracted to implement health programmes in the surrounding communities. However, most of the permanent staff left to pursue other careers and only a skeleton staff of about 20 people remained to run the different programmes.

Research instrument

I used an interview guide for this investigation (see appendix A). Bryman (2008) states that “the idea of an interview guide is much less specific than the notion of a structured interview schedule” (p. 442). The author (2008) further stresses that “what is crucial is that the questioning allows interviewers to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in the conduct of the interviews” (p. 442). For Bryman (2008) the formulation of the research questions should not be so specific that alternative avenues of enquiry that might arise during the collection of fieldwork data are closed off. The author (2008) holds the view that:


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Such premature closure of your research focus would be inconsistent with the process of qualitative research, with the emphasis on the world view of the people you will be interviewing, and with the approaches to qualitative data analysis like grounded theory that emphasise the importance of not starting out with too many preconceptions. (p. 442).

The reason that I chose this research instrument for data gathering is because it is a favourable tool to use for semi structured interviewing. Another reason why I chose an interview guide was that it gave me flexibility in how questions were asked although there was a set of questions that guided the interview process. The fact that questioning is not restrictive when using this instrument enabled me to ask questions which were not included in the interview guide when there were things said by respondents which I wanted to follow up.

Method of data-gathering

For data collection I used an interview guide as a data collection tool. Bryman (2008) posits that “qualitative interviewing is usually very different from interviewing in quantitative research” (p. 437). According to Bryman (2008), the approach tends to be much less structured in qualitative research and there is much greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view. The author (2008) further proposes that “in qualitative interviewing, interviewers can depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask new questions that follow up interviewees’ replies and can vary the order and even the wording of questions” (p. 437). Therefore I developed questions in an orderly fashion to allow variation during the interview should it deem necessary. I interviewed each research participant with the help of the interview guide and by asking them open-ended questions so that they could express themselves with ease in their own words.

Selection of participants

Twenty registered students (15 males and 5 females) in the Plant Production National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 5 Learnership Programme of the Community College participated in the study. The participants followed a two-year diploma learnership programme endorsed by the Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority (AgriSeta). The participants already completed 11 unit standards on plant production endorsed by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) in 2016 and would soon embark on NQF Level 2 up to Level 5. The purpose of this Plant Production NQF 5 programme is to allow Junior Farm Managers/Senior Supervisors to progress towards a Farm Manager/Section Manager position. The entry level for the learners is Grade 12 but learners with different levels of practical experience in farming can also enter through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme. In order for the learners to exit at level 5 with a diploma, they must complete three modules which consists of Fundamentals, Electives and Core successfully. At the end of the programme, learners will have the competence to monitor, implement, co-ordinate, plan, control and provide leadership. They will also be able to take control of quality and quantity outputs and take responsibility for their own actions and for achievements of groups.

I used a purposive sampling technique to select the participants and chose the size and content of the sample in order to maximize my learning from the study. According to Bryman (2008), “most writers on sampling in qualitative research based on interviews recommend that purposive selection is conducted” (p. 458). For the author “such sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling” (2008, p. 458). This was important because I could select participants on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions. Therefore

20 participants between the ages of 20 to 50 (15 men and 5 females), many of the participants were from the previously disadvantaged population groups in the Western Cape were selected to be part of the study.

Data capturing

Bryman (2008) stresses the point “that in qualitative research, the interview is usually audio-recorded and transcribed whenever possible” (p. 451). For Bryman (2008) the reason is that qualitative researchers are frequently interested not just in *what* people say but also in the *way* that they say it. Therefore, for data capturing I used a mini audio recorder and field notes as well as an analytical memo. The reason that I used a mini recorder was to make the interview process less daunting for respondents. According to Bryman (2008), a memo helps the researcher to develop ideas and not lose track of their thinking on various topics.

Data analysis

For data analysis I used the approach of Rubin and Rubin (1995) in which they postulate that “data analysis begins while the interviews are still underway” (p. 226). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), this preliminary analysis gives the researcher time to redesign his/her questions to focus on the central themes as the interviews are progressing.

Qualitative data analysis focuses on “the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations; capturing the “essence” of the observations in primarily narrative form” (Rubin & Babbie, 2010, p. 303). It involves discovering patterns in a research topic or data, which can include issues like frequencies (how often); magnitudes (what levels); structures (different types or elements); processes (order among elements of structure); causes (what relationships can be explanatory, reasons for occurrence) and consequences (what effects, short and long term). Rubin and Babbie (2010) refer to “semiotics as the science of signs” and “emphasize the importance of signs and symbols in qualitative analysis” (p. 309). For the authors conversation analysis seeks to uncover the implicit assumptions and structures in social life through an extremely close scrutiny of the way we converse with one another.

For the qualitative data processing, the following steps were used:

Step 1. Organised the data which included transcribing; translating, cleaning and labelling of data.

Step 2. Identified a framework which was guided by the research question and data. The framework was also structured, labelled and the defined data also included a coding plan.

Step 3. Sorted data in to the framework, coded the data and modified the framework. Coding involved classifying or categorizing individual pieces of data; these coded units were then “retrieved” into groupings.

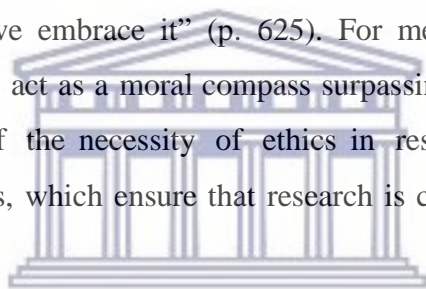
Step 4. Identified recurrent themes and tried to notice patterns in the data. Identified respondent clusters then searched for related themes. Built sequence of events and searched data to answer research questions.

Step 5. Wrote the research paper to report among others, the findings.

Mouton (2006) suggests that “to begin the final data analysis, you put into one category all the material from all your interviews that speaks to one theme or concept” (p. 198). Therefore I compared material within the categories and looked for variations and similarities in meanings. After the conclusions were reached, I started to write the report to share my findings.

Research ethics statement

According to Goodyear, Krljeza-Jeric and Lemmens (2007), the Declaration of Helsinki is a brave venture and the “property of all humanity, which has the potential to continue to promote high ethical standards and protect the vulnerable, but only if we embrace it” (p. 625). For me as the researcher the declaration’s strength lies in its core principles that act as a moral compass surpassing procedural rules. Therefore, we as researchers must take cognizance of the necessity of ethics in research, because it serves as a moral benchmark. It also provides strategies, which ensure that research is conducted whilst protecting the rights and welfare of research participants.



The Policy on Research Ethics of the University of the Western Cape (UWC), especially section 9 on “*Research Ethics*” is based on the principles and standards of good practice such as those laid down in the Declaration of Helsinki. The UWC (2014) stresses five fundamental principles of ethical research namely, “beneficence, which entails do positive good; non-maleficence that means, do no harm; informed consent; confidentiality/anonymity and veracity that means reliability or validity” (p. 43). For the UWC (2014) “beneficence and non-maleficence concerns risks, harm, and hazards, and includes emotional and mental distress, damage to financial and social standing as well as physical harm” (p. 43). The institution’s research policy UWC (2014) also stresses that:

The research should be scientifically sound and the purpose should be to contribute to knowledge; the research should be undertaken and supervised by those who are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the importance of the objective should be in proportion to the inherent risk to the participants; research should be preceded

by careful assessment of predictable risks in comparison with foreseeable benefits to the participants or to others; and concern for the interests of the participants must always prevail over the interests of science and society. (p. 44).

Shamoo and Resnik (2009) emphasise that “violating the autonomy of human research subjects is wrong because it violates human rights, undermines the public’s support for science, destroys the trust that research subjects have in science (which is necessary for recruiting subjects), and flouts a general ethical rule: respect autonomy” (p. 27). I therefore undertook to conduct my research following all the above-mentioned ethical principles. I ensured the quality and the integrity of my research by adhering to the highest possible technical standards, and in presenting my work I reported my findings fully and did not misrepresent my results in any manner. According to Mouton (2006), science cannot proceed:

Without the participation of human and animal subjects, but all subjects have basic rights. Where research involves the acquisition of material and information provided on the basis of mutual trust, it is essential that the rights, interests and sensitivities of those studied must be protected. (p. 243).

Therefore, with the selection of the participants for this study I made sure that, all of them were legally competent individuals over the age of 18, and that they did not belong to “vulnerable” groups such as children, the aged or mentally handicapped. Therefore, I did not foresee any major ethical issues pertaining to protection. It was also imperative for me to get consent from the institution where I wanted to conduct the research, before I could get to the stage of asking permission from potential research participants themselves. In order to obtain consent from the Community College to conduct my research at their institution, I sent a letter (Appendix B) to the director requesting permission to conduct the research.

Mouton (2006) further emphasises that “the aims of the investigation should be communicated to the participants, and they must be informed as to what will happen and their signed consent should be obtained” (p. 244). For the researcher there is an obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of the research and the publication of the results on the general population being studied. In addition, the anticipated consequences of research should be communicated as fully as possible to the individuals and groups likely to be affected. I provided all participants with an information letter that clearly stated what institution I represent. Furthermore, I explained to them what the research was all about, and reassured them that they would be protected from physical and psychological harm. I also made sure that they understood that participation is voluntary, and that they may opt out at any stage without providing reasons (Appendix C).

To secure individual participants' consent, I prepared a participant consent form that explained to each participant that his or her consent is required for an interview and audio recording. Space was provided for their signature, place of interview and date of interview (Appendix D). Upon request all participants completed the consent form. The language of the consent form was simplified so that potential research participants easily understood it. I also made sure that respondents or participants understood their rights in terms of anonymity and guaranteed anonymity as promised. Damianakis and Woodford (2012) argue that "qualitative researchers often conduct studies with small connected communities in which relationships exist among community members" (p. 2). According to them (2012), when engaging with such communities, researchers might face ethical issues in upholding confidentiality standards while they work to achieve their mandate. Participants in my study had a right to remain anonymous therefore; I made sure that this right was respected because it had been promised to them explicitly. I ensured that their privacy was protected by the removal of all identifying descriptions from published data. I also arranged with the research site for a private room where I conducted the interviews on a "one-on-one" basis in order to ensure confidentiality. To respect confidentiality, I did not share any information about participants and the interviews with persons who are outside of this study. I also made sure to refer to participants by using pseudonyms. In order to further protect anonymity, I left out unimportant identifying details about the participants.

Mouton (2006) states that "it is important to give a summary of the research results to the participants" (p. 244). For this reason a brief feedback session will be provided to the participants in this study as an acknowledgement of the valuable contribution to research science that has been made by their participation. I also tried to strike a balance between providing too little information with providing too much and thereby confuse the participants. For the sake of the low levels of literacy and understanding of my participants, I avoided academic terminology and jargon. As this research project is registered with the University of the Western Cape, all records, audio tapes and documents will be stored at UWC for at least five years.

SECTION 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

In this section I present the data-analysis using themes that emerged in each of the different categories and how it related to the debates in the literature. I reiterate the research question: *What situational barriers do adult learners experience in the Plant Production Programme (NQF Level 1-5) that is central to my study.* As mentioned earlier, the aim of the study was to investigate the situational barriers to participation that adult learners in the PPP experienced at a community college in the Western Cape, and how it affected the learners.

Learning activities can include informal learning initiatives and formal education programmes. According to Larson and Milana (2006), “the question of why some people participate in adult education and training while others don’t thus, is as relevant and urgent as ever as we want to make lifelong learning” (p. 2) accessible for everybody. The study used the COR Model by Cross (1981) to investigate specifically the situational barriers affecting those learners. The study made use of a qualitative research approach because the aim of the study was to understand why adults participate in learning and what barriers discourage them from participating in learning activities.

Bryman (2008) stresses the point “that in qualitative research, the interview is usually audio-recorded and transcribed whenever possible” (p. 451). The reason for that is that qualitative researchers are frequently interested not just in what people say but also in the way that they say it. Therefore, for data capturing I used a mini audio recorder and field notes as well as an analytical memo. The reason for using a mini recorder was to make the interview process which can sometimes be very daunting for respondents less so.

In this section, I present an analysis of the data gathered through semi-structured interview questions using an interview guide. According to Bryman (2008), it is “questions to be asked in semi-structured interviewing allowing the interviewer to assemble the ways in which respondents view their social world” (p. 437).

Biographical Information of participants

The participants in this study were adult learners participating in a two-year NQF level 5 PPP programme offered by the Community College. When I started to liaise with the College in 2016 to conduct the study, all the learners were on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1 and 2. However, when I

returned in April 2017 all the participants had progressed to NQF level 5. This specific programme is a two-year diploma qualification and is accredited by the Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority (AgriSeta). The learners will graduate in 2019. The learners attend weekly classes, which are broken down into three days theoretical training conducted by a qualified facilitator, and the rest of the week is for practical training. At least one day per week is set aside for the learners to go out to a farm where they are coached and mentored. They need to obtain a minimum of 48 credits for their Fundamental modules, 37 credits for their Electives and 155 credits for their Core modules in order to exit on NQF level 5. The exit level outcomes for the programme consist of fundamental competencies such as agri-business, good agricultural practices and plant production.

Under fundamental competencies, they need to apply communication skills in an agricultural environment; apply mathematical calculations within an agricultural environment; develop a data collection plan in the agricultural sector and integrate sustainable systems thinking into planning and management systems. For agri-business, they must control an agricultural input chain; develop a strategic plan for agriculture-processing activities; describe the integration of the marketing component as part of the total agri-business; analyse and interpret financial information in agri-business and demonstrate the ability to optimize and integrate farming systems.

In the agri-practices outcome they must ensure sound utilization of agricultural resources; describe the process of optimization of water quality in the system; develop, implement and optimize a management system for food safety and quality practices in the supply chain, incorporate an understanding of the importance of natural resource management and assist in the most appropriate and sustainable land-use.

In the plant production outcome they must be able to describe the basic biochemistry involved in physiological processes of a plant; develop a soil fertility and plant nutrition plan; know that plants are propagated in any production system; implement and co-ordinate different picking plans and identify, monitor and control pests, monitor beneficial insects as well as different plant diseases.

In order to be successful they need to adhere to certain assessment criteria in each respective exit level outcome. For fundamentals, they must be proficient in presentation skills, work instructions, and be able to represent data in graph and table form, plot trends and determine ratios. For agri-business, they must be able to understand HR management, analyse market trends, develop a production plan, identify and analyse market opportunities, develop marketing strategies and demonstrate the analysis of financial statements and records.

In agri-practices, they must develop a maintenance and storage plan, understand and explain safety policies, explain the management of water quality infrastructure design a traceable system and must be able to identify high and low yield areas. In plant-production, they must be able to explain the role of carbon compounds and plant metabolism, movement of water in plants, pathways of photosynthesis; respiration pathways, the role of hormones during plant growth and the responses of plants to the environment.

When I first met them in 2016, 20 learners were registered for the programme, but when I went back in 2017 to conduct the interviews only 16 learners remained because 4 had dropped out of the programme. Thus in essence, I could only manage to conduct interviews with the remaining 16 learners with very diverse backgrounds. Four of the learners represented the coloured population group of the Western Cape while the other 12 participants represented the black population group. Six of the participants were women instead of five as planned and the rest were ten males. The participants had different home languages or mother tongues with the dominant languages being Xhosa and Afrikaans. However, most of them did not have a problem with English being used as the language of command, and there was no need to translate the interview questions into their mother tongues.

Only two participants of the coloured population group were married with children, while participants from the black population group were all single, and some had children. All participants from the coloured population group work on farms in different positions or levels while all the participants from the black population group are jobless. However, the jobless participants out of the black population group receive a monthly stipend to study, because they do not have jobs. Some of the participants in the coloured population group are from the older generation and settled, while the participants in the black population group were from a younger generation. Classes started at nine and finished at two-thirty, so it was possible for the learners who worked to go back to work after class.

A brief background of each participant

For the purpose of confidentiality, I decided to give the participants in this study pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Mandla is a 25-year-old black man who was born and bred in the Western Cape. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he can speak, write and understand Afrikaans and English. He passed matric and tried to enroll into higher education but was rejected. After matric, he worked for 12 months in a restaurant and at present

he is jobless. He stays with his mother and four siblings and does not have any dependants. The only income he has is the stipend he receives from government because of his studies.

Nomvula is a 27-year-old black woman with two dependants. She was born in the Eastern Cape and dropped out of school in grade 11 after she became pregnant with her first child. She moved to the Western Cape after the birth of her second child. Her mother tongue is Xhosa, but she can speak, write and understand English. She stays with her cousins and sisters and is jobless. The only means of income is the stipend she receives for her studies and the social grant for the two children.

Sipho is a 20-year-old black male with no dependants and was born in the Eastern Cape. After he passed matric in 2015, he moved to the Western Cape in search for work. Although he worked in the informal sector for a short period, his first love is still the agriculture sector, because he took agriculture as a subject in matric. He never entered into any form of higher education and this specific course is his first attempt at obtaining a higher qualification. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he can also speak, write and understand English. As with most of the participants from the black community group, his only source of income is the stipend he receives.

Sbu' is a 20-year-old black male from the Eastern Cape with one dependant. After he passed matric in 2015, his parents sent him to his two brothers in the Western Cape. He enrolled at a Further Education and Training College (FET), but dropped out early in 2016. He could not find work after that and for the rest of 2016 he was jobless. He enrolled in this program at the beginning of 2017 and the only income he generates is the stipend he receives for his studies. He progressed quickly through NQF level 1, 2, 3 and 4. At present he is busy with level 5. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he is also fluent in Afrikaans and English.

Zola is a 21-year-old black woman from the Eastern Cape with no dependants. After she passed matric in 2015, she went to Johannesburg to study chemical engineering at a private institution. She dropped out of college early in 2016 and moved to the Western Cape. On arrival in the Western Cape, she enrolled at university to study nature conservation. However, she could not continue with her studies due to unforeseen circumstances. She heard from a family friend about this specific course that was offered at the community college and decided to enroll for the course, because it has something to do with nature. Her mother tongue is also Xhosa, but she can read, write and understand English. The only money she receives is the stipend for her studies.

Vundla is a 23-year-old black man from the Eastern Cape with one dependant. After matric, he moved to the Western Cape in search of better job opportunities. However, he could not find a suitable job and enrolled in this program in the middle of 2016. This is his first attempt in obtaining a higher qualification after matric. Like the others in his group, he also receives a stipend to study which is his only source of income. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he can speak, write and read English fluently.

Kazi is a 21-year-old black woman from the Eastern Cape with one dependant. She studied Hospitality after matric but did not finish the course due to certain constraints. She moved to the Western Cape to come and stay with her uncle, in search of better opportunities. A family friend told her about the agricultural programme that was offered by the college and she decided to enter the program. Her only means of income is the stipend she receives for her studies. She speaks Xhosa, but understands, writes and reads English.

Deon is a 50-year-old coloured male, born and bred in the Western Cape. He dropped out of school in grade 10, after the riots and mayhem of 1985. He works on one of the farms as a farm supervisor. He is married and lives with his wife and kids on the farm. In 2005, he tried to enter a similar programme at the college, but the farm on which he worked then did not want to give him time off to study. Because he has a permanent job, he does not receive a stipend; he must pay for the course out of his own pocket and must make use of his own transport. His home language is Afrikaans, but he understands, writes and speaks English.

Anathi is a 22-year-old black woman from the Eastern Cape with no dependants. After matric, she enrolled in a tourism course at a private FET college, but dropped out due to unforeseen circumstances. She moved to the Western Cape in search of better opportunities but to no avail. At present, she is jobless and depends on the stipend she receives through her studies. Her home language is Xhosa, but she is also proficient in Sotho and English. A family friend told her about this specific course at the college, and seeing that it has to do with nature she decided to join the course.

Thando is a 21-year-old black man from the Western Cape with three dependants. After he completed matric, he enrolled in an assistant manager program at a private FET college. He completed his studies successfully, but his heart was in agriculture which is why he enrolled in this programme. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he speaks, writes and understands English well. His only means of income is the stipend he receives for his studies.

Bulelani is a 20-year-old black man from the Eastern Cape, with three dependants. He completed grade 11 in 2014 and while in matric, he moved to the Western Cape. He failed matric and did not bother to rewrite his exams. A friend of the family told him about this specific course and he decided that it was a good chance to further his studies. He started the course in 2016, completing the NQF levels 1, 2, 3 and at present is busy with level 5. His home language is Sesotho, but he can speak, read, write and understand English. His only means of income is the stipend he receives for his studies.

Harry is a 21-year-old coloured man from the Western Cape with no dependants. He passed matric but decided not to further his studies and went to work on a farm as a general labourer. He fell into the trap of enjoying the work on the farm so much, that he had no intention to further his studies. His girlfriend's mother, however, told him about the programme and he decided to enroll. He managed to convince his seniors on the farm that the course would be beneficial to him and to the farm. He is enjoying the course so much that he is planning to study for a degree in agriculture after he receives a diploma for the present programme. His mother tongue is Afrikaans, but he is proficient in English as well. He does not receive a stipend, as he has a permanent job; he thinks that the farm on which he is working is paying for his course.

Frank is a 27-year-old coloured man from the Western Cape with no dependants. After matric, there was no money to study further so he went to work on a farm as a general labourer. His father was a production manager on the same farm and took him under his wing to guide and coach him. HR management on the farm enrolled him in this programme to streamline his career on the farm. He was busy with the completion of NQF Levels 1, 2 and 3 when his father passed away and he had to take over the responsibilities of the household. The farm is helping financially in paying his study fees at the college. As he has a permanent job, he is not receiving a stipend. His home language is Afrikaans, but he understands, reads and writes English well.

Reynold is a 37-year-old coloured man from the Western Cape, married with one child. After matric, he went to a technical college to further his studies. However, his girlfriend fell pregnant that same year and he had to drop out of the programme to support her financially. After they got married, he went to work on a farm as a supervisor. Only after 15 years, did the opportunity for him to further his studies arrive. His dream was to study full-time but the owner of the farm would not allow him. He believes that the farm is helping him financially by paying his study fees. He does not receive a stipend seeing that he is in a permanent job. His mother tongue is Afrikaans, but he understands, speaks and writes English to a certain extent.

Dumisa is a 26-year-old black man from the Eastern Cape and is currently residing in the Western Cape. He completed matric in 2011, but did not enroll in any programme to further his studies. He worked on a farm in the Western Cape for most of 2012 and after that, he stayed at home. He heard from friends that the college is offering a programme in agriculture and decided to enroll. His father had a piece of land in the Eastern Cape and he used to help his father on the land, which served to motivate him to work with the soil as his father did. He does not have any dependants in the Western Cape. His home language is Xhosa, but he also understands, writes and speaks English. His only means of income is the stipend he receives for his studies.

Aviwe is a 22-year-old black woman from the Eastern Cape. She has one dependant and at present she is staying with her parents in the Western Cape. She completed matric in 2015 and enrolled in the plant production programme in 2016 finishing NQF Level 3. At present she is busy with level 5. She is jobless and the only money she receives is the stipend for her studies. Her home language is Xhosa, but she also speaks and understands English and isiZulu.

Out of the above, it is clear that all four participants from the coloured population group are staying on farms and work on these farms, while the twelve participants from the black population group are jobless. The participants from the black population group were not staying on farms but in a nearby informal settlement. The reason for this is that the Western Cape fruit farms offer longer seasonal employment which attracts migrant or seasonal workers especially from the Eastern Cape. Farm owners in the area tend to appoint more off-farm seasonal workers which results into overcrowded informal settlements with a high percentage of jobless youth.

Self-evaluation

The Chain-of-Response model by Cross (1981) states that an adult's participation in a learning activity is not an isolated act but is the result of a complex chain of responses based on the evaluation of the position of the individual in their environment. According to Cross (1981a), "the answer to the question of why adults participate in learning activities will probably never be answered by any simple formula" (p. 97). Cross (1981a) holds the view that motives differ for different groups of learners, at different stages of life, and most individuals have not one but multiple reasons for learning. The author further proposes that "whether there is a general tendency for people to have a characteristic stance toward learning-that is, a learning orientation compelling them to seek learning opportunities to grow personally and vocationally - is a question worth further study" (p. 97).

My data analysis starts with the self-perception or self-evaluation of the participants. The data collected reveal that only three out of the sixteen participants, entered the programme because they saw it as the easy way out of poverty. Kazi, Nomvula and Aviwe mentioned that they did not know what to do after matric and because they were jobless, they entered the programme. They also had negative learning experiences in the past that caused them to drop out of previous educational programmes. This supports what Cross (1981a) mentions that people who lack confidence in their own abilities avoid putting themselves to the test and are unlikely to opt for learning which might challenge their sense of self-esteem. It also confirms what she says about adults who had a bad learning experience in the past and as a result lack confidence; they do not enjoy learning, have a low self-esteem and do not have a positive attitude towards learning. On the other hand however, if adults have a more positive attitude towards learning and a high self-esteem they will tend to be more open and enroll in programmes to further their studies more easily.

When the participants were asked what motivated them to participate in the PPP their responses indicated the importance of self-perception and self-evaluation:

My mother is working on a farm and I want to help her, but I can only do that if I further my studies in agriculture (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I took agriculture as a subject at school and I want to manage a farm one day, so this motivated me to enroll in the programme (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

When I was in school, there was not a subject like agriculture. I want to have my own farm one day and that is why I grabbed this opportunity with both hands (Sbu', Interview, April 28, 2017).

My mother has a farm in the Eastern Cape, and when I go back I must take over, that is why I enrolled in the programme (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I love agriculture and this is the way to go, I see a bright future for me there (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I want my community to become rich through agriculture, I want to get a job in agriculture and teach my community about agriculture (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

This ties in with Barnett's (2010) argument, that "the prior experiences that many adult learners bring to the classroom may actually increase their capability to become successfully integrated into an educational programme and accomplish their goals" (p. 10). She further argues that adult students may also enter college for different reasons than their traditional student counterparts. The decision to return to school is very often connected to choices, or the lack thereof, that they have made previously in their lives and may be related to work or other life experiences. These experiences adult learners endured, sometimes impact on self-perception or self-evaluation.

The data collected through the following responses from participants interviewed, related completely with what Barnett (2010) suggests about previous experiences.

It was the time of the riots, I was in standard nine and my mother who was the only breadwinner fell ill and we were five kids on school, I had to choose (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I was born on a farm, every day was farm, farm. I do not want to work on a farm; I want to manage the farm (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I can make a living through agriculture because it is good in South Africa that is why I chose this programme (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I finished matric and only wanted to work on the farm for one year. It is five years later and I am still on the farm because I found it interesting. That is why I want to upskill my agricultural knowledge (Harry, Interview, May 9, 2017).

One of the main reasons was that my father is a production manager on a farm, as a child I grew up doing things like pruning, picking and driving tractors with him. That made me curious and in high school, I took agriculture as a subject. I decided to follow in his footsteps (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I had the opportunity to study for one year but was not able to complete it, I was forced to drop out, and so I went to work on the farm. I have reached the ceiling as supervisor and must study to move up (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I only did agriculture when I helped my father in the garden. I see this opportunity for me to work with the soil as my father did (Dumisa, Interview, May 9, 2017).

The above-mentioned responses also resonate with the notion of St. Clair (2008) who cautions adult educators and administrators to “understand and respond strategically to the choices adult students make” (p. 1).

Life transitions

As I mentioned earlier, Creel (1996) suggests that “the notion of transitions is common to all models of adult development” (p. 67). Transitions occur throughout the lifespan and are a time for reappraisal and therefore adults often turn to educative activities in response to a transition. According to her, a transition should be seen “as a process that occurs over time and that presents the adult learner with different needs” (p. 67). All transitions are stressful and may affect other aspects of the adult learner’s life. Adult students bring to transitions resources that may help or hinder them in progressing through the change. For her it is important that, while the adult learner may not be aware of it, adult educators should realise that the type of learning that may occur in difficult times may be transformative in nature and may have to involve a perspective shift on the part of the adult learner.

The data collected indeed show that life transitions as a situational barrier can have a negative or positive impact on learners’ decision to participate or not to participate in further education. When asked why they dropped out of school or previous programmes, and what demands in their lives forced them to return to further their studies, some of the responses were:

After matric, I applied for further education but they rejected me. I went to work and became unemployed afterwards, that is why I was forced to enroll in this programme (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I fell pregnant and dropped out of school in the Eastern Cape, I came to the Western Cape in search for work and that is how I ended up in this programme (Nomvula, Interview, April, 28, 2017).

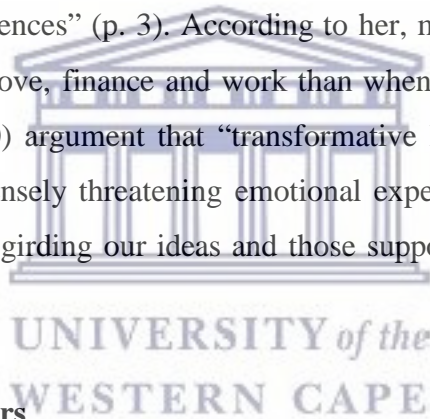
I did a course in hospitality but only passed one module, I decided to drop out and stay at home (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I did a tourism course, but due to a lack of funds, I decided to drop out. Then I heard about the course that is free, we do not pay anything and even receive a stipend monthly to come and study (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

My father who was my mentor and role model worked on the farm, and he passed away while I was busy with my studies. I had promised him that I am going to complete my studies and that is why I am doing Level 5 (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I went to study further after matric but then my girlfriend fell pregnant and I still had another four years of study left. I decided to do the honorable thing to drop out and support her financially (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

This confirms the findings of Merriam (2005) that “most transitions for adult learners are difficult and can lead to transformative learning experiences” (p. 3). According to her, more significant learning occurs when things are going well in domains of love, finance and work than when things are going badly in them. Her findings tie in with Mezirow’s (2000) argument that “transformative learning, especially when it includes subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions under-girding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change” (p. 7).



Situational opportunities and barriers

As I mentioned earlier in the research paper Johnstone and Rivera (1965) were two of the first researchers classifying barriers into internal and external barriers. For them internal barriers included dispositional factors and the external barriers were situational in nature.

Cross (1981a) argues that according to her Chain-of-Response model, if the adult’s responses all along the chain are positive, the adult will participate. According to her, situational barriers arise from the personal situation of an adult at a given moment. It can be a lack of money to finance the course, a lack of time to follow a course due to job and family responsibilities or a lack of transport possibilities to reach the educational institution.

Her shared psychological framework starts off with an adult's self-evaluation and attitudes about education, reflection on his or her life changes and the importance of goals and expectations for education to meet them, and it ends with the barriers and opportunities to be encountered as well as the information needed to proceed. For her, the first important step of decision making pertaining educational decisions is the self-perception or self-evaluation of the individual adult learner.

In research on self-perception (Friebe and Schmidt-Herta, 2013) agrees with Cross (1981a) that:

Even before attitudes toward education, current interests, aims, and learning opportunities become important for participation or nonparticipation in adult education programs the perception of personal learning abilities and learning styles is crucial for the decision either in favour of or against pursuing further learning. (p. 16).

This supports the idea of Cross (1981) that depending on their perceptions of their own learning capabilities and their potential for personal development, adults are more or less open to new learning experiences and willing to get involved in educational processes.

Friebe and Schmidt-Herta (2013) argue that “opportunities and strategies to develop competencies are only partly related to perceptions of self and ageing. This relationship seems to be mediated by lifestyle and the handling of daily challenges” (p. 19).



Finance

Availability of finance

Participants were asked questions pertaining to available finances as a situational barrier. The vast majority of participants from the black population group did not perceive finance as a barrier to enter this specific course, as they were not required to pay fees because they were unemployed.

When they were asked if they had to pay any fees for the course and how they managed to pay, responses were:

No I do not pay any fees they even pay me a stipend, can you see how beautiful it is? (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I do not pay for this course; I think the AgriSeta is paying. We receive a stipend every end of month (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I think it is a learner-ship, so we are being paid to do the course. In addition, yes they pay us to come to the class (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

No, it is free from the government, to help people to get work afterwards (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

No, we are not paying any fees, I think the AgriSeta supports us, they even pick us up in the morning and take us home after school (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Lack of finance as a situational barrier

However, the participants from the coloured population group who were in a permanent job, had a different story to tell. For them, because they were in a permanent job, the course is not free and therefore they or the farm where they are employed must pay the study fees.

When they were asked if they had to pay any fees for the course and how they managed to pay, responses were:

The farm where I work is paying for me and I do not receive a stipend like the others, I think because they are not employed the government sponsors them. I do not know if the farm is going to deduct it again from my salary, because it is expensive (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I cannot tell who is paying because our HR is doing this thing; he said the farm would pay for my studies. However, if they are going to deduct it from my salary I will be in trouble because study is expensive (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Like I say is that nothing in life is “Mahalla”, yes it will be nice if you do not need to pay for your studies. I struggle a bit financially but at the end, I will reap the fruit of this (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

The data collected show that the older folk from the coloured population group were more likely to experience finance as a barrier than the younger generation from the black population group. According to them, they would have participated in furthering their studies long ago, if they had received financial support. This confirms the observation of Cross (1974) that for men, the cost of education seems to be a situational barrier. For younger men with lower paid jobs and lower educational levels it is more difficult to enter institutions to further their studies. For her, these men are in a situation where money is a real – as opposed to perceived – problem. She further argues that for women the barrier of cost seems not to be very closely related to how much money they can be assumed to have. She found that amongst women, college graduates are almost as troubled by the cost of further education as high school graduates. Furthermore, finance as a barrier plagues female college graduates much more frequently than male college graduates. Lastly, she postulates that despite all of the talk about women’s liberation, it looks as though women do not feel as free to spend money on their education as men do.

Transport

Available transport/Lack of transport to the study venue

The data captured reveal that individual participants experienced different barriers related to transport used by participants.

For the twelve participants from the black population group transport was provided and they do not pay a cent out of their own pockets.

When asked if transport was available and how they travelled to the venue, responses were:

There is a taxi available that picks us up and take us home after class, we do not need to pay a cent (Nomvula, Interview, April 28, 2017).

The venue is far from my house but there is a taxi kombi, we do not pay for it (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

We receiving stipend every month but we do not use it to pay, there is taxi for free (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

We are using public transport like taxi but we do not pay, I think they provide the transport for free (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

It is not a walking distance, I am not sure about the kilometers but it is far and there is transport available. I use the minibus and we do not pay for it (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

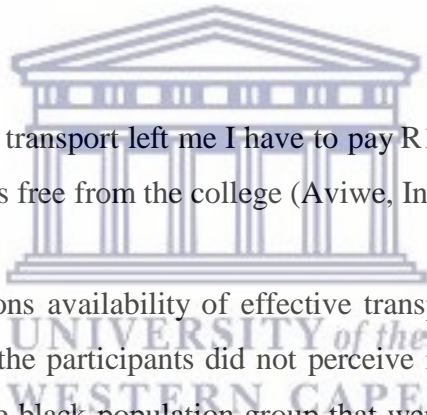
They provide transport and we are not paying anything, I am using the taxi (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

No, we do not walk to the venue it is too far, they provide transport and they pay for the transport (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I think AgriSeta pays the transport; they just pick us up in the morning, and drop us home after class (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I cannot walk, I am using college transport and it is free (Dumisa, Interview, May 9, 2017).

It is too far, because if the transport left me I have to pay R100 from my pocket for a taxi. Therefore, transport is free from the college (Aviwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).



Although literature on barriers mentions availability of effective transport as a possible constraint to adult participation, data show that most of the participants did not perceive it as a barrier. It is also worth noting that for all of the participants from the black population group that were jobless, transport was provided for without any extra costs.

However, the responses from participants out of the coloured population group who were in a permanent job, differed completely from the responses of participants from the black population group. This is confirmation that lack of transportation to the study venue is a situational barrier to participation as stated by Cross (1981a).

It is not very far, it is like 5km and I drive in and out with the farm transport. The other students, they use a taxi and it is free (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I think the distance is 10 km, I use my own transport and I pay for my own petrol (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

The college is not that far and I can use the farm vehicle for transport (Harry, Interview, May 9, 2017).

It is more or less 34 km from the farm to the venue; the farm gives me the transport to travel so I use the farm vehicle (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Convenient or inconvenient times of class, for participants as a barrier to participation

The data show that not all of the participants experienced the starting time of classes as a barrier.

When asked if the classes were at a convenient time for them, most of the responses from the coloured population group were:

No it is not convenient, I need to be at work at seven to organize the daily tasks for my men then I must rush to class which starts at nine. In the afternoon after three when I am done with class, I must go back to work (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

When it is season time on the farm we are very busy, when I am done with class I must go back to work. If classes were in the evening, it would have been best for me (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Actually no, when I am done at the college I must go straight to work to do the planning for the next day (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

The above data collected validates Cross's (1974) argument that "from all the barriers, situational reasons constitute the greatest barrier" (p. 6). According to her, lack of time to study and the timing of classes follow a predictable pattern, with men between the ages of 30 and 55 listing it as a primary barrier and women between the family-raising ages of 30 and 45 also giving it high priority. She further postulates that men offered job responsibilities, while women were likely to check home responsibilities, as leading reasons for failure to continue their education.

The responses of the participants from the black population group differed completely when asked the same question. Most of the participants from this group answered as follows:

Yes, it is convenient, because I do not have anything to do at home (Awiwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, I can say it is convenient, because from last year I was doing nothing so I was prepared to go to school at any time (Dumisa, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, most of the time I'm free so any time I'm available to go to class (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, it is convenient, we only doing theoretical at the college and we have lots of free time at home to do homework (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

The time is convenient for me because this is my first love, so I am doing what I always wanted to do. I am not forced to do it (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Available time for studies/Lack of time for studies

The data collected show that participants from the black population group experience available time for studies or a lack of time for studies differently. When asked if they had enough time to study, and if not, what activities reduced their study time, some of the responses were:

No, I am the only child in the house and must do all the house chores. I wait for everybody to go to sleep and then when it is quiet I do homework and study (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I stay with my cousins and sisters and we take turns to cook and do the house chores. When it is my turn, I do not have time to study or do homework (Nomvula, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I live in a two-room shack with five people and it is very difficult to study at home. I must wait until everybody is asleep before I can study or do my homework, even if it is after midnight and I am tired by then (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Sometimes I do have enough time, but other times I do not. I am staying with my uncle and he is working so I must cook and clean (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

From the above it is also clear that when it comes to gender, men perceive certain barriers differently from women. Mandla, as a male pointed out crowdedness and time management as an obstacle while Zola, Nomvula and Kazi, who are women, considered lack of time an obstacle toward participation in adult education and training. This verifies that situational barriers to participation arise from ones' situation in life at a given time as reflected by Cross (1981).

However, when the same questions were asked of the participants from the coloured population group, the responses were slightly different.

It is not suitable for me, because I have to fit in my work on the farm after class. I must make up the hours that I have lost being at the college the whole day. Therefore, weekends are the best time for me to work on assignments and do basic homework (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I am married and after class I need to give attention to my family, I am also an elder in our church and must attend meetings after work. Therefore, it is difficult for me to manage my time and do assignments (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Actually I don't have enough time, when I'm done at the college I must go straight to work to do my planning for the next day so that the workers can know what they must do. I also have responsibilities towards my family (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

This confirms the notion of Larson and Milana (2006) who suggest that it is especially those learners aged between 25 and 44 for whom lack of time and energy is a barrier towards participation in adult education and training. According to them, at that age many will have children living at home and at the same time probably trying to make a career.

The rest of the participants did not experience lack of time to study as a barrier, most of them pointed out that because they did not have a permanent job, they had more than enough time to study and do homework.

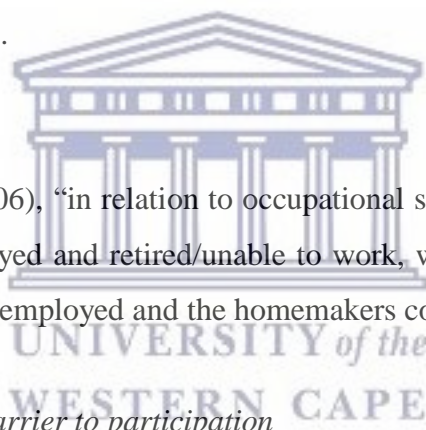
I have sufficient time to study and to do my assignments, when I reach home after class I am alone because my mother is at work. That gives me enough time to study (Awiwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, we are given enough time to study and to do assignments, the facilitator will give assignments on a Tuesday and we must only submit it the next Monday (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I have enough time to study at home, I do not have a work so I can do my assignments and study after class (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Sometimes I have enough time but if you focus too much on your books, your girlfriend will think you do not have time for her (Sbu', Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes, I have more than enough time at home for study and assignments (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).



According to Larson and Milana (2006), “in relation to occupational status, lack of time and energy is least likely to be a barrier for the unemployed and retired/unable to work, while it is significantly more likely to be a barrier for the employed, the self-employed and the homemakers compared to the unemployed” (p. 8).

Confidence/Lack of confidence as a barrier to participation

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2011), confidence can be defined as the “feeling that you are sure about your own abilities, opinion, etc” (p. 164). In the literature on confidence, Norman and Hyland (2003) define confidence as a trait and as a situationally specific concept as well. According to them, a trait is:

Relatively stable over time, hence if confidence is a trait and not situationally specific it would mean that those who lack confidence would remain lacking in confidence and there would be little educators or educational programmes could do to increase learners' confidence. (p. 6).

However, if confidence is situationally specific, it means that it can be raised and lowered depending on circumstances.

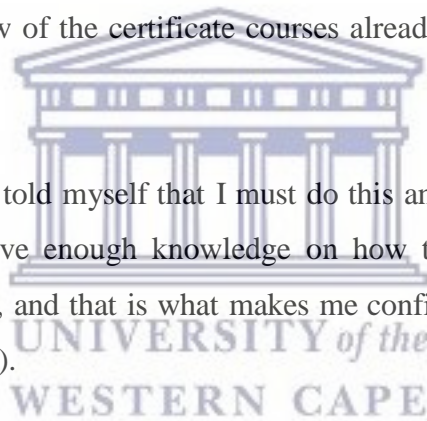
Thus, when participants were asked if they felt confident that they would complete their studies successfully; some of the responses were:

Yes, because this is like a challenge for me and I am willing to put in all the effort to do things to the best of my ability to become a top student in class (Harry, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, I am confident because I am forcing myself to succeed. I know there is no slip-up for me here, this is my last opportunity that I get and I hope the farm does not pull back their support around money and transport (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, I feel confident with the help of our facilitator and assessor, because they were willing to guide us and take our hands to pull us through. I do not have any doubts because I have done a few of the certificate courses already (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I feel confident because I told myself that I must do this and at the end of the day, I will be skilled. I will have enough knowledge on how to run a farm or how to manage my own business, and that is what makes me confident to finish this (Deon, Interview, April, 28, 2017).



The responses from participants from the black population group were as follows:

Yes because I like this agriculture now, it is my choice and I want to be a manager on the farm or in the pack-shed (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes I feel confident, because as I am going through with my course here the more it becomes interesting (Dumisa, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, I am feeling confident; there is nothing that is impossible if you told yourself and focus on what you want; know your goal- that is how I intend to complete this course (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I am very confident because I can see that everything is provided here and the teachers are very supporting (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes of course, I want my diploma. The reason why I'm confident is that my parents and my friends give me support and I also want to learn more (Awiwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, I do, they are assisting us with all the information and they give us many things (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

This validates the notion of Norman and Hyland (2003) who suggest that confidence is assuredness in oneself and in one's capabilities.

Only one participant had a negative response when the same question was posted to her.

No, I am not confident, the stipend that we are receiving here is too small and I have a child to support, and to pay for childcare, so I cannot afford going back home. If there is a better opportunity with better money, than I will leave this programme (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

The barriers expressed by Kazi correlate with the situational barriers mentioned by Titmus (1989). The author states that situational barriers to participation like family obligations, financial constraints, attitudes towards learning and participation are all factors that will impact negatively on adult learners' participation.

Cross (1981a) is of the opinion that "in all survey research, situational barriers lead the list, ranging from roughly 10 percent citing situational factors such as lack of child care or transportation to about 50 percent mentioning cost or lack of time" (p. 100). The author (1981a) further mentions that "although there is a general trend now toward granting tuition-free opportunities to adult learners on a space-available basis, young people are actually more likely than old people to mention cost as a problem" (p. 101).

Available support or lack of support from your facilitator

Falasca (2011) believes that "adult learners of any age can learn and succeed in their pursuits if they are afforded the opportunity, assistance and support they need" (p. 587). Therefore, in order for adult educators

to be successful in supporting adult learners, they should resort to strategies such as “seeing support for learners as an entitlement, not an optional extra and flexibility to suit adults’ circumstances and schedules” (p. 587).

Some of the participants misinterpreted the question: “Do you feel that your facilitator caters for your learning needs?” while others elaborated at length about the good qualities of the facilitator.

He gives...Ok when we do our assignment, we come to him and tell him and if I do not understand and say nothing he explains to me again (Aviwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Yes, he does cater for our learning needs, he is very helpful. He even created a WhatsApp group for us to ask questions when we are struggling (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

He is 100% determined to develop us and gives us every possible support. He motivated me a lot and he inspired me even though I have some challenges with my studies, he definitely played a positive role in my life (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Nomvula, Siphon, Deon as well as Kazi also responded positively on the good qualities of the facilitator.

He helped me a lot, because he gave me multiple chances when I did not submit my assignments (Nomvula, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes, he does, he has an open mind and he is assertive. It is easy to talk to him and he assesses all our assignments (Siphon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes, my facilitator gives me enough time and if there is something that I did not understand, I can call him and he will show and help me. Yes, he is always willing to help (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Our facilitator is helping us because if there is something that we do not understand, we chat with him on our cell phones. We have a chat group, so if there is something

that you did not understand in class you WhatsApp him and ask, then he will explain it to you (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

This resonates with the research of Keillor and Littlefield (2012) that produced a list of best practices for the promotion of adults' readiness to learn. In the academic literature on the support and motivation of adult learners, it shows clearly the importance of the role of the trainer/facilitator. My understanding of support and motivation is that you can awaken the motivation of adults to learn but you cannot force it.

Available support from family and friends or lack of support from family and friends

February and Koetsier (2007), in their research on "Support" and "Success", came to the conclusion that "although support by employers and the university were perceived as important incentives towards the successful completion of studies, more personal factors such as support by family and friends, hard work and dedication stood out as decisive factors that contribute to academic success" (p. 8) for adult learners.

Lack of support from family

Some participants responded very negatively when asked about the support their families were giving them:

My family they just need money because they are not supporting me, they want me to give them that money that I receive here (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

They do not like anything because they are not educated, so they do not know what is great or good for me. I am not getting any support from my family; I am the first one, who passed matric (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I need to be honest with you, they think it is a waste of time; my family are deep into that culture of money chasing. They cannot see that my studies will have an impact on the future, that is why they do not support me (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

They are not interested; they are just waiting for us to get money since they are not educated. I am the first girl to go into higher education, they do not see it as necessary, if you have grade 12 you should go and find work and bring money home. They think it is just a waste of time, so you have to push yourself (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

This confirms Cross's (1981) suggestion that the lack of support of family can be seen as a situational barrier to participation which will deter adults from participating in any learning activities.

Support from family

According to St. Clair (2006), there is strong evidence that family background makes a significant difference to participation. For him this can range from the positive end, where having a highly educated family can support participation at all levels, through general family unease, to the negative circumstances of family violence or lack of support.

These ties in with the responses of participants who were less negative towards the support their families were giving them.

They think that it is good because they love education too. They will always motivate me and if I need something for the school they support me (Bulelani, Interview, May 9, 2017).

My family thinks it is a good thing that I do and when I told them that this is what I like and want to achieve, they gave me support (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

My family is so happy that I am the first one at home, who started this (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Because it is my first love, they support me in all the ways possible and they encourage me to study (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

They are supportive and they just want me to get something behind my name (Harry, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I'm coming from a poor family, that's why my parents think it's a good thing so that I can take care of them (Awiwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

The data show that support from family had a positive influence on the participation of participants in learning activities. This confirms the notion of St. Clair (2006) that family background and support can make a significant difference to participation of adults in learning activities.

Lack of support from friends

When asked how their friends and peers were supporting and encouraging them, only 4 out of the 16 participants responded negatively.

They do not show much of support because most of my friends are in university and this is only a college. They are making fun of my course (Sipho, Interview, April 28, 2017).

They are jealous, they say that I cannot finish the course and I will not achieve because I did not pass matric (Nomvula, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Unfortunately, they do not support me; they say I must look for a job (Thando, Interview, May 9, 2017).

They do not support me at all and I do not know why (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Support from friends

The participants who responded more positively, elaborated on how their friends and peers were supporting them, while some of them just mentioned the support of friends and peers.

They are not jealous since they are also studying; some of them are university students so they are supporting me (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

My sister's husband he is supportive with this thing and he is really helping me because he also did this plant production. He is pulling me behind the ears and I am thankful for that, really I am thankful (Frank, Interview, May 9, 2017).

I have their support, I know at the end of the day they will be proud if I will get the diploma (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

My friends they support me, and when I have an assignment, they help me with it (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

My friends always told me that I must go to school because they are crying for their time, because they did not go to school (Dumisa, Interview, May 9, 2017).

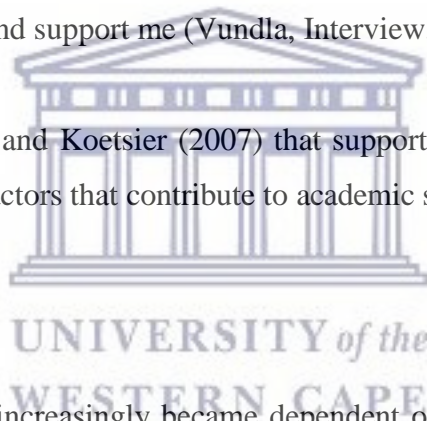
All my friends are on college, so it is quite nice because he is going to tell me what he is doing and I am going to tell what I am doing, so we share with each other (Harry, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Usually Saturdays we go to the rugby or watch rugby, but now they first phone they don't come and disturb...I think in that way they understand that (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

When I do not know something, I go to them and tell them that I am struggling and that they can help me (Awiwe, Interview, May 9, 2017).

My friends are so proud and support me (Vundla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

This supports the notion of February and Koetsier (2007) that support from family and friends, hard work and dedication stand out as decisive factors that contribute to academic success for adult learners.



Available technological capability

Data revealed that the adult learners increasingly became dependent on using technology for their studies. Most of the participants I interviewed owned a computer or had access to it and knew how to use it.

Anathi, Siphon, Kazi and Zola were very confident when asked if they knew how to use technology, like computers and the internet, for their studies.

Yes, I know because I did a computer course at a private college, and if I want to do research, I use the internet (Anathi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes, I do have a computer at home and I use Google on the internet for research (Siphon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I know how to use a computer and the internet, there is one in the library and we can use it for free (Kazi, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I had a PC but I lend it to my brother. Yes, I go to the library to do my research and there is internet access (Zola, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Lack of technological capability

Some participants declared having basic knowledge on the use of computers while others had no idea on how to use computers to further their studies.

I do not have a smartphone so I cannot access the internet and I do not know how to use a computer, someone must teach me (Nomvula, Interview, April 28, 2017).

I know the basic, but sometimes I got blank to use the technology, if you are not so familiar with the technology you will struggle to use it. (Deon, Interview, April 28, 2017).

Yes I only know the basic, how to turn it on but I do not know the deeper. I need someone to teach me the computer (Mandla, Interview, April 28, 2017).

If...let me say...we can use our phones, but it is too expensive, if we can have computer classes on the farm but there is not (Reynold, Interview, May 9, 2017).

Out of the above, it has become clear that computer literacy is a necessity for adult learners to function efficiently and to develop in order to advance in their studies and professional lives.

SECTION 5 – SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section I present a summary, findings, new theoretical perspectives and insights, recommendations for future studies and conclusions.

Summary

The research problem that this research paper addresses is: Adult learners in the Plant Production Programme at a community college in the Western Cape (South Africa) experience a multitude of barriers, especially situational barriers to participation in learning. I observed and noticed that many of the learners who entered the different programmes at this specific college were all of a certain age, mostly between 20 and 50 years. Many of them experienced multiple of barriers deterring them from participation in learning.

The aims of this research paper were to investigate the situational barriers to participation that adult learners in the PPP experience at the community college, and how it affects the learners. By doing this, I wanted to generate new theoretical insights about adult learners' situational barriers to participation in adult learning.

I investigated the following research question: What situational barriers do adult learners experience in the PPP (NQF Level 1-5) at the community college. I used the purposive technique to select 16 registered participants in the PPP from the college, between the ages of 20-50. Most of the participants were from the previously disadvantaged population groups in the Western Cape.

I used the qualitative research approach because the study was aimed at understanding why adults participate in learning and “what barriers deter adults from participating in learning activities”. For data-gathering I used an interview guide (Appendix A), and semi-structured interview questions which allowed me to assemble the ways in which the participants view their social world.

For data capturing I used a mini audio recorder and field notes as well as an analytical memo. The reason that I used a mini recorder was to make the interview process that can sometimes be very daunting for respondents less so. The audio files were then transcribed, after which I started to organise the data by using the questions in the interview guide to identify themes and patterns. For data analysis I used the approach of Rubin and Rubin (1995) in which they suggest that data analysis begins while the interviews are still underway. Thereafter I identified recurrent themes and looked for variations and similarities in meaning.

Findings

- A positive attitude and high self-esteem that several adult learners displayed, motivated them to become successfully integrated into this educational programme.

- Negative life transitions that a few of the adult learners experienced had a negative impact on learners' decision to participate in further education.
- The older adult learners from the coloured population group were more likely to experience finance as a barrier than the younger generation from the black population group.
- A few adult learners with full-time jobs from the coloured population group between the ages of 30-50 perceived the time of classes as inconvenient and a barrier to learning.
- A few adult learners from the coloured population group perceived transport as a barrier to access adult learning programmes, where the participants from the black population group did not perceive it as such.
- Several adult learners from the black population group who were unemployed at the time did not perceive lack of time and energy as a barrier to learning.
- Evidence revealed that all adult learners had an improved sense of confidence that they would complete their studies successfully because they were sure of themselves and in their capabilities.
- Several adult learners were very positive about the good qualities and support that they received from their facilitator in order to enhance their learning abilities.
- A few adult learners from the black population group responded very negatively when asked about the support their broader family is providing them as according to the family studying is a waste of time and money.
- Several adult learners from both population groups were very positive about the support they receive from their family because they understand the value of education.
- A few adult learners from the black population group experienced envy and jealousy from their friends and no support whatsoever, for furthering their studies.
- Several adult learners from both population groups were very positive about the support they receive from their friends because the friends are also studying at tertiary institutions and value education.
- Evidence revealed that several adult learners increasingly became dependent on technology to use for their studies and needed support in that respect to function efficiently.

Unanticipated findings

This study anticipated uncovering evidence of situational barriers to participation in learning by learners enrolled in the Plant Production Programme NQF Level 1--5, at the Community College. However, there were some unanticipated findings such as institutional as well as dispositional barriers that emerged from my research.

Evidence suggests that adult learners from the coloured population group with permanent jobs, especially in the rural areas, found it more difficult to enter into adult learning to further their studies. Before they could go to class, some of them first have to set out the day's work and after class, they must go back to work to plan for the next day. In the evening, they must make time to do their homework and assignments as well as spend quality time with their families. It shows that time as a barrier often refers to family responsibilities and work schedules. This ties in exactly with Merriam and Caffarella's (1999) argument that "adults are busy people who spend at least eight hours a day working and often as many hours attending to family, household, and community concerns" (p. 51).

A few adult learners from the black population group blamed poor family culture of learning as a reason for their families not supporting them in their studies; they see it as a waste of time and money. This relates to what St. Clair (2006) suggests that family background makes a significant difference to participation.

All the adult learners from the black population group received a monthly stipend to study because they were jobless, while all the participants from the coloured population group received nothing because they were in permanent jobs.

Evidence revealed that some adult learners out of the black population group felt that their family is not supportive. All that they were interested in was that the adult learners share the monthly stipend they received. It was interesting to find this new perspective which I will link to cultural differences and label as a situational barrier. Several participants from the black population group were born in the Eastern Cape and relocated to the Western Cape in search of better opportunities. This barrier developed when they had to come and stay with siblings or extended family and had to pay for boarding or lodging. Out of respect for the elders, they were obliged to share the meagre stipend to cover the basic expenses.

New theoretical perspectives and insights

My study anticipated uncovering evidence of situational barriers to participation in learning by learners enrolled in the Plant Production Programme NQF Level 1-5, at a community college in the Western Cape.

My study builds on Cross's COR model where she argues that "participation in a learning activity, whether in organized classes or self-directed, is not a single act but the result of a chain of responses" (Cross, 1981, p. 36) each based on an evaluation of the position of the individual in his or her environment. According to her, responses leading to participation tend to originate within the individual, as opposed to outside forces; it can either encourage or discourage participation in learning.

The main elements in the chain are a) self-evaluation; b) attitudes about education; c) importance of goals and expectations; d) life transitions; e) opportunities and barriers; f) information and g) participation. After I

studied the different barriers indicated in the COR Model of Cross (1981), the situational barriers stood out for me. Relying on the approach of Rubin and Rubin (1995) for data analysis, my study generated theoretical insights that could prompt thinking about new dimensions that could be incorporated into the COR model.

However, when doing the literature review I realised that the literature on adult participation and barriers to participation in adult learning is very diverse and cannot be easily defined. This is reflected in Merriam and Caffarella's (1999) suggestion that "adult education is a large and amorphous field of practice, with no neat boundaries such as age, as in the case of elementary and secondary education, or mission, as in the case of higher education" (p. 45). According to Bamdas (2014),

literature reveals that research studies of the past two decades using or adopting Cross's model have focused largely on assessing the situational (motherhood with child-care concerns); dispositional (self-efficacy or negative thoughts about abilities to learn), and institutional (lack of ability to earn financial aid or have a graduate assistantship or fellowship or scholarship to help finance one's educational) barriers. (p. 248)

The data from my research confirmed the existence of dispositional and situational barriers, but also revealed a plethora of other barriers. What stood out for me, however, was that most of the adult learners at the specific community college were disadvantaged people who were jobless, with just a small percentage of the participants who had permanent jobs on different farms. This ties in with Ross-Gordon's (1991) argument that the COR model is underdeveloped because it does not make provision for individuals of colour who work in the community. She goes further and argues that research in the field of adult education and adult learning has been criticized for their large Caucasian/White sample populations. According to her, some of these formulations question the premises of much research on adult development as too steeped in the realities of white, middle-class, Western men. This includes theorists investigating women's development who have moved away from an initial concern with modifying theories originally derived from observations of men toward the development of theories based on women's lives. Croll and Atwood (2013), like Ross-Gordon (1991), also noted that students having less advantaged social backgrounds still rank high in the reasons for lack of educational attainment.

The data from my research also revealed the disparity between races in adult education because all the participants were from the black and coloured population groups. For these population groups it is easier to access further education through community colleges and learnerships because it is more affordable. The participants from the less advantaged social backgrounds cannot afford the exorbitant fees of universities.

The female participants in this study were also under-represented. They were fewer than their male counterparts, which shows that there some form of discrimination against women entering the agricultural fraternity through adult education, especially in rural areas, still exists.

For the DHET (2013) it is of the utmost importance to substantially expand access to education and training, to improve quality and increase diversity of provision over the next twenty years.

The DHET (2013) propagates that:

This is essential not only to take account of the needs of the youth who complete school but also for those who do not complete their schooling; it is equally important in order to cater for the needs of older people, including those who never attended school, who require education and training opportunities in order to live fuller and more productive lives as both workers and citizens. (p. 7).

One of the important aspects in expanding access to education and training for everyone should be the expansion of opportunities for adult learners, those who work and those who cannot afford to go to universities.



Implications for Further Study

My research revealed that Cross's model is indeed limited and Eurocentric in so far that it does not make provision for an African context, and more specifically, a South African context. In present day South Africa, we are still struggling to address the exclusion and marginalization of less advantaged people from educational opportunities enforced by the old apartheid regime. In future, the model should be expanded to contextualize an African reality more specific to a South African reality. The model should be expanded to make provision for cultural diversity as well as a social, political and economic reality, to address the inadequate provision of opportunities in the broader society. It should also redress the disparity between rural and urban provisioning of learning opportunities for the less advantaged people of South Africa. More research is needed through the COR model in adult education and learning in South Africa, to better understand the interrelationship among the different participation factors.

Recommendations

I would like to make the following recommendations based on my research findings:

- Because negative life transitions impact on an adult learner's decision to participate in further education, different learning pathways and flexible learning opportunities should be developed to give them a second chance to further their education. There is a definite need for the development of inclusive policies by institutions of higher learning that can address the learning needs of adult learners to provide equitable access to learning opportunities.
- For the adult learner, a shortage of funds should not deter them from participation in adult learning and education. Governments and learning institutions should budget and allocate enough financial aid to invest in continuing adult learning and education to enhance sustainable participation in adult learning and education. Financial or subsidized aid for adult learners is of the utmost importance and governments can do this by issuing bursaries to adult learners.
- There is a need for programmes that promote sustainable participation and guarantee equitable access to adult learning and education where the times of classes are not barriers to participation, but where these barriers are eliminated by fostering a culture of lifelong learning.
- A few adult learners from a specific cultural group experience envy, jealousy and stereotyping from their friends with no support whatsoever for furthering their studies. Awareness of stereotypes can have important implications for adult learning programmes; therefore, it is important to take cognizance of group differences that will influence motivation to persist in adult learning programmes. Governments and learning institution administrators need to listen when students report incidents of racial prejudice and not look the other way. If a student population is more mixed in learning institutions, the better the chance that racial profiling and other stereotyping simply will not exist.
- There is a need to better understand adult learners' reasons and situations pertaining to family and family support. However, adult students are supposed to be independent and should make decisions for themselves; they should inform their family about their responsibilities as a student so that the family can be more supportive.
- Technology should be integrated in adult learning programmes to enhance and motivate adult learners to persist with their studies.

Recommendations to the college

- Do research in the community to address the specific needs of the community as expressed by them.
- Embark on an effective marketing strategy to sustain the college because lack of information can be a barrier to participation in adult learning activities.
- Maintain high expectations and requirements to become a centre of excellence and choice.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study confirms the existence of situational barriers to participation experienced by adult learners at a community college in the Western Cape. It also generated a few unexpected findings like dispositional and institutional barriers. The study also reveals that to effectively prevent barriers from occurring, institutions of higher learning should monitor and meet the different needs of adult learners holistically in order to recruit learners from various communities. More important is that more centres of adult learning should be developed, especially in rural areas, to address the educational needs of rural communities. To come to this conclusion I used Patricia Cross's COR model as a conceptual framework to guide me, however, the model should be expanded to make provision for an African context, and more specifically a South African reality.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview guide

Chain-of-Response (COR) Model, and Barriers to Participation in adult learning, Plant production (NQF Level 1 - 5) Training.

Biographic Information

1. Age:

2. Gender: Male

Female

3. Race:

4. Home language:

5. Other languages:

Speak	Write	Understand



6. Marital status: Single

Divorced Widowed

Married

7. Number of dependents:

A. Self-perception/Self-evaluation

8. What motivated you to participate in the Plant Production Training Programme?

9. How is this programme relevant to you?

B. Attitudes towards education

10. Have your opinion about higher education changed over the years?

11. If yes, how did it change?

C. Value of goals and expectations that participation will meet goals

12. What are your expectations for this programme?
13. What goals did you set for yourself in order to obtain a further education?

D. Life transitions (situational barrier).

14. Why did you drop out of schooling/previous programme?
15. What demands in your life forced you to return to further your studies?

E. Information / Lack of information about courses (institutional barrier).

16. How did you find out about this specific programme?
17. Did the institution give you enough information about the different courses?
18. If not, how and why did you choose this specific course?

F. Opportunities and barriers

Available finance/Lack of finance (situational barrier, institutional barrier).

19. Do you have to pay fees?
20. If so, how do you manage to pay?



Available transport/Lack of transport to venue (situational barrier, institutional barrier).

21. How far is the study venue from your home?
22. Is there transport available to the venue?
23. If no, what kind of transport do you use to travel to the study venue?

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Convenient time of classes/Inconvenient time of classes(institutional barrier).

24. Is the course at a convenient time for you?
25. If yes, why is it convenient?
26. If no, what time will be convenient and why?

Available time for studies/Lack of time for studies (situational barrier).

27. Do you have sufficient time to study?

28. If not, what activities reduce your time to study?

Confidence/Lack of confidence (dispositional barrier).

29. Do you feel confident that you will complete your studies successfully?

30. If yes, what makes you confident?

31. If no, what makes you feel less confident?

Available support/Lack of support from teachers/facilitators (situational barrier).

32. Do you feel that teachers/facilitators cater for your learning needs?

33. If yes, what makes this possible?

34. If no, what kind of support would make it possible for you to progress?

Available support from family, friends/Lack of support from family friends (situational barrier).

35. What does your family think about your studies?

36. How do your friends support and encourage you?

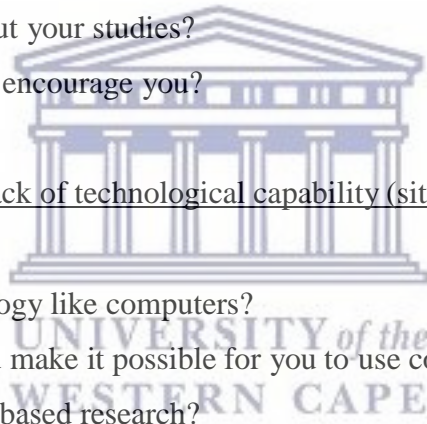
Available technological capability/Lack of technological capability (situational barrier).

37. Do you know how to use technology like computers?

38. If no, what kind of support would make it possible for you to use computers?

39. Can you use the internet for web-based research?

40. If not, who is helping you to do research?



Appendix B

The Director
Community College
Dear Madam

Re: Permission to conduct research

Title: Access, Participation and barriers to participation in adult learning: The case of a Community College, in the Western Cape.

I am registered as a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape.

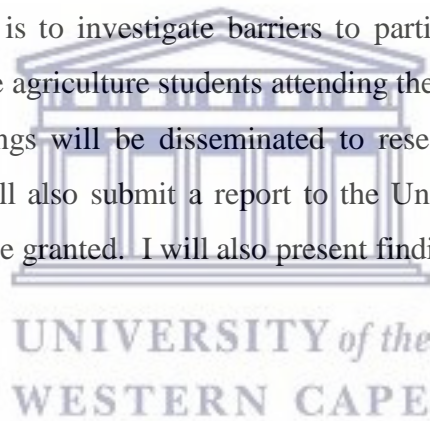
I am writing to request permission to use your organization as a research setting. I would like to use the current group of twenty Agricultural students who just completed their National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 1 training on Plant production and who will embark on their level 2 certificate qualification offered by you under the auspices of the Agri Seta as research participants.

This research is for a research paper which is part of my Masters programme in Adult Education and Global Change. The purpose of my research is to investigate barriers to participation in adult learning, especially Situational barriers experienced by the agriculture students attending the Plant Production programme.

A final report of the research findings will be disseminated to research participants through respondent validation before final write up. I will also submit a report to the University of the Western Cape, and to your organisation should permission be granted. I will also present findings in relevant conferences.

Reference

Prof. Zelda Groener
University of Western Cape
Cell. No. 0795022115
zgroener@uwc.ac.za



Please feel free to contact me should you have any further queries and I will gladly oblige. Hoping my request will be favorably considered.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Vivian Hearne

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Title: Participation and barriers to participation in adult learning: The case of a Community College in the Western Cape.

Dear potential participant

I am Vivian Lester Hearne, a graduate student in the Masters programme in Adult Learning and Global Change (ALGC) at the University of the Western Cape. The university wants me to conduct a research study, after which I will be allowed to graduate from the Masters programme.

You are hereby invited to participate in my research study and are requested to fill out a questionnaire that won't take more than an hour of your time. The purpose of the study is to investigate the situational barriers preventing adults from partaking in adult learning.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and will take approximately one hour of your time. There are no personal benefits to participation and you may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising the researcher, and may do so without any penalty.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential; your name will not be included or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study. Furthermore, because the interest of this study is in the average responses of the entire group of participants, you will not be identified individually in any way in any written reports of this research.

Data collected during this study will be retained indefinitely, in a locked office and locked filing cabinet to which only researchers associated with this study have access.

I would like to assure you, that there are no known or anticipated risks associated to participation in this study.

In addition, you will receive a detailed feedback sheet about the study. However, the final decision about participation is yours. The results of this study will also be submitted to the University of the Western Cape as part of my research paper. These results will also be shared with the Community College in order for them to improve future training courses.

If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or ask me questions directly. See my contact details below:

Vivian Lester Hearne

Email: vivianhearne@gmail.com

Cell: 0749517329



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INFORMASIE AAN NAVORSINGS DEELNEMERS

Titel: Toegang, Deelname en hindernisse tot deelname aan Volwasse Onderrig en Leer: Die geval 'n Gemeenskaps Kollege in die Wes-Kaap.

Hierdie skrywe dien as inligting in verband met navorsing wat Vivian Lester Hearne, 'n ingeskrewe Magister student in Volwasse Onderrig en Leer en Globale verandering aan die universiteit van Wes-Kaapland van plan is om te onderneem.

As 'n ingeskrewe student in die Plant Tegnologie Vlak 1 program aan die Gemeenskaps Kollege, word u vriendelik uitgenooi om deel te hê aan die studie. Die navorsing handel oor toegang, deelname asook faktore wat deelname aan onderrig en leer belemmer. As 'n deelnemer aan die studie sal van u verwag word om 'n vraelys asook 'n vorm waarin u onderneem om deel te neem te voltooi en te onderteken.

Deelname aan die studie is vrywilliglik en sal omtrent 1 uur van u tyd in beslag neem. Indien u verkies om tydens die onderhoud te onttrek van die studie staan dit u vry om so te doen

Alle persoonlike inligting wat tydens die onderhoud bekom sal word word as vertroulik beskou en u naam sal onder geen omstandighede genome word nie.

Alle inligting wat bekom sal word, sal vir 'n onbepaalde tyd in 'n liaseerkabinet binne 'n gesluite kantoor bewaar word. Slegs navorsers wat betrokke is by die studies al toegang tot sodanige inligting hê. Ek beloof ook voorts om gedetailleerde terugvoer in verband met die studie aan u te gee, die besluit egter om deel te neem berus geheel en al by u.

Die uitslag van die studies al ook aan die Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap deur gegee word as deel van my navorsing. Ek onderneem ook om n kopie van die uitslag aan die Gemeenskaps Kollege beskikbaar te stel met die doel vir moontlike verbetering aan nuwe programme.

Indien u enige besorgdheid of navrae het, kan u my enige tyd kontak by die volgende kontakbesonderhede:

Vivian Lester Hearne

Mobiele Foon: 0749517329

E-Pos: vivianhearne@gmail.com

Appendix E

CONSENT FORM

Title: Access, Participation and barriers to participation in adult learning: The case of a Community College in the Western Cape.

I agree to participate in this study being conducted by Vivian Lester Hearne who is a registered graduate student with the University of the Western Cape.

I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information/Consent Letter and have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I understand that my personal details (any identifying data) will be kept strictly confidential.

I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time by telling the researcher without penalty.

Participant's Name (please print) _____



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Participant's Signature _ Date _

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Place _____



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21 December 2016

Mr V Hearne
Faculty of Education

Ethics Reference Number: HS/16/8/17

Project Title: Participation, and barriers to participation in adult learning at a Community College in the Western Cape: A Chain-of-Response Model.

Approval Period: 19 December 2016 - 19 December 2017

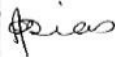
I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



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Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

06 February 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

This serves as an acceptance letter for Vivian Hearne to conduct a research at the Community College. Should you need more information or clarity please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you and kind regards.

Mercy Mgijima



General Manager



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