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Effects of Five-C protocol factors on Part-Time Continuing Education teaching: Case of Masvingo District, Zimbabwe (2020)

Morgen Peter Mabuto

Senior Lecturer, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Driven by an ontology that sought a shared conceptualisation of the challenges educators faced in Part-Time Continuing Education (PTCE) teaching, the study explored the effects of 5C protocol factors (content, context, commitment, capacity, clients and coalitions); in search of interventions and improvements. An interpretive qualitative methodology was adopted for generating data from a purposive and convenience sample of three educators, using a mixed method of on-line reflective activities and semi-structured interviews. The major finding was that the multi-level effects of the 5C protocol factors imposed a dual effect on teaching; comprising ‘enablers and constrainers’. In response, the educators innovatively mitigated some of the challenges, by engaging strategies, such as utilising mobile phone lights to illuminate the classroom; and personal ‘hidden’ curriculum, for content. Consequently, the Strategy for Assessing Factor- Interrelatedness in Teaching (SAFIT), emerged, as a possible and sustainable solution. The study recommended the adoption of SAFIT; to the relevant ministry, PTCE management and to educators; for guided analyses of ‘enablers and constrainers’, in a three- phased approach. SAFIT could be a panacea for minimising the negative effects of ‘constrainers’ and for increasing the positive impact of ‘enablers’; resulting in better quality PTCE teaching.

Key words: ontology; Part-Time Continuing Education; 5C protocol; ‘hidden’ curriculum; panacea

Background

Non- Formal Education (NFE), is a globally recognised and practised pathway that evolved as an alternative to formal education (Smith, 2001), in order to guarantee the right to education for all. Accordingly, NFE denotes the process of meeting the education needs of out- of-school children, youths and adults, in organized and systematic learning outside formal school (Kapur, 2018), whose number was estimated at two hundred and sixty- three million globally; with two million in Zimbabwe (Ministry of Education Report, 2017). The study advocated for the accelerated use of NFE programmes, such as Part-Time Continuing Education (PTCE), due to the exponential growth in the number of out-of- school learners and those seeking continuing education. The Constitution of Zimbabwe is definitive that

education is a basic human right for every citizen, regardless of race, creed, gender, or age. In this endeavour, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), supported by the Education Act of 1987, as amended in 1996, 2006, and later in 2013, spearheaded government's commitment to providing quality and relevant education to all its citizens. Formal schools now harbour NFE programmes, similar to PTCE.

By this undertaking, the government recognises the role of NFE in national development, in general, and that of the PTCE, specifically. Hence, it developed and launched the Non- Formal Education Policy for Zimbabwe (NFEPZ) in 2015, as a framework for guiding NFE, with the following philosophical underpinnings:

“Non-Formal Education refers to planned educational programmes for adult learners, youths and out of school- children that aim at improving skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal education curriculum” (The National Non-Formal Education Policy, 2015:7).

Therefore, by this decree, formal education (FE) and non-formal education (NFE), merged into a dual system of education, sharing resources such as physical facilities, the educators and the FE's curriculum. The FE teachers were the recognised educators, and became ‘non-professionals’ when they migrated to NFE (Mukeredzi, 2009). Therefore, the educators were likely to use pedagogy suited for teaching children, oblivious that adults are self-directed and independent learners (Knowles, 1980).

The historical perspectives on the development of NFE in Zimbabwe revealed that many out-of-school children, youths, and adults could not access education (Nziramasanga Commission Report, 1999), supported by the MoPSE Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020. The factors that impeded development were the lack of a national framework;

under-funding by government, the lack of teaching and learning materials, insufficient educators' financial incentives, coupled with the perennial engagement of untrained educators. Commenting on the current state of NFE, the MoPSE Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020, page 20, confirmed the existence of following factors:

“Fees for participation in NFE programmes which deter people from commencing, continuing and completing classes; reduced teaching time available-shorter hours of NFE classes in the afternoons and evenings rather than the normal five hours in formal learning; the introduction of the new curriculum and need to provide teachers with the professional competencies, to prepare materials and teaching strategies...” (p. 20).

The report did not allude to effect of the factors, suggesting the need for such a study since these factors were bound to have a profound effect on educators' teaching PTCE. The researcher considered the report as the tip of the iceberg, against an underperforming economy. Hence, the researcher was aptly motivated to undertake the study.

Research Questions

1. What factors influenced educators' teaching of PTCE?
2. How did the effects of the factors facilitate or constrain PTCE teaching?
3. How did educators respond to both the positive and negative effects when teaching PTCE?

Literature Review

Unpacking 5C protocol factors

The choice of a conceptual frame work was influenced by literature on crucial factors that affect teaching, whose influence determines quality in education. Najam's (1995) 5C Protocol for policy implementation, which comprised five factors, emerged as a realistic approach to a deeper understanding of the PTCE teaching context. Earlier in history, Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) and van Meter and van Horn (1995), suggested a 3- factor protocol which the researcher deemed to project a narrow scope of factors for exploring the PTCE phenomenon, given its context of challenges and inadequacies in both financial, material and human capacity. Figure 1, below is a contextualized diagram of the variables under review in PTCE teaching.

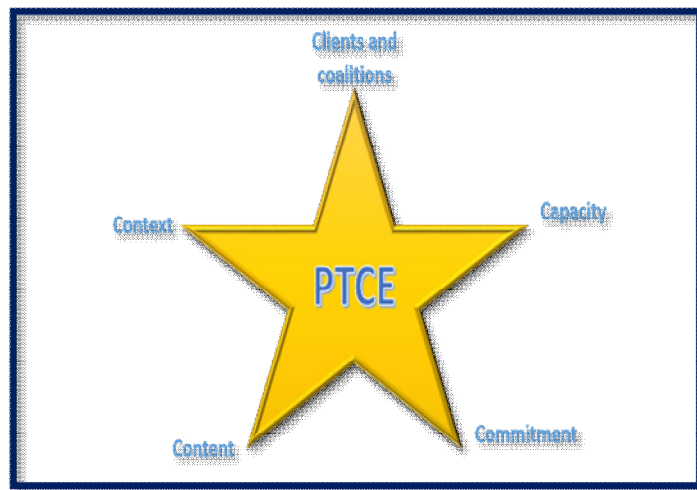


Figure 1: 5 C Protocol factors affecting PTCE (Diagram origination by author)

Lenkokile (2013) advises that the factors above are not exclusive. In other words, they are sometimes independent, while at times they overlap with each other at multi- levels of the process of PTCE teaching.

Content

Content is the substance of a document. It is in this context that teaching and learning content means what is contained in an education curriculum. Curriculum' content acts as an overall guide which should provide PTCE with a general direction of where to go and the limits within which action is taken (Okoroma, 2005). It behooves the school head to share the meaning with all the educators. Clear

education content needs to be understood, interpreted and shared so that it may be implemented (Kasowe, 2018).

Commitment

Commitment is a motivational concept which energises educators, learners and stakeholders towards a challenging goal. For example, an educator may direct energy and utilise time on something that one is convinced is worthwhile. Such an educator seeks gratification from PTCE teaching. Such a breed of educators was driven by resilience and creativity and much would be achieved, despite the presence of adverse factors. Resilience is a crucial ingredient for influencing positive responses to challenging situations (Gu and Day, 2007), including teaching.

Capacity

Capacity can be both a tangible and intangible variable, easily seen and unseen. Examples of tangible capacity are the human, financial and material resources; while intangible resources include training, experience, commitment and motivation. Such constructs are bound to positively influence teaching and learning (Liedl (2011). Therefore, the capacitation of the educators is a key factor for addressing educators' learning needs, adequately (Stofile, 2008). Educators should interpret and translate the curriculum into quality teaching and learning.

Context

Najam (1995) conducted an institutional analysis in order to established the context of realities in policy implementation and recommended the following determinants of a phenomenon: identifying the key actors and their attitudes and competences; connecting the actors to competent management of policy and availing funds for policy implementation. This suggests that the key drivers of teaching that are linked to the context factor are: competent and willing educators, functioning management that is connected to educators and adequate funds. A deep insight was sought after by interrogating the educators (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball. and Braun (2011). Accordingly, the study was guided on the search for answers to the above issues.

Clients and Coalitions

These are the intended beneficiaries of teaching and learning, who include opinion leaders and professional associations. Brynard and Coning (2006) posit that the success and failure of education also hinges on the interest that it generates in the community and other client groups. This implies that PTCE speaks to educators, learners, policy makers and other stakeholders, differently. Infact, clients possess the power to influence PTCE teaching by either their cooperation or lack of it (Liedl, 2011), based on their perceptions or beliefs. This implies that in the face of challenges, support can be sourced from the

community at large and from supporters and sympathisers, such as NGOs and business people. The question that behooved PTCE management was the level of marketing PTCE.

Research Methodology

This qualitative case study explored the educators' experiences for a deep insight into PTCE teaching. Based on the interpretive paradigm, the researcher generated data that were qualitative and contextual (Khoza, 2012), for accurate descriptions of the phenomenon in its natural setting. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, three (3) educators with the experience of an average of four years teaching in PTCE were selected. The four years coincided with the establishment of the school-model and the enactment of the NFEPP in 2015. As such the educators were founding members of the programme and were a rich resource of data.

Cohen, et al. (2011) advise researchers to adhere to the research ethics that prioritise respect for participants' rights. Accordingly, the researcher obtained permission from the school head and the consent of the individual educators. Name coding was adopted in the research report so as to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of participants (Creswell, 2013). The researcher explained the value of honest responses to questions, having emphasised that there were no right or wrong responses.

Data Generation

Data generation is a process of accessing information in a systematic fashion that facilitates responses to the research's critical areas of interest, guided by the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Subsequently, the whole process focused at generating quality data that focused on responding to the set research questions. The study generated rich data using on-line semi-structured interview schedules and reflective exercises, mindful of World Health Organisation (2019) rules for reducing the risk of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reflective activity, as a technique that allows participants to ponder on their personal opinions in a non-threatening manner (Cohen, et al., (2010), afforded the educators the chance to analyse (through email) their experiences and to make meaning of them (Howard, 2010). This activity, which took a week, was structured around the research questions.

The reflective exercise complemented the interactive phone interviewing technique in which participants and the researcher created a conducive environment for the exchange of information. There was encouragement and full participation that produced authentic and reliable responses under genuine feelings (Makumane and Khoza, 2020). The mobile phones' semi-structured interviews afforded the researcher some deep probing, as the researcher sought clarifications whenever necessary (Maree, 2012), adding to the dependability of the results when the responses were compared and matched with those from the reflective activity.

The guided analysis technique, which allows researchers to modify categories based on realities of interfacing with the data (Samuel, 2009); was used. This followed a process of describing, classifying,

and interpreting data into codes (Creswell, 2013). Three themes from the critical research questions and five categories that emerged from literature framed the presentation of the findings that were generated from the participants. The 5C protocol factors, namely, commitment, capacity, context and clients and coalitions; provided the categories for data generation, presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

Presentation and Discussion of findings

The use of the guided analysis technique enables researchers to focus on the goal of the study (Mabuto, 2020); in this case that of exploring the effects of factors to PTCE teaching. The technique allows researchers to modify categories according to the realities of interfacing with the data (Samuel, 2009). Three themes from the critical research questions and five categories based on the 5 C protocol, that emerged from literature, framed the presentation of the findings. The responses to interviews and reflective activity were presented, translated, discussed and analysed within the 5C protocol framework.

Theme One: Research Question One:

What factors influence educators' teaching of PTCE?

The study viewed the 5C protocol factors as determinants to the success or failure of teaching, now and in the future. The educators were given ample time during which to engage introspectively on their experiences. The reflective activity and the intensive interviews produced sets of factors from each participant. The results revealed more similarities than contradictions in the identities of the factors. This was attributed to the shared learning space and networking since the participants were at the same place of work and were influenced by similar contextual, content, commitment, capacity and client- related factors. These similarities increased both confirmability and trustworthiness of research results (Babbie and Mouton, 2009). The findings had managed to highlight the realities of teaching, regarding the typology of the factors that were similar to Najam's (1995) 5C protocol of factors.

Theme Two: Research Questions Two and Three:

Question Two: How do the effects of the factors facilitate or constrain PTCE teaching? and,

Question Three: How did educators respond to both the positive and negative effects when teaching PTCE?

Informed by the characteristics of the guided analysis approach in which researchers can modify themes and categories (Samuel, 2009), Theme Two combined with the findings from Questions Two and Three, to allow for an objective and systematic presentation, analysis and discussion that flowed from each factor's facilitating effects into a presentation of related constraints, and into the discussion on suggested mitigating measures, as presented below.

Capacity factors facilitating teaching

All the participants stated that an educator who had the requisite qualifications for teaching identical FE subjects in PTCE, also had the capacity to teach the same subjects in PTCE. Furthermore, data analysis showed that the capacitation of the educators had occurred during their formal education teacher development phase, with no capacitation towards PTCE teaching. The data also revealed the facilitating effects of the school's support for teaching and learning; through the provision of a room and small amounts of monetary incentives to educators. As such, the PTCE learners had access to basic resources, namely, an old classroom with children- size furniture and the educators' capacity in the form of their resilience to sustain the PTCE programme.

Lack of capacity constraining teaching and suggested mitigation strategies

The apparent limited capacities of educators regarding the lack of professional qualifications for PTCE teaching, and the short comings of the school were issues of concern. Participants revealed their apparent lack of confidence with teaching adults based on the pedagogy that applied to children. The findings revealed a glaring oversight by government of not capacitating educators with the PTCE's technological, pedagogic and content knowledge (TPACK). Hence, Mukeredzi (2009) expressed doubts on the educators' competence by labelling them 'non-professionals'. According to Singh et al (2013), such educators were likely to encounter challenges at interpreting and translating the PTCE's TPACK. Attempts to upgrade existing levels of knowledge and skill saw some educators surfing the internet on their mobile phones, in order to acclimatise themselves with principles of teaching adults.

The school's limited capacity to remunerate educators adequately so that they could do face-to-face teaching, resulted in the educators resorting to virtual teaching on WhatsApp, in order to save the programme from becoming dysfunctional. The educators suggested non- monetary incentives such as groceries, as a form of support and recognition for their sacrifices.

Content factors facilitating teaching

The findings pointed to educators who perceived that they possessed expert content for PTCE teaching. The educators can rely on their personal content and apply it to impact learners positively (Lacorte, 2005). The findings pointed to participants who believed they had expert content. 'They call me an encyclopedia', remarked Participant C. Nonetheless, books were rated highly by all the educators. Grange and Reddy (2017) confirmed that books provided the content that needed to be aligned with the curriculum. The educators revealed a serious shortage of quality content, such that they relied on their own experiences and personal notes as sources of teaching content.

Content factors constraining teaching and suggested mitigation strategies

There was mention of an acute shortage of books which denied educators and learners access to current, quality content and chances to excel in examinations. As a mitigation, some educators had approached former PTCE graduates to buy textbooks at affordable prices, with success. This suggested that a community-wide book collection project could be the panacea to the book shortage experienced in PTCE, including an appeal to clients and donors, such as Non- Government Organisations (NGO)s.

The shortage of books influenced the educators to become educator- driven in their teaching since the learners did not have the material to read on their own. In addition, the educators admitted to being examination- focused and resorted to teaching learners to cram information. In their justification, the educators claimed the inadequate light at night had influenced their choice of teaching techniques. The context was not conducive to in- class reading and writing exercises. The effect was that learners had to listen to educators most of the time as they were subjected to educator- centredness teaching and learning. However, studies encourage learner- centred approaches, in which learners gain access to textbooks for knowledge construction as opposed to rote learning (Ndlovu, 2016). In mitigating the effects of the shortage of content for teaching, educators relied on the notes that they developed previously based on their experience. These unofficial teaching guides are described as ‘hidden’ curriculum (Hoadley and Jansen, 2013). The educators stated that they resorted to their use in the absence of official guideline documents, such as the NFEPZ.

Context factors facilitating teaching

Findings revealed that educators and learners had access to school facilities, as a key resource in teaching. The classroom, though very modest, provided privacy and security. Participant A remarked it was safe environment, with a security guard, thereby promoting participation (Brooks, 2010). Proximity played an important role to both educators and learners by facilitating fast, timeous and safe access (Nkohla, 2016), in order for lesson schedules to be met.

The findings also revealed the positive impact of a government policy that highly subsidised fees, thereby removing one of the well-known barriers to education (Mabuto, 2020). The subsidised fees facilitated the growth of PTCE through increased enrolment, since the community afforded the five United States Dollars per term.

Context factors constraining teaching and mitigation strategies

The educators reported that quality teaching and learning was compromised by the effects of sub-standard teaching environment, with insufficient night time lighting and a shortage of books and the use of furniture designed for children. ‘...*I am at pains to compare our venue with others.... especially the lack of lights for a night school*’, remarked Participant B. The absence of quality furniture is linked to financial incapacity, thereby demonstrating the interrelatedness of 5C protocol factors.

The interrelatedness of factors further surfaced with linkages between capacity as it relates to the context of the phenomenon and the educators. This is a context that Nkohla (2016) says is prevalent in developing countries in which more than two factors are at play at any given time, which reveals that several factors from the 5C protocol had the potential to impact teaching and learning, simultaneously. When educators are faced with such complex situations, they must demonstrate problem-solving abilities (Khoza, 2016).

Faced with the context of unsuitable infrastructure, educators lit classrooms with phone lights while the shortage of content led to heavy dependence on WhatsApp for sharing content among educators and learners. Educators constructed ways to negotiate the impediments, in their unique ways. Lopes (2015) postulates that a deficiency in context under which teaching should occur is a condition for action. Accordingly, the educators tackled the challenges, innovatively.

Commitment factors facilitating teaching

The learners' commitment and that of the community at large was positively acknowledged for bringing sustainability to PTCE. Participant A pointed to the effect of the community's positive attitude by stating that educators were encouraged to work hard.

“The learners come from a community that is struggling to survive. They face a number of hardships but such is life in Zimbabwe at the moment. Some of them travel long distances on foot and at night. Their attitude pushes us harder.”’

Shoba (2018) agrees that the affective ethic has a motivational effect on educators. Similarly, the educators felt that they could not let down the community. They noted that, in principle, government had committed itself by passing the NFEPPZ which made it mandatory for schools to provide access to PTCE learners. The educators then felt obliged to support government efforts. The effect, as Participant C put it, was that educators literally ‘volunteered’ their services even though they earned a pittance.

Lack of commitment constraining teaching and mitigating strategies

Although in some areas, the MoPSE appeared to be committed to promoting PTCE teaching, it was also singled out as failing to demonstrate enough commitment and support towards PTCE teaching, in some of the following ways: insufficient resources and poor remuneration packages for educators. Participant B commented that the standard of teaching could be better if their books were available for educators and learners. Strategies for mitigating the effects of material, infrastructural and financial resources were hampered by the lack of government funding. The findings also suggested that the level of commitment by the MoPSE and school management could be more visible and practical in their support with learning resources and open communication, and sensitivity to the educators' professional and material needs.

Clients and coalition factors facilitating teaching

Although Brynard and Coning (2006) state that there is a wide range of beneficiaries of education, the educators regarded the community and the learners as the prime beneficiaries of PTCE. The two groups were at the heart of PTCE teaching and learning, with learners being the primary beneficiaries who received services directly from the educators, while the community is a secondary client (Tohibi and Jabbari, 2012). In return the community was seen as helping the growth of PTCE through the payment of fees. The educators acknowledged that their incentives were paid from the fees, although the amounts were quite miserly. Participant A explained: Although the money is not enough, it shows the commitment by government to ensure we get some reward. A large part of the fees paid off municipal bills which sustained the programme. Hence, the community envisioned that PTCE would equip community members with an education that would increase the learners' chances of obtaining employment and access further training at tertiary and higher education institutions. This was in line with the vision of government for contributing human resources for socio-economic development (NFEPZ, 2015).

The learners, as the PTCE's prime clients, cooperated with educators in every way possible and impacted teaching positively. Participant C was humbled by the material help in the form of lamps and mobile phones that ensured that some teaching and learning was possible, despite crippling shortages of electricity arising from electricity power shedding in the community. It is a unique characteristic of educators, not only to deliver content, but to seek contextualized solutions, that lead to the adoption and use of local resources (Mabuto, 2020). Amidst the impact of the constraints, the educators communicated with the learners, by phone about developments, since the learners wanted to be fully informed of developments (Fry et al., 2009). This is an important aspect in client-service/ product provider communication process and relationship building in order to develop sustainable solutions to PTCE challenges.

Clients and coalitions factors constraining teaching and mitigation strategies

The findings revealed that participant-client and coalitions relations that were founded on open communications, were productive. The educators stated that PTCE management engaged the community on resources and fees. At another level, government controlled the level of fees, which was set at an incredibly low level of an equivalent of five (5) United States Dollars per term. This had a negative effect on the level of educators' incentives and it created some tensions. The educators suggested an open forum with their employers to resolve the issue, at which alternative remuneration packages were to be discussed, such as groceries. The findings emphasised the value of open communication between and among service providers and stakeholders, in order to analyse, understand and resolve issues that negatively impact PTCE teaching and learning, while creating the sustainable use of the facilitating factors, in efforts to obtain quality outcomes.

Emerging Insights: Strategy for Assessing Factor- Interrelatedness in Teaching (SAFIT)

From the findings emerged a new framework for strengthening PTCE's teaching. It is called the Strategy for Assessing Factor- Interrelatedness in Teaching (SAFIT). The SAFIT is a systematic process that policy makers, management and educators can engage, either collectively or individually. It provides stakeholders, including educators, with a reliable tool for the conceptualisation and contextualisation of the complex connections between and among factors, in order to support the educators with necessary tangible and non-tangible resources, from an iterative process. The stakeholders and educators need to exercise both foresight and hindsight in order to influence the effectiveness of the 5C factors.

Operationally, the SAFIT is a three-phased process for both planning and assessment purposes, framed by analyses at the Pre-teaching phase, during the Active- teaching phase and in the Post –teaching phase. It behooves the analysts to understand what action to take, while mitigating the constraining effects; timeously and effectively. A key characteristic of SAFIT is that it is iterative, thereby allowing analysts to commence with a recap of the previous phase, and to reflect on the factors and their effects that informed the realities of teaching, before creating the futures. Above all, analysts and educators are able to control the present to predict PTCE's teaching outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the exploration of PTCE teaching and learning which was guided by the 5 C protocols at the selected high school, revealed both positive and negative effects. The 'facilitators' included the provision of basic facilities such as an old classroom and the engagement of subject specialists who were resilient and creative at ensuring the sustenance of the programme. The 'constrainers' included inadequate lighting, shortage of education materials and non- availability of a PTCE specific curriculum-in-use. The 'constrainers' influenced the creative use of the WhatsApp platforms for asynchronous learning that suited the working adult learners, while the unavailability of a curriculum promoted individualised 'hidden' curricula, and mobile phone lights; which ensured that the PTCE programme was not at risk of becoming dysfunctional. The study also concluded that lack of appropriate TPACK by educators exposed the educators in the unwitting use of educator-centred methodology, that was largely inappropriate to the adult learners. The numerous constraining and facilitating effects that the educators experienced gave rise to the development of a Strategy for Assessing Factors' Interrelatedness in Teaching (SAFIT).

The framework is a management tool for conducting an in-depth analysis of the complex nature of the intersections that frame the 5C protocol factors; which is conducted at the Pre- teaching phase, during the Active- teaching phase and in the Post- teaching phase. A recommendation that arose from the findings is that government, PTCE management and educators, engage the SAFIT framework, in order to

anticipate, identify and analyse factors that impact teaching. In turn, educators may be supported with PTCE's TPACK, for use at improving teaching and learning quality.

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