Factors Contributing To Low Enrolment Levels of Further Education Teacher Training Diploma in Polytechnics in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The study investigates factors contributing to low enrolment levels of Further Education Teacher Training Diploma in Polytechnics in Zimbabwe. The target population consisted of 70 Further education teacher training diploma students. The study followed a case study research design. The questionnaire complemented interviews and observations in the collection of data. From the respondents it shows that advertisements and road shows improve or boost students enrolment. The advertisements and road shows must be oftenly done. Information about the Education Department course must be sent to secondary schools so that the students will know about the course and its job opportunities in completion. The study recommended that Road shows must be organized regularly with specificity not just as a formality. When conducting road shows remote areas must also be target areas including secondary schools and even offer waivers in tuition payment. Colleges must merge with people from industries to explain the availability of employment in industries after training. Government should re-invigorate the polytechnic education system for national development by remunerating a qualification of Further Education Teacher Training Diploma.

Keywords: Low enrolment, Polytechnics, lecturers, Further Education Teacher Training Diploma.

Introduction

In the academic world, it is said that Zimbabwe is one of the countries which has got one of the highest literacy. Zimbabwe is found in the Southern of African continents. It was well known by offering good and quality education to its citizens. We have a number of technical colleges and polytechnics like Polytechnics in Zimbabwe, Gweru Technical College, Harare Polytechnic, and others. These educational institutions offer courses at different levels. Courses offered include, civil and construction, computers and Further Education Teacher Diploma course which is specifically meant for those especially technical staff members who have not done any teacher education training courses prior to their joining the technical institutions and also those in different institutions not related to education who want to upgrade their research potentials and evaluation prowess. Further education teachers Certificate and Diploma (FETC and FETD)are courses normally done by students who want to further their education and who have already had their professional qualifications. The course is done worldwide in different countries and colleges and for different purposes. Students from different countries and colleges faces different challenges in their studies. Koster & Dengerink (2008) describes FETC&D as neglected middle child of the British Education system because students face the challenges of lack of resources in schools and universities. FETC & FETD has a unique importance in British life though students face the above challenges. The students are also facing the challenges in policy made by the Ministry of Higher Education. The course is resilient and in motive to staff and tutors which affects the learning of students and sometimes students lacks confidence in the staff members. They also face a challenge of not having time and space to work together with staff effectively which results in employees and government not getting results they want or expected. In America (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007) FETC students face challenges in how these programmes are delivered to them. They need a better way so that they can easily acquire education for careers or existing jobs, students also do not have reliable funding stream for furthering education and to run their day to day life and also politics system affects students. In Wales there is on going reagent station of the funding system which is affecting the students in furthering FETC&FETD (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007). Students face challenges in staffing availability and production of materials for...
carrying out the studies. Students are also affected in that there is no development of course specifications and assessment standards are very poor since there is a shortage of staff members and in other colleges.

In South Africa students are facing challenges in FETC sectors in that colleges are considered as institution producing low status qualifications (Hoeckel 2007). Students find it difficult to spend their money in studying FETC because of the quality of education given by the staff members. Also the significant number of teaching staff in this area FETC and FETD college tutors in SA are either under qualified or unqualified (Booyens 2009). According to available statistics in 2002, 8% of FETC education were not in possession of a recognised tertiary qualification (Booyens 2009) and as a result students drop the course. In South Africa FET colleges with the necessary trade and industry experience generally do not hold a format teaching qualifications (Booyens 2009). At one college of Kwazulu Natal 75% of teaching staffing had no qualifications but teaching FETC (Motley 2006) and this affected the students quality of work they were given which were not meeting international and national standards of learning. At the same time students face a challenge of not having official registration.

According to Chikwature and Oyedele (2016) another additional critical factor influencing low enrolment is that there is low rate of female lecturers in Further Education Teacher Diploma courses hence a female student cannot be motivated to join the course either. Also, technical colleges are situated in regional towns where accommodation facilities are not easily available which makes it difficult for low income families to let their children join such courses as Education Department courses. When we look at Further Education Teacher Diploma courses we have those which are one year for a further education teacher certificate and further two year programme for further education teacher diploma. Thus this requires three years to obtain a National Certificate. Education Department course is one of the courses and was given more theory time as it requires analytic rigors on students enrolled through application letters and interviews and only those who passed the interview will be offered a training place.

This was the norm to both the courses in Education department. All the students who were interested in the courses had to make sure all the necessary qualifications were met before applying for the course. The Education Department courses actually came to existence in 2001 and the students’ enrolment was overwhelming to the extent that some were screened through interviews. All the necessary tools and materials were already procured and were in place. The rooms and timetables were made available in the Education department for the following activities Human resource development, evaluation, research methods and statistics among others. Since 2001 the Education Department section or course was running well until 2010 when some of the lecture rooms were put to other use leaving the Education Department courses with no other option but to remain with only one squalid room.

The enrolment figures drastically dropped since then especially in 2010 to the extent that no student was enrolled that year. In 2011 a few students trickled in but the figure was very low. Since there were no interviews being conducted the polytechnics thought it would increase the number of students but still it remained low. In 2012 all polytechnics in Zimbabwe engaged their possible marketing strategies to make awareness campaigns to inform the general populace what the polytechnics offer including the Education Department course in an attempt to boost enrolment figures to no avail in Education Department. Finally, in 2014 insignificant students were enrolled with courted by pamphlets showing courses being offered including Further Education Teaching Diploma but the low enrolment has caused uncertainty in the department as it affects the workload of the lecturers. This has caused a reduction in lecturers’ workload. As a result lecturers are left with less loads than their mandate stipulates. There was fear some of the lecturers were to be transferred to other regions away from their home. This write-up therefore critically examined the causes of this enrolment drop with the view of coming up with the mitigatory measures. This research therefore wishes to answer the following research question:

a) What has caused the low enrolment figures in Education Department?
b) How is the lecturer’s workload affected by the low enrolment in Education Department?
c) What is the effective way to increase enrolment figures?

Materials and Methods

In this research study a case study design was employed only on Polytechnics in Zimbabwe. Case studies focus on one instance or few instances of a particular phenomenon with account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance (Oyedele 2011). The starting point, and arguably the defining characteristic, of the case study approach is its focus on just one instance of the problem that is to
be investigated. The case study approach generally calls for the researcher to make choices from among a number of possible events, people and organisation. The research was carried out as a case study of Polytechnics in Zimbabwe. Leedy (1997) refers to the case study as “a type of qualitative research in which a researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon bonded by time and activity and collects detailed information using a variety of data collection instruments.

The case study was chosen because it allows a lot of detail to be collected that would not normally be easily obtained by other research designs. In particular, it enables the researcher to grapple with relationships and social process in a way that is denied to the other approaches. The analysis is holistic rather than based on isolated factors. The point at which the case study approach is most vulnerable to criticism is in relation to the credibility of generalizations made from its findings. The case study researcher needs to be particularly careful to allay suspicions and to demonstrate the extent to which the case is similar to contracts with others of its type. The case study approach, then, is quite the opposite of any mass study. The logic behind concentrating efforts on one case rather than many is that there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly, that would not have come to light through the use of a research strategy that tried to cover a large number of instances. The aim was to illuminate the strategies to be used in order to increase enrolment figures for Education Department at the particular case of Polytechnics, Zimbabwe.

When a researcher takes the strategic decision to devote all their efforts to researching just one instance, there is obviously a greater opportunity to delve into issues in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research. Unwarranted though it may be, case studies are regarded as all right in terms of providing descriptive accounts of the situation but rather ill-suited to analyse or evaluations. None of this is necessarily justified, but it is a pre-conception which the case study researcher needs to be aware of, and one which needs to be challenged by careful attention to detail and rigor in the use of the approach. Negotiating access to case study settings can be a demanding part of the research process. Research can flounder if permission is withheld or withdrawn. In case studies, access to documents, people and settings can generate ethical problems in terms of things like confidentiality. One of the strengths of the case study approach is that it allows the researchers to use a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods as part of the investigations. In this research information gathered from questionnaires, interviews were combined. The objective of was achieved when the researcher compared different sources situations and methods to find irregularities in the data and recurring patterns. According to Oyedele (2011) a case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to existing knowledge from previous research. Case study emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and they dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool. Yet researcher continue to use the case study with success Is carefully planned and crafted studies of real life situations issues and problems.

Population
According to Borg and Gall (1989), population “refers to all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which we wish to generalize the results of our research.” Population in this study comprises of 70 (seventy) students in all polytechnics Education Department

Sampling
“Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as a representative of that population”. Borg and Gall (1989). In this research study the researcher used the purposive sampling technique in coming up with sample for the study. With purposive sampling the sample is “handpicked” for the research. The term is applied to those situations where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data. In effect, they are selected with a specific purpose in mind and that purpose reflects the particular qualities of their relevance to the topic of the investigation. The advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to home in on people or events which there are good grounds for believing will be critical for the research. Instead of going for the typical instances, a cross section or a balanced choice, the researcher can concentrate on instances which will display a wide variety- possibly even a focus on extreme cases to illuminate the research question at hand. In this sense it might not only be economical but might also be informative in a way that conventional probability sampling cannot be.
**Research Instruments**

The researchers are the primary instruments for data collection in research study. This implies that the researchers were at the centre of data collection activities to subjectively select which events to investigate. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative researchers rely mainly on four major methods of gathering information, such as participation in the study, direct observation, in-depth interviewing and analyzing documents. In this study, the researcher used interviews, questionnaires dispatching to collect data.

**Interview**

Interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with the purpose of obtaining relevant information for a specific problem under study. Interviews were able to probe respondents and getting the right responses pertaining to the low enrolment levels of Further Education Trainer’s Diploma. The interview was also chosen because it was a direct approach of gathering data on what a person knows, likes, values, thinks, his or her attitudes, interests and what a person has experienced (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2009). The respondents that were interviewed were the students. These three data collection tools were considered to be sufficient tools to be considered to be sufficient multiple data sources to triangulate qualitative data to answer the research question. This also increased the reliability of the data and its collection process. The objective of triangulation was achieved when the researcher compared different sources, situations, and methods to find irregularities in the data and recurring patterns through cross examination of documents, notes, and interview data. The responses were more natural, that is, the respondent gave the answers instantly thereby minimizing the risk of Further Education Teacher Diploma responses given later as in questionnaires. The interviewer was able to clarify the issues that were raised by the interviewees as the interview proceeded. This assisted in getting objective responses. Interviews allowed researchers to probe further on certain questions and gave her an opportunity to identify further areas of relevance. Face to face interview allowed for greater detail and accuracy as well as ensuring high response rate. The problems encountered by the researcher are that some interviewees were too busy and reluctant to comment on some of the questions and some information was considered to be confidential as they were being guided by policy guidelines of their polytechnic pertaining to the release of valuable data and information. Confidential information was in the form of enrolment forms, and composite enrolment statistics data from human resources office. However, the researcher had to be patient and took his time to negotiate and assure them of confidentiality and anonymity for their responses until they accepted to offer the much needed information for the research study.

**Administration of Interviews**

The research will arrange with the students the days they are free for the interview. One respondent will be interviewed at a time. The researcher will jot down some notes during the interviews. To get more information from respondents, the researcher will probe the answer freely. The researcher will clarify the questions which the respondents might find difficulties in answering.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are the most commonly used and most commonly abused data gathering instrument. It is that form of inquiry, which contains a systematically compiled and organized series of questions that are sent to the population samples. Although questionnaires have the disadvantage that some cannot be completed and returned, there is freedom from bias from those completed or answered. Students will respond to the questions freely. Questionnaires were used because the respondents chosen were seen as being convenient elements and were literate and capable of understanding issues raised, hence could complete the questionnaire with minimum assistance from the researcher. In addition, the questionnaires were chosen because it was felt that if the respondents were carefully motivated and encouraged then, they would be cooperative and complete the questionnaires. The geographical locations of the polytechnics also were far apart making questionnaires convenient.

**Advantages of Questionnaires**

- They are low cost in terms of both time and money. In contrast to say, interviews, questionnaires can be sent to hundreds or even thousands of respondents at relatively low cost.
- The flow data is quick and from many people
- Respondents can complete questionnaires at a time and place that suits them.
- Data analysis of closed questions is relatively simple and questions can be coded quickly.
- Respondents’ anonymity can be assured
- There is lack of interviewer biased

**Disadvantages of Questionnaires**

- The respondents’ rate can be low.
Most people find verbal communication easier than using the written words, yet questionnaires demand certain level of literacy. There is no opportunity to ask questions or clear up ambiguous or ill-conceived answers. Respondents may give flippant or misleading answers, but the researcher is not in a position to dictate this. In contact face to face interviews might reveal underlying problems through observing, body language or the verbal tones of the respondents.

To control the above disadvantages of questionnaires the best way is to use the same questions for interviews which can help to act as a probing tool for more information which might not be obtained from questionnaires.

Administration of the Questionnaires
The researcher used more of the close ended questions and a few open ended with instruction on how to answer the questions. Close ended questions included answers where the respondents had to respond by ticking the correct answer. The researcher arranged with the respondents on the date to give out questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to 70 students in the Department of Education in Polytechnics in Zimbabwe. The researcher notified the students well before the distributions of the questionnaires. After notifying them and introducing them to the questionnaires the researcher set a date as to when to bring the questionnaires. The researcher collected the questionnaires the following day.

Data Presentation and Analysis Procedures
Data is any information about a sample or population. Analysis refers to treatments performed on the data, which then enables one to interpret the results. According to Creswell (2012) Data analysis is the process of simplifying data in order to make it comprehensible. It is the statistical technique, both descriptive and inferential to be used to analyse the data to be described. Here, the findings that have been outlined were subjected to scrutiny in terms of what they might mean. They were literally discussed and analysed with reference to the ideas. Issues and problems that were noted earlier in the report as providing the context in which the research was conceived. The researchers ‘made sense’ of the findings by considering their implications beyond the confines of the current research. According to Curzon (1990), data analysis involves the separation of things into their component parts. More specifically, it involves the study of complex things in order identify their basic elements. It calls on the researcher to discover the key components or general principles underlying a particular phenomenon so that these can be used to provide a clearer understanding of that thing. Thus, in the study care was taken to interpret the results based in sufficient data relating one characteristic to another and allowing descriptions and comparisons where possible. Data collection instruments used in collecting data were questionnaires and interviews.

Result and Discussion
According to interview response from some respondents, factors like budget constraints, structural adjustment programmes, insufficient public support for the poor and political instability affect the learning process. Inconsistent educational policies, poor quality of education, lack of public support in scientific activities, and limited employment prospects affect the enrolment process.

One respondent had this to say:

over the years technical education has been seen as less dignifying, only suitable for drop-outs in school and children of low income groups, particularly with Zimbabwean history that had a colonial legacy in manual and technical work. There is a wrong perception of technical education. The trend has been that any child whose parent is poor or who fails to gain admission to traditional secondary schools because of poor grades gets enrolled in technical colleges.

Also, according to both questionnaire and interview responses, the bulky of the students complained of inadequate exposure to practical subjects although they are satisfied with the quality of education they get. Employers are also generally satisfied with the performance of graduates on the job and the way they respond to any additional training given. However, they complain of inadequate exposure to practical Further Education Teacher Diploma and management courses and poor communication skills. Economic development of nations depends critically on the ability of their societies to establish a sustainable technological progress. The growth of a development plan for Further Education Teacher Diploma education is to ensure that the required specific standard lecturer is produced in an efficient manner.

A few of the interviewed respondents also are in view that peer pressure, generally, do significantly...
influence students towards choosing Further Education Teacher Diploma courses as a career objective. Parents and guardians in general, seemed to be apparently discouraging female students from venturing into the Further Education Teacher Diploma profession.

Table 1 showing the response rate of the Further Education Teacher Training Diploma students on how advertising and road shows help to boost enrolment figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>%ge</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%ge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 1 shows the response rate by Further Education Teacher Training Diploma students for the Education Department course to find out on whether advertising and road shows are to be organized to enroll more students and to reach remote areas.

Full Time Students

Fig 1: Response Rate on advertising and road shows to boost enrolment figures

According to the fig 1 above 80% of the full time student agreed and indicated that advertisements and road shows must be done every term and about 20% responded negatively. The findings and discussion were based on the themes which emerged from the research questions. To find out whether advertising and road shows are to be organized to enroll more students and to reach remote areas and school, 80% of the both part time and full time students expressed concern on how the course is being left out during advertisements or the advertising technique being used. The road shows must be very effective to reach remote areas, schools and growth points need to the main target. Therefore proper organisation is essential. 20% disagreed on the suggestion.

To investigate on how often the advisement and road shows are to be done to the public, 70% of both student groups agreed that advertisements and road shows should be carried out every term so as to reach many people who might have missed the first shows or advertisement concerning the course. 30% disagreed with the topic.

Part time and Full time students in Education Department agreed that advertisements must be done to all parts of the country so as to capture more students to enroll for the course. They also agreed that the road shows must be done occasionally and reach remote areas of the country as well. In secondary school the information must also be sent there through advertisements for the students to be aware of Education Department.

The analysis from all respondents shows that the institution need to increase the rate at which they advertise the courses especially Education Department, when the public relation and marketing department moves around broadcasting such information they must equip themselves with enough knowledge on Education Department for them to be able to effectively advertise the course.

Findings

- The researcher found out that advertisement including road shows is not done properly and should be well organized as is just being done as a duty.
- From the respondents it shows that advertisements an road shows improve or boost students enrolment
- The lecturers are too demotivated to go the expected extra mile in marketing their departments as they take it as an administrative prerogative.
- Information about the Education Department course is not being sent to secondary schools so that the students will know about the course and its job opportunities after completion.

Encourage students by showing them that opportunities are available in industry.

Recommendations

- There should be a separate committee or board which need to deal with advertisements of courses at Polytechnics in Zimbabwe and this committee should have members from all stakeholders i.e. people who represent all courses equipped with relevant information
- Road shows must be organized regularly
When conducting road shows remote areas must also be target areas including secondary schools.

Colleges must emerge with people from industries to explain the availability of employment in industries after training.

References


