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# NEED FOR THE ZIMBABWE STAFF COLLEGE TO ADOPT THE LIFELONG LEARNING AND EDUCATION POLICY

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## ABSTRACT

In 1998, Zimbabwe adopted the lifelong policy in adult learning and education with the aim of ensuring that education offered to adults would benefit them for life. This study sought to determine the extent to which the lifelong learning and education policy is implemented by institutions offering adult education in Zimbabwe, but focusing only on the Adult Education Degree offered at the Zimbabwe Staff College (ZSC). The study used the qualitative case study research design. Seven students and two administrators were selected to participate in individual and focus group interviews, using purposeful sampling, for it is informed by the Non-Probability Theory. Data was generated and critically analysed. Data was also generated from documentary analysis. The study found that lack of recognition of the Adult Education Degree by superiors at ZSC was found to be a major discouragement among learners and potential learners. Such lack of recognition was found to be due to the non-existence of a national lifelong learning policy. The non-existence of the national and local policies on adult education was found to be negatively affecting not only participation but also the quality of the content provision because a lifelong learning policy framework is supposed to be informing design and practice. Recommendations focus on revision of the policy framework and the way the policies are implemented at national and local levels. A review of the implementation of policy is imperative if the restrictions responsible for the invisibility of adult education in the country and adult education programmes at ZCS are to be removed.

**Keywords:** Adult Education; defence forces education; Lifelong Learning policy; Higher education; Qualitative methods; NVivo

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chisholm (2008) states that adult education as a right for all should be the basis for policy in developing countries. However, according to the UNESCO Global Report (2009:33), "the state of the country's economy dictates the state of policy, for example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, and much of Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean adult education is equated to literacy and compensatory or second chance education." Such a view of adult educational policy within a broader national education and development policy has implications on the flow from policy to legislation to regulations and funding in the identified regions.



However, in European Union (EU) countries, the Lisbon Agenda, with its focus on lifelong learning, is the influential driver of adult education policy innovation and lays emphasis on the dual policy aims of economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

Sumner (2008), in the UNESCO Report (2010:14) on developing countries, of which Zimbabwe is one, observed that these countries “are facing a challenge of how to mainstream adult education policy within an integrated lifelong policy framework. In Africa, most of the countries are still pre-occupied with basic education to achieve the then Education for All in 2015.” (UNESCO Report, 2010:41). Zimbabwe, therefore, as a developing country, also faces the challenges of how to mainstream an adult education policy within the lifelong learning policy framework. His study sought to gain an understanding of the policy that informs the design process and delivery mechanisms of the curriculum at Zimbabwe Staff College (ZSC) from the students’ perspective in order to suggest appropriate measures to remedy the lack of patronage within this particular environment.

## 1.1 Background to the Study

### Adult Learning and Education Lifelong Policy

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture derives its mandate from the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which states that education is a basic human right. The Education Act of 1987, as amended in 1996 and 2006, also provides for adult learning and education. Adult education and learning is directed and controlled by various statutory instruments and director’s circulars, chief among which are Statutory Instrument 371 of 1998 entitled the Education (Correspondence and Independent) Regulations of 1998, and the Lifelong Education Policy. These policy instruments only pertain to the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture; other ministries have their own policies on adult learning and education. The NFE section is the institutional framework that was created for the delivery and coordination of all types of out-of-school education. The NFE section, which is now known as the Lifelong Education Section, deals with all organized educational activities outside the formal school system.

In 1980, Zimbabwe inherited an educational system which was racist, elitist and Eurocentric. The new government was faced with the task of revising and reconstructing the system under its ideology of ‘Scientific Socialism’. In addition to addressing the imbalances, the government had to fulfill the promise of universal education for all as reflected in its election manifesto.

The policy on NFE was part of the overall education policy in Zimbabwe. Based on the fundamental concepts of “Growth with Equity” and ‘Socialist Transformation’, this policy is spelt out in the Three Year National Transitional Plan and the First Five Year National Development Plan. The National Development Plan includes the provision of NFE and explicitly states as its objective the development of a strong NFE Section, which would cater for those who were deprived of opportunities to pursue their education by the policies of the past colonial administration.

NFE in Zimbabwe can be divided into two distinct periods of policy development. The first falls between 1981 and 1988 and the second period starts in 1989 and continues to the present. During the first period, literacy education was the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs (CD&WA) and the Ministry of Education. Within the Ministry of Education, a small section called Adult NFE was established. Its core business was to develop and produce adult learning and teaching materials to train fieldworkers involved in the literacy campaign and its evaluation. The Ministry of CD&WA had the overall responsibility for conduct of the literacy campaigns. The committee’s approach to literacy development, which was adopted during this period, was criticized for achieving low enrolments in 1990 (Ministry of Education and Culture Report, 1994).

The second period, ranging from 1989 to date, was beset with operational problems which led to the transferring of the Literacy Campaign from the Ministry of CD&WA to the Ministry of Education. A new division of adult and non-formal education was created under a deputy secretary. This division was represented at the Heads of Division Meetings a kind of educational high command chaired by the Secretary for Education. Adult education and NFE have been accorded a status similar to those of other divisions in the Ministry.

Scientific Socialist Ideology, however, which focused on growth with equity in order to redress the past inequities and imbalances in accessing educational provision, was abandoned in favour of neo-liberal framework called the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmed (ESAP) in 1990. Overspending on education, health and social services to achieve universal access to education in the education sector, in particular, led to a budget deficit for the Government, under the Scientific Socialist Ideology. The principle of cost recovery, which epitomized ESAP, affected education adversely. Reintroduction of school fees increased dropout rates and significantly reversed efforts to achieve universal education and equity in education (Zvobgo, 1997) Thus, “NFE like any other sector in education was also affected by both ESAP and the economic meltdown which started after the contentious land distribution in 1997 through the hyper inflationary era of 2007 and 2008 which was arrested by the introduction of the multi-currency in 2009”(National Report, 2011:7).



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The goals of Lifelong Education are to:

1. Establish a learning society in which education is seen as a lifelong process;
2. Guarantee universal access to basic education for school-age children and adults in order to promote equity and social justice;
3. Provide opportunities for young people and adults to further their initial education to higher stages in order to raise the general level of education of the population;
4. Provide opportunities for adults to acquire work related skills that will improve their productivity and standard of living, and promote economic growth;
5. Increase the ability of adults to take part in social, political, cultural and sporting affairs in order to improve their quality of life and promote greater participation in the development process;
6. Provide health and gender education to the adult learners (Lifelong Policy 2002:4).

These goals are pertinent to this study because they act as the indicators for an understanding of how policy informs the curriculum development process and the delivery support mechanism at ZSC.

### 1.2 Purpose of Study

The study sought to gain an understanding of how the policy informs the curriculum development process at ZSC from the administrator's and students' perspective in order to answer the overall question of lack of patronage for the only adult education degree programme. Understanding of the relevance of the national policy provision from the administrator and students' perspective would enhance the curriculum development provision for adults to acquire work related skills that will improve their productivity, standard of living and promote economic growth.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Low participation in the BA(ED) Degree Programme for the defence officers at the ZSC prompted this study to ascertain the effect of the lifelong policy on patronage for this particular programme. The degree programme equips the personnel with the work related skills that would improve productivity and standard of living of the officers and also develop economic growth. The apparent paradox is that most of the uniformed officers who are given the opportunity to acquire relevant knowledge and skills do not participate in the degree programme compared to the diploma programmes offered. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the role of lifelong policy in the process of curriculum development in relation to learners' needs as articulated in the Lifelong Policy Goals.

### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Constructivist Theory in an attempt to understand processes of curriculum design and delivery through students' experiences, perceptions and their interpretation of the lack of patronage for the adult education degree at ZSC. The degree was introduced to cater specifically for officers who hold the Diploma in Adult Education. The findings of this study would be used to inform policy and improve theory and practice. According to (Crotty, 1998:42), "constructivism postulates that knowledge cannot exist outside our minds; truth is not absolute; and knowledge is not discovered but constructed by individuals based on experiences". Constructivist orientation to the study was considered suitable because of its ontological perspective that claims that while individuals do not have direct access to the real world, their expression of knowledge through the observation of the world is still meaningful (Carson, Gilmore & Gronhaug, 2012). This view concurs with Guba and Lincoln (1994) who assert that the constructivist worldview has some basic traits such as the argument that realities are local and specific. This means that reality varies between diverse groups of individuals. Therefore, it is acceptable to an interpretive researcher that the distinction between facts and value judgement are less clear (Carson, et al.2012). This emanates from the fact that a researcher is also an instrument of data gathering, as a result, feelings and reason direct his or her actions. This study, therefore, was structured from a constructivist point of view and interpreted through constructivist lenses to accommodate multiple realities from students and administrators on the role of policy curriculum development process for the adult education programme at ZSC.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review focuses on policy framework provision. Review of policy framework provision in adult education is very imperative in this study because policy informs curriculum design process. The review was conducted within diverse cultural, economic and ideological contexts that influence the developing and developed adult education trajectory. While in Europe and North America adult learning and education is linked to lifelong learning thinking (Keogh 2009), in sub-Saharan Africa, on the contrary, "the art and state of adult



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learning and education is anchored within the context of global development and in particular, within the policy agendas of the then Millennium Development Goals and Education for All” (Aitchison and Alidou, 2009:1). Moreover, educational policies are crucial in translating the noble ideas of Millennium Development Goals into reality. According UNESCO (2010:29), adult education policy in sub-Saharan Africa is “mainly associated with literacy and basic education and typically subsumed in general education policies. It was also noted that few countries in this region reported to having specific legal provisions and few countries in this region, as well implement specific adult learning and education policies”. Cape Verde, Namibia and Seychelles were noted to be outstanding exceptions in their comprehensive and coherent approach (Aitchison and Alidou, 2009). This state of affairs for the policy development in sub-Saharan Africa could be a contributory factor towards low enrolment rates in general and in particular for the defence officer’s programme at ZSC.

A landmark study by Aitchison (2012), intended to create an update map of the current state of youth and adult education in five countries in Africa, namely Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland, found that, “all five countries need clearer policies, better financing and improved governance to ensure that youths and adults enjoy their right to education. In addition to incoherent policies, the study revealed that, although there are youth and adult educational policies, they are not comprehensive; they are usually appendages to other policies, in many cases only in draft and ungratified form” (Aitchison, 2012:16). This study contends that such lack of comprehensiveness in the state of the adult education policy framework and remaining in draft form could compromise the quality of adult education provision in this region and jeopardize the achievement of the then Millennium Development Goals for the region as well. Zimbabwe, like any developing country, is perhaps adversely affected by the cited challenges.

In Europe and North America it was noted that countries share more similarities in adult education policy frameworks due to the influence of the European Union (EU). In the EU countries, adult learning and education policies appear to be “inseparable from the labour market policies and the development of the individual is primarily instrumental” (Jones, 2005, in Keogh, 2009:10). Although adult education policy in the EU is reported to be inseparable from the labour market, in an international review of the status of adult education, it was noted that in 2006 and 2007, the European Commission stated that, “adult learning has not always gained the recognition it deserves in terms of visibility, policy prioritization and resources” (European Commission Report, 2007, in Keogh 2009: 9). If lack of visibility is still an issue for EU countries that have succeeded in mainstreaming lifelong policy thinking into their human resources and labour-market policies, what about developing countries?

Wilson (2009), commenting on the development and state of adult education policy in the United States of America, concurred with Aitchison and Alidou, (2009); UNESCO (2010) and Aitchison (2012), about the negative effects of fragmentation of policy on the quality of provision. It appears fragmentation of adult education policy is inherent in most, if not all countries because of the nature of actors and provision that straddle across ministries of education, government departments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sectors and faith based and charitable organizations. Coordinating all these pieces of policy has been observed to be a formidable challenge for developed countries, let alone developing countries and Zimbabwe in particular.

Contrary to the marginal status of adult education policies in Latin America, the Caribbean region and Sub-Sahara Africa, Irish policy to adult education is reported to be underpinned by the neo-liberal ideology. Grummell (2007), commenting on Irish policy to adult education, critiques the functional view of adult education in Ireland that aims at contributing to the development of the economic and political order at the expense of the civic role. He argues that, “it promotes an approach to adult learning that works to the advantage of the market place, enabling economic flexibility for global and casualised labour force” (Grummell, 2007: 47). In the same vein, Jones (2006) criticizes the objectives of the Lisbon agenda for creating tension between the emphasis on productivity and competitiveness and potential development for social inclusion for individuals and social cohesion for societies.

Wilson (2009: 405) also concurs with Brummell’s (2007) notion of the functional view of adult education in USA when he observes that, “USA adult education policy is concerned in recent times with various sorts of neo-liberal economic well-being at the expense of other traditions of adult education policy that focused on promoting enlightened citizenry, individual progress and community development.” Zaida (1999); Grummell (2007) and Wilson (2009) concur that critical emancipatory forms of adult education are marginalized by the neo-liberal policy of education. The discussion illuminates the significance of policy in the curriculum development process as observed by Wilson (2000:13) that, “different ideological orientations drive the policy”.

Adoption of the neo-liberal ideology in Zimbabwe had negative effect too; the principle of cost recovery measures that characterized the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmed (ESAP) affected all sectors in education (Zvobgo, 1997). Reinstatement of fees in primary and secondary schools affected enrolments negatively, resulting in increased dropouts for the NFE sector. A well defined educational policy is necessary for the development of suitable curriculum content methodology and implementation, as well as identifying partner institutions.



In conclusion to this discussion on policy development, it has been noted that, developing countries in general, and Zimbabwe in particular, lifelong learning remains more of a vision than a reality. Aitchison (2012) concurs that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Committee tasked with developing a lifelong education framework and strategy for the region, was disbanded in 2002 when the regional body was restructured. Most developing countries are more focused on education for all in 2015 than lifelong learning and education. Developing countries, although they are part and parcel of globalization, have got peculiar challenges of a socio-economic nature epitomized by resource limitations.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

Qualitative research was deemed suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to obtain an insider perspective on social action (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Thus, the researcher intends to gain insider perception on the rationale for the lack of patronage for the adult education degree at ZSC from a policy perspective. In adopting the naturalistic epistemology, propounded by Krauss (2005), the researcher is acknowledging that students at ZSC are not mere observers or passive recipients of the transmission model of learning and teaching but are active in their experience of the process of curriculum development and implementation.

Non-probability sampling is any technique in which samples are selected in some way not suggested by probability theory. Examples include reliance on available subjects as well as purposeful (judgmental) quota and snowball sampling (Babbie, 2010). In non-probability sampling the researcher selects individuals because they are available, convenient and represent some characteristics the investigator seeks to study (Creswell, 2008). Therefore sampling is selecting a given number of informants from a designated population. An informant is someone who is well-versed in the social phenomenon that you wish to study and who is willing to tell you what he or she knows about it (Babbie, 2010).

The study utilised the purposeful sampling procedure deemed suitable since values, beliefs, perceptions and experiences of students were going to be investigated in order to reveal illumination and understanding of complex issues of the role of policy in curriculum effectiveness, relevance and appropriateness to the needs of internal and external stakeholders. In this exploratory study, selection of informants was accomplished by the use of purposeful sampling, namely, maximum variation, critical case and typical case sampling techniques as postulated by Patton (1990). The merits of purposive sampling are the reduced costs and time involved in acquiring the informants. In addition to reducing costs and time, the power and logic of purposeful sampling is derived from the fact that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic (Creswell, 2008).

Two administrators and seven students were chosen using purposeful sampling to provide useful information about the effectiveness of curriculum-design process and delivery. Two administrators and seven students provided information about policy-framework provision by answering interview questions individually and group focused interview questions. Finally, curriculum documents were gleaned to obtain information about the aims and objectives of the programme and other relevant information that might assist in establishing the rationale for the low enrolment for the degree programme.

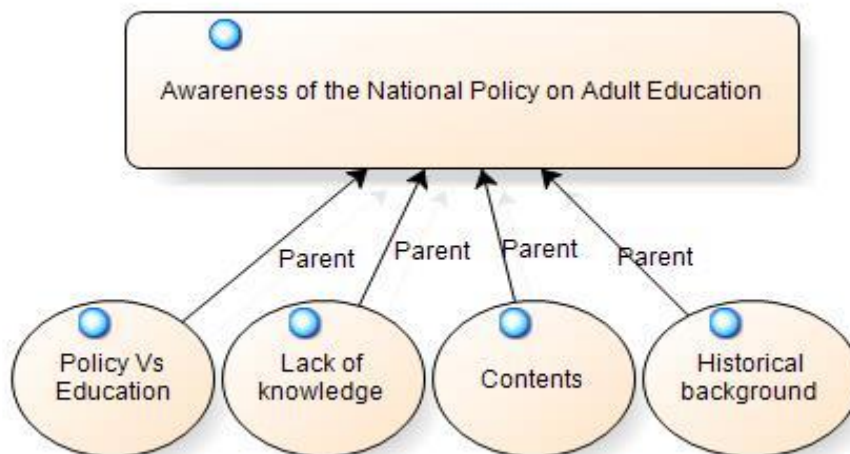
Engagement with the data through post structural ideological perspective was achieved through the aid of a computer aided qualitative data analysis software, namely, NVivo. Flick (2009) identifies the advantage of using NVivo that made the software suitable for this investigation. The software permits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

### 4. FINDINGS OF STUDY

#### 4.1 National Policy in Adult Education

Two child nodes emerged focussing on the knowledge and opinion about the National policy provision on adult education. As shown in Figure 8 below, awareness and lack of it was revealed from how participants spoke about the historical background to education in general and policy issues.





**Figure 1: Awareness of the National Policy on Adult education**

Some of the participants gave a historical background of education in general, indicating the possibility that the policy was developed as early as 1980s after independence. Admin1, Student1 and Student2 subsequently revealed what they associate the policy with the early 1980s. In the view of **admin1**:

...since the formation of the Zimbabwe national army in 1980...I remember vividly that policy being applied as early as 1981 when there was the Association of Literacy in Zimbabwe (ALoz) programmes and also the Adult education programmes being introduced in every formation within the Zimbabwe National Army.

...**Student2** ... the state, then introduced adult education in various fields to bring up all the adults to the levels that were required in terms of what was happening in the country.

**Student1**...generally, I cannot say I know it totally, but generally, I think from 1980, when we retained our independence, there was an issue of trying to educate all the adult people who were, I can say, disadvantaged by then to go to school.

Therefore, the real policy, I am not very certain about it but I know that there was that encouragement to let them learn even those adult people and even now.

It is possible that the participants are referring to the democratization of education, which happened in the 1980s after independence. The sentiments expressed by **admin1** concur with the National Lifelong Education Policy (2002) which states that in 1981 the Government of Zimbabwe created the section of Non-Formal Education to be responsible for all organized educational activities outside the formal system. Subsequently, due to increasing demand for non-formal education, the ministry created the Division of Adult and Non-Formal Education.

A number of students revealed that they were not acquainted with the national policy provision on adult education. This is shown by their extracts below.

**Student5**: No, I have never heard of it. I have heard about the lifelong or continuing education. I have not really gone into it, in fact I will pursue it from here.

**Student4**: No, I am not aware of it...

**Student3**: Am not quite aware what is entailed in that national adult education policy.

This was confirmed by Admin1 who revealed that people at ZSC might not know about the national policy;

...even if they are not able to define that this is lifelong education, but they are in it either knowingly or unknowingly...then say had these guys been aware of lifelong education?

In response to the question of awareness of the national policy provision for adult education the focus group had the following to say too:

**Student5**: Things that have to do with the policy we are not privileged to know about them.

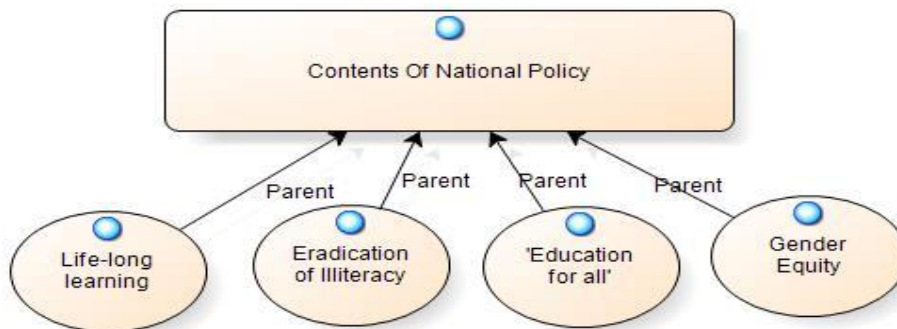
**Student3**: As we were saying last time... related to the national policy... we don't have access to the documents. There are certain levels that handle those documents.



**Student4:** I wanted to say something, whilst we don't know much about the policies; it seems as if training is the centre of everything here at the staff college. I want to believe that we are also fulfilling those policies which we are not privy to see or read about. I think we are fulfilling some of them.

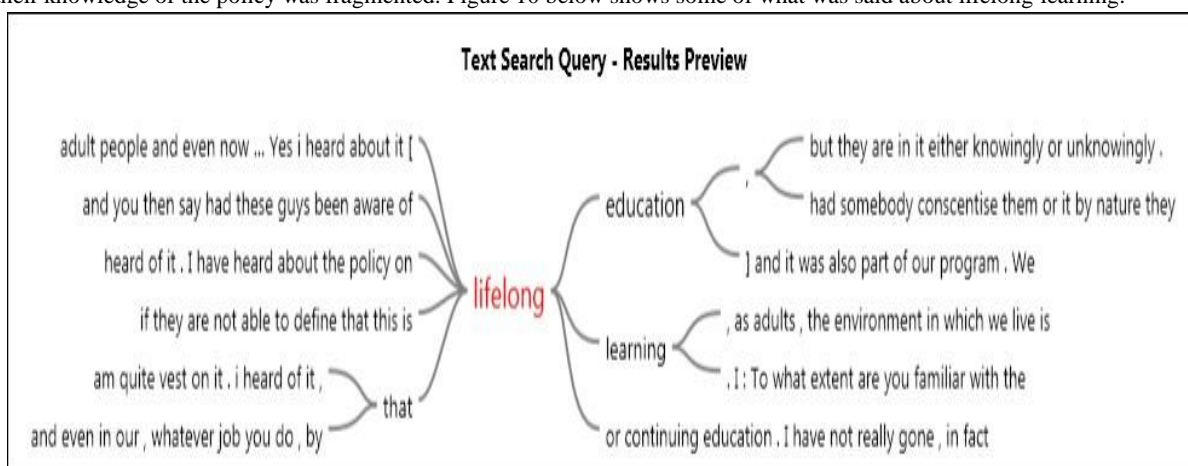
Focus group responses concur with the individual interview responses. They agreed that there is lack of knowledge of the national policy provision on adult education and revealed that trainers and administrators do not have access to the policy documents. They also revealed that policy issues are the responsibility of the higher offices. Such lack of knowledge on the part of trainers who are expected to interpret national policies is likely to impinge negatively on the quality of the adult education programmes. On the question of lack of access, one wonders whether it is by design or omission that trainers do not have access to such public documents. **Admin2** also alluded to the fact that, they are not privy to have such documents. Yet the focus group confirmed that training is the goal of the adult education programme to equip officers with the skills and knowledge relevant to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Having knowledge of the importance of training in the organisation revealed that they were aware of some constructs of the policy. However, the design of the programme seems to be silent about policy issues hence breeding gaps in knowledge among the students.

The contents of the policy were interpreted differently by participants depending on their experience with education. Figure 9 below shows the meanings, which were negotiated by the participants;



**Figure 2: Contents of National Policy**

Generally, most of the students were not sure of the policy, though they acknowledged having heard about lifelong learning. Students 5, 3 and 1 revealed that they were not aware of the policy and went on to say they have heard about the lifelong learning, this indicated that their knowledge of the policy was fragmented. Figure 10 below shows some of what was said about lifelong learning:



**Figure 3 Query for Lifelong Education**

Some participants identified lifelong education as one of the issues related to policy.

**Student1:** Yes, I heard about it [lifelong education] and it was also part of our programme. We learnt about that and we also encourage other people to have that long life learning.



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**Student3:** Ok, that I am quite acquainted with. I heard of it, that lifelong learning, as adults, the environment in which we live is dynamic, so it changes and we need to continue to learn and improve things to bring solutions to problems we face.

**Student5:** No, I have never heard of it. I have heard about the policy on lifelong or continuing education. I have not really gone, in fact I will pursue it from here.

**Student1:** said lifelong learning was part of their programme and yet he was not conversant with the related policy.

As indicated earlier, this shows that lifelong learning was not addressed in the context of the policy and this had confused some of the students who failed to distinguish between lifelong learning and education, and policy. This distinction was shown when the student said he knows about lifelong learning and not about the policy. This was also substantiated by **Student5** who said that, he had never heard of the policy but had heard about the *'lifelong or continuing education'*.

Although there were some gaps in the knowledge of the policy, there were some favourable opinions about the policy. It was said to be a *'quite good helpful effective policy.'* Admin1 and other students had this to say;

**Admin1:** The Zimbabwe national policy in adult education has been quite a good helpful effective policy for it allowed people who had lost chances during the liberation struggle to pursue education.

**Student2:** I think the policy assisted a lot. Many people went for training, educational advancements. The policy, I think assisted even today we are viewed as a country that has good and high literacy, it was due to this policy.

**Student7:** I think its fine, though it's being overwritten by other emerging study subjects.

Although the policy *'has been quite a good helpful, effective policy for it allowed people who had lost chances during the liberation struggle to pursue education'*, the rigor and sensitivity of the policy seemed to have remained static thereby resulting in *'being overwritten by other emerging study subjects.'* as stated by Student2, it has assisted much in raising the country's literacy rate, but is it doing the same in other areas of adult education? Admin1 spoke of the efficiency during the euphoric independence period, indicating the possibility of deterioration in this efficiency with time.

## 4.2 Results Analysis

In responding to the matter of awareness of the national policy framework provision for adult education, participants were found wanting to a large extent. Most of the participants could not make a distinction between lifelong learning thinking perspective and continuing adult education. The gaps in knowledge of the lifelong learning policy, maybe, reflect a key challenge faced by developing countries of how to mainstream adult education policy within an integrated lifelong policy framework. Zimbabwe adopted the lifelong learning policy framework in 1998 but adult education practitioners are not only aware of the development but do not have the document at ZSC. Most likely, Zimbabwe as a developing country is also facing the same challenges of mainstreaming adult education policy within an integrated lifelong learning policy framework. Mainstreaming exercise is reported to be not easy, given the realities for countries in Africa, the Arab States and Latin America. In Africa, the countries are still preoccupied with basic education to achieve education for all in 2015 (Sumner, 2008).

Admittedly, the two administrators who participated in the interview sessions were responsible for the day to day administration of the adult education degree since its inception. Administrator1 participated in the consultations with the UZ in seeking associate status as a college.

Certainly, in response to the issue of awareness of the Zimbabwe National Policy on adult education provision, the two administrators did not only display different perceptions of the policy but also different conceptions of the purpose of the national policy. Their differences in interpretation of the question seem to reflect their different narratives (life stories with adult education) as the reference point (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000). Administrator1 used the historical development perspective of education after independence to negotiate meaning of the policy. Clearly, knowledge of the actual policy provision was associated with different contextual realities of administrator's interaction with educational environment in general and adult education in particular but not with the policy document in particular.

Unquestionably, lack of acquaintance with the Zimbabwe lifelong learning policy, which was revised in 2002, confirms findings by Aitchison and Alidou (2009) that revealed that the overwhelming impression is that adult education policy is a marginal element in education and development policies. This marginality in status of adult education provision is reported to have a significant bearing on the quality provision by the same researchers because the policy framework directs the whole process of curriculum development and delivery. Perhaps, this marginal status of adult education policy provision, which was observed in other developing countries, has a bearing on the lack of awareness of the lifelong learning policy by the administrators at ZSC.

In the same vein, in Africa, it was also noted that adult education is still politically fragile, institutionally unstable, and highly dependent upon external donor funds (Sumner, 2003). However, those donor funds come with strings attached, which do not help the cause for adult education in these countries either.





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Additionally, inability to mainstream adult education policy within the integrated lifelong learning policy framework and adult education being politically fragile, Zimbabwe as a developing country, also faces a challenge of incorporating lifelong learning policy provision for adult education in its strategic national plans to achieve sustainable development as was observed in Namibia. Namibia is reported to have enacted a policy framework provision that not only defines the role of the government but also recognizes the contribution of the private sector and civil society in the promotion of adult learning (Youngman and Singh, 2005).

No doubt, students responding to the enquiry of awareness of the national policy provision for adult education at ZSC revealed that adults come to the learning and education environment with their own experiences or narratives and perceptions, and interpret educational experiences in terms of their narratives (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000). Consequently, participants depending on their experiences with education before and after independence negotiated different interpretations of the national policy provision on adult education. Certainly, most of the participants used the historical development perspective of education as the reference point of change in the provision of education for the majority of Zimbabwean citizens. Generally speaking, the responses depicted the reality of the democratization of education in Zimbabwe after independence in 1980 in an effort to eradicate the racist bottle neck system of education, which denied the majority of blacks, access to education in the formal and informal sectors.

Obviously, the pattern which emerges from the participants' responses to the question of awareness of the policy provision for adult education is that of lack of acquaintance with the policy, despite the fact that, most of them are into training of trainers in the defence forces. Perhaps, policy issues are the responsibility of the high ranking officials in the army or they are also affected by the marginal status of national policy provision for adult education as noted for administrators.

Generally, knowledge of the policy was extremely limited for the participants. They knew, but only some aspects and the historical elements of education, especially the independence euphoric campaigns dominant in the early 1980s. As a result, knowledge of the value of education in general was interpreted as the knowledge of the policy. The focus group confirmed that, the participants are not acquainted with the national policy provision on adult education training. Perhaps, this finding implies that the marginal status of the national policy provision for adult learning and education still needs greater visibility in terms of policy prioritization.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The major finding is that, the relevance of the programme seemed to be compromised by policy issues. Participants' lack of knowledge of the lifelong learning and ZSC policy created a knowledge gap for trainers who were expected to interpret national policy in design and practice. The research finding for the national policy revealed that the knowledge gap was a reflection of the challenge faced by the government of how to mainstream adult education policy within the integrated lifelong learning policy framework. This marginalization in status of adult education provision has a significant bearing on the quality of provision because the policy framework directs the whole process of curriculum development and delivery. Thus, at Zimbabwe Staff College curriculum development process and delivery is not directed by the lifelong learning policy framework. Paucity of resources, limited expertise and preoccupation with education for all in 2015 are some of the reasons blamed for the failure to mainstream adult education in the lifelong learning policy framework. In addition, to the inability to mainstream adult education policy within the integrated lifelong learning policy framework, Zimbabwe also faces a challenge of incorporating lifelong learning policy provision for adult education in its strategic national plans to achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, adult education in Africa is reported to be still politically fragile, institutionally unstable and highly dependent upon external funds. Zimbabwe as a developing country might be facing the same challenges, with regards to adult learning and education. Consequently, this marginal status of the national policy provision for adult education has a negative impact on the status of adult education as a discipline, which is not understood in the country and at ZSC because it is equated with literacy. Clearly, the lack of recognition of adult education as a discipline has negative effect on participation. Both the national policy and ZSC policy provision were found to be restricting participation for officers. Thus, the invisibility of the national policy provision for adult education at Zimbabwe Staff College creates a misconception of adult education as a discipline, it is perceived as literacy. Moreover, ZSC policy has structural barriers that restrict participation.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should mainstream adult learning and education policy within the integrated lifelong learning policy framework. It should be mainstreamed within the comprehensive development frameworks of the country to improve the supply and demand side of ALE. The ministry should create an enabling legal and accessible learning, quality frameworks, explicitly targeted and interconnected as measures to remove gaps between legislation, policy and implementation. To improve visibility of ALE policy in the country and at Zimbabwe Staff College, the ministry should create awareness through outreach programmes, seminars, conferences and workshops.



## 7. CONCLUSION

Certain salient points may be made from the findings of this study. Lack of recognition of the adult education degree programme at ZSC appears to be hampered by the national lifelong learning policy framework that is not only understood but is not available at the institution. Although Zimbabwe adopted the lifelong policy framework for adult learning and education in 1998, it appears that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has not yet effectively mainstreamed adult education policy within the integrated lifelong learning policy as expected. Lack of the visibility of policy does not only affect participation, but also quality of the programme for the lifelong learning policy should inform curriculum design and delivery. To improve both the visibility of adult education as a discipline and quality of content provision for the programme, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should mainstream the lifelong learning policy and create awareness through outreach programmes, seminars, conferences and workshops.

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