Lecturers as students: The emotional side of adult learning

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Abstract
This investigation emanates from the author’s first hand experience of facilitating an assessor training course for Unisa lecturers. Through observation and discussion emotions were detected that were directly related to the learning experience. The investigation into the emotional side of adult learning used semi-structured interviews to elicit data from some of the lecturers who had completed the course. Findings support the literature on the existence of emotions in learning and identified a variety of emotions amongst these lecturers as adult learners. Interpretation of the data revealed a number of stressors as well as coping mechanisms that adult learners used to handle stressful situations. The investigation is of value for lecturers in realising the important role that students’ emotional well-being play in the learning experience.

Keywords: adult learning; assessor training; emotions in learning; higher education; Open and Distance Learning; psychology of learning

Emotions form part of the dynamics of being human. Descartian and Platonic philosophical thinking has, over an extended period of time, depicted humans as consisting of mind/body and soul with a distinctive differentiation between these two entities. This dualistic type of thinking has severely influenced Western educational theory and practice (with its emphasis on learning content that must be mastered) with the soul (or emotions) playing a minor role in aspects of teaching and learning. A number of prevailing views even regard expressions of affect within adult learning as potentially disruptive to the learning experience (see Dirkx, 2006 for a discussion). Therefore cognitive processes that are important for learning have featured more prominently than conative processes.

The motivation for this study was to add to the emerging scholarship of emotion in teaching and learning, in support of the premise that ‘emotion plays a critical role in the construction of meaning and knowledge of the self in the adult learning process’ (Zembylas, 2008, p. 72).
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CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development (DCLD) of the University of South Africa (Unisa) was instrumental in convincing the Senate Tuition Committee that all Unisa academics should undergo formal training in assessment (Self-Evaluation Portfolio for the HEQC Institutional Audit, 2008). The national Department of Education provided funding for this training initiative and Unisa’s Centre for Community Training and Development developed the learning material for this non-formal offering by basing it on an existing National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 7 unit standard on assessment in higher education.

The existing South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) unit standard was adapted to accommodate the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) environment of Unisa. Lecturers credited with this unit standard are competent to plan, design and develop, implement and review assessment practices in an open and distance learning environment. The course carries a credit value of 10, which translates into 100 notional hours of learning.

Three learning modes are available to lecturers in the form of blended learning experiences. The options are: (a) online learning in combination with face-to-face interaction (thus both physical and virtual resources), (b) a three day face-to-face workshop facilitated by a team of five educationalists (four senior staff members from the Education cluster in the College of Human Sciences and one – including myself – from the DCLD), combined with independent distance education-based learning, or (c) distance education-based learning with access to the team of facilitators as dictated by the need of the lecturer enrolled for this mode of learning.

It may be important to note that Unisa management expects all Unisa lecturers to be trained as assessors through this training course. The fact that, in the eyes of the lecturers, this training is ‘compulsory’ may explain some of the emotions evoked by this learning experience.

AIM, RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE INVESTIGATION

In my view, emotions need to be addressed in the course of the learning experience. The aim of the investigation was therefore to investigate the type of emotions that lecturers experience when doing this assessor training course. In facilitating the course, I identified certain aspects of the learning experience that evoked emotions among lecturers doing this course, such as work overload, being forced to complete the course, being out of office to attend the workshop, etcetera. Identifying these aspects became part of the study.

The investigation is relevant since the assessor training course is still in progress. Sufficient experience in facilitating the course has further been gained since it was
piloted in 2007 to justify research on the issue. The investigation is important for the following reasons: (a) the role of emotion in adult learning is an emerging field of interest among educational theorists, (b) the adult learner’s learning experience is an important field of investigation in the Unisa context, (c) knowledge of the emotional and cognitive life world of the adult learner may contribute to improved facilitation of the transactional processes inherent in distance learning, (d) knowledge of the emotional aspect of adult learning may enhance the University’s mission of addressing ‘the needs of a diverse student profile by offering relevant learner support . . .’ (Self-Evaluation Portfolio for the HEQC Institutional Audit, 2008, p. 16), and (e) interdisciplinary research opens the way for combining fields of interest, in this case Adult Learning and Psychology.

WORKING DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

The following key terms occur in this article and therefore need some explication:

Adult learning

Complex and multiple worlds, role identities, and relationships characterise the lives of adult human beings (as professional person, parent, spouse/partner, provider, friend, etcetera). Adding to the complexity is self-authorship, or the ability to see oneself as an active knowledge creator and distinguishing one’s own thoughts and feelings from those of others in the learning context (Smith, 2008). The figured worlds of the adult learner mediate interactions between being a student, worker/professional, family provider and community participant (Kasworm, 2005). Experience of facilitators of this course has confirmed this profile, namely that Unisa lecturers have to conform to multiple demands, fulfil numerous roles, be self-reliant, and be able to cope with multiple stressors.

Emotions

Zembylas (2008) extracts two different definitions of emotion from the literature. First, a psychological perspective indicating that emotions are little more than internal personality dynamics divorced from social and cultural contexts, and second, a sociological perspective that conceptualises emotions as being socially constructed. Both these perspectives will be explored in this study. Related phenomena may include mood (a persistent period of affect or emotionality) and affect (the momentary emotional tone that accompanies what we say or do) (Barlow & Durand, 2009).
Stress

Stress as psychological state manifests itself when experienced or perceived challenges to our emotional or physiological well-being exceed our coping resources and abilities. (Butcher, Mineka, & Hooley, 2010). Stress is known to reflect the interaction between the organism and the environment over time. Therefore, all situations that require one to adjust can be regarded as potentially stressful. External demands are called stressors, and efforts to deal with stress are referred to as coping can therefore be defined as devising strategies to deal with stressors or stress factors.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics pertain to our interaction with people, other beings or objects and the environment (Mouton, 2001) and focus specifically on protecting and ensuring the welfare of research participants (Wassenaar, 2006). Talking about one’s emotions can be, to some people, a delicate issue. This study involved not only sharing one’s emotions with the researcher; it addressed emotions regarding work related issues, for instance, being trained as assessor by and for Unisa. This last aspect may be intimidating to some lecturers who fear direct or indirect punishment should they react negatively to this training initiative.

Within the ambit of the philosophical principle of beneficence (Wassenaar, 2006), this study minimised the risk for lecturers (in the light of possible negative emotions towards the learning experience) by keeping responses anonymous. For the sake of the investigation lecturers included in the sample were informed via e-mail about the purpose of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zembylas (2008) gives an overview of literature on the matter of emotions in adult learning and concludes that adult educators are only beginning to understand the interaction between emotion and learning. Educational research has, over the last few decades, focussed on identifying the cognitive processes that are important to learning. The emotional aspect may have been neglected. Emotions have been seen by some as compromising the learning experience and therefore something that needs to be marginalised (Dirkx, 2008). Rationality is subsequently elevated to a supreme position (Dirkx, 2001, Kasworm, 2005). Those researchers who have focussed on the emotions in learning have clearly highlighted the reciprocal relationship between emotion and learning (Kasworm, 2005, 2008; Sinnot, 2005; Smith, 2008; Zembylas, 2008).

Different kinds of emotion have been identified by Zembylas (2008), namely negative emotions such as anger, frustration, confusion, boredom, isolation, and...
positive emotions such as engagement and excitement. Lawrence (2008) emphasises the fact that Western culture prises the rational-cognitive ways of knowing, emphasising prevailing logical rules and reasoning. Therefore, emotional ways of knowing are often dismissed and ignored. Learning is not, according to Lawrence (2008), a moment of dispassionate post facto cognitive reflection, but a moment of intense emotions and bodily sensations during the experience. Dirkx (2006), one of the leading proponents of the current emotion-in-learning school of thought, says that a scholarship of emotion in learning and teaching is emerging once more. Emotions are therefore important to adult learners since it can either restrict or motivate learning. Emotions further play a constructive role in creating meaning and knowledge of the self in the adult learning process (see Dirkx, 2001).

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

It was the purpose of the investigation to explore the emotions and feelings that lecturers experience in undergoing (compulsory) training in assessment. The context in which it was done is that of a dedicated distance education institution of higher learning that is in the process of transformation. One of the fundamental areas of transformation at Unisa is its teaching and learning paradigm, namely from a distance education institution to an ODL institution. ODL has at its core the identification of barriers to learning and finding ways to bridge these barriers in order to ensure successful learning enterprises (see Unisa Open Distance Learning Policy, 2008). ODL implies student support in all facets of learning (from pre-registration to post-graduation) and therefore support through assessment by well-skilled lecturers is central to teaching-for-success.

The investigation went beyond a mere description of these emotions. It aimed to place it in the range of psychological research by relating the findings to the phenomenon of stress. It was therefore my intention to find out in what way these emotions are stress-related, whether the training course can be depicted as a stressor and whether the data indicates any coping strategies that these adult learners use to deal with this situation.

**Rationale**

The study is of theoretical significance and emanated from the review of the central ideas in the literature review, namely to explore the feelings accompanying the learning experience of adult learners. The aim was therefore to advance the body of knowledge relating to the emotions involved in adult learning and whether they relate to the phenomenon of stress.
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Method

This was an exploration into a relatively unknown area of research, looking for new insights into the phenomenon of emotion in adult learning. Speculative insights and new questions can be generated. An open and flexible inductive approach was adopted, utilising primary and secondary observations of the kind of emotions that Unisa lecturers experience in their role as adult learners. This qualitative study examined selected issues in depth, openess, and detail. This type of research is aimed at gaining rich descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon under investigation.

Sampling procedure

The unit of analysis was Unisa lecturers who have already completed the assessor training course. A purposive non-random sample was used, which implies the selection of a limited number of information-rich cases. The rule of ‘sampling to redundancy’ was applied. This involves ‘not defining one’s sample size in advance, but interviewing more and more people until the same themes and issues come up over and over again’ (Durrheim, 2006, p. 50).

Data collection

An inductive approach to data collection was followed, with semi-structured interviews being the main technique of collecting rich descriptions of the phenomenon.

Since the participants were all Unisa staff members, I experimented with what can be called e-interviews, that is, approaching the sample by means of internal e-mails and requesting them to respond electronically to the questions posed. There are definite advantages and disadvantages to this approach. Advantages could be that it (1) saves time (as opposed to individual interviews), (2) reaches a bigger sample, (3) offers participants time to reflect on the questions before responding, and (4) offers the researcher a ready-made script of the responses.

Possible disadvantages that are anticipated include the fact that it (1) marginalises the role of the researcher as interviewer, (2) eliminates the role of facial and other bodily gestures from the side of the interviewees, and (3) can therefore be criticised as being an impersonal and cold way of interviewing.

From the 83 lecturers to whom an e-mail was sent requesting participation, 10 lecturers responded by e-mail. Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) regard this amount of responses adequate if one plans to conduct relatively brief, semi-structured interviews on something such as attitude. Some of the responses were general feedback on feelings and emotions experienced during the training course, while others responded to each question separately. It is therefore my opinion that the range of cases was sufficient to ensure that what was described covered the field of research sufficiently.
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**Data analysis**

In an interpretive analysis such as this one the interpretation of data is done from the perspective of emphatic understanding (Terre Blanche et al., 2006) in order to provide a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation. Real-life events and phenomena are thus placed in perspective by me as researcher.

Responses from participants were coded and labelled (Terre Blanche et al., 2006) with the aim of identifying themes and sub-themes. This action went beyond merely summarising the content but considered the thought processes, contradictions in emotions and inner-speak processes, among others. It was anticipated that these themes and sub-themes would somehow be directly or indirectly related to (a) the types of emotions evoked by the learning experience and (b) the reasons for these emotional reactions.

The scripts of the participants (in e-mail format) were read and re-read a number of times until preliminary themes emerged. Each theme was colour-coded according to colours of marking pens and then progressively highlighted in their respective colours.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

A thorough analysis of the responses yielded five themes and sub-themes (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Themes and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: A variety of emotions</th>
<th>Sub-themes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Positive emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘expectation; interest; challenging; not strange at all; feels fine’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Negative emotions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘feeling of inferiority; I don’t have time; I really didn’t want to be there; I did not like doing the activities’</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 2: Reasons for these emotions</th>
<th>Sub-themes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a. Internal reasons</strong></td>
<td>‘it bruises one’s ego; I set high standards for myself; the need to perform became once again overwhelming; I was doing it for myself; I wanted to do well’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>b. External reasons</strong></td>
<td>‘we were forced to enrol for this course; another compulsory thing to do; laborious presentations; the content is not new; two and a half days were too long; out of the comfort zone’</td>
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<th>Theme 3: Contexts of these emotions</th>
<th>Sub-themes:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>a. Extrinsic context</strong></td>
<td>‘the work is piling up in your office; a very busy schedule; extra workload’</td>
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<td><strong>b. Intrinsic context</strong></td>
<td>‘one has to balance your personal life with studying’</td>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 4: Coping mechanisms</th>
<th>Sub-themes:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>a. Psychological mechanisms</strong></td>
<td>‘one gets on with the work; assume a humble role; trying to be in a team; focussed on remaining committed and of gaining new insights; keep silent and learn from what others have to say; accept the situation’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Structural mechanisms</strong></td>
<td>‘taking each unit step by step and dividing the work . . . setting deadlines and goals’</td>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 5: In retrospect - thinking back on the learning experience</th>
<th>Sub-themes:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>a. Personal benefits</strong></td>
<td>‘I certainly learned from it; it has enriched my experience; the whole process is exiting; the course has enriched my knowledge’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>b. Professional benefits</strong></td>
<td>‘an absolute MUST course for . . . any academic; a great way for lecturers to relate to what their students experience; to appreciate students’ anxieties, perceptions and expectations; teaches one to have more empathy with . . . for one’s students’</td>
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</table>
Each one of these themes and their sub-themes is discussed in detail, with reference to the scripts of the participants.

**Variety of emotions**

A variety of emotions came to the fore in the responses of participants. Positive emotions (sub-theme $a$) at the start of the training course include feelings of anticipating that something good is about to happen (‘expectation’, ‘interest’). Some initial emotions were neutral (‘rather/a bit strange’, ‘apprehension’). Positive emotions during the course occurred in the form of one participant finding it ‘challenging’, while another, being used to the role of learner, found it ‘not strange at all’; another said that to study ‘feels fine’. After completing the course a new set of positive emotions and feelings surfaced, namely ‘empowerment, enlightenment, pleasure, affirmation, achievement, relief, joy, commitment and consolation’. All these were mentioned by a single participant. Another participant recalled that after completion there were feelings of contentment, general wellness, and relief.

Negative emotions (sub-theme $b$), especially at the start of the course, included insecurity, anxiety (‘giving the wrong answer’), self-doubt (‘a feeling of inferiority towards older, more experienced lecturers’), frustration (‘I don’t have time’), unwillingness (‘I really didn’t want to be there’), irritation (‘I did not like doing the activities’), confusion (‘very strange’ being on the receiving end of teaching), isolation (online option), disappointment, and fear. These negative emotions may be the result of an intense feeling of resistance. As indicated earlier, these emotions were mostly forgotten by the end of the course and were even transformed into positive ones.

**Reasons for the emotions**

A number of reasons were given for these emotions. It will be obvious from the context which reasons led to positive and which to negative emotions. Internal reasons (sub-theme $a$) refer to those reasons that originated within the person and include self-concept (‘it bruises one’s ego’, ‘I set high standards for myself which I feared I might not be able to meet’), learning experience (‘I have been an adult student for both my . . . qualifications, so it’s nothing new’) and self-actualisation (‘once . . . the learning starts . . . the need to perform and perform well became once again overwhelming . . . I was doing it for myself and therefore, I wanted to do well’).

External reasons (sub-theme $b$) would be those over which the participants felt they had no control, such as the compulsory nature of the course (‘not something that you freely choose to do’, ‘we were forced to enrol for this course’, ‘another compulsory thing to do’), administrative delays such as getting registered for the course, doing the assignments (‘completing assignments with due dates’), tasks, the
presentation styles of facilitators of the course (‘to sit through laborious presentations . . .’), the content matter they are transmitting (‘. . . the content of which is not new’), and the duration of the face-to-face workshop (‘two and a half days were much too long’). The appeal to apply new knowledge to existing teaching practices was seen by one participant as a reason for negative emotions, because that was asking ‘to do something out of the comfort zone’. In conclusion, it became clear that external reasons for negative emotions can be summarised in the words of one participant: ‘. . . you don’t have “control” over the learning environment, the content or how the process is structured’.

**Context of the emotions**

Participants were clear about the context of their emotions. This refers to the bigger picture in which their feelings and emotions regarding the training ought to be understood.

The extrinsic context (sub-theme *a*) can be identified as the current Unisa environment in which lecturers find themselves. Therefore workload was identified by participants as being the main contextual factor for the negative emotions and feelings. Remarks like the following make this evident: ‘. . . the work is piling up in your office while you are held captive by long winded presentations’, ‘coping with an additional burden in a very busy schedule’, ‘extra workload additional to your normal work’, ‘how will I ever be able to fit this in over and above the loads of work I already have’, and finally, ‘the gap between what we are currently able to do and that which we now know that we should rather do, has become ever wider!!’

The intrinsic context (sub-theme *b*) refers here to the personal context of participants and was referred to by only one participant. Yet, I find the following remark relevant to this discussion: ‘It’s rather difficult as one has to balance your personal life with studying/student life’.

**Coping mechanisms**

A fourth theme that emerged from the data was that of coping mechanisms employed by participants in order to deal with their emotions. Psychological mechanisms (sub-theme *a*) refer to those processes that occurred within the psyche of participants, such as mental mastery of the situation (‘after a while one adjusts to this situation’, ‘. . . and gets on with the work’, ‘one has to assume a humble role in order to be met with success’, ‘trying to be in a team of fellow colleagues to adjust to the anxiety’). Cognitive imagery was also used to cope with the situation (‘try and picture yourself as the lecturer and what you would have done in that situation’, ‘I focussed on remaining committed and on the positive outcomes of gaining new insights and knowledge’). One participant found that approaching the course ‘with a sense of pride’ and ‘a strong sense of responsibility’ helped to cope with the role of being
a student. Another participant (a young academic) felt that the best way of dealing with the emotion of anxiety was to keep silent and ‘listen and learn from what others have to say’. A senior academic used the technique of benchmarking to make the situation meaningful by asking himself how he matched up to the teaching practices of his peers also present in the course. The following remark summarises this issue: ‘As soon as one accepts the situation, and as soon as one recognises the aspects in the course that can improve one’s own performance, the negative emotions start to fade away’.

One participant highlighted an alternative way of coping, which can be termed a structural mechanism (sub-theme b). It was expressed in the following words: ‘I focussed on taking each unit step by step and dividing the work into manageable chunks and setting deadlines and goals for myself that I could fit into my schedule’.

**Reflecting on the learning experience**

The fifth and last theme deals with participants reflecting on their experience. The first sub-theme that arises is that of personal benefits gained from this learning experience. Remarks like the following testify to this element: ‘ultimately the assessor course was not without value and I certainly learned from it’, ‘it has enriched my experience’, ‘the whole process is exciting as one is finding out new information and meeting with different academics’, ‘the course has certainly enriched my knowledge’.

A number of professional benefits (sub-theme b) were also highlighted. That is, benefits that could enrich one’s teaching practices: ‘an absolute MUST course for any person wishing to embark on a career as an academic at a tertiary institution’, ‘I think it is a great way for lecturers to really relate to what their students experience – submitting an assignment by the proposed due date, having to ask for extension and “being scared” to do so, the frustration of the administrative support of having to wait for the portfolio to be returned, the fear of it being lost in the system, the joy when getting a good mark, the stress of having to get everything done’. One participant said that being in the role of a student ‘gave food for thought’ and helped ‘to appreciate student anxieties, perceptions and expectations’. A final contribution in this regard was that the course ‘teaches one to have more empathy with and understanding for one’s students and the sense of isolation they feel’.

**INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS**

It was evident from the findings that understanding of this phenomenon could be enhanced by a multi-disciplinary interpretation. An attempt was therefore made to interpret the findings from both a psychological and an educational perspective.

The findings highlighted above clearly complement the literature overview covered earlier. Emotions of students can be either motivating or restricting when it
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comes to the learning experience. The majority of respondents experienced negative emotions at the start of the course and only a few started the course with a positive attitude. Emotions (especially the negative ones) were further of a diverse scope and nature, ranging from the everyday anxiety about the unknown to feeling lost and helpless (isolation). Eminent factors acted as reasons for these emotions; on the one hand perceptions and expectations of the learner and, on the other hand, the learning environment.

Looking further than these immediate factors, one needs to acknowledge that students experience emotions within a bigger context which involves their professional and personal lives. Aspects such as balancing workload, family, community and personal responsibilities with the demands of study come into play. It is by now a well-known fact that adults cope in a variety of ways with demands emanating from the multiple roles of adulthood. This, as seen from the study, is also true of adult learners. Both psychological and structural mechanisms to cope with the demands of study have been highlighted. Maturity as a characteristic of adulthood means to seek meaning in what one experiences. All the respondents saw in retrospect that this learning experience contained benefits for them, both personally and professionally.

From a psychological point of view one could possibly place these findings within the ambit of the phenomenon of stress and related phenomena namely stressors and coping strategies. All situations that require one to adapt or adjust can be regarded as potentially stressful. Participants in this study may therefore have experienced the training course as stressful, since they had to (were forced to) adapt to the role of student. Adjustments had to be made regarding work schedules, not only in attending the three day workshop or going online several hours per week, but also making time for completing the assignment and the portfolio of evidence. Hundred hours of learning (10 credit course) had to be fitted in somewhere in their busy schedules and to achieve that certain adjustments had to be made.

The psychological condition known as stress results when physical and emotional challenges are experienced or perceived. These challenges are perceived as exceeding one’s coping resources and abilities (Butcher et al., 2010). It is evident from the data that most of the respondents felt initially that they would be unable to cope with this situation, both in terms of resources (e.g., time) and abilities (e.g., learning or teaching experience). The life-change model to understanding stress (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 2003) assumes that all changes in a person’s life may act as stressors and that the accumulation of small changes can be as powerful as one major stressor. The training course can therefore easily be regarded as a stressor since it acted as a demand on, for instance, lecturers’ time and energy. It may even be understood as a minor stressor that, taken together with the contextual demands on lecturers that emanate from the current transformation at Unisa, was experienced as adding to the continuous stressors experienced over the last couple of years. For this reason the emotions accompanying the stressful situation may have been exaggerated.
findings also indicated efforts to deal with this stressful situation. Butcher et al. (2010) highlight a number of individual characteristics that improve a person’s ability to handle life’s stresses. These correspond positively with the characteristics of some of the adult learners involved in this study and include higher levels of optimism, greater psychological control or mastery, increased self-esteem and positive social support.

Exactly what brought about the change in emotions amongst many respondents from the start to the end of the course is not clear. Perhaps one can speculate by saying that once participants realised that the training course was not bigger than the stressors and demands they have become accustomed to handle and adapt to, their emotions shifted from negative to positive. The following answer by one of the respondents to the question How do academics handle the emotional aspect of the role shift from lecturer to student? sums it up: ‘Just as you handle all the shifts and aspects of daily life’.

FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

In the context of ODL, emotions-as-meaning-making in the learning process could become a very important part of the learning process. This is specifically true in the light of the loneliness and isolation a student studying through ‘distance’ may experience. Since ODL advocates for support (professional, administrative, and academic) throughout the learning process, intra-psychic factors (such as emotions, self-image, motivation) that play a role in the success or failure of the learning event need to be investigated in greater depth.

CONCLUSION

It was the purpose of this research to investigate the emotional side of adult learning and further to interpret these emotions within a psychological framework. Research findings correlate positively with the discussions in the literature on emotions in adult learning by confirming the research of leading scholars. The value of this study lies in its unique setting, an institution for higher learning in which lecturers act as adult learners. Lecturers who are placed in the role of adult learners experience emotions related to the learning process. A psychological point of view added to the picture by suggesting that these learners demonstrate coping abilities that are characteristic of adults.

ENDNOTE

I am well aware of the limitations of this study. It forms part of my learning process in the module PSY471S (Research Methodology) for the Honours degree in Psychology.
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at Unisa. This article was the culmination point of a set of six assignments in which the entire research process had to be demonstrated by me as student. Time was a limiting factor which limited aspects of the research design such as sampling, ethics, range of data gathering and eventually reflection on future research emanating from this investigation. I am grateful for the constructive feedback received from the three reviewers. Readers are therefore requested to regard this effort within the mentioned context.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Chris le Roux studied Theology and after 18 years of lecturing in the (former) Unisa Faculty of Theology, he moved into the role of Education Consultant at Unisa’s Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development. As educationalist he is responsible for supporting and guiding Unisa lecturers in their teaching tasks in an Open Distance Learning environment. His dream is to live a third role, that of Trauma Counsellor.

REFERENCES


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