

Full Length Research Paper

Adult education learners' recruitment: Challenges and prospects for re-engineered access to adult education in Kenya

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A research survey was designed to investigate the factor affecting participation of illiterate adults in adult education in Kenya and suggests ways to improve on the literacy levels. From the findings it was established that lack of conducive learning environments for adult learners, unavailability of enough instructional materials, negative attitude towards learning and shortage of professionally trained trainers for adult learners were some of the factors hindering many illiterate adults from participating in adult education programmes. It was recommended that the government and other agencies should take more responsibility in supporting adult education to make it more attractive to adult learners to attend the programmes by providing adequate funding and facilitating teacher training. The need for effective involvement of the learners in curriculum developed was emphasized.

Key words: Adult education, lifelong learning, adult learner.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a tool for promoting social, economic and political development of any country. The role of a literate adult population in propelling development cannot be overstated. Since independence the Government of Kenya has committed itself to the provision of Adult Education (Kibera, 1997). This is a strategy calculated to provide opportunity for access to adult education. Currently, this is very crucial for Kenya to attain the projections of the vision 2030. The Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey (2007) indicates that the Government of Kenya is a signatory to Education for All Framework for action adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000.

In Kenya, the Department of Adult Education is responsible for recruitment of teachers and Adult Education Officers. The recruitment of teachers is carried out at location and village levels. After recruitment the adult education teachers are trained by the department. The teachers are thereafter encouraged to recruit learners and also manage the literacy programmes in their own villages (Kebathi, 1990). Fordham et al. (1995) noted that

the training of adult literacy teachers should be done before a Literacy programme starts. This gives them confidence to manage literacy classes. Learner's participation in Adult Education is voluntary. Nevertheless, participation is influenced by factors such as attitude to learning, priorities for the use of time and the beliefs on the importance of schooling (Titmus, 1989). Further he argues that Adult Education learners who volunteer to enroll in literacy classes are already motivated to learn. However, he raises concern that such students may drop-out due to lack of physical facilities or due to the instructors' incompetence. Rodgers (1996) supports the views of Titmus (1989) when he points out that adult education is for those few who are willing to join, thus it's voluntary and the learners can be motivated to learn if adult educators satisfy their aspirations by teaching them what they want to learn. This comment means that aspirations and motivation can actually improve adult learner recruitment positively or negatively. Smith et al. (1970) earlier noted that adults who have the desire to participate and the knowledge of location of an accessible institution are the only ones who participate in the programme. Like Titmus (1989), Karani (1996) observes that there is a decline in Adult literacy enrolment in Kenya which she attributes to: Inability to recruit adequate and qualified teachers, social factors which discourage some adults from attending classes,

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lack of adequate classes enough to attract adults and non availability of appropriate reading materials in some ethnic languages.

The Kenyan Government since independence has put emphasis on adult literacy in order to achieve faster and sustainable socio economic development (UNESCO, 2007). The objectives of the Adult Education programmes are to eradicate illiteracy, to provide knowledge, skills and attitude for work, to create self confidence and to foster a positive behavior towards life and society. To achieve this, the learners have to be exposed to specific content. The content in adult education curriculum includes literacy, family life, health, and nutrition, civics, environmental studies and agriculture (Kibera, 1997). It is hoped that if this content is covered well it will make Kenya achieve the objectives of adult education and by extension national development. Despite progress in promoting adult literacy, the country still has high illiteracy rates and the number of illiterate adults continues to grow.

Statement of the problem

Enrolment figures in adult literacy programmes in Kenya have been characterized by declining rates. In 1979 when the National Literacy Programme was launched the total enrolment was 415,074. The Adult Education experienced decline in enrollment from 1985, in 1987 for example, the enrollment had dropped to 150,000. The enrolment in 2001 was even lower at 93,052. This shows that there was a 78% decline in enrolment. The 1999 population census estimated that there were 4.2 million illiterates. According to the National Literacy Survey Report (2007) there are 7.8 million illiterate adults in Kenya today. This situation exhibits a worrying trend whereby the country will not harness the potential adults have for development. Yet, (Ouso, 1994) observes that adults determine the destiny of their society. In a country, adults not only are parents with responsibilities of bringing up healthy children but also owners of economically viable entities like land. So they need proper skills, knowledge and attitudes to be more productive. But what are the factors precipitating the decline in learner enrolment in adult education?

Objectives

The main purpose of this study was to determine the factors hindering adults from participating in Adult Education programmes. The study focused on the following specific objectives:

- i) To determine the extent to which the availability and utility of the physical facilities and instructional resources have affected the recruitment of learners
- ii) To assess the preparation of Adult Education Teachers and the extent to which it has affected the recruitment of adult education learners.

- iii) To establish how social-economic factors affect recruitment of adult learners
- iv) To evaluate the influence of age of teachers and learners on recruitment of adult learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study investigated factors affecting participation of adult learners in adult education programmes in Kakamega south District. The aforesaid factors were investigated effectively through the descriptive survey approach. Enon (1998) indicates that descriptive survey is applicable where a study involves stating conditions or relationships that exist. This descriptive survey included simple frequency counts emanating from the many questions asked. According to Kerlinger (2004), this research design enables a researcher to have a keen observation and come up with facts about a sample that can be used for generalization purpose about the entire research population.

Study area

The study was carried out in Kakamega South District. The major economic activities in the district include trade, tourism, mixed farming, transport and communication. Agriculture is a main activity in the district. Seventy per cent of the area is under cultivation of maize for subsistence and commercial use while thirty percent under is under cultivation of cash crops such as sugarcane and tea. The agro based activities are found in the rural areas and they employ a large labour force in this district. Although Kakamega South District has diverse economic activities that can produce income to facilitate enrolment of adult learners, there are still many adults who are illiterate or semi illiterate. Economic productivity is hampered by illiteracy, hence leading to poverty. Due to poverty in the district, many people have been unable to access basic needs such as education (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

Research population, sample, and sampling techniques

Kakamega South District has 46 adult education centres. There were 469 learners and 45 teachers in the district (District Adult Education Office 2007). The study targeted adult education teachers and adult education learners under the following categories: Learners currently enrolled, drop-out learners and potential learners not enrolled. The adult education teachers were chosen for research because of their central role in the implementation of the learning programme (Hawes, 1979; Bishop, 1993).

The sample consisted of adult education teachers and learners. Simple random sampling was used to pick the teachers and the learners. A sample of 18 adult education teachers was used. This figure represented 40% of the teachers in the district. A total of 47(10%) of the learners were used in the study. The researchers settled for a sample of 10% because of the recommendation given by Gay (1976) and Kerlinger (2004). The two recommend that for descriptive survey research a minimum sample of 10% is adequate. The learners were sampled randomly within the centre visited by the researchers. Within the centre the researchers used class attendance registers to come up with a sample. The sample of 20 drop-out learners and 10 potential learners not enrolled in any centre was got through purposive sampling. The learners and the teachers assisted in identifying dropouts. The Provincial and District Adult Education Officers were selected purposively and they were used as key informants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data were analyzed based on the objectives of the study. These objectives were: to determine the extent to which availability and utility of the physical facilities and instructional resources have affected the recruitment of adult learners, to assess the preparation of adult education teachers and the extent to which it has affected the recruitment of adult learners, to establish how social economic factors affect recruitment of adult learners and to evaluate the influence of the age of teachers and learners on recruitment of adult learners.

Physical facilities and instructional resources

Forty three (91.48%) of the learners interviewed noted that physical facilities in the centre were inadequate. This was confirmed by majority of the teachers 15 (83.33%). The same sentiments were expressed by adult education officers. Those who conducted their classes in a primary school claimed that the chairs and tables were small sized. In churches the learners mainly used benches without tables. It was too uncomfortable for adult learners especially when writing was required. From these findings, it is clear that the condition of furniture gives adult learners problems. Considering the age of learners, where 21 were in the age bracket of 41-60 years which is 44.68% of the study sample. It was observed that people in this age bracket were not comfortable using small sized furniture meant for children. It was also uncomfortable to use benches because the learners would be required to bend all the time when writing. If this condition goes on for long, some of them would be discouraged and drop out because it would affect their health for example backache due to age. Indeed, five (25%) drop-out learners indicated this as one of the reasons why they dropped out. Eleven (55%) of the drop-out learners interviewed indicated that they dropped out due to inadequate facilities. They noted that sometimes they lacked furniture when the church programmes were on. Indeed, out of the seventeen centres visited only three registered an increase in enrollment while fourteen centres had a decline in enrollment.

On ventilation, lighting and general condition of the rooms within the learning rooms seven (39%) teachers indicated that the situation was fair while three (17%) noted that it was unsatisfactory. Only eight (44%) admitted that ventilation and lighting was excellent. Observations by the researchers confirmed this. For example in one of the centres the researchers observed some learners tilting their books towards the window in order to receive more light to see well. It was observed that due to age some learners had poor eye sight thus if the classes did not have proper lighting such learners were not able to read or write well. Five of the drop-out learners said that they did not have good sight. Such health problems made learners drop or refuse to enroll in adult literacy

classes. Seven teachers (39%) said the floor of their classes was in very bad state while six (33%) claimed that the floor of their classes was fair. Only five (28%) felt that the floor was in excellent condition. Teachers interviewed confirmed that most of the class rooms were not conducive for adult learners. Only (16.66%) said that the enrollment of the learners had increased in their centres due to physical facilities available. Through observation, researchers noted that some centres had windows without glasses or shutters. During the rainy seasons it was difficult to learn because rain water entered the rooms through the roofs and windows. It was also observed that three centres had very few benches. Therefore, some learners were forced to sit on the floor.

From these findings, it is worthy noting that physical facilities have direct impact on recruitment of adult learners. Several scholars have made immense contributions on issue of physical facilities within adult learning centres (Terer, 2004; Prosser, 1967; Fordham, et al. 1995; Knowles, 1996). They argue that adult learners taking their classes in primary school end up using small sized furniture meant for children. They also emphasized that adults learn better in physical environment with adult sized furniture. This means that when adults are put in a class with wrong sized furniture, they may be discouraged and may drop out hence affecting enrollment or even refuse to enroll at all. It was clear that uncomfortable furniture affected participation of adult learners.

Related to the comfort was the location of the centres. In seventeen centres visited it was observed that only one centre was conducted in a primary school and the rest were in churches. One experienced teacher who has taught adult education for almost 30 years disclosed that centres located in primary schools do not seem to attract many learners compared to centres located in churches which are away from public view. According to the teacher, primary schools expose adult learners to ridicule by primary school pupils. Another teacher transferred her centre from a primary school because the learners felt shy and they did not want to be seen by children going to school. Smith et al. (1970) observed that adult education does better in institutions which are not educational. These findings support the views of Oketch (2004), who argues that school classrooms are not psychologically or physically suitable for adult learners. Three (15%) of drop-out learners interviewed said that they dropped out because the centres were located very far from their homes. Five (10.63%) learners interviewed said that they had a problem of walking long distances to reach their learning centres. They complained that their centres were very far from their homes. The records kept at the Adult Education Office Kakamega South District showed that there is one centre per administrative location. This was the observation by the researchers too. This makes it difficult for the learners to access the centers. According to (The Institute of Adult Education, 1973; Nafukho et al. 2005) learning centres should be located within reach.

This is because learners get discouraged if they had to travel for long. According to Apps (1991) adults are unable to travel long distances because they are busy with work and personal responsibilities. Thus adult learners are discouraged to join literacy centres because of their busy schedules and the fact that the centres are not within reach.

Instructional resource

All adult education learners interviewed revealed that the centres had inadequate instructional resources. They noted that the reading books and other learning materials were very few. In some areas of study like science, the books were non-existent. The learners also noted that centres could go for several months without pieces of chalk. Five (25%) dropout learners interviewed said they dropped out due to lack of instructional resources. The reading books were very few and when requested by their teachers to buy to supplement what the government provides, some complained they had no money. One of the dropout learners interviewed said: "I cannot stay in class and buy books when my children are hungry. The cost of maintaining my education and feeding my children is very high. I love my children more than papers." The above views clearly show that learners could be willing to remain at the centres but due to poverty they could not continue with learning at these centres. If adult education centres can be provided with enough learning resources such learners could be maintained in the centres. Nine (45%) drop-outs interviewed said that lack of instructional resources is one of the problems facing adult education. Eleven (61.11%) teachers revealed that the decline of enrolment of learners in their centres was due to inadequate instructional resources. They further said that when learners came and found out that reading books and writing materials were missing they gave up and dropped out with time hence affecting recruitment. Some teachers said that the situation was so bad that they were forced to buy their own books and pieces of chalk.

In all the 17 centres, the teachers indicated that they did not have audio visual resources, posters, charts and maps. Three centres lacked literacy primers, three did not have supplementary reading material and another three had no guide books for teachers. The adult education officers interviewed said that the department provides teachers with chalk, blackboard, lesson plan books, schemes of work and a few text books. However the officers regretted that the resources provided were very few. The officers also indicated that sometimes teachers were forced to buy their own instructional materials like chalk, text books and chalkboard. It was observed that all the centres had no library. Teachers carried all books in their handbags because they were few. The learners missed supplementary reading materials. In one of the centres the learners complained that they had only two copies of vernacular text books. The researchers observed

that two centres did not have chalkboards. In one of the centres, the chalkboard was 1.5 feet by 1.5 feet. This facility is not adequate. The researchers also observed that some teachers were using very tiny pieces of chalk. They disclosed that the Adult Education Department provided learning resources once per year. In most cases they were forced to buy their own. These findings were similar to Okech (2004) who argued that in Uganda, adult literacy classes were occasionally faced with shortage of chalk and other instructional materials.

According to the findings, centres lacked adequate instructional resources. Mulira (1978) notes that adult literacy centres should be provided with instructional resources. This is because they make teaching easier and learning more interesting and consequently attracted more learners. Therefore if the learners lack the instructional resources, recruitment becomes a problem because many would not be attracted to join. Those who had already joined may be forced to discontinue their studies. Inadequate instructional resources explained why enrolment was declining in various adult learning centres. In this situation learners were discouraged and dropped out because they were neither willing nor able to finance their education.

The findings also indicated that some centres were using primary school textbooks. This according to Thompson (1987) discouraged learners and some of them dropped out. The learners felt that they were being treated like children. But Ouso (1994) observed that teachers ended up using materials meant for children because the centres lacked learning resources for adults. The centres should therefore be provided with adequate instructional resources in order to increase enrolment. According to Mbiti (1974), learning materials should be supplied in time. This would encourage both the learners and the teachers to work effectively. The findings showed that the teachers got instructional resources once per year. These were not enough to run throughout the year. The materials should also be relevant and adequate for proper implementation of a programme. It is clear from the above findings that the government gives least attention to adult education. This is because centres lacked instructional resources and little was mentioned about serious government involvement in facilitating adult literacy education.

Teacher preparation

According to the District Adult Education Office, the Department of Adult Education requires one to have a minimum of Kenya Certificate of Secondary education. (KCSE) (D+) or equivalent in order to be employed as an adult education teacher. Seventeen teachers (94.44%) had attained KCSE level of education whereas only one (5.56%) had reached Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education (KACE) level. From this data, it is evident that the adult education teachers used in the study had attained

the minimum academic qualification. The proportion of adult education teachers' professional qualification in the study sample had; three (16.70%)-diploma in adult education. Similarly three teachers (16.70%) had a certificate in adult education. Two teachers (11.00%) had professional qualification not related to adult education; one was a trained secretary and another social worker. A large group of ten teachers (55.60%) had no form of professional training. This data indicates that only six (33%) out of the 18 teachers had undergone adult education professional training while twelve (67%) had not taken this training. The education officers interviewed confirmed this. Walden (1975) discourages untrained teachers being used to manage adult literacy classes. Expressing similar sentiments, observes that members of a professional group should undergo training from recognized educational institution which is to provide both academic and professional training in order for them to work effectively. Going by the above arguments, teachers of adult education should take professional training in order to be competent enough to manage the adult education learning centres. The findings showed that over 50% of the teachers do not have the recommended professional training. There was a high possibility that this caused a decline in enrolment of learners.

It was also found that even though a large number of adult education teachers had not taken any professional training, there were some in-service or induction courses mounted for adult educators. These courses were organized by some Non-Governmental Organizations. Since the funding was not adequate only a few teachers were selected to attend and they were not regular. Twelve (67%) had attended at least one in-service or induction course. Six (33%) had not attended any sort of in-service or induction course. This situation is pathetic given that some of these teachers had taught adults for many years. The trend on teacher preparation (pre-service and in-service) exhibited in Kakamega South District was likely to impact negatively on recruitment of adult learners in all centres. Prosser and Clarke (1972) argued that adult education teachers needed to undergo training which would prepare them to be able to attract adult learners. The skills acquired in this training enables the teachers to handle learning centres professionally, a situation which can enhance adult learners' enrolment. Townsend (1977) also notes that teachers should be given in-service training for their professional enrichment. Shiundu and Omulando (1992) underscore the importance of in-service training for both qualified and untrained teachers because in-service courses keep teachers abreast with current educational innovations.

Four (20%) of the interviewed drop-out learners revealed that they dropped out because the teachers attendance was not regular. They further said that teachers came very late and sometimes did not attend. These learners got discouraged because they had other duties to attend to. One dropout learner interviewed said that he

dropped out because the teachers were too fast while teaching. This shows that the learner could not cope with the speed and thus was unable to get the most of what was being taught. Another dropout learner said that she dropped out because the teacher taught many items within a short time. The learner was unable to cope and thus dropped out. In another centre the researchers observed a teacher teach several concepts within one hour. Some of the learners were seen to be mixed up and ended up getting confused. This was evident from the type of questions they were asking in class. Two (10%) drop-out learners interviewed said that they dropped out because teachers did not teach what learners wanted to learn. The teachers were not caring for learners' interests. One drop-out learner said what they learnt was irrelevant to his carpentry. Another learner interviewed said that he dropped out because he felt that teachers were not competent. He blamed teachers for failing to understand different abilities of learners.

The researchers also observed that centres with one teacher had a lot of difficulties in teaching. The teacher had problems dealing with all groups because they were at different stages. From the researchers' experience, it was discovered that those learners whose ability is low when mixed with others of high ability give up and end up dropping out. Records from the Adult Education Office showed that teachers in the district were very few. The officers interviewed said this problem existed because full time teachers were never replaced once they left the service. The officers disclosed that part time teachers went up to five months without pay. Due to lack of salary, the teachers were not interested in professional training hence centers lacked teachers and enrolment went down.

Social, cultural and economic activities

Social and cultural activities

Among the teachers used in the study 16 (89.00%) indicated that their learners did not keep time, while 2 (11.00%) said that learners kept time. The teachers attributed this to the social activities the adult learners were involved in. Twelve (66.66%) of the teachers noted that some learners came late to the centres because they were involved in cultural activities such as funerals, marriage and circumcision activities among others. During circumcision season one teacher disclosed that some learners failed to attend classes completely. Twenty (42.55%) of learners interviewed, said that they were busy with cultural activities for example funerals in the neighborhood or in the family. Nine (50%) teachers noted that some learners came late to class due to religious activities like church choir training, church committee meetings and seminars. One Muslim learner confessed that some of his religious counterparts could not attend classes during the holy month of Ramadhan. Thirteen

(27.65%) of the learners interviewed confirmed the sentiments of the teachers whereby the religious undertakings took a lot of their time hence little or no time was spared for adult literacy classes. This situation automatically led to high drop out rates. Three (30%) potential learners were adamant that they could not join adult education classes because they were busy with church activities.

Fourteen centres experienced a decline in enrollment from the year 2005 to 2007. The teachers gave the following reasons for the decline. Eight (44.44%) of the teachers said that cultural beliefs had led to the decline of enrollment, such as mixing young and older learners. The older learners were not willing to sit in the same class with the young learners. Husbands were not willing to sit in the same classes with their wives. Muslim learners did not accept to be taught by female teachers. Father-in-Laws were not at peace with their daughters-in-law in the same class and vice versa for mothers-in-law. These cultural beliefs in the district had affected the recruitment of adult learners. Some adult learners dropped out of literacy classes and others refused to enroll. Among the dropout learners, ten (50%) said they dropped out because they were being taught by female teachers.

Family responsibilities also caused decline in enrolment according to fourteen (77.77%) teachers. For instance mothers took most of their time taking care of their children. Women also spend most of the time on domestic chores like fetching firewood, water and vegetables for meals. Some women were involved in family duties and they were unable to enroll for classes completely. Five (25%) of the drop out learners interviewed said they were busy with family responsibilities and duties that they sometimes missed classes. This irregular attendance forced them to terminate learning. It was also observed in one centre that a mother was in class with her child.

Family misunderstandings had also taken toll on enrolment of adult learners. The study found out that husbands did not allow their wives to undertake adult education. For example two (4.25%) adult learners were not given permission to attend classes. This was because either their husbands did not perceive the value of education or they just wanted their wives to remain at home and continue with household activities. One female learner confessed that sometimes men felt their ego was threatened when their wives attained higher educational standards. Divorce forced three female learners to drop out because they eventually settled in areas without adult learning centres. Three (30%) of potential learners interviewed said that they could not join adult literacy classes because they were busy taking care of their children. The men spend most of their time looking for money to feed their families and women took most of their time nursing their babies hence they lacked time to attend adult literacy classes. Nafukho et al. (2005) indicated that African families were large with several children. This exerts a lot of pressure on attendance of adult education. They also argue that marital and family problems would affect

recruitment of learners because they would not have the interest to attend. Further, they argue that in the African society female learners have to seek permission from their husbands to attend literacy classes. This affected the recruitment of adult learners because without permission a woman would not attend literacy classes.

Health related problems were identified as some of the causes of the decline in enrollment of adult education. These included backache, poor eyesight and general fatigue. The affected learners were forced to drop out or even refuse to enroll. Fifteen (31.91%) of learners interviewed said that they had problems with their health, some complained of general weakness of their body and others had poor eyesight. In one of the centres visited one old man said: "I joined adult education because I hoped that the government would give us free medical attention especially for my eye sight which was declining." Such a learner was willing to learn but the health problem could force him to drop out. Five (25%) of the drop out learners interviewed said they dropped out because of health problems such as eyesight and backache. Two (20%) of potential learners interviewed said that they could not join adult education classes because of health problems.

An interesting finding was that six (60%) of potential learners said that they had never heard of adult education. Therefore they were not aware of the existence of literacy classes. While commenting on adult education Ratemo (2008b) explicitly points out that in Kenya most people do not know whether adult literacy classes still exist. This means that adult education institutions are dying. On the other hand four (40%) said that they had heard of literacy classes but they could not join because they were already literate.

Three (30%) of potential learners said they could not join because they felt shy when learning together with their wives in the same class. One teacher disclosed that some illiterates requested the adult education teachers to teach them from their homes because they were shy. One elderly man interviewed said: "I cannot join literacy classes because I fear that I will fail Maths or sometimes be unable to answer questions in class. I feel shy to join because women will laugh at me when I fail to answer questions in class."

Out of seventeen centres visited, sixteen are located in churches and one in a primary school. A teacher disclosed that centres located within buildings belonging to certain religious denominations made some learners drop out because they did not want to be associated with those religious groups. For example two Muslim learners found it difficult to operate in a church.

Another social factor that affected the teaching of adult learners was language barrier. One teacher who had been transferred from another centre said that his previous station closed down due to language related problems. The teacher talked of different ethnic languages/dialects used by different learners in the same centre. It

became quite difficult to come up with one language to be used as medium of instruction given that none of the learners understood English or Kiswahili. The teacher on the other hand also knew a different ethnic language. This discouraged many learners hence the centre ended up losing students. With this unique case it can be observed that the language barrier can be an impediment in adult education programmes.

Economic activities

Adults engage themselves in economic activities in a society. These activities may affect recruitment of adult learners positively or negatively. Sixteen (88.88%) of teachers used in the study noted that their learners came late because they were engaged in economic activities. Thirty three (70%) adult learners who were farmers said that they failed to attend literacy classes during planting and harvesting seasons because they were busy. Fourteen (30%) adult learners who were business men/business women also said that they spend most of their time in their commercial activities. The researchers observed in one centre a learner who arrived at the centre thirty minutes towards the end of the lesson. When the learner was asked why he was late, he said he was very busy at his kiosk until he forgot that he was supposed to attend lessons. Thirty five (74.46%) of the learners interviewed said they had a problem with finances. Most of them confessed that they lacked money to take care of their families and at the same time buy educational materials. This situation drove their interest towards some income generating activities resulting to less attention to educational matters. This was also observed by the education officers. Enrolment in the district kept fluctuating according to different seasons depending and agricultural activities. During planting and harvesting seasons for instance, the learners dropped out. After the season some of them resumed classes while others did not report back because they felt they could not catch up with the other learners. Thus, economic activities affected attendance of literacy classes. The above findings concur with the views of Thompson (1987) and the Kenya Rural Literacy Surveys (1988) where they stated that adult learners failed to attend literacy classes because they were busy in their farms. This may be due to the fact that farming produces immediate returns as it solves food and financial crisis faster compared to education. Ten (50%) dropout learners interviewed confirmed the effect of economic activities on adult education. They mentioned that they dropped out because learning days coincided with market days. One of them said that: "My business is very involving, I move from one market to another selling my wares thus I discovered that I did not have enough time to learn. I decided to drop out because I needed money to take care of my family". Income generating activities contributed to drop-out as cited by 95% of the dropout learners. Two were kiosk operators handling consumable items;

two were selling second hand clothes, one was a vegetable vendor, one was a 'juakali' artisan, two were fruit vendors, one was a tomato hawker and one fishmonger. These dropout learners said they dropped out because their businesses were very involving. Nine of dropout learners were peasant farmers engaged in mixed farming including dairy, food crops and cash crops like sugar cane and tea. Fordham et al. (1995) indicated that when organizing literacy classes consideration should be given to the activities that learners were involved in. Such consideration would enable the busy learners to attend classes during their free hours. This is confirmed by the findings that some centres had an increase in enrolment because they had income generating projects started at the centres. The learners had projects such as growing of vegetables and sweet potatoes. These projects kept the learners in the centres because they were able to earn a living. In other words the absence of these income generating activities in these centres would have led to learner drop out and poor attendance hence affecting enrolment because learners would be attracted else where in order to generate some income for survival. The Adult Education Officers interviewed said that the department lacked funds to start income generating projects which may keep the learners in the centres. Luyayi (1999) in his research also found out that income generating projects attracted more learners to the centres.

Age of teachers and learners

In African communities, people are very sensitive to age brackets or age groups especially when important issues are to be dealt with. Adult education officers interviewed said that the Department of Adult Education has given guidelines on the age of newly recruited teachers. The department recommended that a teacher must be 25 years of age and above. Very young teachers are not considered for recruitment. Most teachers were within the recommended age for teaching adults which is over twenty five years. Fifteen teachers were aged 30 years and above.

Four (20%) dropout learners interviewed said that they dropped out because the teachers were young. Majority of dropout learners were between 41 - 50 years (50%) of the sample. These learners may have dropped out because they felt that the teachers were younger than them. Obura and Rodgers (1993) make similar observations. The age difference between teachers and learners affected recruitment because older learners would definitely drop out because they were not ready to be taught by younger teachers. In African traditions younger people do not give instructions to people who were older than them (Nafukho et al. 2005). Fourteen (77.77%) teachers indicated that the decline of enrolment in their centres was due to the fact that learners felt they were too old to learn. Ten (50%) of dropout learners did so because they felt they were too old to be in literacy classes.

Two claimed that their age mates laughed at them. Three complained that they could not go to school with their grand children. Two felt that the learning centres were unfair by mixing the young and old learners together. The older learners could not cope with the speed of learning of young people. The older learners also felt embarrassed especially when they were seen by small children going to school. Four (40%) of the potential learners interviewed said that they could not join literacy classes because they were in their advanced age. One of them said: Why should I go to school during my old age:

- i) Have educated my children and they are not employed.
- ii) Cannot see the reason of going to learn at my age.

Aggarwal's (2001) observes the same, that those adults who were not educated think that it was too late to join literacy classes.

In the above findings it is evident that factors hindering adult learners from attending classes are enormous. This is a worrying state of affairs as Kenya wishes to achieve vision 2030. Such a vision cannot be achieved if the literacy levels among the adult population is that low. Whereas there is need to creatively look for ways to increase recruitment of adult learners into the adult learners programmes, there is need to motivate them and drum the importance of lifelong learning which is hinged on the pillars of learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (Delores1998) cited in Nafkho et al (2005). Life long learning is holistic learning for life and work. Such learning is crucial owing to the changes in terms of technology, social, economic and political realities of the modern world. This will not only enable the citizens to be able to survive, but also exploit the environment for better existence. Where learning can take place any where, there is need to integrate formal and informal types of learning among the adult learners to maximize acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for improved welfare of the people in the communities.

Conclusions

On the strength of the findings it was concluded that the condition of physical facilities and the availability of instructional resources was wanting. The poor state of the furniture and lack of adequate instructional resources significantly affected the recruitment and enrollment of adult education learners. The nature of furniture (small-sized and benches) was not conducive for proper learning process to be effective. Centres with poor facilities discouraged the learners from enrolling while centres with comfortable facilities attract more learners to enroll. The acute shortage of instructional resources also greatly impacted on recruitment of adult learners. The teachers strained to keep learning on. They could personally buy or borrow books and other learning materials from schools around. Such a situation made learning a difficult

endeavor hence learners dropped out or refused to join. The location of learning centres also prohibited engagement in learning. A good number of learners attributed their not joining adult education programme to long distances they had to cover between their homes and the learning centres. Adult Education teacher preparation came up as another determinant of learner enrollment levels in learning centres. The sample revealed that there were small percentages of teachers who are trained in Adult Education. Larger percentage of these teachers were either not trained in the field at all or trained in fields not related to Adult Education. This scenario made it difficult for both the teacher and the learners to successfully take their roles. From some learners it was said that the teachers did not know how to teach. They claimed the teachers were very fast when delivering content, or they never took care of individual differences amongst the learners. Most teachers could not improvise learning/teaching aids in event of shortage. This discouraged learners. The teacher attendance of in-service training was also poor. In all the situations teacher preparation was inadequate.

Social and economic activities were found to affect learner recruitment in Adult Education centres. It occurred that some people gave social and economic matters a top priority as compared to educational matters. Lastly age factor also looked a crucial issue in determining enrollment in adult education literacy classes. Age had both psychological and physical impact on some adult learners. Whereas some adult learners felt that learning is an affair for children others felt that their body health could not allow learning because of poor sight and other health related problems.

Recommendations

In order to improve adult education programmes to attract more students the following recommendations are made that: the government should establish proper adult learning centres which are equipped with suitable furniture for adult learners. To supplement government efforts, communities and NGOs and other willing sponsors should be encouraged to built adult education centres and equip them. The government should allocate more funds to the Adult Education Department for it to be able to purchase and provide enough instructional resources in the learning centres. This would encourage more learners to enroll especially those who cannot afford to buy their own resources for learning. There is need to expand adult education teacher training programmes. This would equip the teachers with required skills to enable them run the adult learning centres professionally and effectively. Communities should be encouraged to avoid or ignore cultural beliefs and practices which are outdated yet interfere with educational activities. Further, there is need for the communities to change their attitude towards adult education. This can be achieved through embracing the

notion of life long learning. Educating the public through the mass media on the importance of being learning communities is crucial. The masses should be sensitized on the value of education at all levels. This would enable them to know the social and economic benefits of education at all ages. This would naturally encourage more adults to enroll at the learning centres.

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