

## The Extent to Which Economic Structures Affect Learners Participation in Adult Education in, Trans Nzoia County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Adult education encompasses basic literacy that caters for beginners, post literacy for literacy sustainability and Non-formal education for primary and secondary level. This study was limited to Basic and post-literacy programmes. Despite efforts made by the government in awareness creation and recruitment drives of adult learners; participation in ACE centres has been evasive and quite low. The objective of this study was to establish the extent to which economic structures affect learners participation in adult education. This study was guided by Herzberg's Theory of Motivation. The population of this study was 58 ACE centres government sponsored ACE centres with their adult education teachers and a total of 838 adult learners. Purposive sampling technique was used to get a sample of 52 government sponsored ACE centres with its 52 teachers and systematic sampling of 10% of the sample of adult learners, thus 251 adult learners sample. This study used mixed research design to collect and analyse data. The instruments of data collection were a questionnaire, an interview schedule and document analysis. Data analysis was inferential and descriptive statistical analysis. The results of this study show that infrastructure affects participation as it was not owned or purpose built for adult education, that instructional resources were obsolete, inadequate and irrelevant to adult learners, that many economic activities affect adult learners' participation, thus a change in learners economic status brings a change in participation and that social-cultural factors affect learners participation as they preoccupy them.

**Keywords:** Adult, Education, Learning, Participation, Resources

### INTRODUCTION

In Kenya after independence in 1963 the government then through the recommendations of the Kenya Education Commission Report popularly known as the Ominde Commission of 1964, established the board of adult education through cap 223 of 1966 ratified 1967 to regulate all the activities of adult education programmes, (Board of Adult Education Cap 223 of 1966). From 1967, there was massive recruitment of adult learners to adult literacy centres. Rapid changes in technology and other socio-economic factors may influence a great number of individuals to change occupations over the course of their lives. The need to update or acquire new skills for vocational reasons may be significant for a growing number of adults.

There are only 52 ACE centres and an equal number of 52 teachers, yet these centres have low enrolments of below 3000 learners and participation of below 800 learners compared to the number of illiterates in the county, [1]. Despite of efforts made to help increase participation to these centres, there is no significant improvement that has been realized as participation still remains low, thus this research

critically examines the relationship between infrastructure, instructional resources, economic and socio-cultural structures and participation in adult education centres in Trans Nzoia County.

According to Brady [2], learning for life in Ireland's white paper on adult education was a major step in the development of the adult education service, bringing with it a much needed injection of resources into a sector that had been severely neglected for many years. The increase in resources has led to the growth and development of a much more sophisticated service, with new emphasis on quality and professionalism. According to the German Parliament Committee for Education, Research and the implementation of Technologies of 2007, it noted that since 2002, participation in continuing education had declined to a level of 5.8% lower in 2005. The decline stands in a casual relationship to the reduction in public support.

According to the 2008 Global Monitoring Report on Nigeria, high dropout rates in adult literacy programmes are linked to economic problems which force adult learners to abandon classes in favour of income generating activities and to problems relating

directly to the adult literacy programme such as lack of relevance, funding issues and low morale among adult literacy instructors. According to Makhale [9], there is limited financial assistance for the establishment of small businesses for the youth that drop out of schools. Micro and small-scale enterprise promotion has emerged as a key objective in Botswana economic and industrial policy. The government is involved in the promotion of small business development through various programmes such as the out of school youth Grant and Botswana National Youth Service Awards.

According to [3] to address the environmental challenges in adult education, resource mobilization is needed, both financial and human resources required to meet the needs of adult learners. This can be done by increasing financial allocation to promote access, equality and equitable distribution of services. It also suggests working in partnerships with civil organisations, private sector, development partners, communities and individuals to address the environmental structures in adult education.

According to GOK, [4] to modernize adult education and improve its learning environment, the focus will be to use Information Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all ACE centres. This will be the goal of developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of youth and adult learners' according to requirements of the Kenya vision 2030. This calls for integration of literacy and numeracy in ICT systems and appropriate digital contents. However, more funding is needed to realize this dream. Adult education programme is challenged by understaffing poor infrastructure and capacity building. To address these challenges, the government needs to allocate at least 3% of the education budget to adult education programmes, increase enrolment of adult learners by 50% by 2015. To achieve these, the government should enhance funding to ACE, refurbish and complete the stalled projects, establish continuing education classes, institutionalize ACE, provide teaching/learning materials, establish infrastructure of all ACE centres and start men only classes [5].

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

According to Kombo and Tromp [6], research design is systematic and logical. It effectively addresses the questions raised in the study. This study applied mixed research design. Descriptive design can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues; [7]. The use of questionnaires generated quantitative data while interview schedule generated qualitative data. The mixed design is applicable to this study as it generates answers on how learning infrastructure, instructional materials, economic

activities and socio-cultural values affect participation in adult education in Trans Nzoia County.

This study used questionnaires, an interview schedule and document analysis in collecting quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Study Location**

This research was carried out in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya and focused on Adult and Continuing Education Centres.

### **Target population**

Trans Nzoia has 58 ACE centres, out of which 6 (six) ACE centres are sponsored by NGOS, FBOS or CBOS while the rest are government sponsored. This study focused on the 52 ACE centres sponsored by the government. These 52 ACE centres operate in faith based organizations, primary schools, ECD centres and in open places. Adult education teachers operating these centres are of two categories, full-time teachers who are public servants and part-time teachers who teach only three days per a week.

### **Sampling procedure and sample size**

Sampling is a procedure the researcher used to gather people, places or variables to study. According to Orodho and Kombo [7], sampling procedure is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population, such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. This study used purposeful sampling and focused on 52 (fifty two) ACE centres with its 52 teachers.

From each ACE Centre, systematic random sampling was used to select 30% of adult learners for interview schedule and the information obtained was representative of all the participating adult learners. From the two categories of full-time and part-time teachers, the researcher purposively selected all the categories of teachers.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The research instruments used for data collection include questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The questionnaires are also essential in the descriptive research as they help collect a lot and in depth information from the targeted respondents. Questionnaires are able to collect both descriptive and basic statistical data.

According to Kombo and Tromp [6], interviews are questions asked orally. The researcher or interviewer has some idea in mind of the topics to be covered and may use some sort of topic list as a reminder or a set of questions. The researcher used this technique to obtain data from the adult education learners who were not able to read and write. Adult

learners were interviewed and all their responses recorded for analysis. The information obtained was descriptive or narrative in nature and was essential for this study.

The interview schedule was administered on the adult education learners at the fifty two ACE Centres. Interviews are questions asked orally. There are three categories of interview schedules, unstructured interviews, semi-structured and structured interviews.

**Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data collected was analysed by use of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Analysis was done by use of Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient on how economic structures affect learners participation in adult and continuing education centres in Trans Nzoia County.

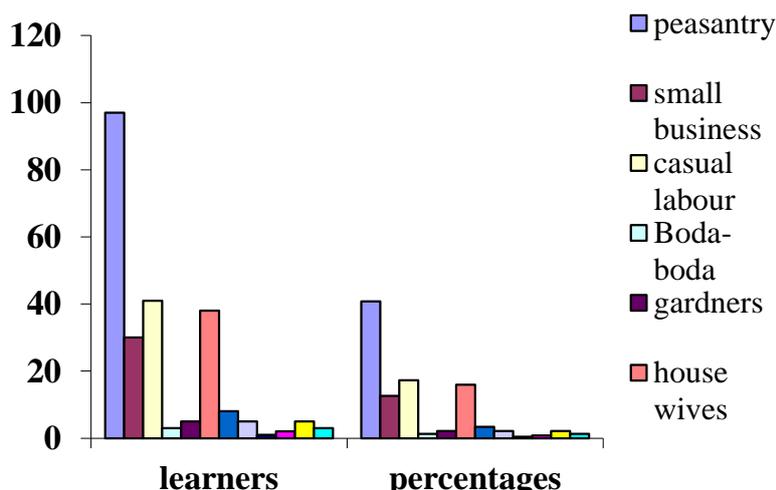
**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Effects of Economic Activities on Participation in ACE centres.**

It is important to note that Trans Nzoia County is blessed with diverse economic activities like farming, floriculture, tea growing, animal rearing, commerce, industrial activities, casual labour and small scale businesses. These economic activities affect participation in adult and continuing education in the county. Both teachers and learners are fully involved in these economic sectors until they have no time for adult education. They are involved in the following economic activities on figure 1 as extracted from the interview and questionnaire responses. Response showed that 97 (40.76%) of the adult learners are engaged in peasant

farming and form the majority of the adult learners. Peasant farming involves cultivation of crops and keeping of animals. This implies that they are busy throughout, especially during the farming activities. Equally, 41 (17.23%) are involved in casual labour which is dictated by the weather. Farming is dictated by the rain seasons, as well as casual labour is more pronounced in the large farms of Agricultural Development Cooperation and individual large farms. Due to different economic activities that pre-occupies the adult learners in the morning; most ACE centres operate in the afternoon.

According to documentary analysis [3] education is seen as one of the primary paths for individuals to realise better and more productive lives. It is therefore one of the primary drivers of national economic development. The government and stakeholders in education have invested heavily in improving access, equity and quality of education in order to achieve universal primary education. The results of this reveal that learners from diverse economic backgrounds are fully involved in ACE programme. Improvement of literacy levels as a basis for the foundation of acquisition of skills and knowledge that enable individuals to create and acquire wealth is therefore crucial in the achievement of millennium development goal of reducing poverty by 2015. This poverty reduction translates into economic development as envisaged in vision 2030. However, the various economic activities affect participation of adult learners in ACE programme which require learning and earning. This is illustrated in figure 1 below.



**Fig-1: Bar-graph showing adult learners' economic activities in the County**

**Relationship between Economic Structures and Participation in ACE.**

Table 1 below shows that majority of learners participating in ACE programme are involved in peasant farming, while the least are those involved in

illicit brewing as revealed in questionnaire and interview responses. This study established that economic activities affect adult learner's participation in ACE centres in different ways. The inferential analysis of data by use of Spearman Rank-Order

correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.986$  established that economic structures have a strong relationship with participation of adult learners in ACE centre. The results from data analysis (SPSS version) show a strong positive ( $r = +0.986$ ) relationship between economic activities and participation in adult and continuing education centres. That is, a change in adult learners' economic status may bring a change in participation in ACE. This study established that 44 (84.6%) respondents (teachers) indicated that weather conditions affect participation in ACE centres in the county, while 8 (15.4%) respondents (teachers) revealed that weather conditions do not affect participation in ACE centres in the County. Weather it rains or not, the learners participate in ACE programmes.

The results show that 21 (41.18%) respondents (teachers) revealed that adult education teachers relate well with their "rich" or economically endowed adult learners, 27 (52.94%) of the respondents revealed a fair relationship. Three (3) (5.88%) respondents had no rich or poor adult learners as they were all inmates. 1 respondent indicated a poor relationship with well to do adult learners do not relate quite well with teachers thus low participation in ACE.

It was also found that in 10 (19.61%) ACE centres, adult learners regarded those of them who were rich with respect, while 29 (56.86%) ACE centres regarded the well to do fairly, the remaining 13 (25.49%) ACE centres had no class identification among the adult learners. The results of this study showed that both adult learners and adult education teachers are most of the time fully occupied by different economic activities they are engaged in and this leaves them with no time for ACE. For instance different farming activities like planting, weeding and harvesting activities engage the adult learners from morning to late in the evening in the County. A good number of adult learners are involved also in small businesses like hawking; selling of illicit brews, and milk among others. During market days they are normally absent from ACE centres and some have dropped out due to a lot of engagements, thus low participation. David (2004) noted that motivation of adult learners is lacking as adults could want to learn and earn. Since this may not balance well, they opt for earning alone, thus low participation in adult education centres.

The findings established that most adult learners are squatters or employees on people's farms and their day to day life is guided and controlled by their employers or landlords. They have no control over themselves. They have interest in learning and joining adult education programmes but soon they drop out as most of the time they are absent.

All the respondents to this study both adult education teachers and learners pointed out that poverty

among the adult learners is rampant and affects their participation in adult education programmes. Adult learners cannot afford to buy for themselves instructional materials or basic needs. Due to this all their time is spent on looking for food and ways means to survive. They are mostly out there for casual labour, looking for their family needs. Lack of food in most instances leaves them weak with low concentration even if they were in class. Widows are most hard hit group with poverty. This is in line with (GOK, [1] which noted that, most adult learners spend much of their time in casual labour at the expense of adult education. This forced the Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education to have adult education programmes run in the afternoons when the learners have done much of their chores in the morning.

This study established that alcohol and drug abuse is rampant in the County. Illiterate poor people brew and consume alcohol and drug or substance abuse especially in non-formal settlements in the county. Alcohol and drug abuse inhibits participation in adult education. The little money they have cannot be used to buy writing materials for themselves. The Germany Parliament Committee on education [8] noted that since 2000, participation in ACE declined to a level of 5.8% lower than 2005 and this was due to reduction in public support in terms of resources. To encourage enrolments, retention and completion of adult learning, class income generating activities have to be put in place. All the respondents recommended income generating activities as a means to discouraging brewing and drinking alcohol to help increase participation. Brady [2], noted that in Northern Ireland's white paper, on adult education's increase in resources has led to the growth and development of this much needed service. Adult education is very much needed but has inadequate economic resources or funding.

A part from the climatic conditions having control over the economic activities taking place in the county, this study established that during the rainy season most adult learners do not attend ACE as the cold muddy weather deters them. This is the time the adult learners are quite busy in the farms. Female learners with babies are deterred from attending literacy centres. Equally, during the rainy season, all inmates are kept in- doors, thus no learning takes place as the prison wards are used as classrooms. With others the rains come with sickness, thus a lot of absenteeism. During the dry season, there is relatively high participation in ACE centres. However, this coincides with maize harvesting season that equally occupies most adult learners.

Economic stratification of society has a lot of bearing in adult and continuing education. The results of this study established that the "the rich" adult education learners are not free to be known to be

illiterate or learn together with the “poor” adult learners or those who are economically low. The rich could always want to learn alone and in a private venue. Stigma associated with illiteracy has made the rich people shy away from ACE centres. The study established this attitude to be more rampant among the older adult learners. This is in line with David (2000), who noted that many people consider learning beyond age 50 as of little value, old age complexities. It is however, to note that the old, the youth, the poor or the rich have demand for adult and continuing education,

but due to different economic backgrounds, there is low participation in ACE programmes in the county. Adult education teachers have a big role to play in determining participation of the various economic classes of adult learners. The time they report to their centres, the time they leave, their attendance, and how they treat or interact with adult learners is crucial. Where adult learners are not treated with dignity due to their economic status, they keep off, thus low participation.

**Table 1: Economic activities of Adult learners**

Economic Activities	No. of Learners	Participation
Peasant farming	90	417
Small businesses	30	129
Casual labour	41	174
Boda-boda transport	3	12
Gardeners	6	22
House wives & maids	31	163
Watchmen	8	35
Herdsmen	12	23
Illicit brewing & selling	1	4
Carpentry & joineries	2	8
Inmates	7	21
Others	4	15
Total	238	1023

Source: Research Data (2014)

## FINDINGS

The results of this study showed that there are many economic activities in the County that affect participation in ACE. However, peasant farming, small business and domestic activities affect participation in ACE programme. Statistical analysis show that there is a positive relationship between economic activities and participation in ACE at ( $r=0.986$ ) Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient. This means that a change in learners economic status bring about a change in learners participation in the programme. It was established that learners’ and teachers’ economic wellbeing affects the programme positively or negatively. Teachers and learners engaged in income generating activities have no time for adult education, thus low participation. Some learners are not given time by their employers and cannot afford to participate in ACE due to high levels of poverty. The findings also show that stigma and poor attitude to ACE on its benefits of employment to adult learners has equally discouraged their participation in ACE. They argue that even if they learn, they cannot get employment especially those over 50 years old. All these economic factors have a bearing on participation in adult education.

## CONCLUSION

The various economic activities in the County and the high incidents of poverty among adult learners affect participation in ACE programme. Adult learners

have no time for ACE as they are fully occupied in the various economic activities and casual labour, thus affecting participation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On economic activities, it was established that learners were inhibited from participating in large numbers in ACE centres due to various economic activities in the County. This study therefore, recommends that a ‘learn and earn’ programme should be put in place for adult learners in all ACE centres in the County. This involves adult learners engaging in class income generating project supported by grants from the national and county governments, NGOs, CBOs and donor agencies. The learners will put in practice the skills and knowledge they learn, thus may help increase participation in ACE centres.

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