

# Enrolment in Adult and Continuing Education Centers in Kenya: A Situational Analysis

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## Abstract

Adult education is a product of a complex interplay of factors, namely; cultural, socio-economic and political. It is essential not only to create and maintain a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce but also personal development and for a just, inclusive and democratic society. The objective of the study was to establish enrolment situation of adult learners in the Adult and Continuing learning centres in Kenya. It was found out that more women than men enrolled for adult literacy classes. Men formed about 30%, while women were 70% of enrolled adult learners in the Adult and Continuing education programme in Kenya. It was recommended that the government conducts assessment of needs and expectations of the target clients to inform revision of current curriculum for production of a responsive one.

## 1. Introduction

Learning is not limited to what goes on in schools and institutions of higher learning, but also lifelong learning. However, UNESCO's definition of adult Literacy refers to the numbers of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write (Oluoch and Othuon, 2008). Many scholars agree that literacy is essential to human development as it offers a foundation for achieving good health and nutrition, socio-economic development and institutions of democracy. Thus, the absence of literacy skills makes it difficult to attain fundamental needs, to uphold basic human rights, and advance a better quality of life (Hasaba, 2013).

Adult education is a product of a complex interplay of factors, namely; cultural, socio-economic and political. Education scholars do appreciate that educating adults differs from educating children in their youth in several ways. One of the most important differences is that adults have accumulated knowledge and work experience which can add to the learning experience. Another difference is that most adult education is voluntary; therefore, the participants are generally self-motivated. Adults would long for education if it has immediate utility, thus, they must have a reasonable expectation that the knowledge they gain will help them further their goals. (Bohonos, 2012).

Over the years literacy has been given a variety of interpretations, from the earlier idea of a deficit to be overcome in the basic skills of reading and writing in mother tongue, to the much broader concept of the making of active participation in a literate culture. Adult education on the other hand is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. Adult education takes place through "extension" school or school of continuing education. Adult education frequently occurs at schools, colleges and universities, libraries, and lifelong learning centers. The practice is at times referred to as andragogy to distinguish it from pedagogy (Hansman, 2008).

In South Africa Adult Education and Training (AET) is offered in public and private learning centers. The majority of public adult and learning centers use schools for the provision of adult education and training programmes. It is estimated that 6 % (about 5.5 million) adult population in South Africa (people aged 20

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and above) are illiterate. 12% of the adult illiterate are functionally illiterate to varying degrees as they had dropped out of school before completing grade 7. There were more male adult learners that were literate throughout the years 1995-2012 than females. The literacy rates for males increased from 72% in 1995 to 83% in 2012 while the female literacy increased from 67% in 2002 to 81% in 2012 (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

## **2. Methodology and Limitation of the Study**

This was a desk top research and did not involve field inquiry. The research relied on information available in publications of government departments. In future, funds may be obtained to facilitate field inquiry. The information used in this document is believed to be authentic and provided by the relevant government departments to engage the public in meaningful discussion. The study sought to establish enrolment situation of adult learners in the Adult and Continuing learning centres in Kenya. The limitation of this study is that it was based on secondary sources of information. It is possible that field inquiry could have provided more elucidating information. However, the study provides very useful insights in understanding enrolment of adult learners in the adult learning centres.

## **3. Situational Analysis in Kenya**

In Kenya, although it is recognized that a functionally literate population is an important factor in a society's efforts to sustain socio-economic advancement, a significant proportion of the adult population missed out on formal education during their youth age. This is further complicated by a fluctuating enrolment and high dropout rates in adult literacy classes. The level of participation of adult learners has been promising and largely disappointing over the years due to a combination of social, economic and cultural factors. Table 1.1 shows enrolment of adult learners in Kenya by gender from 2002-2-10.

**Table 1.1 Adult Learners' Enrolment by gender 2002-2010**

YEAR	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	
<b>2002</b>	69,678	<b>32.279</b>	146,184	<b>67.721</b>	<b>215,862</b>
<b>2003</b>	31,305	<b>28.871</b>	77,126	<b>71.129</b>	<b>108,431</b>
<b>2004</b>	31,562	<b>28.7</b>	78,411	<b>71.3</b>	<b>109,973</b>
<b>2005</b>	38,902	<b>30.795</b>	87,422	<b>69.205</b>	<b>126,324</b>
<b>2006</b>	37,338	<b>28.875</b>	91,973	<b>71.125</b>	<b>129,311</b>
<b>2007</b>	39,338	<b>31.042</b>	87,454	<b>68.958</b>	<b>126,724</b>
<b>2008</b>	69,678	<b>32.279</b>	146,184	<b>67.721</b>	<b>215,862<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>2009</b>	69,747	<b>28.859</b>	171,938	<b>71.141</b>	<b>241,685</b>
<b>2010</b>	80,397	<b>31.834</b>	172,156	<b>68.166</b>	<b>252,553</b>

Source: Republic of Kenya (2010)

From Table 1.1, it is observed that more women than men enrolled for adult literacy classes. Men formed about 30%, while women were 70% of enrolled adult learners in the Adult and Continuing education programme in Kenya. It is not clear why such disparities existed, however, this situation could be attributed to the fact that more women are illiterate than men and also socio-cultural issues. The table also shows that in the year 2008, the enrolment of learners nearly doubled, increasing by 70.34%. This is indicative of specific push up factors that can be relied on to boost enrolment in adult education centres within the country. The measures and activities the government took in the years 2002 and 2008 are the same factors it should rely on for higher enrolment in Adult Education centres.

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<sup>3</sup>The figures here are exactly the same with the year 2002. This may not be true. Check it again.

It is also possible that some adult learners enrolled but were not active learners in the centres. In Nyanza province, although enrolment statistics in 2004 showed that 5,568 men and 16,520 women were enrolled, a mere 2,441 men and 9,119 females or 52% of the total enrolment were actually participating (Republic of Kenya, 2010). In Kisumu municipality although the enrolment was only 534 in the year 2005, there were 42,223 illiterate adults in the area. Most of those people terminated their formal education between class one and four (Oluoch and Othuon, 2008). This translated to a negligible 1.26% of eligible adult learners. This was a demonstration of the extent to which the adult education curriculum was unattractive and unresponsive to needs and expectations of its potential clients.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Immediate outcomes of adult learning include specific skills, competencies and beliefs, social networks and qualifications. Thus, adult learning is essential not only to create and maintain a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce but also personal development and for a just, inclusive and democratic society. The medium term plan for Kenya's vision 2030 recognizes the need to have literate citizens and sets a target of increasing the adult literacy rate from 74% in 2007 to 80% in 2012. To achieve this goal, the Kenya Government should strive to not only secure high quality adult and continuing education but also education that is responsive to the diversity and complexity of the needs of adult learners. The fact of low enrolment, especially of men, in adult education classes is a pointer to an education programme that is viewed by target clients as not responsive to their needs.

It is responsibility of the government to entice its illiterate citizenry to class to acquire benefits of education at this level. The most critical activity would be assessment of needs and expectations of the target clients to inform revision of current curriculum for production of a responsive curriculum. We can only hope that this education sector will attract sufficient attention, appropriate policies and human resource for the greater good of Kenyan society.

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