

**PROBLEMS FACING ADULT EDUCATION CENTER MANAGERS AND DISTRICT ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFICERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULUM IN MACHAKOS COUNTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

A review of all of the available evaluation studies of adult literacy programs in Third World settings revealed that poor program design and implementation are the causes of inefficiency. Adult education in Machakos County is bedevilled by inadequate teaching staff, funds and facilities; unskilled part-time teachers among others. This raises a lot of concern and challenge especially to Adult Centre managers and District Adult Education and Continuing Education Officers who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the success of the Adult education programs. The purpose of the study was to explore problems facing adult education centre managers and district adult and continuing education officers in the implementation of adult basic education and training curriculum in Machakos County. Objectives were to: establish constraints of Adult Education Centre Managers on their understanding of their role in adult education; and identify problems facing District Adult and Continuing education officers in the monitoring and supervision of adult education programmes. The study used descriptive survey research design and was based on the conceptual framework embracing four main theories namely:- Adult learning theory, Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation, Systems Theory and Reference Group Theory. The units of analysis were 424 Adult Education Learning Centers. The study population was 424 Managers of Adult Education Centers, and 8 District Adult and Continuing Education (DACEO's). The targeted populations were 128 Managers and 8 Adult Education Officers. The researcher used both Stratified and saturated random sampling to pick out a corresponding sample. The instruments of data collection were questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Reliability of the instruments was addressed through piloting in one adult education Centre and reliability co-efficient of 0.745 which indicated that the instruments were reliable were obtained by subjecting the instruments to a Split-half Technique and Spearman "Brown Prophecy Formula". Two experts were used to validate the instruments. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings of the study were: the perceptual constraints of adult education learners on implementation of adult education in were:-unwillingness of the learners to pay for the program, a negative perception of the program, a marked sense of skepticism about adult education, and lack of conviction about the benefits of the program. It was concluded that there indeed existed perceptual, managerial, methodological and monitoring and supervisory constraints facing curriculum implementation of adult education programs in Machakos County. It was recommended that efforts be made to destigmatize the program and funds be availed. It was suggested that further research be conducted on stigma, low men enrolment and policy framework.

**Key Words: Problems, Adult Basic education & Training, Curriculum and Teaching Methodologies**

## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is the foundation of the teaching-learning process. The development of programs of study, learning and teaching resources, lesson plans and assessment of students, and even teacher education are all based on curriculum. Curriculum and curriculum development at first glance appear to be of chief concern to educators, governments and parents, and both have relevance and impact on the development of communities. According to De Coninck (2008), curriculum, more than ever before, is now viewed as being at the centre of daily life and the responsibility of society as a whole. Levin (2007) states that educational change is more complex, and as governments have attempted to make large-scale changes, curriculum change has become less of an activity in its own right and curriculum renewal has become part of a broader strategy for change in education. Bhola (2004) asserts that more than 950 million people are illiterate. Because many countries depend on self-reporting to set their literacy rates and define as literate anyone who has been to even one year of school, this figure is probably a significant underestimation of the adult illiterate population. For example, in 1985 the World Bank reported the literacy rate in Lesotho as 74 percent, but in that same year an independent assessment found that only 62 percent of a sample population could perform satisfactorily on a test of simple reading and writing skill and only 46 percent could pass a test of basic maths. UNESCO reports the United States' literacy rate at greater than 95 percent, but the recently completed National Adult Literacy Survey finds that at least 45 percent of the U.S. population has low or severely limited basic skills.

In African countries, the departments of adult education are responsible for recruitment of teachers and adult education officers. The recruitment of teachers is carried out at national levels. After recruitment the adult education teachers are trained by the departments. The teachers are thereafter encouraged to recruit learners and also manage the literacy programmes in their own villages (Kebathi, 2010). Fordham (2009) noted that the training of adult literacy teachers in African countries 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 (2009) argues that adult education learners who volunteer to enrol in literacy classes are already motivated to learn.

According to Titmus (2009) the Kenyan government, since independence has put emphasis on adult literacy in order to achieve fast and sustainable socio economic development (UNESCO, 2007). The objectives of the adult education programmes are to: eradicate illiteracy, provide knowledge, skills and attitude for work, create self-confidence and foster positive behaviour towards life. 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. 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 as stipulated in vision 2030 (Kibera, 2007).

The provision of adult education throughout Kenya has been constrained because the department of adult education has been located in various ministries of Development since 1966 (Ministries of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Public Health and Sanitation), and has not been adequately funded (Chenowith, 2011). Meeting the goal of adult education requires structural and curriculum reforms to fit into the aspirations of the constitution (2010) and the Kenya vision 2030 in particular, to raise levels of literacy. The educational policies followed after independence in 1963 were marked by the quantitative expansion of schooling opportunities at all levels of the education system.

Muya (2013) found that the adult education teachers were recruited from varying academic backgrounds ranging from Kenya Certificates of Primary Education (KCPE) through Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) to Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education (KACE). It was also found that the adult education teachers' training was not structured to suit their varying educational backgrounds. The training content was the same for all of them. The training which took the form of induction (pre-service), in service and correspondence course (Correspondence Course Unit -CCU) was found to be piecemeal, haphazardly organized, irrelevant and far-between which did not amount to professional training. Face-to-face advisory visits by the district adult education officers and divisional assistant adult education officers were found to be rare and in some cases non-existent. Financial and physical facilities were also found to be inadequate. Educational materials were hardly available to the teachers. Morale at work was found to be low for both the teachers and their assistant adult education officers.

Levin (2007) noted that challenges in adult curriculum implementation often arise from gaps between the intended curriculum (policy, vision, rationale and philosophy underlying a curriculum), the implemented curriculum (curriculum as interpreted by school administration and teachers; the process of teaching and classroom practices) and lastly, the attained curriculum (learning as experienced by learners, resulting from defined learning outcomes for students). If a curriculum revision process is overly ambitious, is carried out within short timelines and is within an environment of low investment in teachers, problems will inevitably arise. A particular curriculum may include knowledge and require pedagogy that teachers may or may not have. To address this problem, education systems provide professional development for teachers, but it is highly unlikely, given the amount and variety of curriculum content, that we can provide enough support to enable most teachers to teach most subjects with a very high level of content and pedagogical knowledge.

According to Machakos County Adult Education Office, Quarterly Reports (2014), the majority of the learners are farmers; therefore they find it physically difficult to attend the NFE programme after their hard working days. This has led some adult learners to miss classes and create variability in learning progress, and in return has made it difficult for facilitators to accommodate all the learners' needs. Because most of the NFE centres are located in remote areas and some are not accessible by road, it is difficult to monitor them and support their needs. This also hinders constant and effective monitoring, evaluation and support. Due to scarce IT-trained personnel and facilities in almost all the NFE centres, it is difficult to keep reliable data at the NFE centres which is creating problems in the planning and execution of the programmes.

The provision of Adult and Continuing Education in Machakos County has suffered from inadequate funding, whilst the overall vision requires structural and curriculum reform to fit it to the aspirations of Vision 2030. Of particular concern is the raising of the levels of literacy. The Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey (KNALS, 2007), revealed that only 61.5% of the adult population has attained minimum literacy level, leaving 38.5% (7.8 million) adults illiterate. It also revealed that only 29.6% of the Kenyan adult population has attained desired literacy competency. About 29.9% of the youth aged 15 to 19 years and 49% of adults aged 45 to 49 years are illiterate. Adult literacy education programmes do face challenges. These include lack of adequate resources for things such as scholastic materials; lack of enough trained teachers; lack of classrooms; learners needing to walk long distances to class; paucity of employment prospects upon completion of the programmes; no remuneration for instructors; missing of classes during rainy seasons; no opportunity for further training, absenteeism and the programme not addressing the learners' problems. There is considerable shortage of classrooms, a shortage of well qualified and expert

teachers competent to lead their learners through the new competency based curriculum and learning styles, and the absence of an assessment and examination regime able to reinforce the new approaches and reward students for their ability to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, politics occupy a central place in the daily affairs of the nation. The political class seeks to control and manipulate the polity, either overtly or covertly. According to Freire (2012), education is normally a covert tool in the stratagem of the political class. Political influence in curriculum implementation in Kenya is best seen through the formation of various education commissions, committees, and working parties. Since independence, there have been seven major commissions on the school curriculum. The composition of these commissions is largely oblivious of expertise in curriculum; rather, it mostly exhibits political connectedness. Moreover, the findings and recommendations of most of these commissions are implemented at the discretion of the ruling elite. In most cases, these commissions end up being just grand academic exercises since their recommendations are never adopted. Due to the centralized, all powerful nature of the politics in Kenya, most decisions on education are top-down. Such a power-coercive approach does not augur well especially for curriculum implementation which should ideally be a deliberative, consultative, and participatory exercise (Mutch, 2011).

It is with this background that a need arose to study curriculum implementation in adult learning programs in Machakos County. The major concern of this study therefore, is to carry out a study on constraints affecting curriculum implementation in adult basic education and training in Machakos County

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the 2014 Machakos County Adult Education office quarterly reports, Machakos County has 7104 adult learners spread across 424 Centres who are served by 73 full –time teachers, 75 Part-time teachers and 33 Self-help teachers. Even though all the centres are fully operational, according to the Machakos County Adult Education quarterly reports (2014), adult education faces a number of challenges in the County. These include among others:-Inadequate teaching staff; unskilled part-time teachers; demoralized part-time teachers due to little or no honoraria; lack of proper learning venues and other facilities; lack of transport for supervisory staff; insufficient funds; low attendance of learners; stigmatization of the programme and also the adult education learners; dilapidated learning venues and furniture, and centres expansively spaced posing a mobility challenge as Adult Education officers can only visit a few centres within a day. Almost all the above challenges pose a direct threat to Curriculum implementation and points to the likelihood of some serious constraints affecting the implementation of the adult education curriculum in the County. This raises a lot of concern and challenge especially to Adult Centre managers and District Adult Education and Continuing Education Officers who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the success of the Adult education programs. This problem is worsened by the fact that adult education programs have little or no funding at all by both the National and County governments. Notably, even the County adult education is not represented in the County Education Board unlike the case with Primary and Secondary education.

It is with this background that a need arose to examine the problems facing Adult Education Centre Managers and District Adult and Continuing Education Officers in the implementation of Adult Basic Education and Training in Machakos County, Kenya. The study therefore intends to find out whether the adult education Curriculum has been well implemented, and if not establish the issues affecting Adult Education Centre managers and District Adult and Continuing Education Officers that could be hindering the implementation process and propose ways in which these hindrances can be overcome or at least put under control.

### **Research Questions**

- i) What are the perceptual constraints of adult education learners in Machakos County in the implementation of adult basic education Curriculum?
- ii) How are teaching methodologies that are used in adult education a constraining factor in the implementation of adult basic education curriculum in Machakos County?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the study was to explore problems facing adult education centre managers and district adult and continuing education officers in the implementation of adult basic education and training curriculum in Machakos County. Objectives were to: establish constraints of Adult Education Centre Managers on their understanding of their role in adult education; and identify problems facing District Adult and Continuing education officers in the monitoring and supervision of adult education programmes. The study used descriptive survey research design and was based on the conceptual framework embracing four main theories namely:- Adult learning theory, Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation, Systems Theory and Reference Group Theory. The units of analysis were 424 Adult Education Learning Centers. The study population was 424 Managers of Adult Education Centers, and 8 District Adult and Continuing Education (DACEO's). The targeted populations were 128 Managers and 8 Adult Education Officers. The researcher used both Stratified and saturated random sampling to pick out a corresponding sample. The instruments of data collection were questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Reliability of the instruments was addressed through piloting in one adult education Centre and reliability co-efficient of 0.745 which indicated that the instruments were reliable were obtained by subjecting the instruments to a Split-half Technique and Spearman "Brown Prophecy Formula". Two experts were used to validate the instruments. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Research Question 1**

**The first research question responded to was:-**

**What are the constraints of Adult Education Centre Managers in understanding their role in the implementation of Adult Basic Education Curriculum in Machakos County?**

The respondents to this research question were 128 managers of adult education centers sampled from the 424 Centre Managers in Machakos County.

The Adult Education Centre Managers were requested to give their views in understanding their role in the implementation of Adult Basic Education Curriculum as a constraint in the

implementation of adult basic education. Their responses were captured in the Likert scale as recorded in Table 4.2

**Table 4.5 Perception of adult literacy teachers on adult education managers as a constraint in the implementation of adult basic education ( (n=169).**

Statement	Freq.					Total F	Total score	Av. Score	% Score
	SA	A	U	D	SD				
Institutional team comprises very skilled personnel	87	43	17	9	13	169	709	4.20	83.91
Management contributes largely to the performance of adult learners	64	68	15	17	5	169	680	4.02	80.47
The management body is the determinant body of the well being of the students	71	29	25	24	20	169	614	3.63	72.66
Reading management programs seek to amplify the benefits of independent reading programs	36	47	23	41	22	169	541	3.20	64.02
The management staffs in the institution are very highly competent in ensuring performance of the institution	156	3	7	2	1	169	818	4.84	96.80
The management skills employed in the institution determines the well-being of teachers and other staff	80	54	13	12	10	169	689	4.08	81.54
Management staff and teaching staff receive training constantly	26	13	59	42	29	169	472	2.79	55.86
The ministry concerned vet staff employed	57	23	18	21	50	169	523	3.09	61.89

**Source: Responses from the field**

#### **Classification of individual scores:**

On the concern about institutional team comprising very skilled personnel, respondents scored 4.20 ( 83.91%) on the Likert scale .This means that they strongly agreed that the management team comprised very skilled personnel; on the issue of Management contributes largely to the performance of adult learners, the adult literacy teachers scored 4.02 (80.47%) on the Likert scale indicating that they agreed management largely contributes to performance of the adult learners; scored an average of 3.63 (72.66%) on the item management body is the determinant body of the well-being of the students .This meant that they agreed with the item; scored 3.20 (64.02%) on the item reading management programs seek to amplify the benefits of independent reading programs , an indication that the teachers were uncertain that management positively affected the lives of adult

learners; scored 484 (96.80%) on the item The management staffs in the institution are very highly competent in ensuring performance of the institution; this meant that the adult literacy teachers were highly competent; scored 4.08 (81.54%) on the item an management skills employed in the institution determines the well-being of teachers and other staff ,indication that the teachers were strongly in agreement that their perception on the item was positive; scored 2.79 (55.86%) on the item Management staff and teaching staff receive training constantly an indication that the learners disagreed with the item. The adult education teachers scored 3.09 (61.89%) on the item the ministry concerned vet staff employed this showed that the teachers were uncertain with the item. Generally the adult literacy teachers scored 2.69 (53%) , indicating that they were uncertain about the role of educational managers in adult educational centers in Machakos County.

### Research Question 2

**The fourth research question sought to find out the problems faced by Adult Education Officers in the monitoring and supervision of Adults Basic Education programs that may constraint curriculum implementation in Machakos County.**

**The respondents to this research question were 8 District Adult & Continuing Education Officers.**

When requested to give obstacles affecting curriculum implementation amongst adult learners in Machakos County, the District Adult and Continuing Education Officers supplied the data recorded in table 4.9

**Table 4.8**

**Perception of District Adult and Continuing Education Officers on obstacles facing Curriculum implementation of Adult Basic and Continuing Education Programs ( n=8)**

Statement	Freq.					Total F	Total score	Av. Score	% Score
	SA	A	U	D	SD				
There are no Minimum qualifications required for one to be a teacher	0	0	0	6	2	8	14	1.75	35
Unrealistic time constraints and inadequate resources, resulting in high drop-out rates and low skill acquisition	0	1	2	1	5	8	17	2.13	42.5
There is Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services	0	2	2	0	4	8	18	2.25	45

Most of our Teachers have inadequate understanding of the reform	2	2	2	1	1	8	27	3.38	67.5
	1	4	2	1	0	8	29	3.63	72.5
There is Lack of proper learning venues	2	2	2	2	0	8	28	3.5	70
Almost all learning centres have Inadequate teaching and learning equipment and improper supervision of the programs	3	3	2	0	0	8	33	4.13	82.5
There is Little or no funding at all by both the National and County governments									

### Source: Responses from the field

#### Classification of individual scores:

The district adult and continuing adult education officers were requested to score on the Likert scale their perception on obstacles facing the implementation of adult education. The score of 1.75(35%) on the item; there were no Minimum qualifications required for one to be a teacher. Showed that that the respondents strongly disagreed with the item and that there were minimum qualification for the teachers handling the adult education.; scored 2.13(42.5%) on the item Unrealistic time constraints and inadequate resources, resulting in high drop-out rates and low skill acquisition, an indication that they strongly disagreed with the item; scored 2.25(45%) on the item that there were Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services showing that provision services were adequate, scored 3.38( 67.5%) on the item Most of teachers had inadequate understanding of the reform indicating that they were uncertain of the item ; scored 3.63(72.3%) on the item there was lack of proper learning venues indicating they agreed on the item. Scored 3.5(70%) on the item; almost all learning centres had inadequate teaching and learning equipment and improper supervision of the programs. This meant that they agreed with the item that teaching and learning equipment were both inadequate and there was poor supervision. The score of 4.13 (82.5%) on the item; there is little or no funding at all by both the National and County governments. This meant that neither the county nor the Central government had released any funds for the support of the adult education programs.

Generally, the adult and continuing teachers scored 3.00(60%). This meant that their perception was that the obstacles were real impediments in the implementation of adult basic education.

### DISCUSSION

This study found out the following as being the constraints of adult education Managers in understanding their role in the implementation of adult basic education Curriculum in Machakos County:

The adult education Centre managers well understood their role as evidenced by the following:- Their understanding that Institutional team should comprise of very skilled personnel. This was attested to by the score of 4.20 ( 83.91%) on the Likert scale .By implication, the mangers would

always ensure that anyone whom they appointed to serve in the management of their institutions would have the skill, competence, ability and perhaps the requisite experience for the task. This would then ensure that the adult education Centers would not face any operational or management hitches.

On whether adult education center managers clearly understood their role, the respondents clearly understood that they would be held accountable for the performance of their Centers. The score of 4.02(80.47%) on the Likert scale indicated that they agreed that as management, they were to largely contribute to performance of the adult learners.

On students' welfare of the managers had no difficulty in understanding it as their responsibility. The average score of 3.63(72.66%) on the item management body is the determinant body of the wellbeing of the students confirmed this conviction.

The managers well understood the relationship between management skills and the wellbeing of staff and students as attested by the score of 4.08(81.54%) on the item an management skills employed in the institution determines the wellbeing of teachers and other staff.

However, the following shift of thought gave an impression that the Centre managers never quite understood a substantial number of their roles:-

Firstly, they didn't understand the need for reading management programs as evidenced by their score of 3.20(64.02%) on the item reading management programs seek to amplify the benefits of independent reading programs. This would thus mean that the immeasurable benefit brought about by the use of reading management programs stood either ignored or underbraced in the adult education centres. Such a scenario would then be probably attributed to lack of proper training and equipping of the Centre managers. The conclusion about the training of these centre managers was well confirmed by the score of 2.79(55.86%) on the item Management staff and teaching staff receive training constantly. Even so, the same thinking received a contraction by the 4.84.(96.80%) score on the item The management staffs in the institution are very highly competent in ensuring performance of the institution since this in effect meant that the Centre managers perceived themselves as highly competent. However, this assertion could as well be discredited by the fact that the managers were actually assessing themselves and would very unlikely judge themselves as being incompetent. Improper training and incompetence on the part of the centre managers was reinforced by the score of 3.09(61.89%) on the item the ministry concerned vet staff employed and the average score of 2.69(53%), that indicated that the Centre managers did not quite understand their role.

The study found out that the following major problems that may constrain curriculum implementation in Machakos County are faced by adult education officers in the monitoring and supervision of adult's basic education programs.

Most of the adult teachers ( 67.5%) had inadequate understanding of the reform. This would mean that the adult education officers would sometimes find it a great challenge when trying to communicate adult education policies and processes to the adult education teachers. This would in effect slow down the teaching learning process and even strain the meagre resources of both time and finances since they officers would be required to spend more time explaining and even sometimes to literally visit these teachers in order to educate them on the reforms.

There was lack of proper learning venues in most of the adult education centres (72.3%). This would then mean that most of the venues would be temporary and hence supervision and monitoring would be jeopardized since there would be no guarantees on where to find the teachers and learners.

Almost all learning centres (70%) had inadequate teaching and learning equipment and improper supervision of the programs. This would in effect mean that both teachers and learners fell short of what would normally be required to make the teaching and learning process a success.

The adult education programs have little or no funding at all (82.5%) as neither the County nor the Central Governments have ever released funds for the running of the Centers. This would then mean that there is very little the officers could do in terms of the monitoring and supervision due to the serious mobility and logistical hitches that would otherwise require some expense to execute.

## **CONCLUSION**

The significant constraints of education managers on understanding of their role in adult basic education were:

Adult education center managers do not understand the need for reading management programs as evidenced by their score of 3.20(64.02%) on the item reading management programs seek to amplify the benefits of independent reading programs.

Management staff and teaching staff receive do not training constantly. As a result they may be ill equipped to counter contemporary challenges bedeviling the education system which includes adult education programs.

The adult education staff that include the center managers are rarely vetted by the concerned Government Ministry before being employed as evidenced by the score of 3.09(61.89%) on the item the ministry concerned vet staff employed

The study found out that most of the adult teachers (67.5%) had inadequate understanding of the reform in the adult education sector by the adult education teachers (67.5%) thereby giving the district adult and continuing education officers a difficult time as they try to to assist the teachers to comprehend and implement some of the policies and processes in the delivery of the curriculum..

There was lack of proper learning venues in most of the adult education centres (72.3%) thus posing a great challenge during monitoring and supervision.

There was also evidence of inadequate teaching and learning equipment and improper supervision of the programs. This compromised the quality and delivery of the curriculum.

Severe financial constraints as a result of little or no funding from both the County and Central governments were another constraint affecting Curriculum Implementation of Adult Education Programs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*In light of the findings that there are constraints of educational managers in understanding their role in adult basic education, this study recommends that:*

Adult education Centre managers should be vetted before being employed and after employment should be subjected to proper training to enhance their skills and abilities.

**In light of the finding that there are problems facing adult basic education officers in monitoring and supervision of adult education programmes, this study recommends that:**

The government should make every effort to secure proper learning venues and release funds to support the literacy programs and also to facilitate the district adult and continuing officers to monitor and supervise the programs.

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