



THE FUTURE OF KENYAN HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS: ADULT LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

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Abstract:

High school dropouts in Kenya have limited chances of returning to school and to continue with education, despite few adult education schools having been established in the recent years to exceptionally bridge this gap. This paper is based on a case study that sought to investigate the perceptions of the learners on going back to school after dropping out of high school. The study is therefore aimed at examining the future of this category of learners. The author as a result, explores how an adult learning center (Baraka Adult Learning Center (BALC)) in Kenya educates high school dropouts and helps them to gain access to vocational training or higher education. The study addresses the pedagogy, learning experiences, and curriculum of BALC focusing on how BALC met students' aspirations, needs and goals based on the perceptions of adult learners and how this impact on the future of the learners. Data was collected from classroom observations, curriculum review, and interviews with 9 current students, 3 former students, 5 teachers, and the principal and thereafter analyzed inductively by sorting and coding to generate emergent themes. The results of the study indicated that the adult learners perceived returning to school as getting a second chance and were therefore willing to take up the chance.

Keywords: high school, dropout, adult learning, vocational training, higher education

1. Introduction

In spite of the limited chances for re-entry of high school dropouts into the education system in Kenya, learners can by and large access educational resources through Adult Continuing Education (ACE). According to the Kenyan Ministry of Education, this is the entire body of learning process within the perspective of lifelong learning whereby adults and out of school youth are given opportunities to develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their skills to meet both their own needs and those of the

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society (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2010). Nonetheless, these school dropouts have no clear path for going back to school as the adult education program in Kenya does not have an equivalent of the General Education Development (GED) program as is in the United States. This paper is drawn upon a narration from the author's engagement as a teacher with the Kenyan population that resulted to a realization that school dropouts could not find jobs and therefore needed access to educational institutions that would then open up for their path for job opportunities. The deficiency was attributed to the lack of accessibility to tertiary institutions where individuals can develop vocational skills. In addition, most tertiary institutions in Kenya require a high school diploma for admission which the high school dropouts do not possess.

Most of the Kenyan high school dropouts rarely go back to school; hence, they are subjected to joblessness and poverty for life. Despite the efforts by the public universities to embrace continuing education through parallel programs (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012), Kenyan high school dropouts still do not qualify for admission to higher education. This is because the Kenyan education system does not have school re-entry programs for high school dropouts. Unlike the USA, where community colleges give school dropouts a second chance, and where students can take the GED exam and re-enter the educational mainstream, Kenyan colleges and universities do not have provisions for people who have not completed high school.

Since students must have a high school diploma to gain admission to a college, Kenyan high school dropouts have a slim chance of attaining the admission requirements for tertiary and higher learning institutions. Community education and extension programs are however not within the scope of this study despite having been used to educate people on health issues such as HIV/AIDS and other health care matters. According to the Kenya Ministry of Education, extension programs have also been used in agriculture when educating communities on good farming methods and food security (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2010). This paper nevertheless focuses on the perceptions of the learners on returning to school to gain academic knowledge as a tool to better their future.

2. Literature Underpinning

The problem of school attrition is not only in secondary schools but in primary schools as well. Werunga, Kikechi, Musera, and Sandibi (2011) noted that the national mean of the students who proceed to high school after Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) is 70%, thus having 30% of the students dropping out at primary school level. These findings were based on their descriptive survey that sought to assess the transition rate of students from primary schools to secondary schools in Taita Taveta County. They found out that Taita Taveta County's primary-secondary school transition rate was lower than the national mean by 9.1% (Werunga et al., 2011). Of the 70% who proceed to secondary school, only a few go ahead and graduate in high school after 4 years. According to Werunga et al. (2011), the factors which influenced transition included lack of money, early marriage (especially for girls), long distances to school

and therefore, students finding it difficult to go on foot, peer influence, and lack of interest in schooling.

Referring to a Republic of Kenya survey from 2003, Sang, Koros and Bosire (2013) found out that less than 60% of pupils who graduated from primary schools were admitted to secondary schools. Table 1 summarizes the enrolment and dropouts in secondary education in Kenya in 2002 and 2003.

Table 1. Enrolment and Dropout Rates in Secondary Education in Kenya 2002-2003

Year	No. of sec. schools	Enrolment		Total	Dropout percentages		Total
		Males	Females		Males	Females	
2002	2834	336437	383400	719837	20495 (6%)	50802 (17.9%)	71208
2003	2878	341807	390581	732388	20922 (6.1%)	17.8%	72535
Total	5712	678244	633981	1452225	4137	102415	143743

Source: MOEST (2003).

The national dropout rate in 2002 was 17.9% and 6% for females and males respectively with a total rate of 10%. The rate for dropouts in 2003 was 17.8% for females and 6.1% for males, and similarly, the total dropout rate for 2003 was 10%. Since this figure represents the national dropout rates, rates from some counties could be higher than in others.

Evidently, there was only one study on high school dropouts in Kenya conducted in Kericho County, which is one among the 47 counties in Kenya. The results of the study depict Kericho as a true representation of the other counties in Kenya typically demonstrating a picture of the problems of dropouts (Sang et al., 2013). Table 2 shows enrolment and dropout rates in secondary school in Kericho County from 2004 to 2006.

Table 2: Enrolment and Dropout Rates in Secondary Education in Kericho County 2004-2006

Year	No. of sec. schools	Enrolment		Dropout	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
2004	64	11675	7525	3339	2152
2005	67	12428	7672	3554	2194
2006	71	15885	8965	4543	2564
Total	202	39988	24162	11436	6910

Source: Sang et al. (2013)

According to Sang et al. (2013), the dropout rate in Kericho County was 28.6% with a completion rate of 71.4%. Comparing the national dropout rate with Kericho County, it is evident that there are many high school dropouts in Kenya. Consequently, for Kenyan high school dropouts to return to school there has to be an elaborate school re-entry program, which is not there at the moment. An adult learning center program is yet to be developed and rolled out to all other parts of the country rather than only having these schools started in cities. The Department of Adult Learning and Continuing Education is charged with the responsibility of developing learning centers

for adult learners. However, there are gaps in literature on how school dropouts re-enter school and progress to tertiary institutions and higher learning.

2.1 High School Dropout Patterns

There are many reasons which cause students to drop out of school. Freudenberg (2007) classifies reasons for dropping out of school into three categories. The first category, individual or family category is characterized by the low-income neighborhood, low family support for education, pregnancy, and substance abuse. The second category is neighborhood or community in which one has peers with low educational aspirations or sibling dropouts. The third category is the school or school system category which accounts for low-income status school population and racial and ethnic segregation. Other studies support Freudenberg's (2007) assertion that low socio-economic factors; race, especially children from minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanics are likely to drop out of school. Other factors include pregnancy, substance abuse, low test grades, grade repetition, and lack of support by parents (Blount, 2012; Schoeneberger, 2012; Kim, 2012). Three more factors which cause students to drop out of school are lack of programs on academic tracking, having high stakes testing, and lack of support for transition of students moving from middle school to high school (Blount 2012; Freudenberg, 2007).

Kenya does not have racial differences as it is composed mainly of Africans. However, other factors may account for school attrition. Unlike many countries, Kenya's education system has a long tradition of boarding secondary schools. Kenyan secondary schools are categorized as boarding single sex (either boys or girls), mixed boarding, day (single sex) or mixed day secondary schools. In Kenya, boarding secondary schools have more facilities compared today secondary schools hence; competition to get admission into boarding schools is very high. In their study, Sang et al. (2013) examined internal efficiency indicators in secondary schools. The categories of schools included in their study were boarding secondary schools, day secondary schools, boys only or girls only, and co-educational secondary schools. The study noted that the dropout rate was higher in day schools than in boarding schools. The study also found that there was higher dropout rate in tenth grade (Form 2) than the other grades. The study further indicated that there were higher dropout rates in mixed schools than single sex boarding schools. In addition, it was established that there is no statistical significance between dropout rate of boys and girls. The authors therefore pointed out that there should be effective intervention in the 10th grade.

On secondary school dropout patterns, a study conducted in Nigeria, by Patrick (2012) sought to understand the dropout pattern of secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria. The study indicated higher percentage of dropout in (SSI) ninth grade and a decline in tenth grade (SSII), higher percentage of dropout of girls was reported in all categories compared to boys, rural schools reported a higher dropout rate than city schools, there was a higher dropout rate in mixed schools compared to single sex schools, and there were more student dropouts in public schools than private schools. In his conclusion, Patrick (2012) noted that sex was a major determinant of dropping

out of school, followed by the student's environment. He further observed there could be no single intervention strategy. Both Sang et al. (2013) and Patrick (2012) attributed dropping out of school to economic factors of parents, girls' pregnancies, and peer pressure. The two studies indicated that gender was also a part of the investigative equation. These views are also held by Blount (2012), Schoeneberger (2012) and Freudenberg (2007).

2.2 High School Dropout Prevention

Dropping out of school is always a challenge to school principals, teachers, parents, and community. Research and education professionals have come up with strategies of intervention which include, but not limited to mentoring, tutoring at-risk students, teaching problem solving skills, and relationships. Another strategy is experiential learning which makes learning more engaging and interactive. It also helps students understand how the working world relates with school. Other intervention strategies are having varied instructional methodologies, having highly qualified teachers, increasing teacher support, reducing class sizes, and developing relationships between school and parents (Somers, Owens & Piliawsky, 2009; Tavakolian & Howel, 2012).

Somers et al. (2009) carried out an evaluation on a school dropout prevention program designed to prevent ninth grade students from dropping out of high school. The two major goals of the study were to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach carried out with urban at-risk teens, and to examine career goals and role models of the teens. The results portrayed inconsistency of students on what they identified as career goals between pre-and post-testing. They never identified with mainstream careers which involved four-year College, except teaching. They identified more with entertainment, sports, and media. The study also indicated that the students lacked understanding of relating high school and college preparedness and earning potential. The study found more intervention is needed to guide students as early as in their ninth grade. The students needed to understand the link between classroom performance and their career path (Somers et al., 2009).

On role models, students did not identify with entertainment, music, sports and media figures as their role models but most endorsed parents as their role models. The study underscored the power of influence parents have over their children. Despite the parental influence on their children being documented in literature, it is often underplayed (Featherston III, 2010; Somers et al., 2009). Since the role of parents is so crucial to their children, any implementation of school dropout prevention program should have parents involved.

3. Methodology

Qualitative case study design was used to address the objective of the study. The study was carried out at Baraka Adult Learning Center (BALC) in Kenya. Data was collected from students in classroom through interviews from current students and former students. Teachers and the Principal also formed the target population. According to

Merriam (2009), qualitative design gives the understanding of how people view and interpret their world. On the other hand, the use of a case study as posited by Glesne (2011) enables individual lessons from a single case by focusing on the complexity within the case, its uniqueness, and also its linkages to the social context of which it is a part. Through this context the author explored the opinions of each participant in connection to their experience as learners at BALC located in an urban setting in central Kenya.

At the time of the study, the center had both primary and secondary school students with a population of 508 students. The secondary section had a population of 341 students with ages ranging from 18 to 55 years. The study sample therefore comprised nine current students, three former students, five teachers, and the Principal. Since the center had more women than men, five women and four men in the age range of 19 and 45 years were considered for the study. Three of the women selected were married and two were single. One woman had her own business while the rest of the women had no jobs. The age range for the men was between 23 and 40 years where two men were married and two were single. Data collection was done through interviews and observations of classes in progress as well as through review of school documents.

In qualitative research, data analysis involves a simultaneous analyzing process whereby the collected data can also be analyzed (Creswell, 2012). The collected data was compiled using a word processing program and sorted by formulating codes to categorize the data. The codes were CTS1 to CTS9 for current students and FTS1 to FTS3 for former students. Based on the emerging themes in the data, the author draws a conclusion of the study with analytic generalization, by providing a substantive proposition that, adult learners in Kenya return to school to better their future economic earnings.

4. Results and Discussion

Adult education in Kenya has some negative connotations. Whenever the phrase *adult education* is mentioned, people think of the Kiswahili word *gumbaru* which means illiterate. The root of the word comes from adult literacy program which has been running since 1970s. This program was designed for adults who did not know how to read and write learn reading and numeracy skills. The two terms *adult education* and *adult literacy* are different, but many people in Kenya equate them as synonymous. Adult education is defined as the whole body of organized processes, regardless of the content, level and method; whether formal or informal; whether prolonged or replace learning in schools, colleges or universities; whereby persons regarded as adults by the societies in which they belong, develop their skills, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or vocational qualifications (Nesbit & Welton, 2014, p.1).

Adults returning to school must brave the stigma of being termed as *gumbaru* (illiterate). During the interviews with the students, it was discovered that some of them would not like their peers to know that they are back in school. One student pointed out that he avoids his workmates and sneaks into the school compound without being seen.

I was informed of a drama, which ensued some time ago when some journalists from a local newspaper came to the school expecting to interview students and teachers and write a story about the center. Most of the students ran away from the school compound because they did not want to give any interview nor have their pictures taken. My visit to the school was therefore treated with a lot of suspicion. Both the students and the teachers wanted to know how I was going to treat the data being collected for which I assured them that the data collection was for the sole purpose of academic research and that I was not connected with any media organization; so their stories would not be published in the local newspapers. I also assured them of anonymity. The students in this learning center came from different backgrounds. According to instructor T2, who has been in the center since its inception in 1979, observed that students basically come from all the regions of Kenya. There was no set criterion for determining which class one went other than individual students telling the instructors the last class they attended before dropping out of school, and either joining that class or the class ahead. Students for both primary and secondary came from different religious backgrounds such as Christians and Muslims, and their ages were between 18 and 55 years. The number of women students was double the number of male students.

Instructor T2 said that some of the students register for exams and they are not seen again until the exam days; while other registered as students but were not able to continue due to either work or family responsibilities. Not all the students in the center were dropouts. Instructor T2 said that since the secondary school section had been introduced 8 years before the time of this study, many students who failed their exam from regular secondary schools went to repeat their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). The participants in the study were school dropouts who were current students in the center or former students who had gone through the high school program at the center. In the course of the data collection process, students talked about the reasons they dropped out of school, their reasons for returning to school, and their academic aspirations.

The students gave various reasons as to why they dropped out of school. One male student gave his reason for dropping out of school as follows:

"I am an orphan. My parents died when I was 8 years old, so I was brought up by my grandmother who could not afford to take me to Secondary School. I left school at Form 3 to look for a job" (CST6).

The students said that the average school fees per term in a day secondary school (not boarding), was Ksh.3,500 which was USD 40, and may be, after adding school uniform and books, could amount to a total of Ksh.10,000 (USD 120) per term. The average pay for a non-skilled worker is about Ksh.7,000 (USD 80) per month which was not enough to provide food and housing for the family and send children to school.

Besides poverty, there were other reasons which made some participants drop out of school. A female student gave pregnancy as the reason for dropping out of school. She explained:

"I dropped out of school at second term in Form 3. The reason for dropping out of school was that I unintentionally got pregnant. I would have loved to give birth and then return to school but my dad kicked me out of our home. I went to live with my grandmother till I gave birth." (CST8)

A male student CST3 left school after he impregnated a girl when he was at the 7th grade. He said the police wanted to arrest him, so he had to escape from the village and consequently dropped out of school. He later learned the police could not have arrested him, but because he was young and naive, he believed that he was going to be arrested. Culturally, when a boy makes a girl pregnant, it is expected that the boy marries the girl. Sometimes the parents of the girl could put pressure to force the boy to marry the pregnant girl; however, the Kenyan laws are not strong on child support; so, many girls take the responsibility of bringing up their children without any financial support from the fathers of the children. Other reasons for dropping out of school were: making poor grades, getting into discipline problems at school, getting sick and being hospitalized for a long time, and lack of interest with school.

4.1 Return to School for Better Economic Future

Most of the participants were either not employed or had jobs that were not paying them enough money to support themselves or their families. The participants believed that a good education could help them get better jobs, and consequently, better their economic earnings in future. All the current students and the former students had reasons why they decided to return to school. Most of the students mentioned getting a better job, as the main reason for returning to school.

One student said he was not fitting in the company of his peers because of lack of education. One female student who was a successful businesswoman talked of how she embarrassed her university-trained husband whenever she interacted with their family friends because she was not able to speak English. The reason for her returning to school therefore was to be able to learn both written and spoken English so as to fit in her husband's social life, and to learn math so as to balance her books in her business. Other students who were involved in small businesses also cited book-keeping and financial management as the reasons which made them return to school. A male student returned to school because he wanted to be a better parent. He said that there is a difference in parenting between an educated parent and an uneducated parent. The student was of the opinion that education would make him a better parent.

Some of the students left their rural homes and went to the city for the sole purpose of going to school. A female student, CST1, left her children and her husband upcountry (rural area) 250 miles away to come to this particular school. She said there were no such schools in her area, and she agreed with her husband that her going back

to school was important for the family. She further explained how she had to leave her husband with the children miles away for some time so as to fulfill her educational dream. She talked of how, before she joined the center, she was doing jobs which were low paying and not satisfying. She said those jobs would subject her to a life of poverty and that she and her husband would not be able to send their children to good schools. She returned to school to get the qualification which would enable her to go to college, and eventually, get a better job in the future. A 35-year-old male FST1 who was a former student went back to school, 20 years after graduating from primary school. His motivation to return to school was for him to be able to gain academic credentials to enable him to train for a profession and get a job to provide for his family.

The participants expressed their views on why school dropouts should return to school. They made comments such as *"Education is everything, and without education today, one is nobody"* (CST 9). Similar views were expressed by another student who said, *"It is important to return to school because out there, one cannot get a job without education"* (CST1). A participant asserted,

"Education is the key to good life, so if school dropouts want good life they should return to school and work very hard so as to succeed and get good academic qualification." (CST 3)

The former students who participated in the interview explained how their lives had changed after returning to school. One student FST2 who enumerated his benefits said learning English was very useful to him. He underscored that his English grammar was very bad and poor knowledge of English made him find it difficult to understand school textbooks which are written in English, and that led to poor grades. After joining the center, he became confident in expressing himself in English. The student further said learning mathematics was useful to him because he was able to manage his business. The participant said the greatest achievement was that he passed his KCSE exam and gained admission in a college. Participant FST1 said his life changed in many ways, his level of understanding changed; he had learned how to motivate himself to work hard in school; and that he was able to chart his future after gaining the required qualification to go to college.

4.2 Students' Aspirations for Achieving High School Diploma

School dropouts returned to school with some goals in mind. Both the current students and the former students had very clear goals they would like to achieve as far as their education was concerned. All the student participants came back to school expecting to complete their high school, take their KCSE exam, and graduate with a high school diploma. Some of the students joined the center at the primary school level then moved on to secondary school section after taking the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam. The former students achieved this goal and were moving ahead with their academic aspirations. The students explained they were aware that, for one to qualify for university education, the minimum KCSE grade should be C+. Those who

get below C+ qualify for middle level colleges, such as nursing colleges, primary teacher training colleges and polytechnics.

The current students had their minds made up about what they would like to study. Some of the students were already operating their own businesses, so such students wanted to study business management or marketing. Other participants wanted to be professionals. One student expressed the desire to become a chemical engineer. The student said the reason for his desire to be an engineer was because of his love for chemistry, and therefore, engineering was a good profession for him. A lady who used to work with women groups in rural areas expressed the desire to study community development. She was concerned that there was a lot of poverty in her area and would therefore work with her local communities to alleviate poverty.

Another lady participant wanted to be a nurse like her own mother while one male participant expressed the desire of being a professor. The participant expected to graduate with his high school diploma, then study for his undergraduate degree, and finally proceed to graduate school to obtain a doctorate degree. However, when asked which discipline he would like to study, the learner did not have an answer. A female participant expressed the desire of being a teacher of young children. She would influence children positively, help them learn and become responsible members of the society. Another male student said he would like to be a psychologist and was prepared to study up to doctorate level.

The three former students were also very clear on the direction they were going as far as their educational goals were concerned. One participant FST1, after completing high school at the center, enrolled for a certificate in procurement and completed the course successfully after one and a half years. At the time of the interview, the former student was taking a diploma (Associate Degree) course in procurement. The third participant FST3 got a B- in his KCSE exam. The participant had qualified for University admission. With this qualification, he was able to choose from many areas of study offered in the Kenyan colleges and Universities. The participant was planning to apply to Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC), where he would study pharmacy. Lastly, the second participant FST2 had graduated from the center six years ago. Since graduation from high school, he had made huge academic progress. After graduating from the center, the participant registered for a BA course in theology, which he completed, he attended a graduate school where he pursued a master's degree and completed it. He wanted to pursue a Doctoral Degree in Theology and Leadership.

Although the reasons for the participants dropping out of school may have been varied, their perspective of returning to school could be summed up as: to make a difference in their economic and social lives. According to the study findings, most students dropped out of school due to economic reasons. They could not afford to pay school fees and therefore had to dropout. Asked why they returned to school; the students cited economic reasons as the main motivation for returning to school. And lastly most students had high academic aspirations. They all looked forward to completing their high school education which culminated by taking an exit exam in Form 4 (Twelfth grade) and gaining access to higher education or employment.

4.3 Preparation for Exit Exam (KSCE)

Students at the center take an exit examination at the end of their senior year (Form 4). The examination known as Kenya secondary certificate of education (KSCE) is the same examination taken by regular high school students in Kenya. The high school program was designed to take four years. However, adult learners at the center did not have adequate time for study because they took two or three years to complete high school. Classes were also combined, i.e. Form One students being combined with Form Two students. Taking two years to complete the high school program instead of four years and combining classes that form ones and form twos shared the same classroom were some the biggest challenges of adapting high school curriculum for the adult learners. The principal noted that although the students faced a lot of odds as they prepared for their final exam, some of them performed exemplarily well and managed to go to college.

There were factors which influenced the success of the students who had performed well. Despite the odds the students at the center go through, some of them have excelled in their academic pursuit. Some students have passed the KCSE and proceeded to colleges for higher education and vocational training. Explaining what influenced the success of some of their students, the principal underscored that some return to school so as to get the qualification for higher education admission while others want promotions at their employment or just desire social acceptance. He further said the following:

“What has influenced their success is the fact that some of them come here with reasons. It is these reasons that influence them to work hard and pass. Many a times, the reason is to get promoted in their places of work. For those who are not working, they want to become relevant in the society, they have realized that education and knowledge is important, and they feel odd out there uneducated. They therefore strive very hard to make it, and they finally make it.” (Principal, June 4, 2014)

Some of the students interviewed did not fit the “dropout” description because after taking their high school exam from regular secondary schools, they decide to join the center so as to repeat the exam. An observation of the school records revealed that there were 230 students who had registered with the center to take KCSE in 2014. According to the principal some of the students were repeaters from regular Kenyan secondary schools. One current student said the following:

“I did my Form 4 and got a D+. I knew I couldn't go straight to University, after consultation with my dad and mom I applied for a college in Nairobi at Kenya Institute of Professional Studies, for a Diploma in cabin crew. I tried to use the Diploma Certificate to join a University, but I couldn't manage. My mother advised me to go back to school. And since I knew it was the only way to get me to the University, I decided to come back to this center.” (CST5, May 30, 2014)

The students help each other as they prepare for the exams. One student was happy with the help he was getting from his peers. He reiterated that he got help from his fellow students and although he used to have problems with English and Mathematics he was doing far much better than he did in his former school, and was confident that he was going to perform well in his final exam which took place in October 2014 (CT5, May 30, 2014). The students' preparation for KCSE exam was inhibited by lack of learning materials and inadequate facilities. The center did not have a science lab of its own, so they relied on other schools. Students from the center visit other schools where they could make use of the lab facilities for their science subjects.

The former students who were interviewed were happy with the way the center prepared them for the exit exam. One former student talked of how he managed to get good results which enabled him to go to college where he graduated with a bachelor's degree and later went ahead and got a master's degree (FST1, May 29, 2014). Another student noted that he managed to get a B- grade which gave him access to college where he is currently studying pharmacy (FST2, May 29, 2014). Lastly the third former student praised the center for preparing him for KCSE exam. Since he left school, he has attended two colleges. He was pursuing a three-year diploma in procurement (FST3, May 29, 2014)

5. Conclusion

The adult learners' perspectives on going back to school are conflicting. On one hand, there exists a notion in Kenya that adult education is for illiterate people (gumbaru), and therefore adults returning to school have to deal with the stigma of being viewed by the society as illiterate. On the other hand, adult learners saw their returning to school as getting a second chance to complete their high school diploma. The former students who participated confirmed that it is possible to return to school and graduate from high school. Both the current students and the former students confirmed that they returned to school so as to improve their future earnings or due to economic reasons. Others wanted to be more competent in running their businesses. One participant, however, went to school so as to be a better parent. The aspirations of most students were to complete high school and proceed for higher education or train for various professions. The former students who participated in the study were pursuing further studies in colleges and universities.

5.1 Recommendations

There is need at both the county level and the national level to plan for change in using self-directed approaches in teaching. The study indicates that school dropouts are both marginalized and deliberately ignored especially with the perception that they are illiterate. Hence, awareness should be created in the public to ensure a conducive environment to pursue their educational intentions.

The plight of school dropouts continues to be pathetic because they are not able to get jobs to feed their families and take their children to school. The Kenyan ministry

of education should therefore introduce reforms including long lasting solutions for school dropouts such as funding for resources and erecting more adult education centers.

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