

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES ON DEMAND FOR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE AMONG NON-GRADUATE TEACHERS IN TRANS-NZOIA COUNTY, KENYA

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There has been a rapid expansion in the field of higher education. This has been precipitated by factors of demand and supply leading to various innovations in programmes and modes of study. A new trend has emerged where a wide scope of working professionals, including teachers are undertaking continuing education. To teach at the primary level in Kenya, a Primary 1 (P1) certificate is minimum requirement. However, a significant number of teachers at this level either hold or are pursuing a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. As of December 2016, of the 4,406 teachers in public primary schools in Trans-Nzoia, 896 possessed a B.Ed. degree. Despite the minimum qualifications for the primary school level teaching, there is concern over the increasing number of teachers pursuing B.Ed. degree without corresponding improvement in learner performance in KCPE where the mean mark has remained below 250 for over a decade. The purpose of this study was to determine the personal attributes that influence demand for a Bachelor of Education degree in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. The findings indicated that personal attributes, occupational, institutional and socio-economic factors all account for the surge in demand for B.Ed. degree although the economic factor is the most important one. The study also found that teachers' qualifications have a significantly low effect on learners' academic performance. The findings will help policymakers and educational planners plan for relevant, efficient, effective, equitable and quality education.

KEYWORDS: Personal Attributes, Demand for B.Ed. Degree

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Personal attributes discussed in this section revolves around gender, age, academic or intellectual ability of the respondents, acquisition of more knowledge and skills (knowledge for the sake of knowledge), obtaining a degree and development of a critical vision of the world. Learning is a continuous activity for learning-oriented individuals. These individuals view education as a habit. For these individuals it may be difficult for them to distinguish education from the rest of their life, viewing the process in many cases as another form of entertainment. They are preoccupied with learning and some respondents indicated learning is part of their genetic makeup.

According to Bandura, (1977), personal experiences, self-efficacy, and beliefs about the benefits of higher education create a foundation from which students approach the college decision-making process. Bandura observed that efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people's choice of activities, how much effort they will expend and how long they will sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations. He observed that success in most areas of human endeavour including pursuit of higher education requires commitment, resourcefulness and perseverance.

In a quantitative study conducted among 868 adult students enrolled at 15 military site locations across the United States and within the Workforce Education and Development (WED), Off Campus Degree Programme (OCDP), Howard (2005) sought to gain an understanding of what motivational factors were related to non-traditional students continuing higher education in an accelerated, off campus, weekend format. The findings indicate that the highest motivational factor was a student's readiness to pursue higher education with 63%, followed by student confidence with 47%. Other motivational factors registering significant influence were support at 25%, confidence at 23%, and independence at 17%.

To determine why non-traditional students, attend college, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) interviewed 2,000 men and women. They established that the adults were motivated by the need for personal growth, thus, learning for the sake of learning. For these individuals education can be viewed as a hobby, by taking classes for fun or just to gain additional knowledge. Some individuals in this group may also wish to pursue a career that has always interested them, as well as improve the overall quality of life for themselves and their family. For this group the goal of degree completion is not the intended goal.

In a study of adult graduates from a program at Brigham Young University, 89% of respondents being female, the primary motivations included completing an unfinished degree and setting an example for family members

by placing an importance on obtaining a college degree (Hoyt & Allred, 2008). This finding suggests that many adults pursue higher education merely for the purposes of obtaining a degree and not to acquire functional knowledge and skills. A similar observation was made by Johnson and Bailey (1984) in their study *Mature Students: Perceptions and Experience of Full-time and Part-time higher education*. This study established that majority of older women were more concerned with self-development, finishing the course for its own sake.

In the study, various personal attributes believed to influence demand for the B.Ed. degree were investigated. These included: the gender, age and academic/intellectual ability of the respondents, their desire to acquiring more knowledge and skills (knowledge for the sake of knowledge), desire to obtain a degree and the need to develop a critical vision of the world/make decisions reflexively.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Gender and Pursuit of a B.Ed. Degree

To understand the influence of gender in the decision process, the researcher disaggregated data with regard to gender. Asked if gender influenced their decision to return to college for a B.Ed. degree, the respondents opinion are recorded in Table 1.

Table 1

Gender and Pursuit of a B.Ed. Degree.

Gender	Males		Females	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
U	2	1.4	12	4.1
SD	4	2.7	9	3.0
D	9	6.2	82	27.7
A	51	34.9	91	30.7
SA	80	54.8	102	34.5
Total	146	100.0	296	100.0

As indicated in Table 1, 13 (8.9%) of the male teachers expressed disagreement with gender playing a role in their decision to pursue a B.Ed. degree. However, majority of the male teachers, 131 (89.7%) believed that their gender had a strong influence on their decision to undertake undergraduate studies in education. A significant proportion of the female teachers 193 (65.2%) agreed that it was their gender that influenced them to enhance their academic credentials as opposed to 91 (30.7%) who believed otherwise.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clearly evident that a significant proportion of the female respondents 12 (4.1%) were indecisive as compared to men whose indecisive level is 1.4%. It is also apparent that male teachers are more conscious of their masculinity than women in their decision to pursue higher academic credentials as indicated in their responses, thus 89.7% against 65.2%.

Age and Pursuit of B.Ed. Degree

Age is one of the most important characteristics in understanding respondents' views about a particular issue; by and large age, indicates level of maturity of individuals, in that sense, age becomes more important to examine the response. When analysing enrolment trends among the working professionals, it is important to understand the age profiles of the enrolees. In this regard, the researcher sought to establish if the age of the respondents influenced their decision to participate in higher education and the respondents opined as recorded in Table 2.

Table 2

Age and Pursuit of a B.Ed. Degree.

Age	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
	Males		Females	
U	7	4.8	22	7.4
SD	15	10.3	12	4.1
D	22	15.1	28	9.5
A	49	35.5	92	31.1
SA	53	36.3	103	34.8
Total	146	100.0	296	100.0

As regards age as a factor in their decision to undertake a bachelor's degree programme, 7 males (54.8%) and 22 (7.4%) women were undecided. A significant proportion of the males 37 (25.4%) and 40 (13.6%) females were in disagreement, whereas 102 (71.8%) males and 195 (65.9%) females agreed that their age contributed significantly to their decision to participate in higher education.

With a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.97, it is apparent that there is a strong relationship between age and decision to participate in higher education among both gender. In this case, regardless of one's gender, the age of an individual is a strong predictor to educational pursuits among non-graduate teachers.

Marital Status and Pursuit of B.Ed. Degree

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions. In a developing country like Kenya, it has undergone many changes. The perceptions and

attitudes of a person can significantly differ with the marital status of the respondent in a survey study. It is for this reason that the researcher included this variable in the study.

Table 3

Distribution According to Marital Status.

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	384	86.9
Single	31	7.0
Separated/Divorced	21	4.8
Widowed	06	1.3
Total	442	100.0

It is quite clear that out of the total number of 442 respondents in this study, overwhelming majority, 384 (86.9%) were married, 31 (7.0%) were single, 21 (4.8%) were single, whereas 6 (1.3%) were widowed. However, data was not disaggregated further to indicate the gender of the respondents in this regard.

More often than not, not many people want to disclose their marital status. However, the findings indicate that majority of the teacher who enrolled and successfully obtained a B.Ed. degree were married men and women. Adult learners come to campus for undergraduate studies with a plethora of other responsibilities back at home. However, despite the respondents' busy schedule, they found time to engage in higher education.

Academic Ability and Pursuit of B.Ed. Degree

The researcher sought to establish if there was any relationship between an individual's intellectual ability and the pursuit of higher education. The 442 teachers who participated in the study responded as recorded in Table 4.

Table 4

Academic Ability.

Academic Ability	Frequency	Percent
U	04	0.9
SD	52	11.7
D	87	19.7
A	106	23.9
SA	186	42.1
Total	442	100.0

From Table 4, of the 442 respondents, 4 (1.0%) were undecided as to whether their intellectual ability drove them to university to pursue a degree, 139 (31.4%) showed disagreement whereas 296 (66.6%) registered for a degree programme because they believed they were academically capable to pursue it.

In her study involving 122 undergraduate students attending a multicultural/urban university in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Kennett (2011) directly asked undergraduate students their reasons for going to institutions of higher learning. The undergraduate students were to list all of their reasons for attending university and to indicate those most important. The students identified 21 reasons of which she classified 11 as intrinsic and 10 as extrinsic. Her findings indicate that most students attend university for a wide variety of reasons (and not just one). One of the intrinsic reasons given generally involved proving to the world that they had the intellectual ability.

In the present study, the respondents were almost unanimous that they had intellectual capacity to undertake a Bachelor of Education degree despite not having merited to join university upon completion of secondary education.

Desire for Knowledge and Pursuit of B.Ed. Degree

Learning and knowledge are a source of satisfaction and pleasure. Adults' participation in learning activities is, among other factors related to the pleasure to participate Motivation to study is linked to its own content: to learn, acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. Motivation is linked to the content ('I like everything related to philosophy', 'I like the intellectual perspective of things'). Some people go back to school simply because they enjoy learning. Table 5 indicates how teachers value not only higher qualifications but knowledge acquired in the process obtaining higher qualifications.

Table 5

Acquire more Knowledge.

Acquire more Knowledge	Frequency	Percent
U	47	10.6
SD	29	6.6
D	45	10.2
A	106	24.0
SA	215	48.6
Total	442	100.0

Asked if they went to campus for this reason, 10.6% remained noncommittal, 16.8% disagreed as 72.6% indicated that this was their motivation. These findings are in line with Aslanian and Brickell's (1980) observation that there are people who pursue learning for the sake of learning. For these individuals education can be viewed as a hobby, by taking classes for fun or just to gain additional knowledge.

The findings of the current study partly agree with those in a survey of 713 ethnically diverse university freshmen (463 Latino, 167 Asian American, 54 African American, 29 European American) by Phinney, et al. (2006) who assessed reasons for attending college. One reason that stands out is to prove one's self-worth.

Monetary or physical rewards are not the underlying motivation for individuals who are intrinsically motivated to pursue education for the sake of it. For example, a professor at a university, who has already achieved a high level of education, may take additional courses in his or her area of 'expertise' to become even more effective in the classroom. Though there may ultimately be some additional rewards or physical benefits to becoming a more effective instructor, it is not the fuel for the motivation.

Desire to Acquire a Degree and Pursuit of Higher Education

Earning a degree is a crucial step in life. In America, a degree is an integral part of the American Dream'. To some people, acquisition of a degree is an end in itself.

Table 6

Desire to Acquire a Degree.

Acquire a Degree	Frequency	Percent
U	01	0.2
SD	03	0.7
D	07	1.6
A	110	24.9
SA	321	72.6
Total	442	100.0

Table 6 presents teachers' responses regarding acquisition of bachelor's degree being a motivation to further their studies. One (0.2%) respondent was undecided as to whether his or her goal was to acquire a degree, 10 (2.3%) of the respondents observed that their motivation to participate in higher education wasn't influenced by the desire to hold a degree. To majority 431 (97.5%) of the respondents, a degree has great valence on their decision to participate in

higher education.

Most non-graduate teachers that attend university as adults have an end goal in mind. This goal is usually graduation. Acquiring a degree provides a wonderful feeling of fulfilment.

Need for Critical Thinking Skills and Pursuit of Higher Education

Academics always want to objectively analyse and evaluate issues to form informed judgement. It is for this reason that the researcher sought to establish if the desire to be critical thinkers influenced decision of non-graduate teachers to engage in higher education.

Table 7

Develop Critical Thinking Skills.

Develop Critical Thinking Skills	Frequency	Percent
U	58	13.1
SD	7	1.6
D	45	10.2
A	180	40.7
SA	152	34.4
Total	442	100.0

Although there is no evidence that critical thinking as a component in the B.Ed. degree programme, a great majority (75.1%) of the teachers indicated that their desire to participate in higher education was influenced by the need to be critical thinkers (Table 7). A significant proportion of the teachers (11.8%) showed disagreement whereas 13.1% were undecided as to whether being a critical thinker was their motivation.

Getting university education helps one gain advanced knowledge in their areas of specialty and a broad range of experience in many other related areas of study. The search for a degree also gives one the ability to exercise critical and abstract thinking. It helps one gain the capacity to clearly express himself both in writing and speech and to make sensible decisions. These skills are quite crucial both on and off your job.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that male teachers are more conscious of their

masculinity than women as regards their decision to pursue higher academic credentials.

With a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.97, it is apparent that there is a strong relationship between age and decision to participate in higher education among both males and females. In this case, regardless of one's gender, the age of an individual is a strong predictor to educational pursuits among non-graduate teachers. They believed that one has academic potential to undertake the bachelor of education degree programme influences their decision to participate in further study, and the non-graduate teachers are not an exception. Although there may ultimately be some additional rewards or physical benefits to becoming a more effective instructor, it is not the fuel for the motivation, monetary or physical rewards are not the underlying motivation for individuals who are intrinsically motivated to pursue education for the sake of it.

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