Transforming adult learners: The experiences of participating in second chance education program in the Gambia

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This study explored adult learners' experiences of participating in a second-chance education pilot program in The Gambia. The study examined learners' motivation for enrolling in the program, barriers they faced, and their benefits from attending the program. The participants consist of 13 learners from a second chance education centre in the Lower River Region of The Gambia. Six of the participants were male, and seven were female within 19 to 31 years. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The study revealed that the primary motivations for participants enrolling in the program are to complete education and undertake further education, be employable, and acquire knowledge and skills. The study also indicated that learners faced barriers that hindered their full participation in the program. These barriers are institutional and situational. The institutional barriers include uncomfortable teaching and learning environment; inadequate teaching and learning materials. The situational barriers include domestic chores, personal engagement, access to food, lateness, transportation, and distance from the learning centre. Finally, the study showed that the participants benefit from the

program in improved knowledge and skills, building confidence and connecting socially, taking care of personal issues, and helping others. In other words, the program empowered and transformed learners from improving themselves to helping others.

Keywords: *adult education, transformative learning, second chance education*

Introduction

The Gambia is the smallest country in mainland Africa, located on the West Coast, with approximately 1.8 million people (GBoS, 2013). The country gained its independence from Great Britain in 1965 and became a republic in 1974. The concept of second-chance education might be new in The Gambia; however, it has existed in other parts of the world for two decades or more. In 1995, the European Commission adopted a White Paper on education and training entitled 'Teaching and Learning: Toward the Learning Society, with five main goals, the third of which was 'Combating Exclusion (Commission of the European Communities Brussels Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2001). An experimental scheme for second chance schools was recommended under this goal by the European Commission. This experimental scheme provides education and training opportunities to young excluded people who lack skills and qualifications to enter further education or job markets. After the publication of the White Paper, many countries expressed interest in the project. After a series of consultations, 13 second chance schools were established in 11 countries, all in Europe. These projects were confirmed between 1996 and 1999, but some did not start operation until 2000 (Commission of the European Communities Brussels Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2001) (Commission, 2001). However, before adopting the White Paper on second chance school by European Commission, Inbar and Sever (1989) wrote about second chance education. Recently, (Keogh, 2009; Nordlund, Stehlik, & Strandh, 2013; Ollis, Starr, Ryan, Angwin, & Harrison, 2017; Ross & Gray, 2005; Savelsberg, Pignata, & Weckert, 2017) are among scholars who wrote about second chance education. In the 1990s towards 2003, few African countries were engaged in second-chance education in the form of community schools

as in Egypt, Mali, and Zambia; school for life in Ghana; complementary schooling in Ethiopia; and village-based school in Malawi (DeStefano, Moore, Balwanz, Hartwell, & Academy for Educational Development, 2007). Several countries, including countries in Africa, are now engaged in second-chance education, aiming to provide second chance opportunities to school dropouts (Bakalevu, 2011; Ross & Gray, 2005).

In The Gambia, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary education initiated the second-chance education program. The program was launched on 20th February 2018 at Regional Education Directorate Four in Mansakonko. The program aims to provide "second chance education opportunities for school dropout and out-of-school children and youths in The Gambia to attain basic education, life, and livelihood skills" (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, n.d., p. 1). This great initiative has come when it is most needed because 44.7% of the country's population had no formal education, and females formed the largest illiterate population (GBoS, 2013). Additionally, 30.3% of primary school-going-age children are not in school; 29.8% and 42.8 of junior and senior high school-going-age children, respectively, are not in school (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, n.d.; Universalia, 2018). Due to the factors such as poverty, poor performance, early and forced marriage, and teenage pregnancy, many students drop out of school or cannot continue their education. The program is in two pilot phases. Currently, phase one is being implemented across the country with one thousand learners. The learners consist of students who completed junior high school education but could not continue to the next level of education, i.e., senior high school. The learning contents include the four core subjects – English Language, Mathematics, Science, Social and Environmental Studies. The selection criteria for the program include: the applicant must complete an admission form, provide a statement of Gambia Basic Education Certificate (GABECE) result or transcript, parental consent letter, and birth certificate or clinic cards (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, n.d.). After completing the program, the participants can proceed to senior high school to continue their education. The second phase of the pilot program will allow one thousand students who completed senior secondary school but could not proceed to tertiary institutions to obtain the qualification to further their education in Colleges and Universities. The importance of this program cannot be overstated because it would

complement government efforts in providing accessible, equitable, and inclusive quality education to all. The policymakers also adopt the program as one of the strategies for planning education in The Gambia. Despite the importance attached to the program, there are challenges for its successful implementation, such as the funding of operational activities like payment of facilitators' salaries and training, the building of centres, and the provision of teaching and learning materials (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016).

Several results have been generated from the past studies on what motivates adults to learn, for example, (Lee, Wei, & Hu, 2014; Palmieri, 2017; Ross & Gray, 2005; Villar, Pinazo, Triado, Celdran, & Sole, 2010); barriers to adults learning (Akyeampong et al., 2018; Brady, Cardale, & Neidy, 2013; Ekstrom, 1972; Eze, 1999; Han, Takkaç-Tulgar, & Aybirdi, 2019; Houle, 1961; Rothwell, 2008); and the benefits learners gained from participating in adult education program (Lee & Yeh, 2019; Ross & Gray, 2005; Rothwell, 2008; Villar et al., 2010). These prior researches focused mainly on adult and professional continuing education around the developed countries. However, in many countries engaged in providing second chance education for out-of-school youths and dropouts, there is insufficient research to establish what motivates learners to enroll in the program, the barriers the learners faced, and the benefits gained from the program. Therefore, this study examines adult learners between the age of 19 and 31 experiences of participating in the second chance education pilot program in The Gambia, exploring the following research questions: 1. What motivated learners to enrol in the second chance education program? 2. What are the learners' barriers? And 3. What benefits do the learners gain from the program?

Literature Review

Studies have shown many benefits of second-chance education (Hargreaves, 2011; Keogh, 2009; Nordlund et al., 2013). The second chance education program is among the terms used in literature to describe a program through which individuals can access and re-engage learning outside of the mainstream education system (Savelsberg et al., 2017). It provides the opportunity to move back on the track one has dropped out of or missed altogether. For second chance education to be realistic, it must fulfil three criteria: accessibility, effectiveness, and the end product of the program should provide equal opportunities to that of

first chance education (Inbar & Sever, 1989). Second chance education facilitates social inclusion, and equality, and serves various purposes in all countries, including compensating for learning not previously achieved, preparing individuals for the next level of education, and raising the skill levels of the program participants (Keogh, 2009).

Creating an opportunity for adults to continue their education is one thing; motivating them to seize the opportunity to learn is another thing. As Cookson (1989) put it, there will be no program unless an education or training program successfully attracts adult learners and motivates them to stay with the program. Adult learners faced numerous barriers. Some of these barriers are internal, external and program-related, and vary among learners depending on their age, gender, knowledge, skills, and the context they study (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoc, & Cagiltay, 2019). Among the barriers that hold adults back from learning include lack of time, money, interest, scheduling difficulties, life responsibilities, care of others, and transportation (Rothwell, 2008).

Furthermore, (Brady et al., 2013) reported inadequate space, inadequate staff, ill-health, and low attendance, as barriers to adult learning. Ekstrom (1972) classified barriers into three broad themes: institutional, situational, and dispositional, that exclude women from participating in postsecondary education. The institutional barriers include admission practices, financial aid practices, regulations, types of learning content, services adopted by the institution, and the attitudes of the faculty and staff members. The situational barriers that prevent their participation in further education include family responsibilities, financial needs, and societal pressure. At the same time, the dispositional barriers affecting their participation in continuing education include fear of failure, attitude toward intellectual activity, role preference, uncertainty about educational goals, level of aspiration, inaction, and lowliness. Among other factors that demotivate students from learning include: the attitudes of their peers, staff, personal issues, class features, test anxiety, failure experience, and the education system (Han et al., 2019). In addition, domestic tasks are a barrier for female student learning and farm task for male student learning (Akyeampong et al., 2018).

Therefore, "effort to motivate learners will work best when they are tied to the appropriate reasons that attracted the learners to participate in a learning situation" (Rothwell, 2008, p. 46). In order words, the

motivation must link to the interests and benefits of the learners. Adults want to learn because they want to get their first job or a new career, get a promotion at work, upgrade old skills, and adapt to current community developments (Abedi & Badragheh, 2011; Ghorbani, Khodamoradi, Bozorgmanesh, & Emami, 2012). In her study, Palmieri (2017) found that the critical motivators among adult Australians of non-Italian origin to learn Italian in continuing education contexts in Sydney were affiliation with the target language-speaking community, the community of learners in Sydney, and an ideal self-image of a competent language speaker. Furthermore, adult learners are also motivated by their desire to acquire beneficial knowledge and solve life problems (Lee et al., 2014). Knowledge acquisition and learning for the joy of learning are crucial to an adult joining a program (Villar et al., 2010). Adair and Mowsesian (1993) established that motivation for adult learning could be instrumentally or expressively oriented. Instrumentally oriented motivation enables them to take care of their basic needs and maintain a sense of personal effectiveness.

In contrast, expressively oriented motivation allowed them to satisfy their needs and goals related to identity, affiliation, competence, and engagement in meaningful and purposeful activities. Moreover, Rothwell (2008) identified six motivators assumed to be why adults are motivated to learn. These include: building a social network, meeting expectations, advancing their careers, helping others, and learning for the sake of learning. Ross and Gray (2005) posited that the key motivating factors for second chance education are completing secondary education and embarking on further education. Houle (1961), as cited in (Kasworm, Rose, & Ross-Gordon, 2010), categorized learners into three groups based on their motives for participation, namely: goal-oriented learners – those who want to achieve specific goals; activity-oriented learners – those who want to be engaged but are not necessarily concerned about the learning activity; learning-oriented – those who want to learn for the sake of learning.

Studies showed that benefits attached to adult education programs are instrumental in motivating adults to participate in second chance learning from all indications. Adult learning benefits include taking greater charge over their lives, developing social skills, confidence, and friendships with program mates and staff (Ross & Gray, 2005). Furthermore, Hargreaves (2011) asserted that the second chance

education program offers two-fold benefits to learners, i.e., providing learners with the necessary skills for employment and helping them overcome barriers they once encountered in their past training or education. Adult education provides learners with greater social and political confidence, good health, and employability (Iñiguez-Berrozpe, Elboj-Saso, Flecha, & Marcaletti, 2020). Moreover, adult learners get happiness from learning and maintaining positive attitudes towards life (Lee & Yeh, 2019). Other benefits of adult learning include building individuals we can work and live with, discovering the unsatisfied needs and wants of adult life, and opening the learners' minds to a more soundly conceived future (Berle Jr, 1935). Opportunity to make more friends and live a good and joyful life (Villar et al., 2010). Adult education also served to facilitate social inclusion and enhance economic growth (Panitsides, 2013). Sloane-Seale and Kops (2010) found that continuing education leads to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of successful aging and positively impacts participants' mental and physical activity, resulting in good health and well-being and connection to the larger community and a good self-image.

The essence of adult education is to empower learners to become independent thinkers by learning to negotiate their values, meanings, and purposes instead of accepting others' opinions without condition (Mezirow, 1997). Research has shown that the way adults learn is quite different from the way children do, and as such, they should not be treated like school-going kids. Adults are people with many experiences which they can use to facilitate their learning. Andragogy as an adult learning theory was proposed by Knowles (1968) and defined as 'the art and science of helping adults learn,' is based on the assumptions that an adult learner has an independent self-concept and can direct their learning; has many life experiences which are a rich resource for education; has learning needs closely linked to changing social roles; is problem-centreed and interested in immediate application of knowledge; is inspired to learn by internal rather than external factors; and want to know why he needs to learn something (Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Hence providers of adult education should bear this in mind for effective implementation of their programs.

Method

This study used a qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln,

2011) to explore transforming adult learners: the experiences of participating in a second-chance education pilot program in The Gambia. A second chance education centre in the Lower River Region, which has 17 learners, was selected for this study. The participants for the study were purposively selected based on the criteria that the person must be enrolled in a second chance education program for at least two years so that he or she can provide accurate information and voluntarily fill out an interview consent form to approve his or her participation. Out of the 17 learners in the centre, 13 fulfilled all the criteria. Therefore, 13 learners (six males and seven females) between the age of 19 and 31 were interviewed as participants of this research.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). After getting their approval to participate in the study voluntarily, the researchers sent each participant the interview questions through email and WhatsApp and scheduled an interview with each participant. Each interview lasted for 25 to 30 minutes using WhatsApp phone calls. The interview questions targeted the understanding of the participants' motivation to join the second chance education program, the barriers they faced, and the benefits they gained from the program. During each interview, questions were asked based on an outline that was kept flexible to encourage free and exhaustive answers (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded for analysis. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1999), the data were constantly analysed as collected and compared to find similarities among participants' responses to identify themes and subthemes on their motivation for enrolling in second-chance education program, the barriers they faced, and the benefits they gain from participating in the program. This approach of data analysis is used to capture participants' experiences as narrated by them. For ethical consideration, each of the interviewees' consent was sought by the researchers to voluntarily participate in this study by signing a consent form sent to them via email and WhatsApp. In addition, for confidentiality, the researchers assigned a pseudo name to each participant to conceal their identity.

Limitations

The study was carried out in the Lower River Region of The Gambia. Therefore, the findings may not apply to other second chance education centres in different regions across the country, particularly in urban

areas. Every region has its unique characteristics. Region 4 is located in rural Gambia, where learning facilities such as computers, the internet, libraries, and other services are not easily accessible. Due to resource constraints and the centres' location, the study is limited to the most prominent centre in the region.

Statement of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest. The researchers in this study are independent. Thus, the study was conducted independently without any sponsor from any institution. However, one of the researchers worked as a senior education officer and a focal point for the second chance education pilot program in the Lower River Region of Gambia before leaving to pursue his PhD in Taiwan.

Results

After analyzing the data, the following themes and subthemes emerge as the study's findings, as shown below.

Theme 1 Motivation for enrolling in second-chance education program

The primary motivation for participants to join the second-chance education program is to complete their junior school education and undertake further education (senior secondary school education); to be employable and acquire knowledge and skills.

1.1 To complete education and undertake further education

The principal motivation among participants in second-chance education is to complete their education and undertake further education, as indicated in their responses.

> "To complete my education was the primary motivation for me to join the program. It has always been my aim to complete my education" (Pateh).

> "When I heard about second-chance education, I was delighted because I did not complete school. So if I complete school, I can go and find a 'job or continue my education to senior high school. I want to be a banker" (Nyima).

1.2 Employability

Being employable is another reason that motivated participants to enro in second-chance education, as stated in their responses below:

> *"Most of my friends who were in school with me have completed their schooling, and they are now working, so when I heard about second-chance, I applied to join it. I want to complete school so that I can have a job and take care of my family"* *(Mary)*.

> *". . . I miss my first chance, and most of the people I started going to school with before dropping out are now working, and I was just sitting, so I join this program so that I can complete my school and have work"* *(Dicko)*.

1.3 Acquired knowledge and skills

Acquiring knowledge and skills are also reasons for participation in a second-chance education program, as illustrated by the participants.

> *"I wanted to re-sit to exam on some of the subjects I failed in grade 12, but later I realized the program is for junior high school. Nonetheless, the program serves as refreshment and capacity building for me"* *(Sampa)*.

> *". . I was sitting doing nothing but housework, so I heard about second-chance education, but I was informed that program is about tie & dye and sewing so then I apply for admission"* *(Teneng)*.

Theme 2 The barriers faced by the learners

The barriers faced by learners are institutional and situational. The institutional barriers they faced include:

2.1 Uncomfortable teachings and learning environments

Participants identified unconducive teachings and learning environments such as broken desks, bad blackboards, and untiled classroom floor as barriers affecting their learning, as indicated below.

"Also, most of our desks are broken, and we have to manage to sit and write. Some of us use two benches for sitting and writing" *(Nyima).*

"The classroom we are using is not good. We don't have enough seats. The sit I use is not good. The blackboard is also not good; when tutors write on it the words are not legible" *(Dicko).*

2.2 Inadequate teaching and learning materials

Participants have lamented that inadequate teaching and learning materials are a problem they are grappled with, as stated below.

"We also don't have enough graph books for mathematics. The place our learning materials are kept there is no cupboard, and the learning materials are just lying on the ground" *(Nyima).*

"Learning equipment is also a problem. We still need materials like Brighter grammar, laptop and if we can also have another English teacher that would be great because English is a subject that if you want to teach once, is difficult" *(Lalo).*

The situational barriers faced by learners in participating in second-chance education include the following:

2.3 Domestic chores

Domestic chores are barriers that affect participants, particularly female participants, from concentrating on their learning, particularly the female participants.

"Before I go to school, I have to prepare breakfast for my children and prepare them to go to 'Dara,' and as a result, sometimes I am late for classes" *(Teneng).*

". . . I have children. When I wake up in the morning, I have to prepare breakfast for them and take care of their other needs before I go to school. So most of the time I am late for classes" *(Dicko).*

2.4 Personal engagements

Other engagements of learners hindered their full participation in the second chance education program. Some of the participants are breadwinners of their families. They, therefore, engaged in other things to make a living as narrated by them.

> *". . . I used to engage in petty works to earn some money for myself, but since I started this program, I have to stop all that, which is a big challenge for me" (Pateh)*

> *"I am a senior staff of . . . community radio, so I find it very difficult sometimes to attend classes, especially on Sundays regularly" (Sampa).*

2.5 Access to food

Access to food is a challenge that many participants faced at the centre. Especially on Saturdays and Sundays when no food vendors come to the centre to sell food. As a result, participants have to go into town to buy food, as pointed out by participants.

> *". . . food is one of the challenges I faced at the centre, because most of our classes are conducted during weekends and as result food vendors or sellers do not come to the centre to sell food" (Anna)*

> *"Food is also a problem because food vendors come only on Friday, so Saturday and Sunday we have to go out of the centre to buy food. You know it would be tough to concentrate in class with an empty stomach" (Lalo).*

2.6 Transportation and distance

Transportation to and from the learning centre, and distance from home to the learning centre are barriers learners face, resulting in missing most of the lessons or arriving late, especially on weekends.

> *". . . Transport is a problem, a taxi cost one hundred dalasis which is very expensive, and our transport allowance is not enough to cover that" (Mary).*

> *Transportation is a challenge which affects three ladies that I travel with to the centre, which is about five kilometres away from our village. Sometimes we walk on foot to the centre, and sometimes we buy fuel for us to be transported to the centre by Motorbike owners (Yorro).*

2.7 Lateness

Arriving late at the centre due to delays in getting transport and distance is a hurdle that confronts participants.

> *Sometimes when my Motorbike has a problem, I arrive late at the centre, and sometimes I miss the whole of first lesson or a large part of it (Pateh).*

> *Sometimes we miss morning classes because some of us travel from the surrounding villages and sometimes we are late, which does not go down well with some of the tutors. . . (Teneng).*

Theme 3 The benefits learners gained from the program

The benefits learners gained from participating in second-chance education programs include:

3.1 Improved knowledge and skills

The second chance education program has broadened participants' knowledge and skills in the learning content, as indicated below.

> *I now know how to use personal pronouns such as he, she, it, etc., properly as well as write a letter on my own. If I speak English to English students at the college, they get surprised about how come I can speak good English when I am an Arabic student (Karafa).*

> *Then my English was not that good, but now praise is to God, my English language has improved a lot. I left school in 2008, but when I joined this program, it helped me a lot (Dicko).*

3.2 Build confidence and social connections

The program has empowered participants to believe in themselves and created opportunities to connect and interact, as expressed below.

> *". . . I can use English to chat with people and write a letter on my own without anyone's help" (Mary).*

> *"I made friends with classmates. We communicate and share ideas" (Anna).*

> *"Since joining this program, I know how to use tapelines more, making my work easier than before. I work as a carpenter" (Galloh).*

3.3 To take care of personal issues and help others

Being able to take care of personal issues and helping others solve their problems are benefits that participants have gained due to their participation in the second-chance education program.

> *". . . What I am coming to do now, I calculate to know what will favour me and what will not favour me, and how many workers and laborers I should take. My English has improved; I can read and write text messages to friends" (Lalo).*

> *". . . We learn about how to preserve food and prevent it from bacterial infection, how to take care of ones' body, and keep the environment clean. So I use this knowledge and skills to take care of my children, myself, my food, and my environment" (Teneng).*

Discussion

This study explored the adult learners' experience in participating in a second chance education pilot program in The Gambia. Looking at their motivation for enrolling in the program, the barriers they faced, and their benefits from the program. The study revealed that completing education and undertaking further education are the main reasons why participants enrolled in the second chance education program (Ross & Gray, 2005; Rothwell, 2008). In addition, the participants were also

motivated to join the program to be employable and acquire knowledge and skills, all geared toward personal and family development (Lee et al., 2014; Palmieri, 2017; Villar et al., 2010). These findings indicated that the participants of this study are goal-oriented learners (Houle, 1961; Kasworm et al., 2010). They want to achieve specific goals, including their motivation to join the program, as mentioned above. It is these specific goals that warranted their participation in the program. They are not in the program just for the sake of learning, which the second chance education provider and policymakers should note down. Bearing in mind that the success of a program depends on how relevant it is to the learners' interests and how motivated learners are to stay in the program. The barriers faced by participants in this study include uncomfortable teaching and learning environments (Han et al., 2019), such as broken desks, bad blackboards, and untiled classroom floor. Also, inadequate teaching and learning materials (Brady et al., 2013; Ekstrom, 1972), such as graph books, supplementary reading materials, and equipment for conducting experiments (Brady et al., 2013; Ekstrom, 1972), are among the barriers highlighted by the participants.

Furthermore, domestic chores, cost of transportation, distance (Akyeampong et al., 2018; Ekstrom, 1972; Rothwell, 2008), lateness, access to food, and personal engagement, were also lamented by learners as constraints seriously hindering their full participation in the program. These barriers are institutional – uncomfortable teachings and learning environments; inadequate teaching and learning materials; and situational or multiple role characteristics – domestic chores, personal engagement, access to food, lateness, transportation, and distance. In order not to demotivate participants and as well as to have a quality second chance education program, these barriers, particularly institutional barriers, require urgent solutions. However, that does not mean the program providers should ignore situational obstacles and other issues hindering learners' participation as their presence would contradict the assertions of quality second chance education. Some of these learners have missed school for years. Therefore their learning environments should be conducive to adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials at their reach. With laptops, for example, participants can learn online from their homes, which will solve the issue of transportation to and from the learning centre, broken desks, bad blackboards, food, and lateness. With the internet

on their laptops, they can easily access relevant learning materials and information about their subjects. Adult learners are people with a wealth of experience that can serve as a rich source for learning, have an independent self-concept, and are capable of directing their learning (Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The participants of this study are no exception. They are adults with experiences that they can use to direct and facilitate their learning with support from tutors. Hence the program providers should be aware that the way adults learn is quite different from how children do, as confirmed by studies. Thus building tutors' capacities on appropriate adult teaching methods are necessary to ensure quality teaching and learning. Domestic chores (Akyeampong et al., 2018), for example, cooking for the family and getting children ready for school, seriously affect learners' participation, particularly females. Other personal engagements such as work and petty business or trading to make a living are also barriers that affect the full participation of learners in the second chance education program. The program providers can solve these problems by having a flexible class timetable made in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, particularly learners. Also, giving the learners stipend or allowance would motivate them and help them to focus more on their learning.

For the program's benefits, the study showed that participants apply what they have learned by taking care of their problems and helping others (Ross & Gray, 2005; Rothwell, 2008). Likewise, improved knowledge and skills, building confidence and social connection (Ross & Gray, 2005; Villar et al., 2010), are other benefits participants claimed to acquire through the program. These benefits and commitment to attain their goals are strong motivators of learners to stay in the program, despite the numerous challenges they encountered. Transforming adult learners from being dependent to independent in taking charge of their life, is among the main goals of adult education (Mezirow, 1997). Thus, this program empowered learners with knowledge and skills to rely upon for their daily tasks and survival, even though they have not completed the program. The program has also boosted participants' morale, social connections and transformed them from caring for themselves to helping others without seeking support from outside. However, for the program to be sustainable and realistic, it must attract and motivate learners, be accessible, effective, and create equal opportunities provided by the first chance education (Cookson, 1989; Inbar & Sever, 1989). This study's

institutional and situational barriers findings indicate that providers have lots to do to implement quality and sustainable second chance education programs successfully. Hence the need to address these barriers.

Conclusion

This study used a qualitative approach to explore Adult learners' experiences of participating in the second-chance education pilot program in The Gambia regarding learners' motivation to join the program, the barriers they met, and the benefits they obtained from the program. The study revealed that the learners have a genuine reason to partake in the program. They want to make up for the missed first chance to assume their rightful position in the mainstream education system and the larger society by being employable and acquiring knowledge and skills. However, in doing so, they encountered barriers that hindered their full participation in the program. These barriers include uncomfortable teaching and learning environments, inadequate teaching and learning materials, domestic chores, personal engagements, transportation and distance, lateness, and access to food. Empowering adult learners to be autonomous in taking charge of their lives is one of the main objectives of adult learning (Mezirow, 1997). Hence, despite the constraints, learners benefited greatly from the program in improved knowledge and skills, confidence and social connection, solving personal problems, and helping others. These benefits, including participants' determination to achieve their aims of continuing their education, acquiring knowledge and skills, and being employable, are the main reasons learners stay in the program despite the barriers.

The second chance education program should be accessible, relevant, and efficient. The end product should provide equal opportunities for the first chance education (Inbar & Sever, 1989) to be a success story. Thus the program providers should ensure that the program is easily accessible and that relevant teaching and learning materials are provided to all learning centres. There can only be a program if the program successfully attracts learners and motivates them to stay in the program (Cookson, 1989). Henceforth, the providers should take the opportunity of the learners' motivations, noting that the effort to motivate learners works best when it caters to their wishes and aspirations for joining the program (Rothwell, 2008) and work on the barriers learners face to reach quality and sustainable second chance education programs. In others, this study requires immediate solutions

so that learners can successfully proceed to their next level of education or career stage at the end of the day. In addition, tutors should be motivated and trained on appropriate teaching methods for adult learning to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, there should be effective monitoring to ensure that the program achieves its goals. Policymakers have adopted second chance education as one of the strategies for planning education in The Gambia. Hence there should be no room for inefficiency, which could compromise the quality and purpose of the program. Thus all the relevant stakeholders must work to ensure that the program is successful and sustainable. On that note, the researchers would recommend further research to explore how learners cope with the barriers they encountered and the professionalisation of the second chance education in The Gambia.

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