

Complementary Role of Functional Literacy Programs in Accelerating Literacy Rate in Ghana

¹Amadu Musah Abudu,²MosesNaiimFuseini and ³Yusif Nuhu

¹Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana, ²Faculty of IntegratedDevelopment Studies, University for Development Studies, Wa, Ghana, and ³Tamale Polytechnic,Ghana

*Email Addresses of Authors in that order:amabudu2012@gmail.com, fmnaiim2010@gmail.com and nuhu4pd@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author's address
Amadu Musah Abudu
Faculty of Education
University for Development Studies
P. O. Box TL 1350
Tamale, Ghana
Tel No: 00233208293546

ABSTRACT

This study examined the complementary role of functional literacy programs in accelerating literacy rate in the Wa Municipality and Ghana at large. It focuses specifically on how functional literacy programs have affected literacy rate and the factors that account for attrition. The sample size of the study was 200, which was selected using stratified sampling. Data was collected using a questionnaire and from documentary sources. The data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. The results show that functional literacy programs have contributed to accelerating literacy rate. Furthermore, high family responsibility, lack of certainty about career goals and poor quality of interaction between participants and facilitators emerged as the major causes of attrition. The study recommends that regular in-service training of facilitators and provision of enough funds will help in preventing learners dropping out.

Keywords: Non-formal education, functional literacy, literacy rate, attrition, dropout

INTRODUCTION

Comings, Smith and Shrestha (1995) indicated that in March 1990, the world's educational leadership gathered in Jomtien, Thailand, to take part in the World Conference on Education for All. At the end of the conference, the delegates voted in support of the *World Declaration on Education for All* and the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*. They noted that the right of adults to have access to education was affirmed in the declaration's first article. The article states, every person - child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs (Comings *et al.*, 1995). The framework sets a specific goal for adult education towards cutting down adult illiteracy. Emphasis was also on reducing female illiteracy to correct the current disparity between male and female literacy rates. This became necessary as formal education failed to make all literate: Nearly a billion adults of the world's population is illiterate with at least 600 million of them being women and over 70% of them living

in nine large countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan (Abadzi, 2003). Similarly, Dib (1987) pointed out that literature now emphasizes how inadequate formal systems are in meeting effectively and efficiently the needs of people. This resulted in governments, donor agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) finding solace in Non-Formal Education (NFE) as the surest way to reduction in illiteracy. With all the investment made in such programs it is important to find out the extent to which such efforts have translated into improvement in literacy levels.

According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census (PHC), nearly half (45.9%) of the adult population in Ghana is illiterate (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2002). The rate reduced to 28.5% according to 2010 PHC (GSS, 2012) but that there was geographical, age and sex differences in terms of these gains. Although there seems to have been a reduction in the illiteracy levels, but a great number of people are still illiterates in Ghana. This situation has resulted in Ghana government as well as other NGOs such as Action Aid Ghana (AAG), World Vision Ghana (WVG) and School for Life (SfL) making investment in NFE with an aim of increasing the literacy levels. Despite that these opportunities exist for people to harness and become literate, some of those who enroll dropout mid-way into the programs. It is important to find out what account for people dropping out. It is also critical to assess the impact of these functional literacy programs to decide if they have actually contributed to improving literacy rates in Ghana. In the Wa Municipality, the study site, about 69.0% of people within the age brackets of 15 years and beyond never attended school (with 62.3% males and 75.1% females 15 years and over being illiterate) (GSS, 2005). This has occurred in the wake of implementation of NFE by Non-Formal Education Division (NFED) and other NGOs to cut illiteracy rate in the Municipality. The low-level of literacy signals that certain factors might be limiting the target group from tapping the opportunity as they dropout of the program before the cycle ends. Because functional literacy programs exist in the municipality and many resources are committed into them, it has become necessary to look at the complementary roles of functional literacy programs in accelerating literacy rate in the Wa Municipality in particular and Ghana at large.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Functional Literacy Programs in Ghana

Functional literacy programs became part of the international discourse on education policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is related to the concepts of recurrent and lifelong learning. In Ghana, these programs exist in different forms: Some are organised by the government of Ghana and others by international NGOs. This section takes a look at the activities of these organisations with respect to functional literacy.

1.1 Functional Literacy Delivered by NFED in Ghana

Owusu-Mensah (2007) indicates that NFE provision in Ghana has been the responsibility of the NFED of the Ministry of Education: Established in 1991 with the task of eradicating illiteracy in Ghana by the year 2015. The implementation of NFE in Ghana by NFED was in two phases (Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006; Owusu-Mensah, 2007). They indicated that the *Phase I* of the policy named the Functional Literacy Skills Project (FLSP) lasted between 1992 and 1997 with an aim of improving quality of life of poor people in Ghana, in particular the rural people and women. The National Functional Literacy Program (NFLP) came into being in 2000, as the *Phase II* of the earlier FLSP. The aim of NFLP was educating about one-million non-literate adults, especially the rural poor and women, by 2004 (Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006), but the phase ended in 2006. After the end of the two phases the program is now completely under the control of the

state. With regard to funding, at the *Phase I* and *II*, 60% of funding was from the World Bank, 30% given by Government of Ghana, and the remaining 10% offered by communities and NGOs (Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006). However, presently, the government of Ghana is the only funder of NFE operated by NFED.

Non-Formal Education conducted by NFED encapsulates basic literacy (i.e., literacy in Ghanaian language) and post literacy (i.e., Basic English literacy) (Ghana Audit Service, 2003; Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006; Owusu-Mensah, 2007). The learners are first taken through the primers of Ghanaian languages for a 21-month period and on successful completion of a full course in the local language, Basic English classes may be organized for the learners for same duration (Ghana Audit Service, 2003; Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006). The writers say that all residents in the community in which a literacy class is who are non-literate are eligible to enroll. Albeit the target age group for NFE is 15-45, there is instance where children sit in with their parents or guardians to benefit as learners (Owusu-Mensah, 2007). The instruction uses the Friarian Methodology, which involves discussion of composite pictures, describing an object or situation, stories, proverbs, role-plays and drama, sing songs as way of relieving boredom, and use of syllabifications to form meaningful words and sentences (Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006; Owusu-Mensah, 2007). The instructors of the literacy classes are volunteer facilitators and the program assistants (they are permanent staff). The classes are in batches starting from batch 1 that started in 1992 to the current batch 18, which started in 2012. A class consist of about 25-30 learners (Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006; Owusu-Mensah, 2007). On the average each class meet at least 6 hours per week.

According to Agodzo (2010), from batch 1 to 15, those recruited in NFLP/FLSP totalled 2,781,973, and the graduates constitute 2,247,329 while the average dropout rate stands at 19% for Ghana. It is clear that the functional literacy program has contributed to the literacy rate of Ghana. In the case of the statistics of the Wa Municipality, the total of those recruited from batch 8 to 18 are 26,074, the graduates add up to 20,582 where the average dropout rate is 21%, which is slightly higher than the national level dropout rate (NFED-Wa Municipality, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). The data on those that have graduated from other literacy program also add to the literate population in the Wa Municipality, hence, the rise in literacy levels in the municipality and a corresponding reduction in the illiteracy rate.

1.2 Functional Literacy Delivered by School for Life (SfL) in Ghana

Casely-Hayford and Ghartey (2007) advanced that SfL started in 1995 in Northern Region of Ghana in response to the peculiar educational problems in Northern Ghana. They indicated that the program is a complementary educational program targeted at out-of-school children between the ages of 8-14. "The program offers a nine-month literacy cycle in the mother tongue, for assisting children get basic literacy skills and then integrate into the formal education system" (Casely-Hayford and Ghartey, 2007: 10). They noted that the SfL program started in 1995 as a pilot project in two Districts of the Northern Region with 50 classes in each District to give functional literacy to out-of-school children in rural areas and this attempt was successful. They added that based on the success, the scale of delivery increased during the second and third phases of the program. In the *Phase II* (1998 to 2003), the program implementation extended to 8 Districts benefiting 40,000 children (Casely-Hayford and Ghartey, 2007). The authors indicated that in the *Phase III* (2003 to 2008), the program expanded to cover 10 Districts benefiting 48,000 children. The activities of SfL complement the activities of the other actors such as NFED, AAG, WVG and GILLBT in functional literacy education to increase literacy levels in the Northern Region in particular and Ghana at large.

1.3 Functional Literacy Delivered by Action Aid Ghana (AAG)

According to NFED (2013), AAG is an international NGO, which began operating in Ghana in 1990 and has since worked with 279 communities in the Upper East, Upper West, Northern, BrongAhafo, Volta and Greater Accra regions. Action Aid Ghana invests heavily in education by emphasising on securing girls and women's right to education, access for excluded groups, and adequate resources for education including functional literacy (NFED, 2013). The author advances that AAG collaborates with NFED and other organizations to give functional literacy to vulnerable groups. Action Aid Ghana has used its Shepherd School system in promoting literacy in Ghana. The Shepherd School program implementation was in 1996 in seven pastoral communities in Ghana (Mfum-Mensah, 2002). The principle of Shepherd Schools programs is not only locally proper, cost-effective and accessible to the disadvantaged children, but also flexible to synchronize needs and sociocultural responsibilities of children and educational responsibilities of parents (Mfum-Mensah, 2002). The writer adds that the objectives of the program are three, which are namely: to give basic functional education to at least 30% of children living in target communities who do not have or have not had access to formal school or to those who have dropped out of school; to give unique opportunity for children to effectively bridge-up to the formal school system; and to give children who will return to the community after Shepherd School with basic literacy and numeracy skills.

1.4 Functional Literacy Delivered by Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) in Ghana

Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) came to being in Ghana in 1972 with its headquarters in Tamale. Owusu-Mensah (2007) indicates that GILLBT is involved in Bible translation into local languages and is widely engaged in literacy activities. The goal of GILLBT literacy program is to help empower the rural adult population in order to free them from their social, economic, spiritual and political exclusion (GILLBT, 2009). The writer notes that the literacy program focuses on 22 language groups that are mainly in the less developed rural areas of Ghana, in the northern part of the country and in the north of Volta region. The literacy program operated by GILLBT provides basic reading, writing and numeracy skills followed by advanced literacy in the local language and English to give further learning opportunities which is similar to what NFED does (Ghana Audit Service, 2003; Aryeetey and Kwakye, 2006; GILLBT, 2009). Furthermore, GILLBT has developed a Five Phase Model to manage the program (GILLBT, 2009). The aim of this model is to raise the level of education of rural minority language groups. Once enough learners and organizers from each language group have acquired literacy skills, they can become self-sufficient. The functional literacy classes incorporate business practices such as bookkeeping and related techniques from the first start-up stage to the marketing phase, together with information that raises learners' awareness of citizen rights and peaceful ways of reform. They also recruit facilitators to run the literacy program. The facilitators receive allowance for their services rendered which is not done by NFED. The program's main donors include Summer Institute of Linguistics International, the Oikonomos Foundation (Netherlands), Wycliffe Australia, and the Tearfund (UK). GILLBT is also working in close cooperation with the NFED and the University of Ghana's Institute for Adult Education in Legon to cut illiteracy in the country (GILLBT, 2009).

1.5 Functional Literacy: Role of World Vision Ghana (WVG)

World Vision Ghana is a Christian relief development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice (NFED, 2013).

The author notes that WVG is working with the world's most vulnerable people and serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. World Vision Ghana collaborated with NFED to offer English Literacy to vulnerable communities. In the partnership, WVG produces English primers and follow-up readers for Basic English literacy program (Owusu-Mensah, 2007; NFED, 2013). This lays the foundation for the people to become literate in English language.

2. Literacy Rate Situation in Ghana

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2012) defines literacy as ability to read and write in any language. The discourse on literacy situation in all of Ghana, Upper West Region (UWR) and Wa Municipality is on people aged 15 years and older. In terms of all of Ghana, in 2000, 42.6% of people in Ghana were illiterate this reduced to 28.5% resulting in an increase in literacy rate from 57.4% in 2000 to 71.5% in 2010 (GSS, 2005, 2012). With respect to literacy in Ghanaian language, the author noted that in 2000, 2.5% were literate in a Ghanaian language and this reduced to 0.7% in 2010. For those literate in English and Ghanaian language, in 2000 they constituted 31.8% and this rose to 41.5% in 2010. From the national level, the evidence suggests that the literacy levels are on the rise. This could be attributed to the functional literacy programs operated by NFED, AAG, SfL, GILLBT and WVG. With regard to the UWR, in 2000, 73.4% of the people in UWR were illiterate which reduced to 59.5% translating in an increase in literacy rate from 26.6% in 2000 to 40.5% in 2010 (GSS, 2005, 2012). In terms of literacy in Ghanaian language, the writer indicated that in 2000, 1.1% was literate in Ghanaian language only and this increased to 3.4% in 2010. For those literate in English and Ghanaian language, in 2000 they constituted 10.9% and this rose to 57.1%. The trend in literacy level in the UWR show that the literacy levels are on the rise as literacy in the Ghanaian languages rose, which could be tied to the activities of the functional literacy programs run in the region. Considering the Wa Municipality, in 2000, 69.0% of people in the municipality was illiterate and this figure declined to 49.9% translating in an increase in literacy rate from 31.0% in 2000 to 50.1% in 2003 (GSS, 2005; NFED- Wa Municipal, 2013). In terms of literacy in Ghanaian language, in 2000, 1.4% was literate in Ghanaian language only and this increased to 14% in 2010 (GSS, 2005; UNDP-Ghana, 2010). For those literate in English only in 2000 they constituted 15.8% and this increased to 27% in 2010. The trend in literacy rate here signals that the literacy levels are rising in the Wa Municipality and this is all due to the frantic efforts made by both the government and NGOs in promoting functional literacy in the municipality.

3. Impact of Functional Literacy Programs on Literacy Levels

In the view of Mfum-Mensah (2002), the Shepherd School program contributed much to literacy in the country. It was found in the study in the Bawku District that most of the children indicated that they were given literacy and numeracy education in the Shepherd School system of which they gained mastery. The sponsors and school authorities of the program noted that there was a strong relationship between the Shepherd School programme and the formal educational system that are close to the communities as the former served as feeder schools for the latter. The Shepherd School authorities have pointed out that about 147 of their products in the study district have transferred to the formal schools. The results further showed that parents have now developed positive attitudes towards their children's education especially the girls through their regular monitoring of their attendance. In addition, attendees of the Shepherd Schools transfer their literacy and numeracy knowledge to their parents and siblings meaning that there was a trickle-down effect. The finding of Mfum-Mensah (2002) is consistent with that of Beder (1999).

According to Aryeetey and Kwakye (2006), by the end of 2003, about 2.2 million people had been recruited to the program (i.e., NFLP and FLSP) since 1992, out of which about 0.7 million of them had enrolled in the second phase. These people were literate in the 15 Ghanaian languages used in the instruction and some had literacy in English as well. This has contributed to the literacy rate of the country. The authors further indicated that around 75% of recruits are between age 15 and 44. They add that dropout rates were sometimes high in the first phase of the program – 24% and 20% in the 2nd and 5th batches respectively – but have been lower in years that are more recent. They add that equally important impact of NFLP was that participants now are more likely to send their own children to school than before. This implies that the literacy program influenced the formal sector of education since parents are now keen in sending their children to school because of the benefits they derived. This situation has resulted in the decreasing trend of the illiteracy level in the study place (i.e., the Wa Municipality). Similarly, Blunch and Portner (2011) found in their study that a positive and statistically significant impact of participation on literacy and numeracy rates. This implies that with participation in functional literacy programs, it will increase the number of literates in the country as most of the graduates can now read, write and use numerals.

In the view of Casely-Hayford and Gharthey (2007), the “Leap to Literacy” program of SfL has over the past 12 years changed the lives of over 85,000 children in the Northern Region of Ghana. They advanced that more than 90% of children between ages 8-14, who enrolled in SfL class, graduated from the SfL class and that 65% of those enrolled in the SfL program transfer to the formal system of education. In addition, the SfL program was also having a positive impact on parent’s attitudes towards girls’ education as 50% of those enrolled in the program were females of which a large proportion were completing and entering the formal system and remaining in the system until the higher levels of education (i.e. SSS). Similarly, since the inauguration of GILLBT in 1972, its literacy programs have achieved the following namely: making over 500,000 people functionally literate; that 10,000 of the literacy program graduates have made the transition to formal education; and that a total of 37,000 learners passes out of the program each year (GILLBT, 2009). All these prove that the literacy programs have contributed to the decline in illiteracy levels in Ghana.

4. Causes of Attrition in Literacy Programs

Despite the fact that participants in literacy programs like NFE stand to benefit enormously from their participation in terms of being literate, gaining certificates, improving their job skill, being able to use numerals, having opportunity to join the formal sector of education, some of them nonetheless, still dropout from the program before its official ending. Researches in attrition have shown that the dropouts usually advance many factors for their withdrawal from the literacy programs. Financial and academic advising challenges were found as causes of attrition in literacy programs (St. John, 1990; Ryder, Bowman and Newman, 1994; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1998; Long and Middleton, 2001). For instance, in Ryder *et al.* (1994) study they found that instructor attitude (teaching and advising attitudes towards non-traditional students); advising (quality, knowledge, or attitudes of advisors); scheduling (day or night class considerations, number of available sections of each required class); staff (organization); and administrative problems (availability of information) influenced dropout. The study found financial problems and academic advising as the greatest hindrances to degree completion while lack of emotional support and the lack of same age peer group are the least important.

More so, some other studies found program related factors, performance in class, job related conflicts, money problems and conflicting schedules as causes of dropout (Long and Middleton,

2001; Mayo, Helms, and Codjoe, 2004). Long and Middleton (2001) for example, found that 31% of respondents who enrolled in a literacy program end up dropping out before the program completed. It is interesting to note that the same study indicates that 39% of male respondents, compared to 23% of female respondents, dropped out of their programs. Out of those respondents who dropped out, respondents aged 16-24 had the highest dropout rate at 42%, while only 17% of those aged 45 and older dropped out. Of all those who dropped out of programs, 56% listed socioeconomic circumstantial reasons for dropping out, 27% listed program/policy related reasons, 6% listed cognitive-emotive reasons and 10% listing other reasons. In addition, of the respondents who dropped out, 47% listed job-related conflicts, 35% cited money problems, and 29% cited care of children as the reason they dropped out. This shows that people have a variety of reasons why they dropout. Similarly, in Mayo *et al.* (2004) study, reasons given by current college students for their dropping out included conflicting schedules and responsibilities (43% of responses), money (23% of responses) and academic issues (16% of responses). On the other hand, those enumerated by high school students are conflicting schedules and responsibilities (48% of responses), poor academic performance (21% of responses) and money challenge (16% of responses).

Furthermore, distance to class, family duties, migration and health issues emerged as causes of attrition (McGivney, 2004; Jena and Wangchuk, 2011). For instance, McGivney (2004) identified personal factors that hinder persistence in courses and in overall programs. The writer notes that an attendance factor that may prevent students from performing well in each course is 'last-minute' factors. These include not feeling well, family emergencies, transportation problems, or adverse weather. When students miss many classes due to last-minute factors, they may not see the need to continue the course. The reasons for students' dropout from a program were considered as 'fact of life' and are related to work, home, family responsibilities, and health issues. In the case of Jena and Wangchuk (2011), they found that reasons for the dropouts are namely family or domestic problem at home, health problems, distance to the center, appointment as community leader (Tshokpa) so no time to attend the class and migration to comfortable places.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used is the cross-sectional study design. In the view of Kumar (1999), a cross-sectional design is best suited to the studies for finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem or attitude, by taking a cross-section of the population. This research design was right for this study because it involved collecting data from the respondents on reasons for their dropping out from the literacy program of NFE at only one point. Batch 17 dropouts from NFED program, dropouts from SfL, AAG, and GILLBT were considered as the population for this study and hence, a sample was drawn from this population. A non-statistical technique was utilized in the determination of the sample size of 200 respondents for the study based on Best and Kahn's (1995) assertion that there is no fixed number or percentage of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample. The sample was selected using stratified proportional sampling (*See Table 1* for details of sample size distribution). A questionnaire was used in collecting data from the dropouts. This instrument is appropriate because it is an effective tool in collecting quantitative data. The items on the questionnaire consisted primarily of Likert scale items. The questionnaire that the dropouts responded to consisted of two sections. The first division encompassed background data. The second but last part consisted of 13 items on attrition that were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Only quantitative data were collected from the respondents. Quantitative data was gathered from two sources namely through documents and ratings of attrition items. The quantitative data on the number of people enrolling, graduating and dropping out from the functional literacy programs was obtained from reports of Wa Municipal

office of NFED and other documentary sources obtained online. The second form of quantitative data was obtained from the dropouts as they rated their perceptions on the five point Likert scale on items of attrition. In the analysis process, the data was entered into statistical package for social scientist for processing. The analysis of data was conducted in two phases. In the first part, with reference to the contribution of functional literacy programs in accelerating literacy rate, it was analyzed by using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages) of people graduating and dropping out from literacy programs of NFED in Ghana and the Wa Municipality to construct line graphs. The second but last phase of the analysis entailed cross-tabulating attrition items against dropouts and frequencies and percentages were then used to do the analysis. The data was presented in a table and line graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Contribution of Functional Literacy Programs in Accelerating Literacy Rate

Functional literacy programs implemented in the country by both state and non-state actors have influenced the rise in literacy levels in Ghana. Figure 1 shows the number of participants graduating from functional literacy program of NFED in Ghana. From the line graph, in batch 1, the number of people graduating stood at 167,461 and this rose to 209,763 in batch 2 but declined to 174,059 in batch 3 and then stabilized up to batch 6 not hovering above 181,000 people. The number of people graduating dipped in batch 7 and this was because the *Phase I* of FLSP had ended and the program did not have enough resources to recruit more learners as well as supply them with the necessary materials. Participants were to acquire those materials on their own, those who could not dropped. The graduation number rose again continuously up to batch 9 when the NFLP, which is the *Phase II* of FLSP was implemented. This shows that between batch 1 and 13 about 2,247,329 people graduated in the 15 different Ghanaian languages used as the medium of instruction and English language, which adds to the number of people who are literate in Ghana.

Figure 2 gives the details of participants dropping out from the functional literacy program run by NFED across the country. In batch 1, the dropout rate for the participants rose from 17% to 25% and this declined to 16% in batch 4. It then rose to 20% in batch 5 but later declined to 12% in batch 8. The dropout rate increased from the batch 8 figure to 22% in batch 10 and then declined continuously to 10% in batch 13. The line graph illustrates that in the early batches the dropout rate was relatively high this was probably because the participants had not yet seen visible impact of the program and so were skeptical, but the current trend suggest that the dropout rate is falling as the participants have success stories stirring in their faces. The average dropout rate from batch 1 to 13 in the program is 19% translating into a figure of 534,644. As the dropout rate falls, it is a sign that fewer people are dropping out implying that those graduating will be high. No wonder, the illiteracy rate is on the decline while the literacy rate is rather on the rise.

In terms of the Wa Municipality, Figure 3 gives details of NFLP contribution to literacy rate in the Wa Municipality covering the period where there was World Bank funding for the *Phase II* and period after the phase has ended. From the figure, in batch 8 the number of participants graduating rose from 4,321 to 5,789 in batch 9 but fell to 2,123 people in batch 10 and later rose to 3,456 in batch 11. As depicted in the line graph, from batch 11 thereof, the number of participants graduating declined up to 245 people in batch 14, which could be tied to the fact that during that time the then Wa District was divided into three districts constituting Wa West District, Wa East District and the study district, Wa Municipality. Also, the decline in learners graduating could be associated with the ending of the funding obtained from the World Bank (i.e., no adequate funds to recruit more learners). From batch 14, the number of graduates increased to 319 in batch 15 but declined and later rose again slightly in batch 17 to 256 people. Despite the fact that the number of

people graduating is on the fall, however, those graduating (i.e., 20,582 graduates from batch 8 to 17 from a learner population of 26,074) still add to the number of literates in the Wa Municipality and the country at large.

With respect to dropout of learner, Figure 4 gives that trend in the Wa Municipality. From the graph, in batch 8, the dropout rate for the participants fell from 16% to 10% in batch 9 which later rose continuously up to 30% in batch 12 and then declined to 18% but increased again to up to 85% in batch 16. From batch 16, the dropout rate then fell to 58% in batch 17. The trend in the graph illustrates that in the early stages of the *Phase II* of NFLP the dropout rate was relatively increasing slowly up to the end of batch 12 but rose sharply at the end of *Phase II* up to batch 16 and fell then. The entire learners that dropped out from batch 8 to 17 constitute 5,492. In spite of the seeming high levels of dropouts at an average of 21% for the periods between batch 8 and 17, the graduates from the program add up to the literate population thereby increasing it. This dropout level, which is relatively alarming, might have been due to certain factors in the program that caused their attrition and this has been explored in the next section.

2. Causes of Attrition from Literacy Programs of NFE

One of the major challenge facing functional literacy programs has always been attrition of beneficiaries. The causes of attrition are from the standpoint of the dropouts. The details of the causes of attrition in NFE in the study site are in Table 2. The discourse here is on the top significant five attrition factors and the presentations of the factors are in a descending order of magnitude.

Pieces of evidence obtained on lack of academic advisors as a reason for dropout signals that more than two-thirds of dropouts acknowledged it as a cause of attrition. The respondents that *agreed or strongly agreed* on the attrition item represent 76.7%. Considering the results, it is obvious that most of the respondents perceived lack of academic advisors as a cause of attrition. The results on this attrition factor corroborates the finding of Ryder *et al.* (1994) that non-traditional students perceived the quality, knowledge or attitude of academic advising as a factor that triggers attrition.

From Table 2 the dropouts that *agreed or strongly agreed* on the attrition item higher family responsibilities cause dropout from NFE are 74.4%. The results suggest that majority (74.4%) of the dropouts hold the opinion that higher family responsibilities cause attrition from NFE in the study locations. The current study's result is consistent with McGivney's (2004) and Jena and Wangchuk's (2011) discoveries that family responsibilities are a cause of participants in adult literacy programs dropping out.

A critical examination of Table 2 reveals that majority of the dropouts think that lack of certainty about career goals is a cause of attrition from NFE. The results illustrate that 74.4% of the dropouts *agreed or strongly agreed* on this attrition issue. This shows that most of the dropouts endorsed the attrition item. This sends the signal that most of the people who enroll on NFE program do so without critically examining whether it meets their needs or not, and at a particular stage when they reflect on it, realizing a mismatch, they dropout.

Taking a look at Table 2, it is found that a greater proportion of the dropouts perceived poor quality of interaction between participants and facilitators/program assistants as a cause of dropout from NFE. The results show that about 72.1% of dropouts *agreed or strongly agreed* on the attrition statement. The results suggest that most of the dropouts backed the attrition statement. The present discovery concurs with Ryder *et al.* (1994) finding that instructor attitudes caused attrition from a learning program.

With regard to poor performance in class activities as a cause of dropout from NFE, the results show that about two-thirds of the dropouts support that assertion. Those that *agreed or strongly agreed* on the attrition item are 67.4%. It is clear from the results that most of the respondents actually think that poor performance in class activities is a cause of dropout from NFE in the study site. Mayo *et al.* (2004) discovery that poor academic performance led to attrition in an educational program is in line with the current finding.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the complementary role played by both the state and NGOs in implementing functional literacy in Ghana has led to the drastic reduction in illiteracy in Ghana and the Wa Municipality in particular despite the dropout. The most significant attrition factors that emerged from the study included lack of academic advisors, high family responsibilities, lack of certainty about career goals, poor quality of interaction between participants and facilitators/program assistants and poor performance in class activities. The presence of these factors have led to some of the participants in the functional literacy programs quitting before the literacy cycle comes to a normal end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In-service training should be organized regularly for the facilitators/program to equip them with the right andragogy skills to enable them handle the learners adequately.

Family members who do not take part in the literacy program should do some of the household chores to enable those members who are participants to have enough time to continue attending the program.

It is important that providers of literacy programs encourage those that have dropped out of the program to re-join the program to complete the program during the same or later batches.

The Ministry of Education and the Districts Assemblies should make enough funding available to NFED, to enable it conduct its activities of publicity, monitoring and supervision effectively and efficiently to attract and keep up people on the program to completion.

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Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Dropouts	Male	Female	Total
NFED	40	60	100
SfL	15	35	50
AAG	5	15	20
GILLBT	10	20	30
Total	70	130	200

Source: Field Survey (2013)

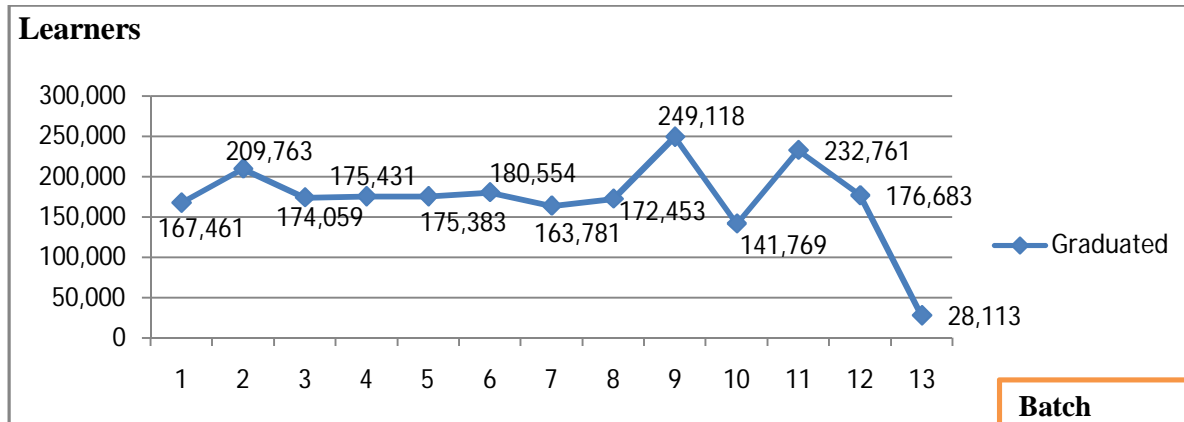
Table 2: Perceptions of Dropouts on Causes of Attrition in Functional Literacy Programmes of NFE

Attrition Items		Dropouts			
		D/SD	U	A/SA	T
Poor participant physical health contributes to dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	103	5	93	200
	%	51.2	2.3	46.5	100
Higher family responsibilities cause attrition from NFE.	<i>f</i>	42	9	149	200
	%	20.9	4.7	74.4	100
High job demands on participants lead to dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	74	19	107	200
	%	37.2	9.3	53.5	100
Lack of certainty about career goals is a cause of dropout from NFE	<i>f</i>	23	28	149	200
	%	11.6	14.1	74.4	100
Lack of relevance of curricula is a cause of dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	98	9	93	200
	%	48.8	4.7	46.5	100
Poor performance in class activities is a cause of dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	51	14	135	200
	%	25.6	7.0	67.4	100
Farness of participant's home to class is a cause of attrition from NFE.	<i>f</i>	65	14	121	200
	%	32.6	7.0	60.5	100
Lack of income generating activities is a cause of dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	75	9	116	200
	%	37.2	4.7	58.1	100
Poor participant- peer group interaction is a contributor to dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	98	9	93	200
	%	48.8	4.7	46.5	100
Poor quality of interaction between participants and facilitators/programme assistants is a cause of dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	37	19	144	200
	%	18.6	9.3	72.1	100
Inconvenient scheduling of classes is a factor that induces attrition.	<i>f</i>	112	19	69	200
	%	55.8	9.3	34.9	100
Cost of programme is a reason for dropout from NFE.	<i>f</i>	182	9	9	200
	%	90.7	4.7	4.7	100
Lack of academic advisors is a reason for dropout.	<i>f</i>	19	28	153	200
	%	9.3	14.0	76.7	100

Source: Field Survey (2013)

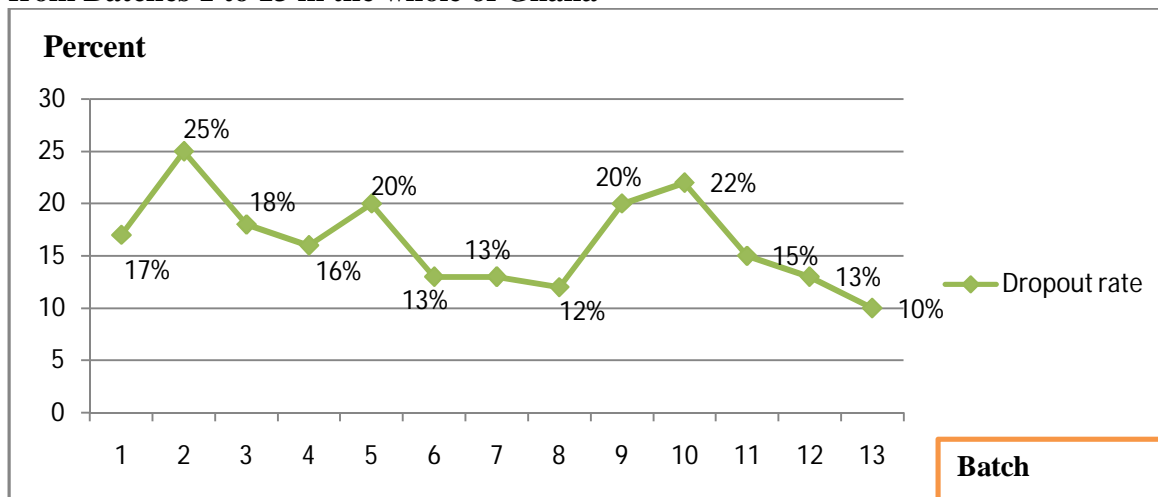
T=total; *f*=frequency; %=percent; D/SD=Disagree/Strongly Disagree; U=Uncertain; and A/SA=Agree/Strongly Agree

Figure 1: A Line Graph Showing Participants Graduating from NFE Organized by NFED from Batches 1 to 13 in the whole of Ghana



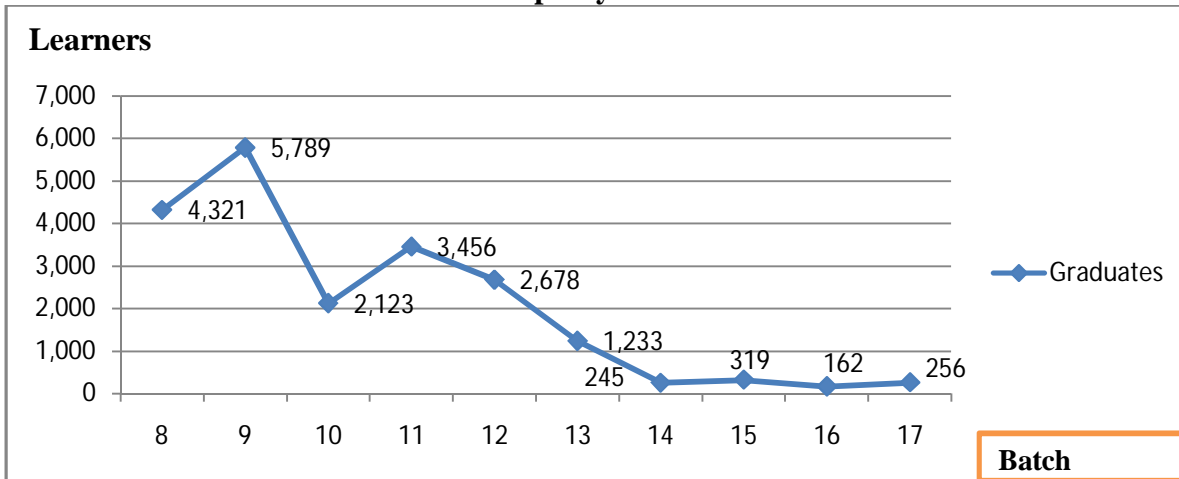
Source: Field Survey (2013)

Figure 2: A Line Graph Showing Participants Dropping out from NFE Organized by NFED from Batches 1 to 13 in the whole of Ghana



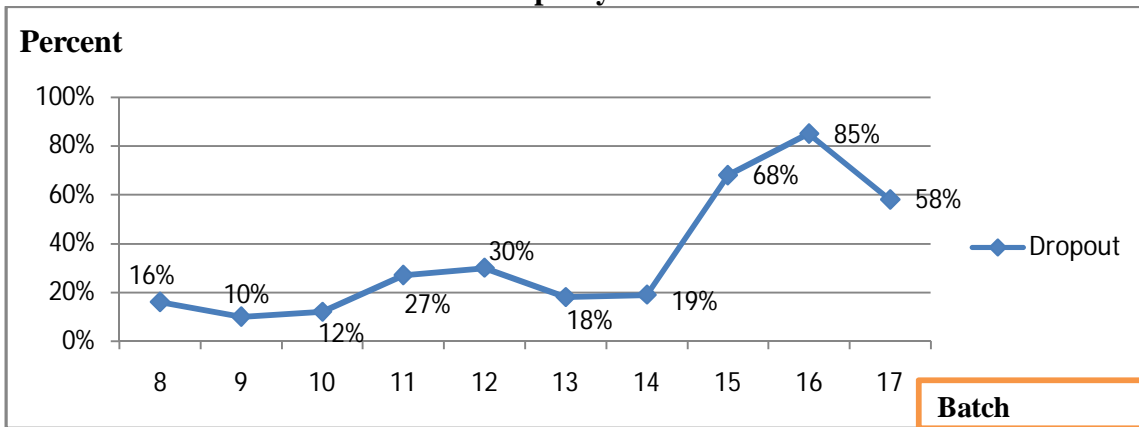
Source: Field Survey (2013)

Figure 3: A Line Graph Showing Participants Graduating from NFE Organized by NFED from Batches 8 to 17 in the Wa Municipality



Source: Field Survey (2013)

Figure 4: A Line Graph Showing Participants Dropping out from NFE Organized by NFED from Batches 8 to 17 in the Wa Municipality



Source: Field Survey (2013)