Non-Formal Literacy Education for Rural Women’s Empowerment in Ghana:
A Micro-Level Analysis

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the doctoral degree
Department of Social Justice Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Much as knowledge is rationally perceived as power with ability to construct identity, and facilitate social interaction, most women in rural areas in Ghana are unable to read or write in a local language as they missed out on schooling for socio-cultural and structural reasons. Yet, literacy is discounted as an element of personal transformation as well as a skill to possibly and cogently bridge the gender-parity gap in education through empowerment projects. The reason being; non-formal education programmes which engender acquisition of literacy skills is disparaged as an alternative form of learning in education planning at the detriment of marginalized populations and women in particular. But how can one read the world without the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987)?

This study primarily identifies the linkage between literacy and women’s empowerment; interrogates the prognosis between literacy and personal transformation; and examines the methods employed by Non Formal Education Division to systematise learning to achieve this goal in Ghana. It is an empirical qualitative multi-sited research conducted in four rural locations in Accra to critically investigate how non-formal education is represented in social development. The study’s analytical framework is set within a feminist methodology and grounded theory, and draws on transformative learning Mezirow (2000) and empowerment
Stromquist (1995) as conceptual frameworks to explore the epistemology and subjective change respectively.

The findings report: interest in literacy is dynamic but implicates government indifference with respect to non-formal education as it identifies, that instable governance, funding and state bureaucracy encumber institution and programme effectiveness and this deprive citizens their right to education. Learner interest has equally shifted from gender-role reinforcement literacy to that of empowered literacy to include: income-generating and employable skills, multi-language learning, women’s co-operative formation, and micro credit opportunities. The study concludes with a five-frame proposal for NFED institutional strengthening for effective governance, public engagement and fundraising towards sustainable literacy for development.
Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation with very special appreciation to my mother, Madam Martha Fidelia Otukuor Okunor. This work is equally written for women, globally, who for inexplicable reasons and circumstances are unable to take part in any form of education yet they aspire to read and write. This work is for them to recognise that I sincerely share their pain.
Acknowledgment

To God I give the glory!

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of the following:

My initial appreciation goes to Professor Njoki Wane, my thesis supervisor/advisor. You sustained my blazing candle from fading with your inclusive supervision. Our interaction in graduate school has offered invaluable professional and personal experiences for which I am exceedingly grateful Prof.

I equally extend my sincere gratitude to the thesis Committee Members: Professor Jack Quarter and Professor John Portelli who agreed to take this journey with me. To Dr. Dan-Bright Dzorgbo my External Examiner, Professor Madhavi Kale, Internal Examiner, Professor Edmund O’Sullivan and Professor Malcom Thorburn; thank you very much for accepting to be part of my oral examination.

My appreciation also goes to Professor George Dei and to Dr. Ann Phillips.

To my colleagues Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei, Rahat Joldoshalieva, Dr. Devi Mucini and Dr. Roxanne Torres I appreciate your friendship, camaraderie and support in the academy.

To the authors I referenced, thanks for making your scholarly work accessible to support the construction of the narrative.

Access to the field for data would not have been possible without the Non-Formal Education Division office, staff and also to the women in the literacy classes who generously participated in the interviews to share their stories to represent women in similar situation. I salute you.
To my field assistant Mrs. Emelia Ellah, thanks for your insights and guidance which made this field experience one to remember. I appreciate your company; day, nights and weekends on dusty rural roads just so this dissertation would be completed.

Thanks to Drs. Seth Allotey and Mark Abrahams for the transcription and editing support respectively. They turned out great.

Finally, to my family and friends I say thanks for been there and for your support during this journey.
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Map of Ghana
Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3Rs</td>
<td>reading, writing and arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRA</td>
<td>Adventist Development Relief Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS-</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention to Eliminate of Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Convention People’s Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSW</td>
<td>Department of Social Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECG</td>
<td>Electricity Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Economic Recovery Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAWE</td>
<td>Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCUBE</td>
<td>Full Compulsory Universal Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GACD</td>
<td>Gender, Culture and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>GES</td>
<td>Ghana Education Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNA</td>
<td>Ghana News Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLLIBT</td>
<td>Ghana Literacy and Linguistic International Bible Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLSS</td>
<td>Ghana Living Standard Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWC</td>
<td>Ghana Water Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRATIS</td>
<td>Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology Industrial Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGA</td>
<td>Income Generating Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIEP</td>
<td>Institute of International Education Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Junior Secondary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>Literacy for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoCS</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoLG</td>
<td>Ministry of Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSLC</td>
<td>Middle School Leaving Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCD</td>
<td>National Council Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCWD</td>
<td>National Commission on Women and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFED</td>
<td>Non-Formal Education Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFE</td>
<td>Non-formal Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFLCP</td>
<td>the National Functional Literacy Campaign Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>New Patriotic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPAG</td>
<td>Plan Parenthood Association of Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Partner Relations Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Program Co-coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNDC</td>
<td>Provisional National Defense Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>People’s National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Social Development Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Transformative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Traditional African Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education and Scientific Council Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAJU</td>
<td>Women and Juvenile Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILDAF</td>
<td>Women in Law and Development in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUSC</td>
<td>World Universities Services of Canada</td>
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“We came to learn. It’s important to know what is going on.” – Maa Akoshia

Chapter One

Introduction

Background to the Study

The opening note is a statement from a participant in the literacy classes I conducted the interviews in for this research. What is it that women want to know but unable to? What constitute the prohibitions to this knowing? Many women in rural sub-Saharan African countries like Ghana are not literate in their own languages so they cannot read or write. Socio-culturally, literacy cognitively is attributed to knowledge and ability. Women without literacy skills in other words are perceived as incapable of engaging effectively with society and are likely to be marginalized and discounted in decision-making and in democratic processes. In 2005, Amu referenced statistics from the 2000 Census survey in Ghana on female literacy and educational attainment:

53.3% of the population who are women and are 15 years or older are literate in either English or a known Ghanaian language. Only 34% are literate in both. Also, 45.7% of the adult population are non-literate whilst educational characteristics of the female population show a 54.3% rate of illiteracy, and only 27.2% literate in both English and a Ghanaian language among women over 15 years and above (p. 17).

In 2009, in a speech during Global Action Week on Education in Ghana, Addae-Boahene reiterated, “Illiteracy seems to be a lesser priority compared to issues of access and teaching as nearly 42% of the population are non-literate, of which 50% are women.” A study from the Ghana Population Census (2012) revealed, 80.2% males are more likely to be literate than 68.5% females though women form over 52.3% of the population only 15% age fifteen years and above can read and write in English or a local language. The statistics indicate an
insignificant change in literacy levels among females over the last twelve years. It implies that a woman has a higher risk to remain an illiterate than a man. As Sister Hewane a participant mentioned; “many women in the village are willing to join the class but are either anxious (fear) of learning in adulthood, or unable to balance house chores and job with learning.”

Underestimating women in this way not only invalidates them as repositories of traditional wisdom, practical indigenous knowledge and teachers of cultural norms but also violates their rights as human beings. Also, education is being mediated socially as a measure of cultural currency to differentiate between the haves and the have-nots. Much as non-literate women can be found throughout Ghana for historical, cultural and structural reasons, however, they predominantly reside in rural areas (Tiwaa-Kwaporong, 2005; Tsikata, 2009; Anyidoho and Manu, 2010). Hitherto, Non formal education (NFE) literacy programmes have been informally organized by churches and interested bodies in Ghana for their members and communities. However, the then Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government officially designated NFE to foster literacy for Ghanaians, especially women, who did not attend or could not complete formal schooling. Much as the programmes enhance cognitive abilities and offer practical skills, society and official education policy planning have disregarded NFE processes as the outcomes are marked as not-formal and therefore unimportant for personal, community, and national development. In light of public perception about non-formal education, the above study aims to specifically examine how such programmes have translated into real personal gains for Ghanaian women in four rural communities in Accra Ghana, and to critique the role of Non-formal Education Division in literacy and women’s empowerment.
We can then place these local concerns in NFE in a global context. For instance Wieczorek-Zeul (2007) has argued that “though women form the majority of the world’s population, they take up two-thirds of the world’s non-literate group when it comes to education” (p. 2). Both UNESCO (2009) and Education for All (EFA) (2005) reports represent illiteracy as an immense global challenge. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2009), of the 64% of the 774 million non-literate adults worldwide … the majority are located in developing regions … made up of women. Yet, as Egbo (2005) argues, “increased levels of education among women are key to consequential social progress in Africa as social development are changes associated with increases in productive capacities, adaptation, and progress within a given society” (p. 142). Questions pertaining to literacy and women proposed by the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s), and Education for All (EFA) suggest that the issue is more problematic than it appears at face value. The gender-education parity gap, both locally and globally, obviously places the issue of literacy for women as an urgent discourse in development. Yet, collaborative initiatives in the last few decades to upgrade expand, and articulate quality and accessible education to address individual learning needs by the agencies have been insignificant with regards to literacy attainment (see EFA 2005 Report). That said, illiteracy globally has been attributed partly to sustained global power imbalances and directives that have not been in the best interest of former colonized societies like Ghana were education needs are not a priority to the state. Politicians are more interested in economic development (through foreign investment) which is an irony as the social cohesion and local development constitute the pillars to advance economic change.
For example, Eyiah (2004) observed that colonial evasion initially “succeeded in the dichotomization of development resulting in an infrastructure-laden metropolis and rural-underdevelopment coupled with controlled schooling and pedagogical practices to affirm Western worldviews which invariably were unsupportive to local education” (p. 2). Likewise, Mfum-Mensah (2003) and Smith (2001) made similar observations in regards to such imbalances. But how can the subaltern speak (Spivak, 1998; Memmi, 1967; Fanon, 1967; Dei, 2004)? The subaltern individual is the one who for reasons of colonization has continually been subjected to Eurocentric controls and imperialistic ideologies that dominate consciousness (Shizha & Abdi, 2005; Dei, 2004). The colonial era was characterized by inequalities in resource distribution and educational services - infrastructure, planning, manpower, human resources, and gender inequities to produce educational differences (Asabre-Ameyaw et. al, 2012). As Dei and Ashgarzadeh (2005) posit, “Notions of difference and diversity are heavily characterized by relations of power and influence” (p. 219). Such imbalances relatedly culminated in rural social underdevelopment. Education and literacy form part of this underdevelopment. The political shifts unfortunately affected women because the African context, as Okeke-Ihejirika (2005) notes, “Presents unique challenges because of the contradictions in the relations of gender introduced by colonization and capitalist expansion” (p. 169). Embedded within these challenges are social reproduction, and the subordination of women.

The social construct of the woman, that gaze which has determined her relations within society, has not changed with so-called modernity. The cultural construction of the female as the “other” (de Beauviour, 1947) and as an extension of man has persisted in gender relations
to the detriment of those who identify with that sex category. Although globalization and neo-liberalism have currently replaced colonial projects, Steady (2004) states:

The concept of the African woman is nonetheless central in development as gender unseeingly, is an organizing principle in the accumulation and operation of colonial and transnational capital resources and privilege allocation. Interestingly, these paradigms maintain the systemic reproduction to make the study of gender in Africa inescapable to the realities of post-colonial domination. Objectification of the woman as the outcome may have been perpetuated over the last thirty years through the activities of international institutions to reinforce reproduction (p. 1).

Successive governments, even after independence, regrettably fail to address the systemic dichotomy in education. Therefore much as women enrol in informal apprenticeship training—hairdressing, dressmaking, and conduct trading activities in the local markets - an average number among them are without literacy and numeracy skills. Due to the national insufficiencies in reading and writing, the Non Formal Education Division (NFED) was instituted in 1994 by the then Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government.

The primary objective as Owusu-Mensah (2007) indicates:

Is to harmonize all non-formal education (NFE) forms of activities in the country, and to provide mass literacy - reading writing and numeracy to individuals, especially for females who missed out on schooling as part of the economic development processes in Ghana (p. 4).

Furthermore, Ankomah, Koomson, Bosu, and Oduro (2005) provided statistics to indicate that through the functional literacy programme, the national illiteracy rate has currently been reduced from 69% to 52% as of 2005. The question nonetheless remains: in what ways have literacy programmes addressed aspects of self-transformation in women to inform and shape their empowerment? As Sister Tilly, a participant reiterated; “I want to experience something new for my life through the non-formal programme.”

Despite NFE’s contribution to literacy programmes, LaBelle (2000) says, “The initiative is failing to crystallize results and for that reason it’s been considered a less viable part of the
socio-economic development strategy to support the gap-building effort between social
exclusion and institutional rules” (cited in Hooper 2006, p. 49, 52). Besides, such inadequacy
in NFE initiatives fosters

An absence of a coherent, long-term national literacy policy encompassing attention
to governance, programme design and delivery, human and financial resources, and
the promotion of conducive environment to encourage individuals to become literate
and to sustain their skills; as well as total lack of partnership with the government by
NGOs or synergy among themselves in addressing illiteracy problem (Hamza Tinjani,
n.d.).

The inconsistencies undoubtedly jeopardize the intended goals and objectives of NFED in its
quest to provide basic literacy out of concern for human rights and social development.
Under the circumstances, we need to re-examine the United Nations Charter on Human
Rights that states that “everyone has a right to education” (UN Human Rights Charter 1947).
Unfortunately, this “right” may be an illusion for a number of women in Ghana; they are
missing out on their right to education due to systemic inequities and cultural differences that
inhibit their access to literacy.

Various governments in Ghana over the past five decades have proposed series of initiatives
in an effort to make education accessible to citizens. Besides the Nkrumah and Busia national
development plans the Ministry of Education Full Compulsory Universal Basic Education
(fCUBE), introduced in 1996, and envisioned access to basic quality education for all
Ghanaians to meet the Education for All (EFA) goal by 2020. The National Functional
Literacy Campaign Programme (NFLCP) programme operation strategy projected parallel
objectives to the (fCUBE) to eradicate literacy. Likewise is the 1995 Dzobo Report which
assesses the state of basic education and recommend changes accordingly. What is the
educational position and outcomes on literacy from these reports? If the objective of
development is to accelerate growth through improved conditions and knowledge production, in what ways have feminist development paradigms and government educational initiatives been accelerative in stimulating women’s development? Similarly, to what extent have development projects impacted on women’s literacy and social well-being in Ghana? These questions, among others, constitute the focus of this research. Answering them implies charting a changing phase in the process of literacy and development for empowerment.

**Literacy and Development in Ghana - Why Now**

A number of readers may ask this question: why a discourse on literacy now? My response to this rhetorical question is the primary reason for this work. The summation response to this inquiry however lies in the statement of a participant. Maa Bea said; “I regret I missed out on schooling. Reading and writing have enhanced my personal outlook.” My reaction personally, is that literacy is an inevitability in human advancement and so, I fundamentally anchor my argument on the philosophy of Giroux. According to Giroux (1987) “literacy should be understood as a myriad of discursive forms of cultural competencies and constructs” (p.10). Therefore, if literacy produces knowledge and knowledge shapes individual competencies and assigns power, then groups of people missing out on this cultural currency in a changing world of technology in a knowledge economy where skill is vital capital for human survival might not be effectively engage with the world as they do not have the word (paraphrasing Friere & Macedo, 1987).

Discourse on literacy in our contemporary, fast-paced technological world reverberates like a concept from ancient mythology would to “modernized” people. Illiteracy, as a construct and/or identity, has been equated to non-civilization and non-civility, and has therefore been
attributed to people in the “uncivilized” world. This argument should be history. The value of the practice is essential in all forms as environmental, insurance, financial, and mining, health, and gender literacy indeed bring humanity, development and corporations into equilibrium in our contemporary globalized world. Yet, most education initiatives promote economic and technological development over literacy. But I understand the latter to be fundamentally important as the former. Been literate not only allows one to read text but equally provides opportunities for individuals to deeply understand their social realities, identities, roles and responsibilities, and to critically question systemic dominance and power through gender and systemic differences.

Women in Ghana have not been fully brought on board to participate objectively in issues and in decisions affecting them every day; decisions which in part allow one to acquire functional literacy skills. The statistics I cited earlier in this introduction and elsewhere suggest literacy initiatives for women in Ghana has been insignificant in the plans and decisions of the state. So how can women reflect on self-development when they are in fact still grappling with the bare necessities of life instead of their strategic functional needs (Molyeneux, 1985)? Women obviously may appreciate sustainable levels of support external to their own ingenuity; they should notwithstanding, have access to assistance that advances their long-term needs. The above expectations obligate the Ministry of Education (MoE), NFED, civil society, development agencies, and women themselves to follow through in identifying measures to address their learning needs and skill development where government support has been inadequate in Ghana.
Nonetheless, this conflation is problematic because literacy in practice - the art of reading, writing, and numeracy has been neglected globally on the drawing board. Dovov (1985), three decades ago draw a feminist perspective on the issues; that

Literacy can imply more than the ability to read. It can mean having knowledge of one’s history, of one’s origins; having a world view that is indigenous to one’s people and not imposed by others. Women will therefore remain trapped in age-old patterns of enslavement and they will lose hard-won freedoms unless they learn and transmit their history and the body of feminist theory. Women remain illiterate without knowledge of this theory (p.xi).

When almost everything is either click or touch away it is true that information might be more available, but 21st century technology and Western development models introduced to developing countries does not erase the reality that millions of people cannot read or write in their own language. Its obvious literacy initiatives for women in Ghana and elsewhere have been insignificant in the plans and decisions of the state.

In Ghana, colonial forms of education that denigrate literacy and inherited by Ghanaians have encumbered the progression of women (Abagi, 2005; Dei, 2004; Asiedu-Akrofi, 1982; Foster, 1965). This practice, inadvertently, is re-branded in (post)modern context five decades after independence as development to respond to the situation similarly created by the colonizer. It is one in which the learner (subject) and terrain (object) have both been produced by certain historical and political powers/actors: the World Bank, IMF, and ideological factors. Such cause-effect systemic relationships have configured new socio-economic patterns to (re)frame the power structures and social relations that were detrimental to women in the first place. The same institutions ironically happened to be the main drivers of empowerment projects directed at women’s education in Ghana, and yet over 30% of females here lack basic literacy skills (see Ghana Census, 2012).
Moreover, state education reforms from the 1960 to the 1980’s - thirty years after independence fail to articulate comprehensive nationwide literacy plans exclusively for women. The 1960 five-year and three-year development plan by the Nkrumah and Busia government respectively fell short on this issue. As the social always become politicized under military rule, the long bout of coup d’états in Ghana affected the provision of literacy at the grassroots as any social gathering is assumed to be a form of anti-political organizing to challenge the ruling military power. In other words, if the primary objective of development is to accelerate growth through knowledge production and social engineering, then the question is this: how have feminist development paradigms and government educational initiatives been mechanisms that jointly promote women’s literacy and material well-being in Ghana?

**Women in the Process of Development – WID, WAD and GAD**

According to (Banda, n.d) although “women’s equal right to development has been called a universal good” (p.149) women have been implicated differently in the process for many decades. The issue is indicative in feminist theoretical paradigms and development frameworks which influence critical thinking and policy (Connelly, MacDonald & Parpart, 2000), from the 1930’s through the 1990’s to date (Rathgeber, 1990; Razavi and Miller, 1995; Rao, n.d.). Non-formal education and literacy represent identifiable examples in regards to the ideological differences between Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). Much as individuals and organizations draw on the integration of the theories in interventions, the differences and ways through which the theories impact on literacy and women has to be examined as they hold implications for empowerment outcomes.
Literacy has been offered from either the World Bank or state ideological perspective; not from learners’. For example, Mr Gogi stated: “The World Bank’s interested in literacy is so that Ghanaians will understand the Structural Adjustment Programmes and state policies in the 1980s and 1990s” (Personal Interview, 2013). The literature equally cited numerous reasons in regards to the provision for literacy for women. For instance; Yates (1997) research on literacy in Apam in Ghana was for women to understand business practices. To the NFED-(Owusu-Mensah, 2007); is to enable women, read, write and count as citizens; and for religious bodies’ literacy for women is to equip them to read the Bible. Seldom are women’s voices and perspectives heard on the subject regarding their expectations from literacy. Thus conceptual differences within the paradigms, and their collectively response and theorization of development and women’s empowerment interest in this study contextualize the arguments of the failure of benefit of development from the “trickle down” perspective for analysis.

The WID approach through Ester Boserup’s (1970) analysis on women’s economic position critique development from a women-based perspective as the determination to integrate women in the process became a concern for government and donors (Banda, n.d; Connelly, et al, 2000). According to (Connelly et al, 2000), “whilst WID enhances our knowledge on women’s work to provide women with education and employment opportunities, it rarely addressed fundamental questions about women’s subordination, and ignore impact of global inequities on women in the Third World” (p.58-59). Thus WID’s transformative capacity is limited as it reliance on modernization theory’s economic access for women fail to conduct a gender-assessment of social issues (Connelly et al, 2000). Likewise Banda (n.d) notes, that
“gender neutrality ignored gendered structural inequalities which has negative effects on women” (p.151) on a broader spectrum.

Albeit, most NGOs - local and international in Ghana continue to set literacy intervention programmes within the WID approach and by that limit women’s empowerment on welfare than equality. But the welfare approach enforces gender roles and places women as recipients in need of help. This preconceived notion reflects in literacy provision for women as it has constructed NFED which offer NFE programmes to perceive women as “empty vessel” in which knowledge has to be deposited into. For example, the staffs suggest to me to dress down and refrain from speaking English on the field to avoid participants’ intimidation. I obliged. Paradoxically, the women rather dressed-up and a couple of them made brief statements in English during our interaction. This welfareist notion of NFED of learners equally reflects in the pedagogy - the learning material which has caused disinterest among learners and subsequent turnover because of the disconnection between learning expectation and delivery.

Failure of WID ushered in WAD which (Connelly et al, 2000) reiterated, “Stresses the distinctiveness of women’s knowledge, work, goals and responsibilities and argued for the acknowledgement of the role women have always played in the development process” (p.60). The WAD paradigm is however criticized for overlooking the issues of patriarchy and for focusing on “women-only” projects. Subsequently, debates regarding this approach to intervention are whether it should be “integration” or exclusive women-centred programmes. As Connelly, et al (2000) note once more:

    Much of the theorizing of people working within WAD perspective is undocumented because active engagement at the policy and community level has been the major
priority. Therefore marginalization and smallness of scale have limited the transformative potential of women-only organizations, although gains have been made in raising consciousness, publicizing women’s concerns, and bringing them into the policy arena. WAD is also inclined to see women as a class, thus downplaying differences among women (p. 60-61).

The observations by Connelly et al (2000) and of course other feminists’ impact on interventions. Programmes employing the WAD paradigm in Ghana fail to make a micro-macro level connection in regards to policy impact in women empowerment. So, if the voices of women in WAD-NGOs literacy programmes would never be part of the change process then what is the essence of participation (Banda, n.d; CEDAW, 1979) and learning?

The GAD approach emerged in the 1990s from Third World and Western socialist feminists respectively due to failure of the WID and WAD theories to respond adequately to gender inequalities. According to Banda (n.d), “GAD refers to ways in which roles, attitudes, privileges and relationships regarding women and men are socially constructed, and how gender shapes the experiences of males and females” (p.151). GAD investigates women’s material conditions, class position, recognizes development policy and practices that impact men and women and considers women as agents and not recipients of development. It also politicizes practical needs and transforms them into strategic interests and empowerment for women. It analyzes policies and organizational efforts to conduct gender-need analysis and to help change subordinating structures (Connelly et al, 2000). Despite its educational and empowerment outcomes, intervention programmes in Ghana grapple with the GAD paradigm as people are unable to depart from the traditional constructs of gender and gender-role socialization in Africa. This belief inevitably reflects in the literacy training in which the curriculum reinforces gender roles and domestication of women.
In view of the above reasons among others the empowerment philosophies of NGOs and NFED have been influenced by a diversity of paradigms. Others maintain the WID and WAD approaches but not GAD challenges patriarchal structures which disempower and dictate the power relations among the genders. It is presently more challenging as its unclear to identify the paradigm NFED and other NGOs employ in the literacy design framework. The content of learning according to Connelly et al (2000) should be closely examined to identify the paradigm because labels no longer guide the identification of the theoretical paradigm underlying policies and programmes. The way literacy is organized by NFED and other organizations in Ghana has definitely been impacted by changes and challenges of the paradigms thus creating difficulty in determining the direction of gender-literacy analysis.

All the same, within an assessment of the WID, WAD, and GAD feminist development ideologies, the NFE literacy programme somehow supports the historical progression of women’s empowerment initiatives in Ghana. For example, the then National Commission on Women and Development (NCWD) partnered with NFED in their status of women, mass education, and literacy and development campaigns (Owusu-Mensah, 2007). The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection (MWCSP) currently carry on similar interventions. But what does empowerment mean to women? How is female interest sustained for effective participation towards literacy skill acquisition within a world revolutionized by knowledge and technology? Is literacy the appropriate kind of education needed for social mobility or there is something more or better than that? If so, how do we engage, and if not, why and what are the alternatives and/or the parallels?

To set such realities as a feminist scholar, it will be appropriate to cite a participant’s critique when she mentioned during our interview that “Sister, my desire is to know more to build my
confident.” This assertion is epistemological because it situates the meaning of knowledge from a female’s perspective for critical feminist questioning and analysis. What impels motivates or drives her to know? As Cole (1993) argues:

Both knowing itself and thinking about knowing (producing epistemologies) are activities embedded in complex networks of politics and power, these network themselves requiring understanding and dictating caution. Conditions of knowing are homogenous and can be generally specified. All potential knowers have a presumed equal access to a view and the epistemologist’s job is to explain what is going on in their viewing and whether it amounts to knowledge or something else. But the fact of the matter is that ideal viewing conditions simply do not obtain for all potential viewers; in our society, knowledge conditions are vastly different for members of groups differentiated by gender, race, class, age, economic status, and so forth (p.83).

The essence of literacy comes alive in Cole’s assertion. Been literate therefore not only allows one to read text but equally cause individuals to understand their social realities, identities, roles and responsibilities to critically question systemic dominance and power through gender differences. Unfortunately, traditional epistemologies Cole (1993) further reiterates:

Ignore the fact that, “knowledge is power.” But feminist say; knowledge construed as the preserve and private playground of a privilege few has given power to those few: the power to exclude, to theorize about, and to intellectually dominate the other member of the species (p. 84).

Therefore as knowledge informs to shape attitudes the world can no longer wait to see every woman become literate. Thus the hypothetical questions raised so far are of interest to this research and will be addressed during the course of the narrative.

**Personal and Subjective Location**

The scholarship and research we pursue in many ways actively emanates from our passion, our individual subjective experiences, beliefs and political inclinations. In view of that I have
located myself in this project as a point of entry to orientate and to connect readers with the researcher.

My mother had to drop out of school so she was unable to complete basic education. According to her, she would have loved a career as a nurse if she had finished the basic school cycle. However, her level of knowledge and insights on global, social and political issues, the confidence she projects in her interactions and the extent to which she engages with society and institutions with her basic English language skills is the motivation that engendered this thesis. She navigates her everyday social life without any encumbrance whatsoever because she is by society’s standards, literate. Her argument is, “my little schooling provides ability to understand processes and situations better.” She occasionally points out in our conversations; “I am not intimidated by any space or person; is it the questions they will ask that will I be intimidated by or the English language? Look, I will respond with my *broken* English.”

My critical observation of the social behaviour of this woman set the pace for this study. Girls and women when given the opportunity by family or otherwise to attend school or are able to acquire a level of education through formal or non-formal means engage and participate in society differently than those who do not; all things been equal. Much as this opportunity may be absent for people in marginalized communities in Ghana the circumstances and motivation for explicating the personal is due to the stagnation of change in literacy provision in rural Accra.

I hail from the Ga tribe in Accra. Change in terms of development has been comparatively non-existent in the rural areas of the Greater Accra region. In spite of the upsurge of real
estate development and multiple institutional presence, the human development here is dichotomized – one half rural and deficit the other modernize and with utilities and facilities available for modern living. As a child, a young adult, and a social development professional, I periodically visit the study locations but found the spatial and structural layout as well as infrastructural development has remained same for more than five decades after Ghana’s independence from colonial rule. This stagnation in socio-economic growth diversely impact education and livelihood on women living here. I am therefore interested in how women are implicated in literacy and development under the circumstances and such factors partly informed my interest and position for the study.

Moreover, experiences in humanitarian work provides an opportunity to sociologically observe and to experience the behaviour, performance, and way of life of non-literate rural folk - especially women as they navigate life in a knowledge-based world – one in which they are unable to read or write. I appreciate the challenge in cases where non-literate women constantly have to seek the assistance of others to decipher meaning from personal messages and documents. In such cases, privacy has to be compromised; consequently, some women have been victims of fraud with negative repercussions. Some women are unable to comprehend basic health instructions and practices; directives are not followed, resulting in complications to wellness. Others lack employable skills for reliable income and livelihood and thus are dependent on spouses, some of whom exploit this vulnerability to abuse their women. Others with school-age children are unable to assist with homework or to provide educational guidance. There are exceptions to this rule however as culture and society is not stagnant but evolving and people change with the process.
Thus my background enables me to situate this analysis based on my affiliation with the experiences in this context. This position also allows for efficient articulation of the lived experiences and struggles of the women in the communities who attend the literacy classes and their conception of feminist emancipation from an African woman’s perspective. Similarly, within the context of this study my experiences as a colonial subject facilitates the issues and narratives expressed as I re-visit debates on the subject of colonialism’s impact on tradition, modernization, and change to see how elements of gender have been constructed to redefine the woman within the changing time processes. The above experiences have partly informed this micro analysis research that intends to study the real world of women without reading, writing, or numeracy skills in this socio-political and cultural context.

**Orientation of the Research**

My research is fundamentally anchored in a qualitative case study within a grounded theoretical approach. The study employs a feminist lens to conceptualize and to frame the narrative. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; 2000) and the concept of empowerment (Stromquist, 1995, Rowlands, 1997; Puthenkalam, 2004) also constitute the conceptual frameworks for the research. The two concepts are concurrently situated within the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD) development framework (Connelly et al, 2000) to theorize the link between the process of transformation and empowerment. Theories of modernization and dependency and alternative paradigms exploring rural women’s ways of knowing, knowledge acquisition, and production are also examined. This structure and outcome analysis on the policy impact on programme implementation is of importance to the study as the interrelationship potentially determines how structural-functionalism sociologically modelled behaviour (Steady, 2004).
As a result, my work traverses the normalization of agency and autonomy in gender discussions to a more radical subjective-individual policy impact analysis of literacy for empowerment at the micro level in order to set the theoretical grounding for the issues and proposals I raise.

In line with the interest and direction of research, practicability of NFE’s role in literacy provision for women will be interrogated and deconstructed (Gough, 2008). This interrogation includes several questions such as: how have the NFE literacy programmes empowered rural women? In what ways does learning acquired from literacy shape women’s thinking in addressing everyday demands and challenges? What level of autonomy is attained and how is this reflected in exercising one’s agency? In what ways do the newly acquired skills bear on their households and communities? Has the literacy episteme contributed to advanced critical skills and livelihood formation if indeed “literacy pulls people out of poverty” (Treffgarne (2005, p. 1). Participants equally came forth with questions such as:

“We will appreciate different forms of learning in the programme; can NFED make provision for that?”

“How can we mobilize other women to attend the class?”

“We need micro-credit for our petty trading, can someone assist with that?”

“Besides the field staff, is there someone we could speak to about our needs?”
The questions hypothetically outline the basic concerns of this thesis and are addressed in the light of literacy, rural development, women, and education policy.

**Problem Statement**

Adult women in Ghana’s non-formal education literacy programmes either fail to acquire the skills these programmes purport to provide or are likely to lose significant amount of their skills after the training (Aoki, 2005). Anticipated pedagogical outcomes, including micro-level transformations, never or minimally occur. This should not happen. But the curricula in the programmes Tijani Hamza (n.d) notes;

> Are not informed by an understanding of how adult non-literate could use their knowledge to help children with homework, administer medical prescriptions properly, communicate with government offices, write letters, read texts, and open bank account. Themes are chosen arbitrarily. (Some) learners find the classes irrelevant and boring (Power point presentation, Ibis Ghana).

Consequently, anticipated pedagogical outcomes, including micro-level transformations, never occur. The stated philosophies behind such intervention are undermined because the training does not create meaningful change in the lives individual or communities. I attribute the problem to both historical and structural reasons to include: culture and differences in gender socialization, the legacy of colonial education, non-feasible education reforms that disparage literacy coupled with weak NFED legal framework and controlled economic reforms. Mettle-Nunoo & Hilditch (2000) and Owusu-Mensah (2007) equally attribute the problem to the absence of a policy document that effectively governs literacy education in Ghana.

Yet, the objective of literacy is to modulate subjective thinking and to link the ability to read and write to development (Treffgarne, 2005). As Stromquist (2006) argues, “literacy
programmes from women’s perspectives must simultaneously cover equality of citizenship rights; reproductive, sexual rights, and health; income generation; and empowerment practices” (p. 150). The challenge for development according to Dighe (1995); is “to distinguish between literacy that empowers and literacy that domesticates” (p. 43) when literacy programmes are conceptualized in planning. Under this circumstance, Owusu-Mensah (2007) reiterates, the “lack of provision for and access to formal education demands the identification of alternative ways of educating if we are to meet citizens’ learning needs” (p.4). Its unfortunate NFED in Ghana has failed to narrow the literacy-life skill gap through its non-formal forms of education and mass literacy campaigns despite the gains to literacy. This is problematic.

Non-formal education could address these needs as reading and writing empower women and marginalized populations without literacy skills because literacy impact enormously on women’s mobility, social skills, and socio-economic well-being. Thus the objective to eradicate literacy particularly among women and exclusively within rural locations has been unattainable due to state, institutional and instructional challenges. Inconsistencies in implementation and training contribute to depreciate the importance of literacy education in the overall national development strategy in Ghana (GNA 2011).

**Objectives of the Study**

The research goal is to precisely assess the extent to which rural women in Ghana are empowered through literacy programmes outcomes. It specifically investigates and analyses the disorientating dilemma (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) women undergo while navigating social life that has either challenged and/or motivated them to acquire additional knowledge.
The purpose is also to objectively determine how the content of the literacy curriculum engenders demonstrable transformation in learners’ lives. This research epistemologically investigates the genre of knowledge production through non-formal education literacy training in addition to other means of learning intended to capacitate, to reinforce consciousness, and to infuse empowerment at the individual - personal level.

**The Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study, distinctively sociological is to primarily identify and understand whether women’s empowerment can possibly be achieved through literacy and to specifically examine how NFED organize the process to meet this objective. The institution for the past two decades has provided literacy in Ghana. One of the goals for this initiative is to “empower women especially those in the rural areas with unidentifiable economic and literacy skills. (Owusu-Mensah, 2007).

Whilst this is a laudable initiative, the programme is entrenched in the modernization process of WID approach as NFED follow World Bank and state directives in citizenship development because the former has been a major donor to the programme. Their goal under this circumstance is to modernize women through reading and writing rather than to interrogate genders relations and the consequences of patriarchal dominance from a GAD perspective. This perspective engenders equality between males and females and empowers women towards development. Women’s interest in the programme has waned which is evident in the participants’ claims to indicate that the knowledge fail to respond to their long-term needs and to improve their quality of life as they had expected. One participant stated; “we need more hands-on training than book work.” Another reiterated; “I don’t feel
empowered, I have to find a job that matches my skills but it’s impossible as I cannot speak English, only Ga – the local language.” Learner turnover has been all time high - 17% coupled with other institutional challenges.

But as knowledge is changing so are female epistemologies and ways of knowing to survive in the new economy because “development of the knowledge economy has been associated with divergent social processes” Walby (2007. p.9). The knowledge-based economy Wably further explains,

Provides higher skilled, more autonomous, more flexible, better quality jobs, coordinated through flatter hierarchies and networks. Knowledge has newly become the primary source of productivity and competitiveness. The shift from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy affects both the content and organizational form of employment. The nature of the work requires cooperation and communication rather than coordination through simple hierarchies. It enables greater flexibility in the use of labour time, removes certain spatial constraints on where work is carried out, and facilitates the development of new forms of careers and attachments. Therefore the focus is on human-based knowledge varying in emphasis from education and human capital (p.9).

This attribute to linking literacy with empowerment by NFED for women to achieve the goals is what the research hopes to uncover. As such, the study is guided by the following objectives:

i) To determine the prospects of literacy in rural women’s empowerment and the changing pattern of the programme in the Ga Rural Area in Ghana.

ii) To assess how women are implicated in non-formal education and the extent to which the literacy pedagogy engender personal transformation.

iii) To explore Non-Formal Education institutional outlook and effectiveness in rural literacy provision for social development.
iv) To assemble, analyze and interpret subjective and objective information from the findings to generate and employ substantive theory to propose recommendations for institutional regeneration.

My research questions are informed by the research objectives and vice versa whilst enquiries are explored through the *why* questions which were formulated to intercept the responses needed for discussion through the field interviews conducted on participants; a review of the relevant literature; and information drawn from NFED, literacy documents, and field notes.

**The Research Questions**

My research questions are framed to capture and investigate the issues I have raised in the introduction, the research problem and elsewhere that marginalized women should be allowed to articulate their needs and to voice their subjective perspectives rather than their needs be imposed on them. Based on this fore knowledge the major question that the research seeks to explore is: is there a connection between non formal literacy programmes and women’s empowerment? Research questions, as Creswell (2007) explains, “are distinct and provide an opportunity to encode and foreshadow an approach to inquiry” (p. 107). Thus the enquiries reflected in the interview process which enables respondents to successfully come forth with information and insights to guide the narratives as indicated in the problem statement. The subsidiary questions were outlined to respond to the major question. They include:

i. How has the education system in Ghana undergone changes to accommodate female literacy needs?

ii. What is the fundermental objective for initiating non formal education?
iii. To what extent are rural women involved and implicated in non-formal education programmes?

iv. What is the current literacy and development situation in Ghana and how do they reflect the ideals of empowerment and transformation?

Simple as they may sound these questions are intricate and complex. Stake (1995) reiterates:

“They are intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts… issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, and the complex backgrounds of human concern and address the major concerns and perplexities to be resolved” (p. 17 cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 109).

As anticipated, the literature analysis and data collection process responded to the epistemological and ontological enquiries in the study.

**Significance of the Study**

This study responds to the questions proposed on women’s empowerment through literacy and development, as well as state and institutions responsibilities towards this objective. Scholarly claims and institutional investigations that link literacy to women’s development certainly fall short on the subjective formation of the female in shaping empowerment, agency, and autonomy (see Aoki, 2005; Chao, 1999). This has been due to the social (and possibly Western) emphasis on formal education as the correct form of education and which has prevented programme planners from carefully examining the benefits of non-formal education. Consequently, a certain level of awareness is essential to understand the power dynamics, which institutions are expected to put in perspective, and embedded within the self-development process. Thus the study provides space for marginalized women to articulate their opinions and perspectives towards literacy in Ghana.
The political nature of literacy programmes obviously fail to incorporate learners’ invaluable opinions into programme planning. Theorists like MacLaren (1992) and Stromquist (2006) comment on this disconnect, particularly between content (input) and study (outcomes) in the literacy delivery process. Based on the observations, the study fosters analyses in the relationship, gaps and challenges between Non-Formal Education, government and private institutions in regards to literacy work, and examines the documenting process of the outcomes for future analysis. This significantly provides opportunity for the institutions to conduct self-evaluations as actors in development to address the gaps in engagement towards the advancement of informed strategic plans for nation-building. The study equally argues that the location-specific knowledge will be a resource to NFED in Ghana as participants’ feedback could be considered for incorporation into future curriculum.

Previously, individual learning needs have often been arranged through informal means like apprenticeship as masters and mistresses of the trade are understudied by individuals for a period of time to acquire trade skills. The training duration is arranged between learner-trainer after which trade-study rites are performed to usher the trainee into the profession. This practice is presently on-going and such trainees may be equally found in the literacy classes to learn to read and write to enhance their technical skills. Thus non-formal education in a post-colonial country like Ghana becomes imperative as citizens’ learning demands that the process be strategically established as an integral part in citizenship and democratic development to increase the literacy levels in the country. The implication of this study has respectively been due to the inadequacies in theorization and research on such alternative forms of education, particularly as this classification signifies an absence of rigour, structure, and certification, which many assume means is lesser than formal education.
The study’s arguments invariably demonstrate a necessity for an in-depth assessment of the impact of literacy on females’ psycho-social and socio-economic empowerment. We must broaden the scope of present empirical debates to reconstruct our methodological processes and operational framework(s) while simultaneously expanding operations to connect education, personal development, and society. This era of economic development in Ghana, over fifty years after independence, presents a favourable setting to explore the literacy-development nexus from perspectives and lived experiences of the agents of change themselves: rural women in Ghana.

Thus the responsibility obviously necessitates the exploration of a theoretical connection, if any, between literacy and empowerment. Much as the study’s conceptual analysis is to inherently understand the lived experiences of female learners in literacy programmes within a micro-context, the experiences are situated within a macro-structural analysis of socio-economic transitional processes which shaped development and the gendered differences in education and globalization. Considering the forgoing analysis, this case study ultimately and significantly intersects with other critiques to re-examine positivist and neo-liberal positioning in literacy because these tendencies not only restrain the agency of individuals in development but also encumber approaches to development-from-within. Also as external controls undoubtedly bottle-up internal initiatives and resolutions for literacy, the study significantly illustrates the extent to which the controls had primarily failed to conceptualize a holistic approach towards literacy effectiveness in Ghana.
Limitation of the Study

A number of limitations were identified in the course of the field work and the writing process. The observations are outlined here for analytical purposes. The NFED is currently negotiating with government to change its civil service status to that of a public service entity. Details of the negotiations could not be divulged to me as the information involved constitutes discreet corporate matters. Discretion is therefore required in terms of how much information can be made accessible to the public. Respecting this reality, I did not delve into the process during my interviews with NFED staff to avoid violating any confidentiality protocol. The recommendations made in this research were eventually based on information available to me at the time of the research.

Similarly, though I was able to identify numerous literatures on the topic under discussion, only the specific materials considered appropriate to generate questions and theory on inquiry, and to identify the gaps in discourse were considered for analysis. Within this micro research context there are varied issues on women and development both on and off the field obviously on differential power, inequities and deprivation which necessitate similar consideration., I am obligated however, under the principles of this research to focus on the proposed objectives and methods which essentially acknowledge the stream of conditions entrenched within the postulated process to lay out the consequences for conceptualization. In that case, the enquiry was disciplined to reside within the scope delineated in the format of the study and methodology.

The field is equally saturated with information which could certainly develop into a new analytical inquiry. I was however compelled to keep within the structure and scope of this
Moreover, I naturally became part of the investigation as a researcher’s bias is undeniably inseparable from their analysis specifically in qualitative studies. Thus I was compelled to simultaneously navigate between analytical binaries of objectivity and personal subjective views within which my voice obviously became part of the dissertation due to prior experiences on the subject matter and interest generated from listening to the stories of my study’s participants. As a learner reiterate;

“Sister, please, informs others about your visit and the challenges in the programme. Please be our voice.”

I also take responsibility for any issues, editorial mistakes and translation arising from the thesis.

**Thesis Structure and Format**

The dissertation is categorised into eight chapters. The introduction is set in chapter one and which outlines the entire thesis. Here, I also articulate my personal location to justify my position and interest specifically for this research.

Chapter two provides a sociological overview of Ghana. It discusses the economic, political, education and spatial details of the country in pre and postcolonial settings within a historical context. It further critique how such conditions have impact education of women, schooling, adult literacy, rural development, socialisation, and gender relations in the Ga rural area.

The third chapter presents and critiques the conceptual frameworks employ for the dissertation. It explores the concepts of transformative learning and empowerment and simultaneously critiques the implication in the development process in Ghana. The feminist development paradigms of Women in Development (WID), Women and Development
(WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD) were equally analysed to ascertain how women have been implicated in interventions from multiple feminist paradigmic perspective in Ghana.

I present the research methodology and methods of data collection in chapter four, and critically explain the different approaches to and strategies for theorising, instruments, input, and process. The data collection procedure, the participants and documents used to gather information and out of which the narrative was developed are outlined to indicate the sources and voices from which the theories were generated. It was based on the outcomes that recommendations were put together.

Chapter five offers a review of literature to identify the theoretical gaps and differences. This review includes literature on the impact of education, literacy, and development on women in Ghana. The literature is subjected to a comparative and critical analysis to examine convergences and divergences in the arguments and theoretical connections. This exercise steadily set the direction for the discourse analysis as I was able to determine the embedded power relations and to know which voice to assign more discursive power from the array of voices presented.

The sixth chapter specifies my research findings and data analysis. The findings are organised in thematic mode through creative interpretations, thorough examination, and conceptual systematisation of the data. I emphasize the voices of participants against contemporary debates surrounding women’s education - discussion they are often marginalized within. The process was particularly beneficial for the study as a strategy to
propose new theories towards the construction of intermediate frameworks to address systemic inequalities.

Following, the data is interpreted in chapter seven. Here, the exercise synchronizes a subjective analysis to position the author’s observation and voice in the narrative to portray my engagement with the study and also as means to theorize concerning the circumstances and issues arising.

Finally, chapter eight is made up of the recommendations, proposals and policy frameworks. It features a range of proposals that include literacy effectiveness, learner-centred models, capacity-building, governance and administration, funding, fundraising, partnership development, and NFED institutional innovation for programme improvement. They are presented to address the problems the research seeks to explore and thus the recommendations positions hypothetical solutions towards that.

The name of the research location and participants are concealed under pseudonym (Ogden, 2008) to justify respondents’ confidentiality and to protect participants’ identity as outlined in the University of Toronto’s ethics review process and interview consent. The objective is equally meant to minimize readers gaze and judgement, so they would rather reiterate, theorize and juxtapose the issues presented in a broader context.

**Summary**

This chapter foregrounds an account to uncover the extent to which systemic issues create inequities in the provision of education to the detriment of women. It outlines explanations for persistent comparatively high levels of non-literate women in Ghana, states phenomenal implications for this issue, and eventually links the relevance of knowledge to empowerment
and development. Historical, socio-cultural and structural antecedents were discovered to have shaped the present education realities to the detriment of females. Thus the debate surrounding this reality as observed from the research objectives and research questions informed the orientation of the study together with the data collection and analysis and chapter formation.
“The programme is depreciating. Learner attendance is very low because they are dissatisfied with the organising. We are equally fed up! – Ms Asma

Chapter Two

Sociological Overview and Information on Ghana

Introduction

The above epigram is a quote from a research participant. It simultaneously explains the extent to which learners are implicated and objectified in the programme, as well as the present state of learning. This chapter presents an overview of Ghana to contextualize the issues raised in the study with particular attention paid to the forces that influenced the current state of education in the country. It also examines NFED as an institution and programmes offered particularly literacy for women; and the impact of Ghana’s social structure on female education and how this is charted through its status as a pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence nation.

Map of Ghana
Geography, Population and Demography

Ghana is a popular country, both globally and on the continent of Africa for variety of reasons. It is famous for its slave castles and peaceful democracy and, more recently, for the discovery of oil – one of the world’s most sort after natural resource. The country is geographically situated by the south-western portion of the Sahara desert and the West Coast of the African continent. It is bordered on the east by Togo, on the west by Cote d’Ivoire, on the north by Burkina Faso, and on the south by the Gulf of Guinea. It covers a land mass of 238,535 square kilometres from coast to coast (Wikipedia); and is located about 750 kilometres north of the equator between latitudes 4 to 11.5 north (Ghana Embassy in Ottawa website). The country has two distinct seasons: a rainy season and a dry season. The rainy season occurs from April through August, and the dry season from October through March. The temperature is generally around 20 degrees depending on the location, season, and month. March is the hottest month and August the coldest.

The vegetation varies nationwide from location to location as the country spans from the Atlantic Ocean to the savannah regions. Ghana’s coastal belt is made up of plain grassland with shrub patches and small forests. In the west, the country features a tropical rainforest. Its middle-eastern belt is mountainous and forest-like while the northern stretch is savannah land. Rivers like the Volta, Pra, Tano, and Ankobra criss-cross the country. The Volta Lake is the biggest man-made lake constructed to generate hydropower for the country and beyond. Fauna and flora spatially abound everywhere.

Migration, urban growth, and development in the last two decades have brought about intense spatial transformations in the country: farmlands have been replaced by real estate
development, infrastructure, and business activities. Such geo-human activities have resulted in the disappearing of rural farmlands putting the livelihood of rural dwellers and small produce growers in Accra, the capital city, and its environs in jeopardy. As one participant Auntie Momo indicates:

“I go farther into the wooded area to gather farm-fringe produce as the community elders have sold our farmland to real estate developers. This has affected the quantity of produce I currently harvest. But I need income to supplement my family needs. It’s the reason for my absenteeism from class. I have to survive, you see.”

Her assertion indicates the impact on geo-spatial changes on human livelihood, development and subsequent impact on women in particular as females are equally expected to provide for their household yet they form the poorest majority and, at the same time do not have access to resources.

Ghana encompasses nearly 3,300 square miles of land with a population of almost 25 million. This is made up of 51.3% females and 48.7% males (GGoP, 2011; Ghana Census, 2012). The statistics imply that women outnumber men. The population comprises more than 75 ethnic groups; the largest is the Akan, then the Mole-Dagbon, the Ewe, and the Ga-Dangme. There are more than 250 dialects spoken throughout the country. The most common languages are Asante, Ewe, Fanti, Dagbani, Dagarti, Ga, Hausa, Kusase, and Nzema. Statistics from the 2012 Populations & Housing Census Report stated:

The population and sex ratio enumerated in the census in 2010 was 24,658,823 made up of 12,024,845 males (48.8%) and 12,633,978 females (51.2%), giving an overall sex ratio of 95.2/100 (p.xi).

Life expectancy for a Ghanaian is around 59 years. 58% of the population are literate, which can be interpreted that they can read and write in one local language and/or English. However, the majority who are literate - 40% are male (Amu, 2005). English is the official
language of Ghana; it is taught in most schools and used as a means of communication in business and commerce countrywide. While the population has increased at a rate of about 10% within the last two decades (www.ghanaweb.com), improvement in education to accommodate women has not equalled this growth.

Traditional patriarchal practices in Ghana imply that women are subordinate to men and ensure that inheritance and succession systems favour men over women. Women do not share power equally with their male counterparts and this is reflected through freedom of speech, choice, property ownership, and autonomy. This cultural practice is microscopically presented by Sister Bene, a participant. She said;

“I have to seek permission from my husband before I registered in the literacy class. He did grant it but first had to check the programme content and class schedule. You know, he has to know what I am doing at all times. It’s a cultural practice.”

The statement to an outsider may be interpreted as subordination but it is because social relations are organized differently in Ghana. Therefore spouses require each other’s consent as approval to initiatives. The practice does not imply disempowerment or dominance – it could be in some cases because as in all societies there are exceptions to the rule in regards to relations, attitudes and behaviours.

Economy of Ghana

Although Ghana abounds with natural resources like gold, diamonds, timber, and oil the economy is more agrarian than industrial. The GNP is heavily dependent on revenue from the export of cocoa, timber, and extracted minerals like gold, diamonds, and oil. About 30% of the population farm cash crops, rear livestock, and engage in produce cultivation for sale in local markets, hotels, and restaurants for their livelihood. According to a survey by the
World Bank (2013), real GDP was 47.93 billion dollars, GDP growth was 7.1%, and inflation 11.6%. In reality, on a continuum, education, life chances, and equality of life can be classified as moderate to low.

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Ghana changed the economy and restructured the public sector by redirecting the provision of public services from the mid-1980s to the present. Thus subsidies for social services were discontinued. The restructuring resulted in a raise in the cost of living and affordability, causing a decrease to the standard of living to the detriment of an already poverty-stricken population. A transitional economy resulted from the structural interference of which two sides of arguments resulted. Whilst some laud SAP others argue it encumbered the pace of the nation’s progress due to the resulting debt servicing and IMF economic controls. Family experiences under such economic circumstances are compelled to make choices that invariably affect their children’s education with gendered implications. Family resources tend to be invested more in boys’ schooling than girls’ due to cultural practices which uphold preferences for male children. This practice is historically rooted in tradition as families’ required male labour to farm and to provide for the family’s livelihood. Men are also expected to procreate to sustain their family’s lineage, to be heirs to the throne, or to be custodians of family wealth (see Moser, 1989). Consequently, they are accorded more importance than women in the socialisation process. Therefore high and unaffordable tuition coupled with lower household income socio-economically compel families to decide on which child should attain what level of education. These decisions do not typically favour girls who eventually have to either drop out of school
or complete only at a basic level, dictated by the family, after which they may be signed up for informal apprenticeship training to learn a so-called *feminine* occupation.

Due to ineffective governance and austere donor directives, the impact of foreign aid and donor support that flooded the country in the ‘70s and ‘80s has been insignificant in affecting economic growth and social development. Instability in education planning and policy persists as decisions are based on World Bank and IMF directives. Supply for space, infrastructure, resources, and teachers have remained constant from the colonial period while student numbers and learning needs have increased in the last five decades. However, vocation, technical, and non-formal forms of education have been negligible as skills from such forms of training are alluded to school *drop-outs* by society, and are comparatively perceived as inferior to formal white collar ones. Literacy is categorised under these skills set hence the disparaging.

While the population living in poverty decreased from 51.7% in 1991-92 to 28.5% in 2005 people still live in extreme poverty in cities and in rural areas. According to the 2010 Population & Housing Census report:

Of the adult population fifteen years and older, 73.2% of males and 70.0% of females were reported as being economically active. Conversely, 26.8% of the males and 30.0% of females were considered economically inactive. In the category of professional workers, females have a higher proportion (5.4%) than males (4.1%). Almost a third of women (31.6%) are engaged as service and sales workers, this is more than three times that of men (10.1%). For females, the proportion which was self-employed was 69.4% in 2010 and that of was males 60.2 % (p.xi).

The country has not experience major improvement to its unemployment and underemployment situation. Unemployment remained high at 8.5% in 2010 and about 14 million people between the ages of 14 and 64 were unemployed. In some cases incomes can be less than a $100 per month for individuals and households (www.ghanaweb.com).
Politics Administration and Democracy

Ghana is divided into ten administrative regions. Accra is the capital city and it is the land of the Ga. As it is the biggest city (in terms of modernity but not geographic) and nation’s capital other ethnic groups can also be located here due to industrialization, migration, and urbanization. Two major political parties dominate the country’s politics: the New Democratic Congress (NDC Party), the current ruling party, and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the opposition. The People’s National Party (PNP) and Convention People’s Party (CPP) also have parliamentary representation.

The political landscape after Ghana’s independence from the British in March 1958 has been murky. Colonial domination and subsequent suppression from undemocratic governance has fashioned an elite (sometimes wealthy) group of citizens who rule the country. The first Prime Minister Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, governed the country under a civilian government until he was overthrown in a coup d’état in 1966. Successive civilian and military coup d’états followed his overthrow until the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) took over in 1981. The Council was metamorphosed into a political party known as the National Democratic congress (NDC) after almost two decades as a military government and intense citizens’ advocacy for democratic elected government. Political activities were once again revived which subsequently led to a democratically held election in 2000 to usher the opposition NPP into power (www.ghanaweb.com)

Democracy and democratic rule are comparatively infantile and have only been active in the last two decades as Ghana has been plagued with numerous coup d’états between 1966 and 1981. Six changes in government in this period, coupled with external economic governance
in internal state affairs, somewhat destabilized economic growth and development. Changes in government likewise affected education policy reforms as policy proposals initiated for example by a government are abandon by another ruling party upon assuming power. The famous Seven-Year Development Plan drawn by Dr. Nkrumah’s government in the 1960’s and which was subsequently neglected by other ruling parties despite supporting practical elements for social change is a typical example. The government has focused on economic growth more than education and social development for several decades due to the philosophical conviction that the former rather than the latter could lever people out of poverty (see Dzorgbo, 2001).

Lack of support for social change affected education and has undermined the fostering of constructive growth and critical thinking. Political instability and ineffective governance are reflected in shifting leadership, minimal budgetary allocations, and nationwide neglect of the quality of and access to schooling in the education sector. Such (in) actions and inconsistencies invariably obstruct the effective execution of education plans and programmes to the detriment of educating citizens, especially women and marginalized populations.

**Religion and Religious Beliefs**

We as Ghanaians perceive ourselves as very religious people. It is evident in our behaviour, socially and through expression of faith in everyday interaction and spiritual practices. Churches, mosques, shrines, scared and traditional places of worship, and spiritual groves are visible throughout the country. People travel as far as they can to worship God or the
Supreme Being or the Higher One. The name depends on one’s belief, belief system, religious affiliation, spirituality, and faith.

Ghanaians practiced (and some still do) Traditional African Religion (TRA) prior to the arrival of the missionaries to Africa and their subsequent takeover of the Gold Coast in the 1700s. Practitioners of TRA believe in a Supreme Being while worshipping smaller gods; the sun, moon, and stars; thunder; rainfall; and natural elements like trees, rivers, and stones. They also practice ancestral worship, witchcraft, sorcery, and fetishism, and witch doctors and fetish priests/priestesses mediate between TRA believers and the spirits.

Christianity and Islamic worship were introduced to the people by proselytization through Christian missionaries and Moslems from the trans-Saharan trade and currently constitute the dominant faiths in Ghana. Currently, orthodox and Pentecostal churches like the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Adventist, Lutheran, Mennonite, and Islamic can be found in numerous places throughout the country. Oriental and other forms of worship like Christian Science, Grail Message, Ba’hai Faith, and the Latter Day Saints have also emerged.

Faith-based institutions such as the Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist churches have historically contributed enormously towards education and non-formal literacy in Ghana. They assumed responsibility of schooling to continue to educating the populace after colonial rule as majority of schools were built and governed by missionaries and so churches became automatic custodian of the properties and plans (Dei, 2004, Eyiah, 2004). For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses offer non-formal literacy classes for interested adherents to acquire 3R skills in Bible reading and effective participation in proselyting. The
participants interviewed - majority of who attend orthodox churches offer similar reasons as motivation for literacy in their communities. The participants stated and I have cited a few that:

“I am happy I can now read the Bible because of the literacy classes.

“I feel confident I can read the Bible at church and sing from the hymn book which I could not do prior to attending the literacy class.”

This is a paradox. Women dominate religious-based classes yet the notion of a woman been subordinate to man has been historically and contemporarily upheld in some religions. Until recently equality between men and women was not wholly supported by some churches, let alone seen as a responsibility, in view of the above socio-religious differences. The tradition historically began with the Europeans as their colonial castle schools only enrolled boys; girls were expected to stay at home to assist with chores. Women are educated for marriage. Some critics even argue that this step in unnecessary and deride the notion of educating women at all. Thus in both the mainstream and in religious circles the woman has been objectified as the “other” (Said, 1977), compromising her right to equality and respect.

Religious bodies continue to be immensely involved in education; their focus presently is on tertiary education in Ghana. Both orthodox and Pentecostal churches have set up and own universities in the last two decades. They include Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Methodist universities; Central University College; Valley View University; and Dominion University College. An Islamic university can also be found in the country. Other churches and places of worship in communities offer their spaces for non-formal literacy training for
local language and English study. Much as the spaces are to everyone open as anticipated they are typically dominated by members of the faith.

The extent to which literacy is organized and offered in such spaces is different from secular institutions and this needs theorizing. Why have religious communities been deeply involved with education in Ghana? Is it their moral obligation to educate or it’s for ethical reason? How is their religious interest represented in the curriculum? Which demographics attend the schools? Religious studies form part of the curriculum in literacy as teaching materials are usually religious texts and language skills are emphasized more than IGA skills. While participation is for all, learners are predominantly women, similar to NFE literacy classes. Is this a coincidence or a pattern? If it’s the latter, what factors have reinforced this phenomenon from pre- to post-independence education in Ghana?

**Socialisation and Social Relations**

Men and women are socialised differently in Ghanaian cultures. This socialisation process invariably determines and influences social relations between the sexes and in society at large. It also manifests in the allocation of resource for boys and girls and the attention paid to each in different contexts. For example, formal schooling began in the Elmina, Cape Coast, and Christiansborg castles built by the Europeans and managed by the missionaries during colonial rule (Eyiah, 2002; 2004; see also Foster, 1965). Preference was given to boys to enrol in the schools by both parents and missionaries. Parents were reluctant to release their girls for education since domestic skills were assumed to be informal schooling for them. A participant Maa Melee reiterated:

“"I was not enrolled in school as a child because I am a girl. This is the reason I am trying to learn how to read and write when I’m almost sixty years old.”"
Dialectically, female subjective self-development in this case seems to be of less importance to their families as helpers for domestic activities than their objective value of themselves. Such historical gender differences continually manifest in Ghana where education is concerned.

Girls are unlikely to attend school and could drop-out of school at any level. They are also less likely to be motivated to attain higher education. In most rural locations poverty exacerbates these issues. Girls are socialised differently even inside the classroom, because pedagogy and the school environment itself – the hidden curriculum reflect an extension of the cultural socialization process. Teachers persuade girls to pursue feminine/nurturing professions like nursing, teaching, and secretarial duties instead of technical and managerial ones. Gender discrimination is thereby inevitable as females are seamlessly objectified from the home to school to places of worship to the workplace – a reflection of a society of patriarchal and power.

Under in some instances, children could be sent to live with either a relative or to serve as a helper with a benefactor especially in the city. This child if a girl is unlikely to be enrolled in school and more likely to be signed-up for an informal apprenticeship, depending on her age and the social status of her benefactor. Otherwise, she is likely to remain at home doing housework as long as possible.

Human rights and freedom of speech are undervalued, but the exhibition of the latter is changing with intensification democracy and advocacy. Even so, culturally one is expected to speak with a form of decorum and protocol, especially to older people and traditional leaders. Comprehension of issues of human security, social protection, legal rights, gender, and
economic growth is relatively lower among individual citizens due to low levels of literacy. As a result, spousal abuse; domestic violence; child, elder, and disability neglect, are human rights issues improperly conceptualized by most Ghanaians. The 2010 Population & Housing Census Report indicate, “about two-thirds of households (65.3%) are headed by males while more than one third (37.7%) are headed by females” (p.xi). The condition represents a classic example of gender inequality despite the presence of numerous development and empowerment projects. Nationwide civic education been undertaken by some NGOs is facilitating awareness through legal and human rights literacy specifically among women in rural communities by training and learning of social protection processes.

**Education and Schooling in Ghana**

Education and schooling in the country has a long history dating back to colonialism. While the government appears to hold the monopoly on education, private and religious interests are equally prevalent in education provision. European missionaries and churches were the primary educators until government began to redirect education after Ghana’s independence in 1957. Statistics from the 2010 Population & Housing census report:

The current school attendance for the population six years and older is 40.7% for males compared to 38.6% for females. Enrolment at the primary level for the population aged six to eleven years is 75.4% for boys and 76.3% for girls. The rates for the population aged twelve to fourteen years are 99.1% for boys and 91.7% for girls. Those aged fifteen to seventeen (SHS) years are 50.8% for boys and 44.9% for girls. The rates for the population aged eighteen to twenty-one years (tertiary) are 10.8% for males and 7.5% for females (p.xi).

The government’s role is to formulate educational policy and, provide the legal framework, and directives to guide wide-ranging interests to better serve/educate citizens.
Various actors on the other hand provide one form of education or another. They include: churches, community development groups, professional skills trade associations/guilds, and political. The government began to complement and harmonize the efforts through subsequent education development plans. As Dewey (1909) notes, “education and politics are two functions fundamentally controlled by public opinion. Yet the conspicuous lack of efficiency and economy in the school and in the state has quickened our recognition of a larger need for expert advice” (p. vi). In the case under consideration it is foreign intervention for development.

Some churches have partially managed their education by claiming moral and spiritual reasons for their conduct. The objective reflected participants’ responses as a majority – approximately 60% first allude to religious reasons as personal motivation for participating in literacy. Responses like:

“I want to learn to read the Bible.”

“It’s fulfilling to quote scriptural verses during Bible classes.”

“Reading the Bible at church is my foremost objective for joining the class.”

“I worship with this church where this literacy class is held so I took advantage of the proximity to attend the literacy class to learn reading and writing to be able read the Bible”

“I can orally cite verses from the Bible but cannot read from the Holy Book. I want to open and read the references and challenge people of other faith when they come proselyting in my house.”

But their actions, examined against Dewey’s arguments on moral education, could be dialectically placed in the context of what education stands for or is perceived as within religion. On this basis Dewey (1909) argued,
It is out of the question to keep direct moral considerations constantly uppermost. But it is not out of the question to aim at making the methods of learning, of acquiring intellectual power, and of assimilating subject-matter, such that they will render behaviour more enlightened, more consistent, more vigorous than otherwise would be (p.2-3).

We can settle on the argument that education has both moral and economic values depending on the contextual circumstances in which such education is offered, and individual motivation and aspirations for learning.

Moving forward the presence of non-governmental organizations and international agencies in Ghana from the 1980s equally complement government effort in refining issues of access and quality in education as the agencies assist with capacity-building and governance issues in education management locally to bolster the services of the Ministry (Mfum-Mensah 2003; Akrong, 2008; Fennell, 2008; Owusu-Mensah, 2007; Fuseini and Abudu, 2014). Yet, while education is considered a human right and Ghana is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the country’s holistic national education framework fails to offer the basic provision of education. Literacy levels in Ghana vary locally in the different regions, between ethnic groups, and within rural and urban areas as formal and non-formal education are equally under-resourced. Given the above scenario the gender-literacy gap differences is equally dissimilar within regions due to colonial rule and its attendant effect on education arrangement.

**Pre and Post-Colonial Education and Development**

The first Education Ordinance, according to Eyiah (2004), was passed in 1852 to provide a better education for citizens. Since independence, Ghana has made some strides in its education system as a result of major policy initiatives adopted by various government administrations. Some of these policies and laws include the Education Act of 1961, the

Education development, however, has circulated through series of changes. Whereas in the colonial period churches and missionaries handled education, other education providers have risen in the contemporary post-independence period. The NGO sector, civil society advocates motivated by socio-economic and cultural changes, and the community/faith providers suggest different methods of operation in the provision of education (Fennell, 2008). Such nuances necessitate the examination of complementary forms of education to demonstrate their contribution towards eradicating illiteracy.

According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS, 2008), the school attendance rate, despite government efforts to make education accessible, was 86% during the year of the survey (p. v). The same survey report also indicated 51% of adults are literate in English or a local language; however, there are substantial differences between the sexes and the localities as far as literacy is concerned. Almost 70% of adults in urban areas are literate while only 40% of adults in rural areas and most of these are adult women.

While government initiatives have structurally supported improvements to the education system in terms of access, teaching, learning quality, infrastructure delivery, and management efficiency (www.ghana.gov.gh), to some subordinate groups in rural
communities access to schooling is increasingly non-existent. Therefore, while formal education is highly regarded by some, basic non-formal ways of learning remains elusive to other social groups. Non-formal literacy activities which until the 1990s are scattered nationwide were formalized as stated elsewhere by the then PNDC government to offer literacy for such marginalized groups is unable to render efficient service due to structural challenges (Owusu-Mensah, 2007).

Relatedly, despite the strides been made in progress to empower women in Ghana economically and to have basic education, they have not fared so well in education interventions in the post-colonial era as education policies have not given much attention to the learning needs of females particularly those in rural areas. The state failed to appropriately capture the learning needs of women’s in most educations policies. In cases where national survey or education reports are written only a paragraph or as little as page-long proposal is devoted in policy documents to encompass literacy needs in Ghana. Under this practice reports fail to supply comprehensive framework for learner recruitment, funding, stakeholders and partners involvement in addition to programme strategies which tend to be virtually absent or understated in such policy documents. The outlook has undoubtedly weakened the linkage between adult education, NGOs education activities and non-formal education towards literacy implementation programmes in Ghana.

Following the on-going discussion it is obvious the observable dichotomies are the result of imbalance resource distribution which I attribute elsewhere to both external global dictates and internal governance factors and lapses in inter-link institutional communication. Such inadequacies in education obviously hold implications for government in the pursuance of
alternate means to create opportunities for literacy for those who miss out on formal education.

**Educating Women in Ghana**

One of the objectives of education is to socialise individuals but gender differences plays out in the socialisation process of the sexes in the school system in Ghana. The practice has implications for girls’ occupation choices and for the future. The nature/nurture and private/public divide (Engels, 1884) is reflected in how teaching and learning is organized to engender or to reinforce representation and gendering in the classroom.

For example, teachers discuss the progress of boys more often with parents than that of girls. Female career paths often seem to have been pre-determined; in some cases, girls are immediately enrolled in nurturing/semi-skilled occupations when they are unable to make the higher grades necessary to qualify for tertiary education. This phenomenon, however, began to change shortly after the first Beijing women’s conference in 1995. The meeting culminated in the formation of women/girls empowerment programmes in Ghana, creating advocacy platforms to address gender equality and equity issues in the country (see Ghana’s Women’s Manifesto, FAWE, WILDAF, and The Ark Programmes). Equal opportunity for girls, including education, became a pervasive issue that was extensively discussed.

Information provided by the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census indicate that:

The proportion of males currently attending school in 2010 (43%) is more than twice what it was in 1960 (18.7%). For the females however, there was a four-fold increase from 9.6 % in 1960 to 38.6% in 2010. Similarly for past school attendance, male attendance doubled between 1960 and 2010 (from 18% to 38.7%), but the female proportion quadrupled, from7.4% to 33.0%. The ten-year period between 2000 and 2010 seems to have experienced a significant improvement in education. The
proportion of males who had never attended school declined dramatically from 33.1% to 18.3% while the decline in the proportion for females was even greater, from 44.5% to 28.3% (p.26).

While practical changes in girls’ education have been relatively protracted, girls who find themselves in school have become more assertive as they are socially-aware and are therefore likely to participate and engage more in social discussions. Boundaries in gender occupational roles is also been broken by women who choose non-traditional occupations hitherto perceived as roles for males only in both basic and in higher education. Until recently, the ratio of females to males in tertiary institutions remains minimal. The Tertiary education Gross Enrolment is 10.8% for males and 7.5% for females (GSS, Population and Housing Census, 2010, p.30).

Similarly, according to the Ghana Statistical Services (GSS, 2002), nearly half of the adult population in Ghana was non-literate. The rate decreased to 28.5% after almost a decade (GSS 2012). This statistic has implications for non-formal education as the non-literate population is comparatively higher among women. In the year 2000, 44% of women, as opposed to 21.1% of men, had no formal education (GLSS, 2000. p.4). Given that formal - and in some cases informal - employment required basic education and skills it follows that women in Ghana would be at a disadvantaged in terms of access to meaningful employment and sustainable livelihood (Women Manifesto in Ghana, 2004). The question remains: how can we narrow the gender inequality gap through formal and non-formal education?

Non-formal Literacy Programme - Gbenta Municipality

Accra is the capital city of Ghana, and beyond the city’s core are its suburbs and rural enclaves. Gbenta municipality is one of the recent districts created under the administration of President John Kuffuor in 2008. It is located in the north eastern part of the city. This
vicinity is spatially transforming from a rural locale into a sprawling settlement boosted by real estate development, business, and universities. Its population is about 78,215 with area coverage of 98.3 km² (Ghana Statistical Service 2010; Business Ghana website). It is twenty-one kilometers from Accra by road. The four rural settings selected for this study lie within the jurisdiction of the municipality within the Greater Accra region. NFED actively implement programmes in this municipality.

The NFED office/space is located within a cluster of government offices on a relatively small property. My expectation when offered the letter of introduction to the municipality was to walk into an office building belonging to the NFED but to my surprise it was to my imagination too small to be called an “office”. The Programme Coordinator (PC) in charge of the day-to-day operations and fifteen other staff work here. They are responsible for literacy programme implementation in the localities. I could not hide my astonishment in the moment when the PC welcome me and said:

Welcome to our office! Please sit down. This is our workplace. This is the municipality’s office of the NFED. I hope you did not encounter difficulties in locating us as we do not have directional signs to guide our visitors to this location? You see, we are like squatters here (pointing to the floor) so we feel ashamed to bring visitors to the office but we’ve got to work, so again, welcome!

NFED does not own property in any of the learning locations so the community and churches allocate spaces for interested learners and facilitators to meet for lessons. Literacy classes are held in the four different locations. Three of the four happen to be faith-based church spaces; the fourth is a village meeting place. According to participants, classes have been held in the locations since NFED introduced literacy over a decade ago. Much as participants’ articulate the impact of literacy in their personal lives, this is not the same with the communities they live. The reason been that, NFED lack institutional presence as it does own physical
structures in this locality to be accorded the respect and authority alluded to institutions like the school or hospital. Yet this ambiance in itself bolsters corporate morale.

**Research Location and Context**

This research is a multi-site study conducted in four rural locations. The communities included: Obaanye, Noyaa, Gbenta, and Ekome.

Of the four places, the Gbenta community is the largest and most developed, infrastructure-wise. While Noyaa and Obaanye are also experiencing some structural changes with sprawling property development, often resulting in dichotomized villages that feature old and new buildings, Ekome has not seen that much change. The physical outlook of the municipality is changing; the growth however is obviously skewed. The rich elite and developers who purchase properties build infrastructure, services, and amenities on their sections of the village but they are inaccessible to the rural communities. I call this spatial difference the village-town development phenomenon. Thus schools and other facilities have remained the same as they were during the colonial era. Motivation for girls education and school attendance is minimal in the communities hence the introduction of NFE’s literacy initiatives to provide functional skills especially for young adults and women. Literacy classes are held in each of the communities.

The choice of study location was influenced by two reasons. First, was to deconstruct the discourse that development will trickle-down to modernize underdeveloped areas. While the enclaves lay within the capital city ironically, they are textually rural. Life in villages is a mixed experience and a continuum between rurality and modernity. Second, my cultural background and spoken language happened to be similar to that of the people – my intended
participants thus offering the opportunity to enter into the lives of the women to capture and to theorize the epistemologies of their lived experiences.

The physical spaces and school environments of the communities, coupled with cultural socialisation practices, de-motivate girls to complete basic education and to attain higher. Those who complete or drop out learn a trade, like hair dressing or sewing. Other women without familial and economic support for apprenticeship sell in the market or assist with the family home business. A number of the women take part in the literacy programme.

My choice for this group of participants is anchored in Creswell’s (2003) assertion that “qualitative research takes place in the natural setting...uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic ... and involves active participation by participants and sensitivity to participants in the study” (p. 181). Thus, the changing phenomenon: structural, population and diversity in literacy class constituents the multiplicity of phenomenon certainly, allows identification of unusual activities, and participants’ provision of historical information which enables the researcher to obtain participants direct language and words to represent thoughtful data (see Creswell, 2003). It is a unique microcosm of a classic development-in-observation.

Summary

Insightful historical information on education and development and the formation of NFE literacy in Ghana as indicated was influenced by colonial impact on education. This long gestating pattern has remained in practice. The issue of educating females has persisted to dominate gender-development reporting in Ghana which implies that women have still not been fully brought on board education and development. Ambiguities embodied in
conceptualizing gender in Ghanaian cultures are contemplated as fundamental reason for failure to narrow the gender-education gap. Likewise insignificant changes within the governance structures, education infrastructure and educational management have failed to accommodate citizens learning needs. Modernization in reality has not significantly advanced education and people in ways development experts had presumed in Ghana.
“The fact that I can currently read and write does not imply I am empowered. Empowerment means money in your bag. I don’t have the money so I don’t feel empowered” - Sis Bea

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The above statement reflectively implies that empowerment means different things to different people. I cogitate this assertion as an entry point to critically examine whether literacy possess transforming elements for individuals. The conceptual frameworks to set the theoretical direction for the study are discussed in this chapter. The discussion is sub-divided into four parts. Following, the frameworks are initially explored from a discursive approach to centre the individual/learner within an interface of the two concepts. The second underlines implications of the frameworks in practice. The third demonstrates evidence that Ghanaian women have been visibly transformed through literacy and capacity-building to engage in the social development process however, to some extent. A critique is offered on the frameworks in the final part of the section.

Transformative learning and empowerment are concepts employed to identify and examine the prognosis of personal development from critical pedagogy (learning that transforms). The two concepts are further operationalized to interpret aspects of change and to construct the cognitive development process of the self towards skill acquisition that informs, shapes, and empowers individuals.
**Conceptual Discursive Framework**

Transformative learning and empowerment are two conceptual frameworks which possibly identify and map the historical antecedents in feminism, gender, and education to connect the implications of systemic, socio-economic and cultural structures on female education and development. Transformative learning singly presents an opportunity for individual critical reflection when old ways of knowing which fail to generate desired results come under scrutiny (Dirkx, 1998). Knowledge and schemes are subsequently devised to empower self to stimulate new perspectives to challenge identifiable disempowering socio-cultural norms. The framework thus question and explore the interface between the changing self and society through critical thinking.

Within the changing phase of the world order in development, globalization and lately sustainability as well as the focus on the global *Education for All* (EFA) initiative, and studies constituting knowledgeable individuals require approaches that link micro-subjective experiences to broader macro-societal structures. In that case, models of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Rowlands, 1997; Stromquist, 1995; Puthenkalam, 2004) along with the transformative learning framework (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Cranton, 2006; Freire 1987; Dirks, 1998) postulate useful approaches to facilitate the exploration and construction of women’s points of view, experiences, and participation in conceptualizing everyday literacy practices. The transformative learning framework, for instance, conceptualizes speculations concerning rural women’s attitudes towards education to confront inequality and unequal power relations inherently created through socialisation (Habermas, 1971; Friere 1970a; 1970b; Kitchener and King 1990 cited in Mezirow, 1991).
In other words, the transformative learning framework harmonizes the fragmented epistemological strands of adult education. Dirks (1998) notes; “it illuminates the rich, multi-focal and multi-layered nature of adult learning” (p. 9). Consistent with this harmonization technique, a ten-phase conceptual process that systemised key analytical tools to characterize an interchange between individual’s agent (subjective) and structural (objective) influence was essentialized by Mezirow (see Mezirow 1991, p. 168-169; 1981, p. 7). According to Mezirow (1991), “the fact that the concept asserts elemental transformative learning process of scanning, construct, imagination, insight, interpretation, reflection, and validity testing” (p. 164) complements adult learning process.

The process Mezirow postulates indicates that new ways of knowing intended to empower are created and internalized in progressive phases. Mezirow for that reason expanded the core concepts of his transformative learning framework (Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2006) based on initial complementary theories from Habermas (1987, 1984, 1971), Freire (1970), Daloz (1986), Boyd (1991), and Wertsch (1979) to include critical self-reflection, critical discourse, and perspective transformation. This modification broadened the constituent elements of the concept to connect the interaction between perspective transformation, and meaning perspective for the individual (Mezirow, 2000; 1991) where the s/he becomes the focus of and subject of the discourse in the change process rather than the object of a phenomenon.

Modern society’s dramatically diversifying beliefs, values, and social practices challenge adults to keep up with such changes. Mezirow (1991) further argues that “such sequential revolution for change entertains desires for enhanced transformative ways of knowing given that idiosyncratic influences and cultural assimilation from earlier socialisation modelling frames of reference no longer suffice” (p. 307). These phenomena have disconnected the
ideal and reality for women who cannot read or write but such dislocations, as Maxine Greene (1975) notes, “are endemic to modern life as the learner’s central concern is with ordering her/his own life-world when dislocation occurs” (p. 307 cited in Mezirow 1991).

Consequently, Mezirow (1991) built on this argument to suggest that “rather than mere adapting to changing circumstance, adults acquire new perspectives to gain a complete understanding and control over their lives” (p. 3) as a means of adjustment. Women in Ghana seem to be taking this line of action individually whilst simultaneously making this connection as means to reinvent the self. Thus a transformative learning theoretical approach works to rupture such dilemmas in this instance as the dislocation support the construct of innovative ways of thinking to potentially stabilize the individual. Thus what Greene termed “dislocations” (p. 196) Mezirow identifies as “disorienting dilemmas” (p. 197). Daloz (1986) calls them “frayed old experiences” which Mezirow (1991) encompassed to constitute “failure of recipe learning as the study revealed led to individual premise reflection and perspective learning” (p.197-198). As Mezirow (1991) puts it, “Transformative learning framework is therefore a process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (p. 5) as it allows for self-reflection followed by action. The objective of transformative learning at this point citing Dirkx (1998), “Is to identify coercive forces constraining actualization by freeing and influencing individuals through reflection, dialogue, critique, discernment, imagination, and action” (p. 8-9). Such assertions collectively essentialize transformative learning theory as a framework towards understanding dynamic adult learning principles as it potentially transforms meanings, schemes, and perspectives through critical thinking (Dirkx, 1998; Mezirow, 1991).
Accordingly, to examine the learning process of transformation it is important to recognize that transformative educators are informed by their transformative learning philosophical assumptions when facilitating learning. These assumptions simultaneously have a bearing on and (in) directly guide what is taught and learnt to inform critical thinking. It is imperative therefore to interrogate current educational reforms in Ghana to understand knowledge produced through schooling and education to subject/individual formation. In response to the argument Dirkx’s (1998) observes Clarke (1993) had identified four of such philosophical strands. They include; “transformation as consciousness-raising (Paulo Freire), transformation as critical reflection (Mezirow), transformation as development (Daloz), and transformation as individuation (Boyd)” (as cited in Dirkx 1998, p. 9-10) to classify the different philosophical leanings. The categorization Dirkx (1998) establishes, “stress the importance of a dialectical relationship of self and society within the learning experience, as [v]arious forces and dynamics within society need to be understood from one's personal experience” (p. 10). A critical assessment of each strand would benefit a practitioner’s choice of philosophical perspective when addressing a particular intervention. This philosophical distinction Mezirow (1991) observes, “demonstrates a means of or a process for achieving self-empowerment, autonomy, power, self-esteem, as transformative learning process of scanning, construal, imaginative insight, and interpretation are irreversible once completed” (p. 152, 164), he argued.

In light of the analysis, questions theoretically related to the study need to be addressed. For example, in what ways did the women studied identify transformative elements that informed or reinforced empowerment to attain socio-cognitive experience from their learning? Which perspectives changed and which remained unchanged? How were the experiences
articulated? These ontological and epistemological questions necessitate a judicious hypothetical examination; the conceptual link between empowerment as an outcome of transformative learning was axiomatically grounded to establish that assessment. It is the reason why transformative learning framework was constructively meant to equip and to create critical thinking among learners (Mezirow, 1991). But how is this critical modelling channelled to re-orient women through their journey towards empowerment? An analytical application to ascertain the extent to which the framework theoretically speaks to the above questions follows; whilst the responses create a theoretical bridge between transformative learning and the concept of empowerment.

Empowerment theoretically has been discovered to be multi-dimensional in approach and is conceived as an ideology or a worldview with local-national, micro-mega, and individual-global connections (Sadan, 2004; Agrawal & Rao, 2004). It is conceptualized differently in diverse social and political contexts (Puthenkalam, 2004), considered holistic in nature, inter-sectoral in approach (Bhasin, 1985; CESO, 2006), and causes internal (psychological) and external (political) change (Sadan, 2004). Despite its contextual, contested, and dualistic differences, feminists advocate for empowerment projects to address strategic more than practical gender needs (Molyneux, 1985) as the strategic generates the empowering outcomes beneficial to women.

Relatedly, as an intervention strategy, Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland (2006) argue; “the empowerment framework strengthens people’s asset-based agency and modifies institutional rules by shaping human behaviour and interaction” (p.29). The outcome objectively and purposively attempts to create power balance between men and women (Agrawal & Rao, 2004). Thus its conventions resonates with the GAD paradigm which postulate that women’s
immediate practical needs should be distinguished from their long-term strategic needs as needs specific to women differ in various socio-political contexts (Moser, 1983, 1989; Molyneux, 1985).

Within such assumptions Rowlands (1997) implicitly notes:

The concept significantly points not only towards knowledge or skill acquisition to improve self; rather it involves cultivating critical skills to interrogate impeding structures - social, political, cultural or economic militating against the expression of power within. Albeit, empowerment framework in development context has been constructed on a definition of “power over” in which women are empowered to participate within the economic and political structures (p. 11).

Feminists contest this initiative because of its co-opted approach in women and change process as it justifies for the failure of most WID and WAD projects in Ghana. It is understood in this case and in her study that one group has “power over” the other. The disadvantaged/marginalized group is thus seeking “power to” increase capability for resistance to challenge that dominance (Rowlands, 1997). The propensity of the empowerment framework to influence power in this case categorises it as an initiative or tool with interrogative capacity to challenge differences in power as it seeks/advocates for balance in power-sharing. Through this interplay in power dynamics Rowlands explains the Foucaudian analysis of how power is constituted in a network of relationships among subjects who seek power. Rowlands (1997) further describes it as a “mode of actions upon actions” (p. 12). Explicit in the argument is the assumption that power is not a given privilege; rather, one has to rupture boundaries to claim it as a right. The impact in such power imbalances is the reason GAD and Gender, Culture and Development (GCAD) approaches advocate for equal opportunities and participation for men and women in development. Much as the two are perceived as equal counterparts within a given culture for
the mere fact that they share similar space, advocacy for gender equity and equality would be impracticable without women’s access to resources and opportunities.

An empowerment framework, for that matter, “rationalizes a process to change the distribution of power, in both interpersonal relations and in institutions” according to Stromquist (1995, p. 13). This complements Mezirow’s (1990, 2000) theoretical argument that it is through such imbalance relationships that perspectives change to generate the questioning of one’s assumptions, values, and beliefs. Correspondently, conceptualizing the empowerment framework as a way to enhance the “capacities of a person, community, nation, institution, organization, to generate growth and self-sustenance within its own empowered capacity” (Ratnaswamy 2004 in Agrawal & Rao 2004, p. 103) encapsulate the transformation aspect in the perspective change process. Such constructive theoretical layers potentially influence the interpretation of the concept not only on the basis of process or outcome but also the cause-effect relationship between how former, pre-existing and future systems and structures potentially shape the individual.

**Implications of the Conceptual Frameworks**

The theoretical implications of the frameworks are worth discussing at this point.

The study identified that both empowerment and transformative learning frameworks denote a moving state. For example, Lazo (1995) argues, “It exhibits a continuum that varies in degrees of power and relativity which logically implies a movement from a state of powerlessness to powerfulness. But the extreme ends of the continuum are of course idealized states” (p. 27). The mobility is indisputably transformation in process as empowerment outcome lies within the movement in perspective.
Based on both literature and the study’s findings empowerment ultimately represents a phenomenon, like a continuum on which the level of change is presumably measurable. It symbolizes chains of influence which contribute to the creation of a state of powerlessness for an individual. As a result, the goals and approaches adopted to address such inadequacies empower the individual. In that case, the empowerment framework could be theorize as embedded with (in) visible elements within the cycle of transformation (Ratnaswamy, 2004) from a state of powerlessness to one of power.

Evidently, an empowerment framework contributes to the depoliticization of power. The arguments situates Ratnaswamy, (2004) assertion that “empowerment inclines to empower inadequacy; builds; expands; adds power to enhance ability; provides opportunity to evaluate capacity, identify future needs; has ability to rebuild; and its equity and promise of a future with a present on the basis of the past” (cited in Agrawal and Rao, 2004 p. 193). Thus the approach is perceived as a relational framework because it challenges patriarchal structures perpetuating gender discrimination, social immobility, and inequality and problematizes the aggravation of power over the marginalized.

Therefore, the critical consideration of the conceptual definitions initiated by Stromquist (1995) and Rowlands (1997) in many ways complement Ratnaswamy’s (2004) as together the theorists generate a conceptual matrix for mapping a sociological analysis to examine the “intrinsic and instrumental values of empowerment” (Puthenkalam, 2004, p 328). Such a framework invariably supports the identification of the complexities of solutions meant to meet the strategic individual needs of women in Ghana.
In addition, elements fundamental to conceptual arguments on empowerment and its systemic impact on women cited in feminist development narratives (Connelly et al 2000; Moser 1983) have indispensability fore grounded the outcome to the poor and marginalized if they are to change their social and material conditions (Rowlands, 1997). In line with the foregoing arguments, Puthenkalam (2004) suggests “conditions such as access to productive resources; inclusion, participation and organization; accountability; local governance and organizational capacity; and gender equality” (p. 329) need to be present and presented to catalyze such actualization. These conditions should consistently focus on improving/reinforcing people’s choices and bargaining strength (Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006, Kabeer, 1999, Stromquist, 1995, Lazo 1995) as empowerment denotes a process of acquiring, providing, and bestowing resources and gaining access and control (Lazo, 1995; Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002) with an objective to raise and reinforce people’s capacity for transformation.

Following, Lazo (1995) posits, “If empowerment enables a person to gain insight and awareness as to what is undesirable and unfavourable about her current situation, and to perceive a better situation and the possibilities of attaining it” (p. 25), then my argument is; the position assumed here ought to interrogate the governing constituents within these changes. This awareness can be likened to Mezirow’s perspective change and critical thinking theory. If so, in terms of be-coming, at least, democratic transformation is contemplated by the individual as political, implying that the ability to participate in decision-making within the structures of power, to have a voice to exercise self-determination is reflected upon. In that case, Stromquist’s (1995) perception of empowerment
as “not merely concern(ing) personal identity but that which brings out a broader analysis of human rights and social justice” (p. 13) offers credibility to accentuate Lazo’s (1995) theory.

The complexity of the observations fundermentally introduce a comprehensive feminist enquiry into contemporary development interventions which project empowering activities with an intent to address women’s strategic needs in the non-formal sphere, similar to the literacy programmes researched in this study. Such intervention essentially should exhibit “cognitive, psychological, political, and economic” components (Stromquist, 1995, p. 14) which ideally constitute a holistic empowerment framework to generate the desired transformative outcomes.

Ultimately, to empower and to transform is a purposeful goal. Thus, Rowlands’ (1997) notions of “personal development - developing a sense of self and individuality; relational development - the ability to negotiate, influence relationships and decisions; and collectiveness - where individuals work together to achieve extensive impact” (p. 15) must be inclusive to conceive or construct critical autonomous citizens.

**Transformative Learning and Empowerment in Practice – Women in Ghana**

Transformation either personal or political is ideological. I therefore agree that the reverse in perspective change, as Wiegersma (2011) argues, “Has brought greater participation and leadership among women in peace (women’s) movements and in governments in Africa” (p. 291) but only to some extent. The literacy training and related programmes observed in my study partially contribute to women’s empowerment in Ghana. The framework highlights how women gain strength (Lazo, 1995, Moser, 1983; Sen and Grown, 1987); organise to foster self-reliance, assert their rights, make choices, and control resources in an effort to eliminate their own subordination (Rowlands, 1997). That said specifications rather than
generalizations of learning outcomes are essential in a critique on transformation and empowerment as circumstances which inform, shape, and construct the depth and extent of empowerment differ in different contexts. I concur with Gautam, Banskota, and Manchanda (2011) who ask, “How do we understand women’s transformative experience from a relative invisibility to visible protagonism” (p. 341)?

I would argue that though the empowerment framework in feminist development paradigms undeniably exhibits certain ideological differences the method and perspectives in articulating and advocating against patriarchy and oppression, in integrating women into development, and in fostering fair gender relations complement the struggles of Ghanaian women as they carrying out the mission of challenging the status quo. Through the ingenuity of the women with the provision of various literacy programmes - legal, microfinance, family, disability, health, HIV/AID - and with selected support from international agencies and civil society organizations they have been better able to leverage opportunities to assert for their rights as a unified force.

Their activities, to some extent, resulted in empowering local-to-national women advocacy groups to interrogate the existing power relations and to encourage the analysis of power embedded within existing gender/cultural relations to inform change. Through women’s leadership and communication, politicians and law makers have advocated about issues pertaining to women and intersectionality - disability, discrimination, domestic violence - and access to resources for micro-macro development planning. Women also identified discrepancies in rural-urban resource allocation and how the incongruities impact on rural women.
Ghanaian women collectively motivate each other to learn, to integrate socially, and acquire assets, to be autonomous, articulate, and to exercise their agency and rights. Advocacy activities encourage women as a collective to learn by participating in community forums, literacy classes, and farming extension services. They broaden their social networks through association with self-help and microcredit groups to control their finances, their reproduction, their bodies and sexuality, and they do this all in the spirit of African women’s emancipation.

Also, because the empowerment framework advocates against discrimination women generally are more conscious of harmful traditional and cultural practices and overtly counteract such dehumanizing customs. Examples include: widowhood rites, female genital mutilation, girls’ slavery to shrines, and bride selling. Women have also shown interest in alternative forms of education: some attend night schools, some have private tutoring, and at the household level insist for education and girls retention in schools to lower drop-out rates and to increase adult literacy programme for older women in communities. The power imbalance has developed tenacity in women to participate in literacy classes, religious educational group activities, cooperatives, skill-training, and capacity-building programmes. Women assert their rights more than ever, own businesses, work outside of their homes, and exercise self-determination as practise to subjugate systemic and patriarchal oppression.

Evidently, interventions on capacity-building to empower Ghanaians has contributed to women’s emancipation (Friere, 1970; 1973), creating solidarity that reinforces their voice and challenges systemic inequities to make way for better opportunities. A number of women as a result now have access to farmlands, to credit for businesses, and to training and networking opportunities. They have successfully lobbied for policy changes like the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill in parliament. The Ministry of Women, Children’s Affairs and
Social Protection (MWCASP) and the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Police Department as designated by the government over a decade ago to specifically politicize and handle issues of abuse affecting women and their families. Women have campaigned for representation in political spaces is now identified to be representing constituents as parliamentarians; others participate in decision-making and leadership roles at the local and in national institutions. A number of women’s organizations have challenged politicians to incorporate micro-level issues affecting women into macro-level policy decisions.

As synonymous with campaigns on social transformation, challenges abound in empowerment projects despite the progression and successes: there are imbalances throughout the journey towards transformation in the struggle to achieve balance. Systemic and structural issues, governance, ideological differences (Eurocentric and African/colonial), cultural norms, values and practices, traditional and religious beliefs, spatial accessibility, and lower literacy levels among the general populace and women specifically persistently impede potential victories.

**Critique of the Frameworks**

The choice of the two conceptual frameworks has proved suitable for the expected outcomes for this study. But of course, we must also identify the theoretical flaws to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, and parameters. Such limitations are highlighted below.

First, some theorists (see Boyd, 1991; 1988) had disagreed with the psycho critical viewpoint of transformative learning and argue that it eclipses alternative conceptions of transformative learning. For example, the role of spirituality, positionality, emancipatory learning, and neurobiology (Taylor, 2008, 1998; Dirks, 1998) in the framework are minimized by the
obscurity. Taylor (2008) believes, “The exciting part of this diversity of theoretical perspectives has the potential to offer a more diverse interpretation of transformative learning with significant implications for practice” (p. 3). I share in this theoretical position.

Also, empowerment and transformative learning frameworks have been critiqued for characterizing processes as if they can be started and completed in a linear progression from start point to end point (Boyd, Dirks), rather than a cycle. In this form of conceptual ordering (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) change is perceived and positioned as unilateral without much contemplation to the fact that the progression may or could be affected by unanticipated factors and events. Such critics assert that change should instead be conceptualized multilaterally as it materializes from varied sources: internal/external, intrinsic/extrinsic, or social/political.

In other words, the ability to capture the dimensions of the framework from diverse perspectives necessitates empowerment be conceptualized within a duality to initiate a contextual-based analysis from which the outcomes materialized. In the same logic, either as a process or an outcome, the empowerment framework poses a theoretical challenge (Agrawal & Rao, 2004; Sadan, 2004; Sen, 2000; Ahmed 1999; Kabeer, 1999; Sen & Dreze, 1996). Radical or socialist feminists argue for the transformation of patriarchal structures to harmonize equal social relations. While the outcome of that process is to transform, Agrawal and Rao (2004) ask an important question: is “such transformation smooth, acceptable and sustainable” (p. 193)? I would add another question: is it absent of politics and control?

The frameworks also manifest as psychoanalytical tools though less on the empowerment frame which emphasizes more on the socio-cognitive, the theory of transformative learning
does focus on psychoanalysis. It has been argued by critics of the theory (see Dirkx, Dalos, Taylor, Boyd) to draw on the psychology of the individual to appeal to cognition, criticality, change, perception, and internalization of norms from all forms of socialization that need de/re-internalization.

As consistent with empowerment the process or outcome towards change has to be informed through relational components to include other individuals, actors and society elements of equity, equality and assess before the individual could be perceived as been impacted to be empowered. Such significant variations happened to be the central converging point of the frameworks and which reflected in diverse ways in the study. Ultimately, both frameworks independently exhibit distinct multi-dimensional attributes. A unique example is Mezirow’s (1991) proposal of the changing phases of an individual’s perspective in which he applies his ten-point analysis to explain the changing process individuals experience at each step in the course of transformation.

Regardless of the limitations, an amalgamation of the two specifically in this study conceptually supports the formation of a discourse to discursively centre the individual as the subject of focus, bring self-awareness and identify the role of individuals in the context of development. The views expressed in the frameworks confirm that as individuals reside within a context and circumstances pertaining to that specific context enormously impact on them it is important to speculate context-specific planning in social development interventions to align with specificities in need-related solutions. Despite their collective pitfalls, the theoretical ideas/ideals of each framework effectively capture the socio-psychological processes that together inform and shape the transformative outcomes in an
individual’s learning journey which happens to be an appreciable collaboration to both human and social development.

Summary

Transformative learning theory and empowerment were conceptualized in a discursive ontology to critique the learner’s position subjectively in the education and learning process. The supposition of learner transformative evolvement towards empowerment is examined within the spectrum of the two conceptual schemes. The ideological outcomes certainly established that there are cognitive elements between the two frameworks that connect, inform and shape individual’s criticality and identity to redefine the self in society. Much as the elements are external however, to the learner we agree with the arguments in the theories that the external conditions should be situated to complement the internal changing processes if the learner is to attain actualization of the self in society. Considering the above observations I conclude; the frameworks fundamentally blend the social and psychological ontology to seamlessly address the changes in human, personal,
“Our issues and needs seem to have been misrepresented so we do not receive what we ask for in this programme.” – Aunt Jay

Chapter Four

Literature Review

Introduction

Women’s issues and needs have been historically misrepresented. This concern was evident in both the literature and in the field - the literacy programme. Literature is thus reviewed in this chapter to identify authorial positionalities, to critique, and to triangulate the convergent and divergent perspectives and ultimately frame the gaps in the theoretical discourse through evaluation of literacy, education, women, gender, and development for the study. Though the focus of this study is on four communities in Ghana, national and transnational literature on the broad topic of education will be contrasted in this context to parallel the analysis and issues. This review thus captures a myriad of voices from selected resources to signify the extent to which current studies redefine existing knowledge on the subject matter so the chapter is organised in two parts. The first offers an overview of how development has produced education, women, and literacy in Ghana. The second identifies the gaps in the literature to present a historical analysis and critique of their evolvement of the Non-Formal Education Division (NFED), and the literacy education programme from pre - to post-colonial era.
Non-Formal Education and Adult Literacy Initiatives in Ghana

The United Nations (UN) and other world/global bodies advance universal strategies towards global reforms for quality, accessible, and affordable education to address issues on basic education. The agencies objective has been to educate both children and adults to acquire reading, writing, and numeracy skills through formal and non-formal means of training (Leys, 1996; Owusu-Mensah, 2007). Coincidentally, the UN’s 1990 *Literacy For All* initiative to make literacy accessible for the vulnerable and women worldwide parallel the *Education For All* (EFA) 1990 Jomtien, Thailand, meeting where pledges were made to resolve similar issues. Much as both events have implications for women, especially in contexts where interventions presumably respond to socio-cognitive needs of marginalized, the grandiose goals failed to generate expected educational outcomes locally and globally for obvious reasons. For example; the Ghana Population & Housing Census Report 2010 notes:

Urban literacy levels, for much of the same reasons discussed in the earlier section on education, are substantially higher than in the rural areas. At the country level, the literacy rate in the urban areas is 84.06 % compared to 62.75% in the rural areas. Conversely, the illiteracy level in rural areas is more than twice the level that in urban areas (15.94% and 37.25%). A mere 7% of the population is literate solely in a Ghanaian language, but the proportion for females is higher than for males 8.22%, against 5.94% (p.38).

Imperialism and World Bank interest in economic rather than social growth of developing economies predictably delineate and subsume education in national development planning process and that unconsciously shift the service of citizens education to the private sector. Comoditization of education in this situation has been to the detriment of the poor who are unable to afford the service due to the cost involved and which is exacerbated by their social location and poverty. Marginalized groups are undoubtedly left out in education. The issue of non-schooling in some cases could be intergenerational which unfortunately does not
augur well for the manpower needs of a country. My premise here calls for a re-evaluation of the proposals to advance functional education frameworks to effectively address these initiatives. According to Hoopers (2005):

The case towards such holistic framework in an African context can be developed from three perspectives: a strategic perspective pointing to diversity, a human rights perspective underscoring need for coherence and integration, and an African development perspective which points relevance of education to society in which children and adults (p. 29).

Hooper’s proposal intrinsically resonates with this study as NFE objectives speak for Ghana and to a large extent sub-Saharan Africa considering the region’s setback in education attainment. The sub-region is noticeably plagued with economic insecurity, political instability, conflict, HIV/AIDS, high mortality rate which deter nations from reaching appreciable levels in education outcomes.

In the 2002 EFA Monitoring Report, for example, Hooper (2005) notes, “Only 3 out of 30 sample countries had a chance of reaching the 2015 Universal Primary Education (UPE) goal” (p. 30). He reiterates this as a wake-up call for adult educators. Hooper’s argument is based on the assumption that if education is considered a human right (UN Human Rights 1945) then the interface between the right to education and wider economic, social, and cultural rights should be of significance to development. This right to education, as Hoopers (2005) argues, “Can be met in different and not necessarily equal ways to meet the provision of basic needs” (p. 32). This implies a parallel democratic citizenship development. Hooper (2005) like Molyneux (1985), further calls for the progression of human and women’s needs from basic to strategic. The strategic need, Hooper (2005) states, “is one that recognises a right to equivalent learning attainment for girls (and women) if they are to overcome social subjugation and patriarchal oppression” (p. 32). What constitute such needs?
If adult literacy is an alternative form of education that speaks to learners’ needs, then we should expect literacy to address the socio-cognitive abilities of individuals and capacitate and construct citizens capable of interrogating social inequalities of reproduction and patriarchy (Mezirow, 1981, 1990). This philosophical reasoning connects to the arguments of theoreticians and adherents of Mezirow’s (1981; 1990) that emphasize the “internal learning processes,” “psycho-cultural” learning moments, and “disorienting dilemmas” to often accompany a new perspective in an individual (as cited in Spencer 2006, p. 55). It implies that transformative moments seem to catalyze and inform change in the personal and in wider contexts.

In that case, the perspective of education in development (Charlton, 1984) should uphold the transformative tendencies. As Hooper (2005) emphasizes:

> It should significantly explore the place and role of education in the context of socio-economic development. This process however calls for the integration of elements from different worlds, different forms of learning, settings and actors as it is within this context that NFE initiatives have become part of national efforts to reconstruct basic education (p. 32-33).

That said it is imperative to examine the projections of education policy against its reality to ascertain where change is greatest. The policies essentially hold implications for subjective micro-development and constitute beneficiaries’ involvement, to the extent to which women might participate in education and literacy in Ghana.

The NFED in Ghana has played an integral role in literacy and development since its inception in 1991. However, while the institution’s role is to coordinate non-formal literacy programmes nationwide, structural and governance challenges have beleaguered and encumbered its goals and vision.
Literacy indisputably provides an immeasurable opportunity for one to fully participate politically, socially, and culturally. Our impact on society is enhanced by our ability to disseminate information and contribute to public discussions on politics, economics, and democracy (Eyiah, 2002). Despite this quintessence, prior approaches to reduce illiteracy, according to Aryeetey and Kwakye (2005) in the PAMOJA Draft Report (2010),

were characterized by short mass literacy campaigns as adult literacy activities initially were the responsibility of religious bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ghana until the Non Formal Education Division (NFED) was establishment in 1991 through PNDC Law…with responsibility to eradicate illiteracy by 2015 (p. 2).

So why were literacy initiatives prior to NFED insufficient in Ghana? What are the drivers for the provision of literacy? What motivates individuals to participate? Which population is the target of literacy programmes? In what ways have such literacy interventions impacted on females? What is the programme’s philosophical framework? How is it organized, funded, implemented, and evaluated? What are its elemental processes and how are its challenges and outcomes defined? The stream of questions will be subsequently addressed in the ensuing critique.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (MOE), NFED is officially responsible for non-formal education, literacy and numeracy, health/child care, farming practices, and income-generation activities for citizens (interview with Mr. Gogi, 2013). Aryeetey and Kwakye (2005) describe the initiative as “a strategy for sustainable development to empower people to develop themselves and participate in the process of development, especially those living in rural communities, to become functionally literate with emphasis on women” (cited in Owusu-Mensah (2007, p. 2). Similar to most literacy programmes NFED’s justification for literacy, according to Aryeetey and Kwakye (2005):
Is to provide learning to meet participants personal or social needs; enhance their abilities and competencies in the everyday life in literate communities; equip learners with knowledge, attitudes and skills to raise quality of life in their communities; enable improvement of occupational skills through functional literacy; broaden reading interests and establish an attitude for reading through the provision of follow-up literacy supplementary reading materials (as cited in Owusu-Mensah 2007 p. 8).

Proposals designed for functional literacy classes constitute reading and writing in some (not all) Ghanaian languages and, in a handful of cases, English, in addition to basic numeracy, health/child care, environment, and income generating activities (Aoki, 2005; Aryettey and Kwakye, 2005; GLLIBT, n.d; PAMOJA, 2007; UNESCO/IEP 2006). The institution literacy delivery framework is set in Paulo Freire’s philosophical notion of “consciousness-raising,” “personal transformation,” and “empowerment” (interview with Mr. Gogi, 2012; Freire, 1987). Presently, the ideological perspective directing non-formal education activities within the country (and globally) serve neoliberal objectives (Yates 1997; Aoki, 200; Chao, 1999; Mr. Gogi interview; 2013).

**Education and Development for Women**

It is appropriate to define the concept of “development,” as development like empowerment means different things to different people. Todaro’s (2000) suggestion advisedly is “to define the term by its values and objectives in order to reflect the topic under discussion” (p. 14). According to Todaro (2000),

Development has traditionally meant the capacity of national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates of perhaps 5%-7% or more (p. 14).

Todaro’s definition leans more on the economic side of the process than the social. But this is not surprising as development strategies often focus on rapid industrialization and measure growth in fiscal, infrastructural, and technological terms rather at a personal, human level.
This definition often comes at the expense of agriculture, rural development, and individual well-being. Though economic aspects of development are often supplemented by casual reference to non-economic social indicators like literacy, schooling, health conditions, and provisions for housing (Todaro, 2000; Leys, 1996), the references frequently seem incidental. In time, a large number of social change interventions come at the expense of man and the environment due to the consistent non-human definitions of development. As Todoro (2000) reiterates,

This process explains reasons for the failure of the modernization and dependency theories to development and their non-materialization in the creation of self-reliant independent states. The trickle-down economic growth approach rather deepened poverty among nations and people Western ideologies theories were meant to dictate socio-economic processes than augment them. Ironically, the two theories provide elaborate ideas revolving around the social construction of gender differences with recurring themes of modernity, development and self-reliance informed by gender preoccupations and conceptions (p. 14).

Ghana had to source financial resources and expertise to modernize its economy as a strategy to yet not necessarily to support the needs of its citizens after independence. But macro socio-economic policies enforced in the South by the West had repercussions: the initiatives unfortunately resulted in debt-serving and forced the country to restructure programmes and spending as steps towards economic recovery in the 1980s and 1990s. As Morales-Gomez (1999) notes, “It led to major reductions in government spending on social and other development-support services” (as cited in Hoppers, 2006, p. 48). The austerity measures restructure not only economies but also gender relations to the detriment of women because women are more likely to lose their jobs than men. They are also the first to be impacted when subsidies are removed from services because as nurturers of families they are compelled to fill-in for care and unpaid work in times of eventualities. So how did gender
dimensions proposed in development serve female interests when women still languish at the periphery of modernity and change?

Economic interventions in developing countries which aimed at leveraging industrialization and rural productivity have failed to materialize. Rather than re-engineering social development as stated elsewhere abortive neo-liberal policy reforms deepened economic problems and with them inequalities in resource distribution, exacerbating women’s vulnerability as they were farther removed from the means of production and social services and became more susceptible to poverty (Leys, 1996). Morales-Gomez (1999) notes:

Poverty significantly led to a reduction in participation in education as education needs were neglected given that government and research does little to address illiteracy especially among adult women. NFE inevitably was pressured to substitute for non-accessible formal education (p. 173 cited in Hoopers, 2006).

Marginalizing NFE, a potential partner in economic growth, fundamentally positioned the concept as an after-thought to education planning, to the detriment of the vulnerable. Notwithstanding, Stromquist (1990) argues, “The ability to read and write in an increasingly technological society is a fundamental need, particularly for rural populations, ethnic minorities, and women … literacy constitutes an essential tool in their efforts to gain legal and socio-economic rights” (p. 95). How can this right be guaranteed while NFE is disparaged as marginalized groups are denied access to education through government’s utter indifference?

According to Stromquist (1990), “Between 1960 and 1985 the number of non-literate women rose from 68 million to 98 million globally, an increase of 44 percent, resulting in the initiation of literacy programmes by the UN and other international agencies” (p. 95). She adds, “This was directed at reducing illiteracy rates for girls and women through functional
literacy” (p. 96). But such objectives did not materialized in most developing countries like Ghana. Though modernization theory demonstrated gendered structures, Scott (1995) argues “it failed to exhibit this in the implementation of its modernity processes … and dependency theory also fails to challenge the social construction of gender” (p. 16). In the presence of non-welfare capitalist ideology the literacy/non-literacy gap is further widened and education is stretched beyond the reach of the poor. This is an obvious denial of human right and right-based approach to development (see Tsikata, 2004).

As many development interventions proved inadequate to address women’s literacy and other needs, feminists like (Steady, 2004; Connelly et al, 2000; Molenyx, 1985) conversely articulate the concept from a womanist perspective to represent the differences in the needs of women who often constitute a large number of the marginalized. Even the World Bank acknowledged re-conceptualizing its definition of the concept of development. In the 1991 World Development Report by the World Bank (as cited in Todaro, 2000) it states:

The challenge of development ... is to improve the quality of life. Especially in the world’s poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher incomes..., (and) much more. It encompasses as ends in themselves better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom, and a richer cultural life (p. 16).

Arguably, if human needs are the goals of development then sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom, as Goulet and others (in Todaro 2000) suggest, “Must serve as core values, the conceptual basis and practical guidelines for understanding development; incapable to sustain oneself implies an existing condition of ‘absolute underdevelopment’ where there happened to be needs in critical supply” (p. 18). The values equally apply to education. Though people desire better education to create better lives and esteem, social policy reforms in Ghana encumber access to such opportunities. Failure in actualization implies “the reality and idealness of women’s participation in development is (Charlton, 1984, p. 23). What needs are
being referred to here? What constitutes these needs? Who defines them? Are they imposed or co-created, and how do we harness resource for actualization?

Obviously, miscalculated Western development theories could not generate outcomes for women in the Third World as interventions failed to manifest due to policy control, ideological differences, and cultural practices (Charlton 1984; Synder & Tadesse, 1995; Stromquist, 2005). So how do we question claims to western attribution of developing underdeveloped countries?

**Literacy in the Context of Development**

Literacy for empowerment transcends the normalization and safeguarding discourses on mere literacy. I agree with arguments postulated by Hammer, Lawrence, and Huijser (2011), on empowerment which “advocate a type of critical engagement and reflection, and simultaneously recognizes and values the importance of a particular cultural (epistemological) perspective, without privileging such perspective as unchanging and finalized” (p. 184). Numerous actors are required or expected to be involved within this context of renewal in order to critically and to some extent meaningfully engage with the related knowledge difference proposed (Hammer, et al 2011).

Literacy ultimately has a place in the human-change process. In that case, how do we conceptualize the role of literacy specifically in response to the needs of women? Learners in the literacy programme are speaking to this question but their voices had not been heard by NFED because of issues of marginality. When they made statements like:

“We prefer practical, hands-on skills than mere reading and writing in the programme.”

“We want to develop group projects to generate income.”
“The length of the study must be shortened so we save some time to attend to personal issues.”

Related to the above assertions, the definitions and practices of literacy in recent debates, according to Subban (2007), “are subjected to personal, cultural, historical, and political positions which influenced and increased the complexity of deconstructing literacy in order to realize its interdisciplinary potential for personal and community development” (p. 69). Such goals are attainable only if literacy is delivered from a critical perspective with an objective to facilitate individual reflection (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). In this sense, the nuances of ethical and moral choice in development necessitates a critical examination of varied traditions to address women’s needs, though this interest must be examined in light of literary impact debates on women’s development (Charlton, 1984). I concur with both Mezirow and Charlton’s arguments; change is what development is all about, though the process does require astute critical thinking which I contend is absent in practice.

But precisely what embodies women’s needs and who defines them? While this compelling question theoretically delineate the gendered differences and cultural construction of gender to define the relation and status of women positioned as subordinate to men it also defines the power relations between the sexes. Women’s advancement undoubtedly may be deemed a threat by those with more status and power which is usually men - spouses, bosses and decision-makers. Thus, the seemingly straightforward goal of integrating women in development, as Charlton (1984) suggests, has “implications as it instantaneously challenges the social and political structures as well as the distribution of wealth and cultural mores” (p. 9). So implicitly, in what ways can we conceptualize the relationship between literacy, development, and power in gender relations?
Moreover, our impact on society is enhanced by our ability to disseminate information and to contribute to public discussions and democracy (Eyiah, 2002); literacy is inevitable if one is to fully participate in society. Thus, NFED’s justification for its position on literacy, according to Aryeetey and Kwakye (2005), is:

To provide learning to better meet participants personal or social needs, enhance their abilities and competencies in the everyday life in literate communities; equip learners with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to raise the quality of life in their communities; enable learners improve upon occupational skills through functional literacy, broaden their reading interests and establish an attitude for reading through the provision of follow-up literacy supplementary reading materials (as cited in Owusu-Mensah 2007, p. 8).

This statement substantiates the fact that just as communities vary, so do the needs of people within those communities, be they rural or urban; generalizing needs for all non-literates adults is therefore unwarranted (Radencich, 1994). Likewise, based on a case study on women’s literacy from a development point of view, Nordtveit (2008) contends, “Approaches that would generate the greatest effects within an EFA perspective may not be the best way to alleviate poverty within a MDG-perspective” (p. 405). To contextualize the arguments within empowerment processes demand the formulation and appropriate implementation of location-specific programmes to target populations.

The arguments evidently suggest that literacy has a purpose for individuals beyond being an end in itself (Wikeland, Reder & Hart-Landsberg, 1992). It’s a social practice of learning that changes a social construct - the notion of non-literateness. I do support the arguments that literacy interventions should be content-specific, should facilitate social performance, and should be devoid of band-aid solutions to problems.
Literacy Impact on Females in Ghana

I have asserted so far that education impacts women differently. According to the 2010 Population Census, “of the population eleven years and older, 74.1% are literate while 25.9% are illiterate (p.xi). Empirical research from Aoki (2005); NFE literacy programme reports (Mettle Nunoo & Hilditch, 2000; Owusu-Mensah, 2007); and development agencies like Care International, Plan International, ADRA, CRS, IBIS, PAMOJA and Actionaid claim to have trained women in Ghana to acquire literacy skills. Where the women are and what are they doing with their newly-acquired skills? If we are to discursively respond to the above questions, then responses would be likewise appreciated from policy makers, administrators of education and beneficiary communities.

The national survey on literacy indicates higher literacy in male than female at the national level. Statistics provided by the Ghana Population & Housing Census, (2010) stated:

While about 80% of the males are literate, only 68.5% of the females are literate. On the other hand, only about one-fifth of the males are illiterate compared to almost one third (31.5 %) of the females population. In all the regions, literacy rates are higher for males than for females. Male literacy is highest in the Greater Accra Region (93.6%); in all the central and southern belt regions literacy rates are over 80%. The only exception is Brong-Ahafo Region (75.4 %) whose rate still contrasts very sharply with the literacy rates of males in the northern areas of the country. Conversely, female illiteracy is lowest in the Greater Accra Region (14.7%) moderate for the central and southern belt regions, but significantly high for the regions in the northern belt- almost 70% for the Northern Region and around 60% for the Upper East and Upper West Regions (p.36).

Whereas female illiteracy is said to be lowest in the Greater Accra region - the location of this study, the phenomenon cannot be generalized for some women in the rural areas as indicative of this empirical studies. Sprawling urbanization through migration and spatial development has contributed to change in people’s attitude towards education. Such activities may have contributed to increase in female education in this region.
Therefore, though attribution may not necessarily be modernity per se, Ghanaian women are one way or another involved in either media, legal, social protection, financial literacy education programmes, or are in part been sensitized through community awareness and capacity-building interventions that impacts female empowerment. We can predicate that their lives have been impacted one way or another by the (re)forms of intervention. An enquiry in such line of thought is laudable as the key objective of the adult literacy programme which has been operating for over twenty-decades according to the Ghana Population & Housing Census (2010):

Literacy is to equip women in the informal sector with the basic numeracy and reading skills necessary to run their small-scale enterprises more professionally. This partly explains why more women than men are literate in Ghanaian local languages only. The fact that women participate in adult literacy programmes much more than men is clearly evident looking at the much higher rates of literacy in only a Ghanaian language, for females in all the regions except for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West (p.36).

It will be of interest to know how the women apply the skills within their households and their contribution to the socio-economic development of their communities. We should also be curious about their future learning aspirations, their perceptions and expectations towards literacy and whether they desire to see changes to the programmes and the extent to which such adjustments could be implemented. Such responses genuinely elaborate on the propensity for participation and also specify critical baseline information to evaluate the essence and impact of literacy programmes. It is obvious both formal and informal learning have deepened interaction and broadened social networks for women.

**Critique of the Literacy Disparity Gap in Ghana**

Though literacy work is performed and administered by institutions and accessed by individuals and groups, ideological and philosophical differences emanate within the
practice. Literacy work in Ghana can therefore be situated as multifaceted because not everyone involved – partners, stakeholders, institutions and individuals with this operation agree in principle. The differences have been influenced saliently, and guided by peoples’ own ideas on gender, religion, regional location, urban/rural divide, and status.

As Stromquist (1992) argues, “there have been relatively few studies measuring the impact of literacy as opposed to the levels of schooling and even fewer studies focusing on literacy while controlling other confounding variables” (p. 58). The practice of evaluating both formal and non-formal education programmes itself has been problematic in Ghana. This evaluation process bifurcates literacy planning because the gains to non-formal training is less visible and intangible compared to formal schooling, and therefore given less priority in national goals. Such evaluations in diverse ways obscure peculiar issues of non-traditional ways of learning, and the field where women mostly access this forms of knowledge is forgotten. This practice is detrimental to women’s literacy development as the already meagre funding for literacy projects totally disappear for lack of attention.

Yet, it is evident that learners are subject to transformative experiences as implicit to the gains in literacy (Howards, 2012; Giroux, 2006; Jarvis, 2001; Owusu-Mensah 2007; Stromquist 1990, 2005, 2006; Samat, 1996). Rarely do external evaluation and impact studies on literacy stipulate learner experiences because the number-crunching overrides pedagogy and epistemology (see Aoki, 2005). The practice satisfies neo-liberal directives since the World Bank and allies provide funds for most education projects in Ghana. As technical objectives dominate learners’ understandings, modifications that contribute to education and development become equally distant from beneficiary interest. Of course, who is interested in the subaltern’s voice?
Chao’s (1999) Ghana-World Bank assessment features statistics on disparities between male and female education attainment. Her report buttress earlier observation outlined in the 2010 Census Report and other empirical studies that more men have access to education than women; this is the reason that more women participate in adult education programmes. Narratives on literacy as means of change inevitably focus more on macro than micro issues. These assumptions reflect in Chao’s research and account which obviously did not address location-specific learner needs. For example, Chao’s (1999) argument about educating women in Ghana is an economic polemic which ignores social considerations in education. Literacy is anecdotal in Chao’s report despite the fact that her objective stimulates policy for gender and development. Her research prioritizes economic gains over individual self-improvement; consequently, her analysis lacks a comprehensive literacy plan for women in Ghana.

Likewise, while non-formal education parallel neo-liberalism objective in Ghana, ironically the NFED institution procedures are designed to empower women to challenge the social organization of the same neo-liberal system. Learners appear to be pushing the boundaries of NFED’s objective to gain access to more economic power. How do we theorize this tension between ideology, interest and practice? Responses to this question theoretically delineate epistemologies arguments into further programme analysis and to engender the question; that that do literacy benefit?

Funding is also identified as a challenge for literacy programming due to a decline in foreign aid NGO and support (see Owusu-Mensah 2007; Mettle-Nunoo & Hilditch 2000; DfID Report, 2012). Funding is more often allocated to short-term skill acquisition than long-term activities like literacy training. Literacy is further given little attention due to its apparent
non-formality which lacks the vivacity to attract both local and foreign assistance. For many westerners (and even Ghanaians) literacy is taken for granted as if it does not require some form of training, or that they cannot even imagine not being illiterate. It implies that this kind of training does not excite potential philanthropy as the issue of health or microfinance or formal education, yet we speak about universal basic education. Is literacy not part of that universality? If not, what is the definition of basic in this conceptualization? If yes, how is it been implicated in the planning process? So of course, how can women engage with “the world without the word” (Paulo Freire & Macedo, 1987) if literacy is not given the expected attention? It is for this reason that Yates (1997) deconstructs funding and donor relationship on gender and literacy to explicate how donor expectations impact of women’s learning which mostly correspond with the arguments raised above.

A 2008 Ministry of Education Report comes to a similar conclusion. The Report signifies a high adult illiteracy rate of 45.9%, of which 37.1% are male and 54.3% female (p. 2). The 2010 Population and Housing Census also suggest the disparity had to do with the fact that the population of women outnumbered that of men and as the Report stated:

> Is the fact that women participate in adult literacy programmes much more than men is clearly evident looking at the much higher rates of literacy in only a Ghanaian language, for females in all the regions except for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West. A key objective of the adult literacy programme which has been running for years is to equip women in the informal sector with the basic numeracy and reading skills necessary to run their small-scale enterprises more professionally. This partly explains why more women than men are literate in Ghanaian local languages only (p.36).

As stated previously the phenomenon is also due to the effect of colonization and other socio-cultural factors.
Much of the literature discusses the impact of literacy on women in specific locations in Ghana. Yates (1997) examines donor and gender literacy initiatives in Apam. Fallon (1999) investigates the correlation between education and social status in Larteh. Kwapong (2005) examines the practice of empowerment among women in Mo in the Brong-Ahafo Region, and Adjah (2005) argue for the importance of libraries and information hubs to support literacy in Accra. Besides, the literature indicates religious activity and NGO involvement in literacy nationwide alongside some level of government involvement (Chao, 1999; Aoki, 2004, Aryeetey and Kwakye 2006), but the institutions are clearly more active in certain locations than others. The varied studies taken together conclude that location to location literacy training needs and issues vary. At the same time, we must question why accessibility and quality of education are often prioritized and essentialized in education surveys over the relevance of schooling and educational needs in local context. We must also interrogate why certain locations are better resourced and researched than others in the education planning and development.

Furthermore, both Bhola (2000) and Aoki (2005) have conducted impact studies on functional literacy programmes in Ghana. Whereas Bhola (2000) concentrates on testing the applicability of an impact model in intervention, Aoki (2005) assesses learner capability in literacy and numeracy impact on development. The dynamics of literacy among rural women in the Greater Accra region as in many impact studies is subsumed within these studies. Aoki’s findings offer quantitative representation of literacy levels in each region and within the training batches and not sub-locations and how they contribute to the regional summation.
One means to reinforce intervention outcomes is continuity in other words; continuous access to reading materials for learners should be integral to literacy planning. This proposal constitutes the central theme in Adjah’s (2005) research conducted in Accra. Libraries, learning hubs, and reading are established to support learner cognitive development. Adjah suggests,

A need for literacy agents to liaise with librarians and plan literacy programmes which take into consideration the special needs of women as post-literacy initiatives complements the short periods of teaching basic reading and writing skills Adjah's proposal for accessible libraries with feminist literature and women successes stories (p. 188-189).

I welcome Adjah’s concerns that reading practice reinforces learner skill retention. At the same time, libraries in Ghana even now are under-resource with reading and learning materials, lack infrastructure and professional librarians human resource, especially where support for language artifacts and non-conventional readers are concerned. Thus the absence of resources would potentially inhibit this objective. In other words, can Adjah’s proposal even materialise? Nonetheless, Oxenham’s analyses correlates aspects of Adjah’s (2005) concerns. Oxenham (2004) argues, “It is more than just reading and writing and numeracy but rather a lifelong issue as acquired skills wither without practice” (p. 2). To support the means to accommodate the issue of literacy skill retention, Oxenham (2004) suggests, “effective literacy programmes need to embrace many concerns that require learner retention, study spaces, curriculum, and instructional methods to guarantee the programmes’ positive long-term outcomes” (p.3). But as in Adjah’s case, the foundational elements for constructing meaningful learning have been detached from learning itself. How can this element be restored back into education?
Much as I appreciate Yates’s (1997) critique for addressing core issues in literacy-planning, delivery, impact, and donor interest her conceptualizes kept shifting. Whereas she did not posit literacy as a panacea for personal empowerment she failed to theorize the tacit knowledge produce and exchanged in spaces through interaction. In the meantime, she acknowledges the effectiveness of reading and writing acquired by the women as additional skills to *in situ* indigenous ways of knowing. The practice reflects an accountability process created by the women to benchmark their daily business activities. In light of this advantage I argue, that women and other socially marginalized groups without reading and writing skills should be persuaded to access non-formal education if they are to leverage opportunities to better engage with the fast-paced knowledge world.

Furthermore, education impact assessment conducted in most developing countries by donor agencies are systematised with biases. But according to Bhola’s (2000) rather than constructing impact before programme evaluation; the exercise should be envision as an episteme space for systemic, constructivist, and dialectic thinking. His argument in many ways challenge the traditional all-encompassing impact studies as the practice overshadow the pitfall in non-formal education and the gender-literacy gaps to the detriment of women. The reason being, that generalized assessments obstruct in-depth details to be accommodated in local project gender-needs projection planning.

**Summary**

The issues in this section as categorized and theorize inform changes in literacy given that generalization eclipses specifics in the identification of problems. Authorial perspectives equally identify similarities and divergences in the delivery and meaning of literacy. We
realised that while literacy is understood as critical in development yet contextualizing it in practice is problematic globally. The literature also fails to harmonize the contradictions and tensions in learner, programme and macro structural perspectives, to solidify a coherent practice, or to offer a comprehensive methodology to frame the issues of women and literacy in Ghana. The issues obviously call for broader theoretical deliberations that particularize to women’s literacy needs.
“People need to know more about the programme as we will appreciate external support.” - Ms. Ansa

Chapter Five

Research Methodology and Data Collection Methods

Introduction

I interpret this participant’s comment from a sociological perspective, that people develop and expand their prospects through association with others as human beings are social creatures and survive through processes of interdependency. This is the methodology chapter and is divided in two parts. First, the study’s research methodology will be presented to include the tools of engagement and the data collection process employed. Second, the methods of data collection will be assessed; this section will describe the procedures followed during the empirical data gathering process. The limitations of the study and the challenges are also highlighted.

Given that my overall objective is to “generate and/or discover a theory” (Creswell 2007, p. 63), the study’s procedure follows a social constructivist tradition to engage grounded theory as a method to construct theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Clarke, 2005; Charmaz, 2011). In addition to the researcher’s reflection, opinions, observations, and interviewing notations, and field notes (Gay et al 2006; Berg 1995; Creswell, 2007, 2012), an inductive approach is adopted to systemically draw inferences from the raw data (Charmaz, 2011). The combined analytical activities stimulate the formation of the theories in the study.
Methodology and Research Strategy - Feminist Theory and Case Study

The study’s methodology is grounded in a feminist qualitative case study. It is a feminist study as it presents the histories and stories about women’s lived experiences in a contextual situation in Ghana. There are, therefore, epistemological and ontological considerations that have philosophical implications that can be brought to bear on the research findings.

According to Bredo (2009), a “methodological war’ ensues due to the dilemma in choice of method and representation in gender qualitative research investigation” (p. 443). A tradition of enquiry is thereby critical as it appropriately identifies and harmonizes the multi vocal discourse currently surrounding qualitative research (Creswell 1998). Besides it supports feminist research (Steady, 2004; Loesen, 2000) which philosophically bring the stories and experiences of women to centre their voices into the theoretical critiquing in the narrative. It is also a conceptualizing tool to guide the data collection, coding and analysis.

The versatility of grounded theory likewise sustains and advances the categorization of theories and model frameworks. Based on this interconnectedness, Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated,

The grounded theory consists of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build middle-range theories. The guidelines emphasize studying processes in field setting(s), engaging in simultaneous data collection and analysis, adopting comparative methods, and checking and elaborating our tentative categories (cited in Charmaz, 2011, p.360).

The feminist enquiry further supports the empowerment conceptual framework as Harding (1987) and Cook and Fonow (1986) show: “It is through this process of inquiry that the historical social conditions, identities, and subjectivity of women are socially constructed and ontology created” (as cited in Hammersley, 1992, p. 187). Certainly, this strategy is a platform and an opportunity for female interviewees to narrate and to theorize their
experiences (Smith 1987, Hill Collins, 1990; Harding 1987; hooks 2000; Olesen 2000). To achieve this goal, individuals’ expressions were captured in a context-specific situation where the study was conducted as means to make the issues come alive in the analysis.

According to Charmaz (2011), effective interaction is clearly possible through the application of practicable tools that grounded theory offers for enquiry. Subsequently the strengths of grounded theory Charmaz identified are all applicable to this study because it:

Lead to 1) defining relevant processes, 2) demonstrating their content, 3) specifying the conditions in which these processes occur, 4) conceptualizing their phrases, 5) explicating what contributes to their stability and/or change, and 6) outlining their consequences (p. 361).

Charmaz (2011) further explains that by adapting this logical frame “social justice researchers make explicit interpretations of what is happening in the empirical world and offer an analysis and depict how and why it happens” (p. 361). By attentively listening to participants’ stories and responses, and analysing the data, I postulate that the problem of literacy has been taken-for-granted in Ghana and this calls for deepening discourses on the realities of inequities associated with the power to know and knowledge. Following this proposition the grounded theory approach, Charmaz (2011) proposes, “it recognizes the constraints that historical, social, and situational conditions exert on these actions and acknowledges the researcher’s active role in shaping the data analysis” (p. 360). The approach similarly allows events on both local and global levels to be systematically analysed. Thus the theory in many respects furthers the debates of the study as it allows for the “creation of nuanced analyses” (Charmaz, p. 360) of complex social phenomena.

Moreover, poverty alleviation, literacy, women, and empowerment have been topical issues in development and generate critical discourses globally. International agencies and
stakeholders engaged in development have been researching, piloting models, and implementing strategies with the objective to enhance lives in developing countries. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has specified objectives for sustainable development which include literacy for all, universal primary education, access to healthcare, reducing maternal and child mortality, livelihood development, and gender equality (UN MDGs, 2008). Grounded theory as a method potentially responds to and addresses the foregoing discourse because, as Charmaz (2011) and others hypothesise, “it provide tools to reveal links between concrete experience of suffering and social structure, culture, and social practices or policies” (p. 362). How is Ghana faring on this continuum of evaluation if the indicators indeed measure a country’s development?

As literacy happens to be one of the goals and indicators of development, the researcher’s interest is driven to locate the correlation between literacy and women’s empowerment in rural communities in the Gbenta Municipality in Ghana. In view of the objective, the study theoretically and epistemologically lend to the “subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2008, p. 16). An inductive approach is employed from which inferences are drawn based on interpretive observations for the analysis from a grounded theory perspective. Grounded theory further supports the inductive-deductive exercise of coding and categorizing data as it allows the dismantling and re-constituting of information to decipher trends in recurring issues for the “theoretical sampling” (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross & Rusk, 2007, p. 1137; Boychuk, Drchscher & Morgan, 2004). Charmaz & Bryant (2008) add that “grounded theorists prompt entirely new sample empirical areas from those in which they began their study” (p. 375). The versatility of the theory offered the ability to adapt to new questions that emerge as more data is collected for theorization.
Similarly, the embedded power difference between researcher and researched decisively necessitates a feminist methodology and grounded theory to authenticate inclusion-exclusion boundaries concerning information sharing during the interviewing process. The power-knowledge difference applied as a result is addressed with a feminist lens (Soni-Sinha, 2008, p. 518) and situated in the feminist development paradigm of GAD.

This strategy compatibly supports the reciprocal relationship (Domosh, 2003) during the study as it obviously allows female participants to “engage in a myriad of conversations which actively displaced the existing discourse that confined their subjectivity” (Gibson-Graham 1994, p. 110). Participants were resiliently positioned to candidly express their self-determination and present knowledge on issues related to their social reality. This action copiously facilitates the theme-building processes for data collection and analysis as it philosophically embodies the fact that in feminism, as Stanley and Wise (1983b) state, “personal experiences could not be invalidated or rejected, because if something was felt then it was, and if it was felt it was absolutely real for the woman feeling and experiencing it” (p. 53, as cited in Hammersley, 1992, p. 188). The observation diverse ways was a reality for this case study.

**Methods of the Research**

The various research methods and tools employed to generate the study’s data are discussed in this section. The process follows the qualitative case study tradition and employs participants’ observations, in-depth interviews, informal conversations, and document analysis as methods for collecting data.
**Qualitative Case Study**

Social constructivists theorize that the significance and implications of social actions are potentially influenced and shaped by social actors (Bryman, 2008). The statement implies that individuals construct their personal identity and social reality. Following this consideration, the research respectively ascribes to the qualitative research methods of case study, feminist theory, and grounded theory (Creswell 1998; Creswell 2003; Creswell 2012; Blaikie 2000, Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2011). The approaches inform the choice of inquiry and research design (Creswell 1998) as well as the actions - human and otherwise - of linking methods to outcomes and techniques with procedures (Creswell, 2003) for data collection and discourse analysis. Moving forward, the research structure is established through the collective guidelines of a range of approaches which reflect in the connection between the various narrative structures and for development of the study’s objective and findings. The adoption of the case study approach followed to ascertain the differences and similarities between each case, thereby considering every case as a unit of analysis. As follows both participants and study sites are analysed on a case-by-case basis and characteristically theorize each case as they theoretically and observably differ from one another.

The process adopted invariably affirms Charmaz’s theoretical position as Charmaz (2011) asserts, “abductive reasoning keeps researchers involved… and advances theory construction” (p. 361). Therefore, grounded theory in many ways directs the discussions to shape and re-shape the narrative and centre proposed theories within the study as it encourages active engagement with the data. This approach allows emerging concepts to be formed into theories in that citing Patton (1990), it indicates, “qualitative evaluation inquiry
draws on both critical and creative thinking - both the science and art of analysis” (p. 434 in Straus and Corbin 1998). Also, Charmaz (2011) notes, “grounded theorizing involves imaginative interpretation and rigorous examination of data, it increases our analytical precision, and keeps us close to the data to strengthen our claims to make our work visible and our voices heard” (p. 361). As the qualities of grounded theory literally enable harmonizing criticality and creativity in thought, the data was analysed and shaped to bring out the nuances of social actions/inactions.

Obviously, grounded theory clearly justifies this multi-site choice case study as it allows the comparison of the multiple case collected through which differences and similarities are deduced successfully within and among the situations and ordered to further theorize on emerging concept formation. Yet again Charmaz (2011) posits that such activities “sharpen our analyses and the iterative data collection allows us to test our ideas and to check our emerging theoretical concepts” (p. 361). Thus the constructivist version of grounded theory speaks to the theoretical ordering of this study given that it has a situation-outcome nature of interrogating systemic inequities on individuals. Relatedly Charmaz (2011) says, “it attends to context, positions, discourses, and meanings, and actions and thus can be used to advance understandings of how power, oppression, and inequities differently affect groups and categories of people” (p. 362). In this study therefore, the approach has proven to be “a theory that was derived from data” (Strass and Corbin, 1998, p. 12) as it has in diverse ways supported the actualization of the theory advancement for this study.
Observations and Interviews

NFE literacy programmes are intended to equip learners with reading, writing, numeracy, and income-generating skills (Owusu-Mensah, 2007). On many levels, literacy is considered an integral part of personal development; the acquisition of this skill possesses both intrinsic and extrinsic values in learners’ empowerment (Puthamkaram, 2004). As “qualitative interpretations are constructed” in research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 p.iv), this study employs a variety of methods for data collection: observation, conversations, and in-depth interviews. The instruments illuminate the perspectives women have on their everyday experiences and social realities, as well as how larger public and social themes (Boylorn, 2008) impact the way women pattern their life stories (Gough, 2008; hooks, 2000).

Ensuing, I gained insight into the community and social system of NFE by participating in and observing multiple literacy classes as the practice offered meaning to existing social activities and interactions between actors, learners, and educators. As Creswell (1998) suggests, “descriptive and reflective notes about experiences, hunches, and impressions” (p. 125) is essential in field research so I noted the observation from my outsider-insider position. Besides, informal conversations were held with learners and actors to capture perceptive comments, opinions, and feedback which could not be acquired during my formal interview sessions as well as general observations for “ameliorative purposes” (Fontana & Fry 2000, p. 666 in Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2012). Teaching materials and artefacts developed for and produced from the literacy classes were equally collected. They have been included as secondary data (Blaikie, 2000).
Following the observation sessions, I conducted series of interviews to complete the methodological process. An in-depth semi-structured interview guide that included several open-ended questions was employed to administer one-on-one interviews with selected participants because “an interview is a purposeful conversation” (Morgan 1998 in Bogoan & Biklen 1998, p. 93, Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). Further probing also form part of the interviews whilst interviews conducted on key individuals provided the bulk of the data for this study (Creswell, 2012; Berg, 1995).

Procedurally, four variations of the interview guide were designed and tailored for each of the four different groups of participants. Each interview was electronically recorded on audiotape then stored and filed for retrieval (Creswell 1998; Mills, Gay and Airasian; Charles & Mertler, 2002). Parallel notes taken during each interaction equally served as purposeful references for comparing and triangulating data.

My decision to use multiple qualitative research methods strategically invited diverse views and voices, both objective and subjective, into the study (Creswell, 1998) to contextualize the philosophical elements in the lived and observed experiences of participants and the researcher.

**The Research Design**

The research design informs the structure of the study and this reflected in the way various components were constructed to address the research objectives, questions, and analysis (Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong, 2000). It also constructs a framework for the data collection and analysis. This design subsequently took the case study approach as the investigation is set within a multi-site perspective which constituted four rural (micro) areas.
Preparation for Field Visit and Entry Process

Empirical research is made up of interrelated activities, processes, and procedures and can be affected by different levels of preparation prior to the field, on the field and beyond. Preliminary preparations were made before my field research. I initially contacted the Non-Formal Education Division (NFED) head office through an email communication to express my intention and objective to conduct research on the literacy programme in Ga Rural and received the required approval in the same month. However, as ethical intentions and implications are integral to explicating participants to ascertain the risk involved (Blaikie, 2000; Christians, 2000; Bogdan & Biklen; 1998), the study was subjected to an ethics review by the University of Toronto to determine any discrepancies with accepted protocol. With that the principles to govern appropriate interaction to address dialectics between ethics and dilemma were consequentially delineated and permission was granted for the field work.

Upon arrival in Ghana I scheduled a face-to-face meeting with the executive (FOD) and the coordinator (PC) in charge of the Municipality’s literacy programme. In-depth discussions resulted in a comprehensive procedure I would follow that set boundaries, determined field actions and interview protocol, and enshrined participants’ rights and my own responsibilities as a researcher. At this official meeting, it became obvious the FOD and PC are two of the institution’s gate-keepers for the programme. As my research exclusively focuses on the literacy programme itself - that is the learning sites, learners, and staff - I merely observed the larger community from a distance without interfering with its members.

I travelled to the Gbenta, Obaanye, Noyaa, and Ekome locations of the Gbenta Municipality to survey the area for my subsequent data collection exercises in five successive weeks.
During this period I observed my participants and the community in the first phase where I spent three days in each community for a total of four weeks. NFED field staffs were enormously supportive as they smoothly facilitated my transition from one location to another and provided guidance and invaluable information regarding uncertainties in each community for psychological preparation.

**Participants Recruitment - Sampling**

Participant recruitment was limited solely to the programme and so respondents had to be associates of the NFE programme. The four communities were selected by employing a simple random sampling technique (Creswell, 2007, 2012; Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E. and Airasian, 2006). In each community a class was chosen in the same way. The four classes, along with two NFE offices, constitute this study’s sample.

I accordingly placed notices at the different centres to inform interested participants and potential contributors about the study. Responses received were together put in a draw from which participants were randomly selected for interview; a process repeated until the sample size for the study was attained. A similar procedure was applied for the selection of facilitators and staff. A total of 25 participants were eventually recruited as a “representative sample” (Mahiem, Rich, Willnat and Brains, 2008, p. 119) of the major attributes of the larger population.

**Demography and Characteristics of Participants**

The participants in this study were a total of twenty-five and are both men and women with diverse characteristics. They include: the eighteen adult women enrolled in the literacy classes who were either employed or unemployed, the three facilitators who taught the
learners, and the four NFE field and programme officers. This diversity reflects Creswell’s (2003) assertions that “qualitative research takes place in the natural setting,” that it “uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic,” that the methods “involve active participation by participants and sensitivity to participants in the study” (p. 181). As expected, the multiplicity of voices coupled with participants’ provision of historical information enable the researcher to obtain participants direct language and words to represent specific details for analysis (Creswell, 2003).

I observed the literacy classes were mostly attended by women, though in a few isolated cases men also participated. Mr. Gogi and Ms. Asma – two of the staff informed that recruiting the women was a deliberate strategy to encourage more females to learn to read and write. Mr. Gogi explained,

“Women constitute majority of learners we have been recruiting since 1992. There are three areas of attention in our recruitment drive; the third and special one has to do with women. 62% of our targets in the first phase of our graduates were women. It was 68% in the second phase. Women are the main target in our literacy policy and this equally reflects in our objective and animation process. NFED do give special attention to the women in this country.”

I interviewed eighteen female learners in total in the literacy programme; they constitute the majority of the study’s participants. They range between the ages of 28 to 56 years. Ten were married, two are widows, two are divorced, two separated and two are single. Also, out of the eighteen twelve are employed; six are unemployed - one of the unemployed in disabled. The women are petty traders, small-scale farmers, produce sellers, and casual labourers. Such activities form their main sources of livelihood.

Besides, I also identified four categories of learners within this group. The first group includes women who had never had any form of schooling; this experience therefore, is the
first time they have ever come into contact with a form of “structured” learning and text. The second includes school drop-outs, some of whom could partially read and/or write. The third group comprises of women who are literate in languages other than Ga (the language of instruction), have had some formal education yet they attend the classes to learn Ga as they have relocated to Accra for various reasons including family or work. Such learners are petty traders who need language skills in Ga for use in their everyday interactions with customers. The fourth include semi-literate women whose priority is acquiring income-generating skills to enhance their material condition. Although the women in this group acknowledge the importance of the 3Rs, their primary objective is business and entrepreneurship.

Following, I also interviewed facilitators from three of the four communities: two women and one man between the ages of 42 and 63 years. Two were married and one is separated. They teach and facilitate the learning and are expected to facilitate the knowledge that supposedly engenders expected change. As expected, the three are constantly and directly interact with their learners. They offered invaluable into information on pedagogy, teaching methodology, organization, learner attitude, and institutional challenges. They equally clarified teaching methods, training and capacity-building, class management, and use of the primer, curriculum, and learner behaviour towards enrolment, attendance, remuneration, and challenges. The level of education, knowledge and experience they bring to the programme often directs the learning and leadership approaches to inform the best practices for teaching.

Finally, four of the NFED field staffs were likewise interviewed. This group included two men and two women between the ages of 28 and 52. The two men were a senior executive and a programme coordinator, and the two women were programme officers. They serve as intermediaries between the adult learners and the literacy programme and are involved in the
implementation of the day-to-day activities of the programme. They also respond to issues and challenges concerning teaching, learning, and resource management on the field. Each of the four respondents holds a university degree. Their responses elucidated the programme aspect of literacy work, nationally and locally; funding; community behaviour; community animation; learner mobilization and recruitment; learner retention and sustainability; job security within the programme; and the diverse challenges that impacted programme outcomes. The responses of the executive additionally detailed the programme philosophy regarding the mission, vision, policy, and resource (human and material) management, as well as the institutional frame of literacy non-formal education work in Ghana.

While the voices of female learners and the staff directly involved with the programme are of utmost interest to this study, *my raison d'être* for a broader sample was an attempt to capture information from varied angels to allow my analysis to effectively triangulate and interpret issues in the data.

The participants’ responses were subsequently compiled into data. The socio-demographic information of the participants is presented below:

**Table 1: Demographics of Gender Distribution in NFE Programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>No. Of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 25 respondents 22 are women and 3 men. The total male population is made up of 1 facilitator and 2 NFED staff. The female sample is made up of 18 learners, 2 facilitators, and 2 NFED staff. The staff are predominantly female, an observation consistent with the
feminist argument that poverty and non-literacy are given a woman’s face (Kabeer, 1999; Moser, 1989).

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents in NFE Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Years</th>
<th>No. Of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-47</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-67</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants range between the ages of 18 and 65 years. Three out of the four are staff in their thirties and fifty-something years respectively. Almost 48% of the learners’ are between the ages of 38 and 47 while 32% are in their late forties or older, with the oldest being 56 years old. Participants in this group have school-age children; the literacy class, therefore, is an opportunity to learn skills to support their children with homework and to reinforce good health practices. Only 4% of respondents are within the 18 to 27 age range. Though insignificant, this may suggest that education campaigns on educating the girl-child are making headway in Ghana as girls tend to remain in school longer compared to about three decades ago (see 2010 Population & Housing Census).

Table 3: Educational Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never been to school/dropout</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School/JSS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information above contradicts presumptions that not everyone in the literacy class is illiterate. While the data suggest that 28% of respondents completed middle school, this group includes all three facilitators and four other learners. An insignificant 4% represents one person has attained vocational school education. I consider the responses of this learner substantial as they hold implications for recommendations because she was explicit about her long-term goal of becoming a facilitator. Her primary interest is to deepen her English language and IGA skills for her business in order to have some flexibility to train for this aspiration. 52% of the respondents never had formal schooling or had dropped-out for unexplainable reasons. The 16% with university education are the staff who execute the programme’s goals.

**Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow/Widower</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Much as the question on marital status is not a defining element in this study, the objective nonetheless is to investigate how learners in relationships balance family responsibilities with the challenges of learning. While fourteen of the participants are married, three of the fourteen are males – two staff and one facilitator; the fourth is a female facilitator. The other ten are female learners. Of the rest of the female learners, four are single; two staff and two learners. Also three are separated, two divorced, and two are widows.

**Community and Literacy Class Selection**

The four rural communities selected for the study include Gbenta, Obaanye, Noyaa, and Ekome. All four exhibit similar socio-cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, but each has different spatial characteristics. Gbenta is metamorphosing into a sprawling suburb due to expansive real estate development. Non-literate folks with low income and social status who attend the literacy class exist at the periphery of development in this location. The three other sites remain relatively rural. But whereas Obaanye and Noyaa are experiencing changes in terms of provision in community infrastructure—schools, universities, real estate, and modernized places of worship - Ekome remains visibly under-developed. It is of interest to know that all four communities lay on the same geo-spatial grid - approximately fifteen-minute drive between Gbenta in the south and Ekome in north.

Because my own ethnicity is Ga, my knowledge of the study location and the cultural and linguistic similarities I share with my participants appropriately positioned me for this study. While I am technically considered an outsider in the communities, there is a socio-cultural connection which symbolised participants identify with my shared characteristics. My
interviews with the NFE staff were conducted in English; but the rest with learners were carried out in the Ga language.

Four communities were also selected and assessed on the basis of the location of their respective classes in the learning cycle. In Gbenta, the class was fairly new; the programme was only four months old during my visit. The one in Noyaa was fifteen months and Obaanye, eighteen months old respectively. The class in Ekome was about to wrap up, concluding the 22-month cycle. This eclecticism in participant constituents offer varied perspectives from learner responses and experiences, proving that women who are at different stages in their studies are likely to articulate different perceptions of their experiences.

NFED does not own building properties in any of the locations. In three of the communities, classes are held in faith-based spaces. In Obaanye and Noyaa, the classes are conducted in the Presbyterian Church primary school buildings. In Gbenta, the class in the back space of the Assemblies of God church hall. The Ekome holds lessons in a secular space reserved for community meetings.

**Data Collection Process**

The data collection followed a systematic process out of which meaningful information was gathered (Creswell 1998; Creswell 2012), and as (Bryan, 2008) puts it, “to interpret human actions and behaviour to explain social reality” (p. 22). It was an opportunity to capture the lived experiences, stories, and challenges of the women in their literacy journey to formulate explanations and theoretical arguments (Smith, 1987; Harding, 1987; hooks 1984; Olesen,
2000; Blaikie, 2003; Firmin, 2008). Likewise, qualitative data collection techniques Schensul (2008), said:

Focus on data collection at the sociocultural (collective) and individual level its the responsibility of the researcher to determine which of these approaches are useful to obtain relevant data for a study and how they should be applied in the study setting (p.520).

To achieve this goal, a combination of qualitative data collection methods were employed, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, conversations, and document analysis. As “qualitative interpretations are constructed” in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. iv), I was, to cite Bryman (2008), “brought to close proximity with participants through this varied technique enabling participants to provide understandings to explain their social reality” (p. 22).

The process was segmented into two phases over a period of three months as data was gathered from multiple sites. Different durations and time periods were allocated for each site. The observational phase lasted for a month, followed by a series of one-on-one interviews that took two months to complete. A total of four villages and five literacy centres were visited within the period.

**Participants’ Observation and Interviewing**

Participant observation is a qualitative method where a researcher resides or partakes in activities by research subjects and, as an observer, is a research instrument herself (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). Despite been a non-participant, my presence nonetheless stimulated human actions and behaviour. Classroom sessions were observed to study
facilitators’ instructions, methods of lessons delivery, learners’ responses and general behaviour, staff attitude towards work, and the ergonomics of the work environment.

Context is crucial because learning conceptually occurs within interactive spaces (Lindeman, 1926; 1961b in Merriam & Grace 2011), in that case it is fundamental to identify the spaces in which such relationships ensued. As Belenky & Stanton (2000) observe, “women learn differently through relationships and by connecting with each other” (cited in Cranton, 2011, p. 323). This difference in interaction and affinity can only be examined through observable investigation.

Correspondingly, both observation and conversation were enormously beneficial to this research. Insightful comments and opinions complemented the interviews to present an in-depth understanding of how adult literacy and programme coordination impact on learners simultaneously. Naturally, participants’ behaviour shifted in some cases - for example, one field staff commented that my visit prompted regular class attendance for the few weeks learners were informed of my presence in and study of the municipality.

Observable information was likewise recorded firsthand in writing (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Creswell, 2003) as part of the data collection. Such field notes are crucial in qualitative studies when validating data. Bogoan & Biklen (1998) explain that “balancing participation and observation can be particularly challenging ... but how one participates depends on who you are, your values and personality” (p. 82-83). It was undeniable that my presence influenced the social process and this methodically reflected in my documentation.

All participants were formally interviewed. Different semi-structured interview guides with open-ended questions (Charles & Mertler, 2002; Creswell, 2012) that summarized specific
content and provided suggestive probes (Morgan & Guevara, 2008) were utilized to collect information from participants. Four variations of the guide were tailored for each group. By this strategy issues that illustrate the case based on interviewee position on the NFE programme structure were textually captured as Morgan (1998) stated “an interview is a purposeful conversation” (cited in Bogoan & Biklen 1998, p. 93; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006) and so must be guided by a structure to facilitate the solicitation of meaningful responses.

Opened-ended questions additionally allow participants to freely express themselves. Participants provide unanticipated but genuine responses of their experiences. According to King (2008), “qualitative interviewing potentially probe deeply into the private lives of respondents” (p. 471). Rightly said, this approach permits participants to describe detailed personal and historical information (Creswell, 2012, 2003; Blaikie, 2000) invaluable to the study. The interview essentially focuses on constructing the constructive work in producing order in women’s everyday activities and experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000) as they navigate economic issues and educational activities within their villages.

Participants were each briefed on the objective and significance of the study at the beginning of each interview. Each participant was informed of their right to choose to respond or not to respond to any question for whatever reason. On this note, participants’ were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw their participation. The consent statement was then interpreted for participants before consent and approval were finalized in order to commence the interview.
The learners were the first to be interviewed as this research is essentially their story so the choice was a gesture to accord precedence and accord respect. The interaction which is the interviews present cursory yet insightful details on learner motivation, learning needs, expectations, achievements, and challenges in the programmes. Interviews were then conducted with the facilitators and, finally, the NFED officers. Facilitators’ responses offered information on teaching philosophy, leadership style, challenges in the classroom, and learner participation and engagement with the learning. The officers on the other hand offered contextual information on their role in the field, programme implementation processes and challenges, and possible solutions to constitute the data. The information offered supported the sequence in developing the proposal and recommendation framework in chapter eight.

Each interview was ultimately an opportunity to capture individual lived experiences, stories, and challenges that women face in their literacy for empowerment journey (Smith, 1987; Hill Collins, 1990; Harding, 1987; hooks 1999; Olesen, 2000). Moreover, diversity theoretically possible generated the exploration of varied individual beliefs and behaviours to create a range of patterns that could be categorize into similarities and differences. The process notably collaborates with the adoption of a deductive research strategy that responds to the ‘why’ questions to frame explanations and theoretical arguments (Blaikie, 2000). Language difficulties were not encountered in any way as I speak fluent Ga, the language spoken by almost all the participants. Each interview session took between 15-20 minutes and was audiotaped with the participants’ permission and later transcribed for analysis.
Field Notes and Document Analysis

Field notes (Brodsky, 2008) were taken alongside the observations and in the course of the formal interviews and informal conversations to corroborate participants’ responses. While the notes include details like pseudo names, dates, activities, places, and events they also capture theoretical and analytical questions posed by participants during the process of the interviews. Feedback from participants and hunches (Creswell, 2012) arising from unseen contextual collaborative interactions were compiled as field notes.

Notes were also taken on content from programme documents officially handed over by participants. Similarly, participants’ behaviour, personal impressions, nature of learning, working spaces, the rural environment, situational issues, emotions, structural challenges, and limitations were all detailed and documented for referencing and analysis.

Such activities and issues were written in descriptive “non-judgemental” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999) summaries since the goal of observational field notes, according to Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2008), “is to have a record of what was observed … to be analyzed” (p. 340). It is also a means to corroborate data triangulation as unusual moments and occurrences and topics that proved to be uncomfortable to participants (Creswell 2003) were documented.

Finally, the field notes were sequentially separated, categorically ordered and coded, and the information extracted to substantiate my data analysis, findings, and interpretation.

Teaching and learning materials (secondary and tertiary data) developed for and produced from literacy programmes form part of the data collected (Blaikie, 2003). Literacy training documents and artefacts - primer, teaching materials, facilitators’ training manual, lesson notes, and other informal resources-were additionally constituted for evaluation. The content
of the materials elaborate on the teaching and curriculum of the programmes and for analytical purposes, the materials were examined to check for transformative elements germane to empowering women.

**Data Coding Process**

The data was coded and analyzed. The coding was processed manually. Data was sifted through to identify themes, concepts, patterns, and descriptions to be used in the research report (Creswell, 2012; Blaikie 2000; van den Hoonahar and van den Hoonahar, 2008; Benaquisto, 2008; Gay et al 2006). A variety of data sources were sorted on the basis of site and participants to codify the issues on a case-by-case basis after which the information was compartmentalized under themes and sub themes through a conceptual mapping process (Schreiber, 2008; Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2006). Following, multiple evaluations and interpretations were carried out in the process of coding and labelling with the objective, as Benaquisto (2008) suggests, “to reconceptualise and incorporate concepts into broader themes, abstract categories, and link various codes to solidify categories” (p. 87). The analysis followed the coding.

To analyse is to be critical. The data analysis was blended in a cyclical and iterative process as means to provide sufficient insight to further shape the data generation (Blaikie, 2000; Creswell 2012, van den Hoonahar & van den Hoonahar, 2008; Gay, Mills & Airasian 2006). The data was then triangulated not for the sake of mere coalescing (Berg 1995) but rather to corroborate evidence and to augment credibility (Creswell 1998, 2012; Berg, 1995; Rothbauer, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen 1998). To cite Fielding and Fielding (1986), “It’s an
attempt to relate them to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (p. 31 from Berg; 1995p. 5) within the research findings.

Once again, triangulation was used in this feminist research to distinctively and strategically capture the multiple voices from the field and in the literature and to know which voice to assign the most discursive power. As with most qualitative data analysis an inductive construct in interpretations is derived from the data (Gay et al 2006; Berg 1995; Creswell 2012) to reflect this theory. Thick descriptions were therefore utilized and were solely based on events from the locations/settings and the behaviour patterns of participants to confirm researcher-researched transferability (Creswell, 1998; 2012). Inferences are substantially minimal from the analysis as a result of the method of analysis employed.

Codes were afterwards assigned in addition to the text, overlaps and redundancy were examined and broad and sub themes/categories were produced from participants’ responses (Creswell, 2012). The themes interrelated respond to the major research questions to situate the narrative for analysis. Critical questions were derived from the coding and conclusions were drawn based on the significance of the researcher-researched narratives, contextual evidence drawn from prevailing attitudes, and the psychological realities and alternative explanations from participants (Charles & Mertler, 2002) rather than from subjective biases.

**Data Validity and Management**

The data was turned round in a manner to endorse inconsistencies and uninformative materials were weeded out during the coding, categorization, and analysis stages to solidify, establish and concretize the ideas to anchor the theoretical findings and assertions.
Data triangulation followed the weeding process. This exercise supported the validation and the reliability of the data as it offered an opportunity for a range of analysis to be conducted between the literature reviewed, the theories and concepts generated, and information collected from the field to verify elements of contrast and similarities to comment on and for theory formation. This technique was achieved by interpolating the findings and gaps from the literature to (in) validate the voices of the women to assess the reliability of the information through interpretation.

Reliability of the data was validated through this ranging and categorization process as each information was juxtaposed with each other to verify the connection within and among voices to guarantee participants and authorial representation in the study.

The responses from participants electronically recorded on audiotape (Morgan & Guevara (2008) were stored on disks. This information was retrieved and transcribed into Microsoft Word document and filed for analysis (Creswell, 2002, 2012; Mills, Gay and Airasian, 2006; Charles & Mertler, 2002).

To warrant participants’ protection for confidentiality and for security purposes, the interview data was encrypted and was made inaccessible to parties other than the researcher and her supervisor. Likewise, all names implied in the narrative were pseudo-references which ethically are meant to guard participants’ individual identities and confidentiality. Other artefacts - for example, the learning materials I borrowed - will be returned to NFED with appreciation. The rest of the paper documentation was destroyed with water to produce paper mache and was dropped off as garbage.
The encrypted data was stored until the completion of the thesis writing process to allow me to periodically reference, and compare and contrast participants’ opinions to cross-confirm details to validate and/or ground theory. The data was permanently destroyed once the dissertation was completed; this information was exclusively meant to generate findings for this study’s analysis and nothing other than that.

Summary

The methodology, methods, and data collection processes are discussed in this section. Researcher-researched interaction was observed to have engendered invaluable information to support theory proposals. Likewise, the theoretical elements of the feminist and grounded theories rightly accommodate the different categories of participants to support the information-seeking agenda, and to capture and crystalize the diverse voices. Through the demographics long-held assumption about literacy that it is for the aged and illiterate is debunk as interaction with participants’ revealed otherwise. Programmes staffs are highly qualified and capable of managing the programme expectations and outcomes. While some participants have completed formal education and speak English staffs perceive and objectify this sub-group as non-literate which I find problematic. My comment on this observation is that the programme does not accommodate difference and this ethos can be theorize as several of the root causes of its myriad of challenges and non-innovation.
“The programme is not what it used to be. I honestly don’t know what we’re doing now. We are just struggling to keep the interest.” – Ms. Ansa

Chapter Six

Research Findings and Data Analysis

Introduction

This epigram introduces us to the literacy programme to identify the observable impact of long-term non-formal education interventions on constituents and learners. The chapter focuses on the experiences of the learners to explicate the extent to which they have been impacted by the operation and outcomes of NFE literacy classes. As follows, the data and research findings are analysed and theorized to link voices – participants, literature and researcher’s together as the goal is to project the conceptual and ontological thought and meaning. In other words, the data accumulated is pieced together to, as Charles & Mertler (2002) put it, “identify the typical and atypical issues to extinguish differences, relationships, and patterns existent in the data” (p. 179). The discussion as a result has been segmented into two parts. In the first I present the research findings, and the second layered out the data analysis.

Research Findings: Themes, Thematic Structure and Analysis

The analysis is thematically organized (Firmin, 2008). It focuses on the systems and methods of the literacy programme to determine their connection to women’s empowerment as this study is a situation-and-outcome project rather than an impact-assessment. Hence, this narrative is thematically based and a total of five broad themes and several sub-themes have
been identified noted, separated, and categorized under appropriate groupings and discussed. They include:

a) Overview of literacy  
b) Institutional landscape  
c) Empowerment and change projects  
d) Access to resources  
e) Community involvement  
f) Post literacy plans  
g) Challenges and constraints

**Overview of Literacy**

Both learners and staff understand and interpret literacy - reading, writing, and numeracy - through subjective and conceptual means. Learners articulated their experiences with literacy in diverse ways. As one learner stated:

“It’s an eye-opener; literacy makes you aware of your environment."

Another added, “It’s a skill everyone should have and for that reason should make time for.”

A third learner, Sister Mercy said; “from a distance literacy appear to be daunting and unattainable skill but our facilitator makes learning easier.”

Another stated: “I feel good as I currently show off my literacy skills to my school-age children and friends.”

The oldest of the learner participants said, “It will be said of me one day when I’m gone that I also attended the literacy class and was able to read and write.”

The statements by the learners resonate with Howard’s (2012) argument, that:
Learning to write has never been a simple concept or practice. The phrase carries complex meanings because writing is simultaneously a technical and motor skill, a conceptual process, and a means of communication. The multiplicity of meanings and possibilities is also influenced by other factors for any one person. These include inner psychological pressures … the ability to persist or the level of confidence; and external pressures, such as the compulsion to attend school the constraining forces of the curriculum, structure and content … or opposition to learning (p. 26-27).

The confidence exuded by participants places the practice of knowing how to read and write as a personal enjoyable experience. Theoretically, it is not what you know but how you apply knowledge to critically respond to problems - and in the case of learners apply it to lever oneself out of poverty and to increase t material condition is more important.

**Perception and Participation in Non-Formal Education Programmes**

Participants’ responses indicate that citizens have a high regard for non-formal education programmes; numerous accounts emphasize their certainty in the benefits of the service. One participant said, “Ei! (Mean, see) literacy provides income skills at the community level; my modest goat and rabbit project has increased since I joined the classes. I put the animal husbandry readings in our primer into practice at home towards their care.”

Another considers the programme as a step to better farming practices. She said; “the literacy classes reinforces learners’ knowledge of the environment. My produce harvest has increased from practicing the crop rotation skills I learnt from the primer.”

One additionally explains: “it offers knowledge you can use anywhere, I read my primer behind my wares.”

A statement from Naa Tsitse’s established the arguments from data and literature that some learners have expectation beyond just reading and writing. She explained how literacy has supported her aspirations for leadership:
“As the current treasurer for the women’s association I am now called upon to lead prayers and other activities because of my newly acquired reading and writing skills. Look, sister I have surprised my friends.”

Unfortunately, and synonymous with every intervention not every individual seems to have encountered such moments of eureka; other participants were gently disappointed their expectations had not been fully met. Sister Kuki, for example, is expecting to receive training in the IGA skills that the community was promised during learner recruitment. She lamented, “I like catering and wish someone could be hired to teach us to bake and make doughnuts.”

Another learner who specifically enrolled in the programme to study English was equally disappointed to learn her expectation will not be met. She reiterated; “been in the class has been a somehow a waste of time.”

The staffs’ perception of the programme was equally positive; but concerns about resources and infrastructural support encumber their enthusiasm. Both learners and staff expressed disappointment for the absence of teaching materials and other supplies for the municipality from head office.

Empirical studies on literacy education indicate varied motivations, intentions, and aspirations for participating in adult literacy programmes. In a study on participation inducing factors in literacy by Fuseini & Abudu (2014), the authors reported; “participants considered becoming good role models for their children as motive for participating in NFE” (p. 26). In all four programmes, learner respondents also articulated similar and numerous reasons for participating in literacy. My interviews with the programme’s staff corroborate the multiplicity of responses based on feedback received in their day-to-day interaction with learners. Some learners offered straightforward answers like: “I want to be able to read and write, simple.” And, “my husband is literate and he encouraged me to be one also and that is
my reason for enrolling in the class.” Others joined the programme to achieve a personal goal particular to them.

For example, a learner explained, “I have school-age children and wanted to understand what goes on in their lives in relation to schooling.” Another learner spoke about self-esteem: “Women who attend the literacy class in this village are respected and that is my reason for participating. I want respect.” Other learners envision literacy as an opportunity of a lifetime. One participant stated, “The literacy programme is free and so why not take advantage to study in a place where I am not required to pay fees?” This learner had missed out on formal schooling in her youth and contemplates this literacy class as a second chance.

For twelve of the eighteen learners, constituting 66.6% of the learner population, their interest in the classes is quintessentially devout. This group desired to learn to read the Bible and be able to sing from the church hymnbook during worship. It is unsurprising; given that majority of individuals attend classes held in church-based spaces. The interview with Mr. Gogi further highlighted the peculiarities:

“We currently take advantage of faith-based organizations as their membership constitutes about 60% to 70% of our learners. It is partly because; their goals align with our objective. They want to have literate congregations, they want their people to read the Bible, participate and understand the teachings of the church. The missionaries and the Wesleyan mission in the Volta Region taught literacy so the people can read the Bible. The churches have sustained the practice so we support their interest.”

Historical accounts of education and literacy in Ghana (see Eyiah, 2004, Dei) buttressed the observations. I was informed that positive literacy outcomes from faith-based learning centres has inspired similar institutions to budget for literacy work and so periodically enrol their members in the NFED facilitators’ training programmes to be trained as facilitators to organize classes in their churches.
Pedagogy

According to NFED staffs, the primary objective of literacy is for learners to master the basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and numeracy. Therefore, the first lessons taught comprise the practical and functional aspects of the 3Rs. The pedagogical intent, as Souto-Manning (2006) puts it, “Is to democratize education and culture more than formation, it tries to promote the social competence of people of low socio-economic status, and improve their quality of life” (p. 30). With this in mind, facilitators conscientiously adhere to the Frerian philosophy of consciousness-raising, liberation, and empowerment in the training process. The learning as I was informed has been conventional for personal capacity development toward addressing needs in real life. As Mr. Gogi elaborates,

“It is an approach to facilitate problem-solving skills. If the topic is on poverty, learners identify that they are poor because they have not taken action to find solutions to that problem. Some of the readings are on income-generating activities. Others create awareness about environmental resources that can be harness to improve income levels. In other words the readings engender individual action and that is empowerment. The pedagogy is therefore complementary, rather than supplementary, to reinforce prior adult knowledge.”

Contrarily, about 50% of the learners reveal that the pedagogy correspond to experiential than different knowledge considering time spend in the programme. The pedagogy from their perspective is supplementary than complementary which somewhat contrast Mr Gogi’s assertion. Learners’ reiterated that such indifference in knowledge is the cause in the shift in interest and higher turnover. Respondents critiqued the pedagogical model and strongly express desires to redirect aspects of the learning towards creating income-generating activities (IGA) skill. IGA skills happened to be new and creative ways of learning to figure out new things to generate income. It informally enriches inexperienced learners with practical and new method and process to acquire such skills to develop means of sustainable
livelihood. For example; pastry making, dressmaking, animal husbandry, tye and dye, basket weaving and beads making are such genre of skills. A participant Maa Bene stated during the interview,

“My objective for joining the literacy class is not to learn to read and write only but also to acquire baking skills. I thought the NFE can provide that but have not been unable to fulfill their promise. I want to own a small bakery business.”

Another argued:

“I am happy I could read and write after twenty two months (the cycle of the literacy programme for each batch). But I wish I could learn the art of making tye & dye to sell the clothes for an income to impress my family. You know, I am looking for something more hands-on. The pedagogical model is too school-oriented.”

Clearly, while NFE in Ghana design programmes around 3R literacy skills in local languages for basic social functions, learners are equally interested in the acquisition of income-generating and English language skills to meet the demands of a changing society. This group of learners implicitly provide an interpretative perspective towards transformation. The interpretations, as Mezirow (2000) argues, “involved symbols that represent ‘ideal types,’ the qualities of which we project onto objects or events in our experience. Both schemes and perspectives selectively order and delimit what we learn. They define our ‘horizons and expectation’” (p. 3). Learners’ desires for pedagogical restructuring may sound far-reaching but they hold implications for programme innovation. Besides, though learners may diverge over what skills they want to learn, all view the purpose of literacy in similar terms: it is essentially liberatory. Freire’s (1985) consciousness-raising project argued that knowing empowers; thus learners comprehend Freire’s theoretical conclusion as natural and obvious. Learning influences thought and behaviour and expand personal horizons (Mezirow, 1981, 2000). Learners self-awareness is ontologically stimulated; hitherto “normalized”, obstacles
to self-betterment become circumspect, and seem to be gaining a sense of accountability for self and for society.

**Teaching Materials**

NFED has introduced varied teaching material in the programme. Learners have access to a copy-writing book intended to facilitate writing skills, a basic arithmetic textbook, a maths exercise book, and two reading primers. They are first introduced to the alphabet, phonics, and consonants. Learning then progresses to two/three syllabus words development, and then sentence formation, which ends the lessons in Primer One. Upon completing the beginner lessons the second primer is introduced to teach basic reading, picture description, and storytelling. The objective following Primer Two is to develop cognition and reasoning, to reinforce practice, and to improve interpersonal skills. Basic writing and maths are taught alongside reading as means to develop motor skills and counting abilities. The outlined details constitute the content of the teaching materials.

Learners demonstrate satisfactory levels of engagement with the content and subject matter and articulate their personal experiences on this topic in diverse ways. For instance, Yenyemi said,

“"My perception towards schooling and school attendance changed when I joined the programme. I can better articulate the essence of schooling to my children now when they provide flimsy excuses as a way to stay home than before. I can presently relate to the consequences of recalcitrant behaviour from the primer to analyse their attitude when they play out or try to outsmart me.”

Another participant, forty-something-year-old Maa Akoshia, smilingly reminisced,

“"I regret dropping out of school. I would have been a lady if I hadn’t dropped out on my own volition.”

Sister Besa wanted more scholarship. She stated,
“I wish we would be provided with Primer three and four to study more higher order issues (using her hands to indicate levels of attainment) until we can’t study anymore (smile).”

Learners are however polarized on the materials. While some claim to have learnt things other than from the course content besides the 3Rs, and appreciated that the texts engender self-reflection about everyday assumptions, activities and attitudes, others were totally dissatisfied with the content and found it cognitively unchallenging. The latter group dismissed the pedagogy as simplistic, uncritical, and lacked the necessary depth to encourage reflection. While reflection and critical thinking both have their place in learning, dissatisfied learners attribute self-reflection to criticality which they claim foster changes in behaviour and attitude in families and in community interactions. For example, Maa Hewale a participant said,

“I’m aware of the issues been discussed in the primers … the class does not challenge me much but yet I have a feeling I’m learning something at least by coming over.”

Sister Obese added,

“I feel good that I can read and write. I show off my reading skills to my friends until one questioned; “so what’s next after the reading and writing in the literacy class? Are there other skills to be learnt as I would like to be trained in hairdressing so I can stop my petty trading? … This set me thinking about the future in regards to the lessons being taught.”

It is obvious criticality has been developed in individuals through the interaction process to interrogate functionality. However, as Lakey (2010) argues,

No curriculum or teacher can take account of everything going on in a learning group: the diversity of learning channels; variety of kinds of intelligence; the participants’ differing degrees of experience and background in content matter; the complex realities of rank, class, and ethnicity that influence participation … and the relation between the mainstream of the group and its margins (p. 43).

It implies that no individual or institution has the ability to control how individuals learn or how knowledge is applied; philosophically speaking, knowledge is power in itself and can be
wield in a number of ways; to improve or to challenge the status quo. Learners’ acquisition and use of knowledge offer such insights to express power by articulating desires and expectations.

**The Learning Environment**

Learners are impacted by the environment in which knowledge is produced and learning occurs. Again citing Lakey (2010), “Every group needs this rhythm - integration and differentiation - just as much as the individual needs to inhale and exhale. Differentiation is expressed in small group activities, pairs, and individual work … integration is expressed in whole group activities” (p. 130-131). Such differentiation and interaction played out in the four learning spaces.

In communities where classes were held in churchyards, learners eager to acquire literacy skills involuntarily had to do that in a non-neutral space that, otherwise, was meant to serve a particular purpose for a particular group of people. Some learners had difficulty adjusting to the environment (space) and the people (group). The experience resulted in a loss of belongingness and fragmentation of being - factors that might deter communities members of from participating in intervention programmes. The differences constitute outcomes I will further theorize as cause-effect in community animation and mobilization. Furthermore, the structural layout, accessibility and ambience of the classes’ impact learner impression and such observations when communicated to the influence decisions as to whether or not to participate.

The Ekome class was conducted in the community’s meeting place. It is a bamboo structure with thatched roof. The Obaanye and Noyaa classes were held in grade one classrooms and
learners in this instance have no choice but to use the tiny desks and chairs as is. The Gbenta classroom was not, in fact, a room at all, but rather a segregated space in the back corner within the sanctuary where furniture and an easel had been arranged to constitute a “classroom”. This space is observably devoid of ambiance and privacy; moreover, the concentration of learners was compromised as worshippers visit the premises even on the days classes are held.

The classes are mostly held in the evening, which means that electric power is required. The Ekome, Gbenta, and Noyaa classes were well-lit; the Obaanye class, however, lacked the luminance ideally required for a classroom space. Not surprisingly, it was the location with the highest absenteeism and turnover. In fact, two of the interviewees in Obaanye disclosed - amidst smiles - that the news of my presence was the only reason they showed up for class that week. Several respondents made complaints and offer suggestions for the revitalization of the spaces. Sister Mercy of the Gbenta class for instance, complained about the movement in the church hall: “See? See how people are moving about? How can we concentrate”?

Another participant urged, that “NFED should build classrooms for their literacy lessons in this village, we need our own place.” Maa Gracey advocate for a special building for literacy and IGA training; she felt a need for this type of facility is essential so learners have the feeling of attending some kind of a school. Clearly, space constitutes an important part of the learning process, and good facilities lend credibility and recognition to the experience.

**Staff Responsibilities**

The staffs I interviewed had been with the programme for a period ranging from three to twelve years. They handled multiple responsibilities including, supervision, resource
development, administration, community animation, learner recruitment, and pedagogy advisement. Such individuals acknowledged their roles as life-lines of the programme. Referencing the above experiences I question: how does pedagogy inform the empowerment aspects of the literacy process? Alternatively, is the pedagogy drawn by elites to mask the struggles of the poor? Johnstone & Terzakis (2012) argue that the answer “is aligned to the student-teacher problem-solving, dialogical education where generative themes are codified and decodified to draw interpretations” (p. 190-191).

The staffs therefore are integral to the programme’s efficiency. Staff members complained about lack of resources, reiterating that resource hampered their ability to successfully fulfill their multiple responsibilities. The situation they pointed creates enormous stress which ultimately distracts them from attending to actual learner needs. Micro-subjective learner development, in this end became inconsequential as staffs focus was forcibly shifted to survival from stability. Miss Asma clarified this phenomenon. She explains, that

“Although the NFE philosophize about the learner - the basis for the programme design, paradoxically, our activities which should focus on the learner are in jeopardy due to varied organizational challenges so we’ve not been able to meet learners’ needs. I feel our objective has not been achieved.”

Ms. Ansa elaborated on the issue, she said;

“Combining office schedule and field supervision is very hectic. As you can see, majority of our classes are held in the evening yet we do not have means of transportation … it is very challenging when you have to conduct supervision and follow-up learners to attend class. We conduct the activities with our own money.”

The observations undoubtedly indicate a problem; the provision of resources for field work had not been forthcoming from the Head Office; this epitomes few of the constraints of the programme.
Non- Formal Education Institutional Landscape

I would characterize the institutional ambiance from the Head Office down the progression to the municipal sub-office, and to the field as daunting and dispiriting, with an atmosphere of lethargy. The entire work environment seemed neglected; while staff members had been assigned roles and responsibilities, oftentimes they loaf and attend to responsibilities sluggishly. The visible lack of resources, it appeared, had impinged on the ability of staff and learners alike, creating a sense of drabness that surrounded the whole programme. That may sound pessimistic, so I should clarify that even given the reality that educating adults is comparatively different in form, approach, and style from the formal education of children, this state of circumstances was too obvious to be overlooked.

The institution employs the social development framework and Freirian philosophy and methodology in the programme implementation. A level of political and governmental is in existence to support the social change process. Mr. Gogi elaborates on this connection:

“The programme is managed by a Ministry (MOE), the head of the Ministry is a politician … but it is a social developmental issue, and I think that even politicians understand the concept. The political parties - both divide understand literacy as an on-going project. I use the word both because I am referring to the two major political blocks. They support the continuity of the literacy drive especially functional literacy as it provides encouragement to people at the grassroots; that is our focus. We have to understand and implement governmental policies, and provide support.”

Ironically, though Mr. Gogi mentioned the social development approach (SDA), this rarely reflected in the programme and learner engagement processes. Observations revealed; only one part of the SDA model is present, that is the 3Rs. The economic aspect of the SDA is totally absent from the plan yet the two must be implemented concurrently as women’s empowerment is incomplete without economic skills. They need financial stability which socially is a sign of power.
Under the education delivery structure, the Non-formal Education Division (NFED) is supervised by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which has oversight over its operations and governance as a Civil Service entity. According to Mr. Gogi (2013), while other sectors in education - the Basic Education Division, Tertiary Education, and Vocational and Technical Training received proportionate amounts of operational funds through budgetary allocations from MoE, NFED’s budget has been a mere 1% to about 3% annually. This meagre sub-budgeting has exacerbated the challenges of the organization. The interpretation is due to the informality accorded to non-formal education. Funds from the donor community, both internal and external, are accrued into a kind of “donor basket” at the Ministry of Finance and later disbursed to the different state ministries for further distribution to ministry-specific operations.

Obviously, this multiple-tier governance/funding structure in Ghana does not augur well for NFED as a body delivering supplementary education. Despite the enormous responsibilities assigned by MoE to NFED in theory, in practice supervisory controls deflate the goals of the programme. Owusu-Mensah (2007) attributed the issue to the “absence of a legal framework” (p. 6) from NFED to be acknowledged by the state. The institution in view of its state of affairs has been negotiating with government to accord it a public service status. Management according to the executive, envision the status would possibly accord a certain level of institutional autonomy, and better equipping to deliver its services and effectively engage with citizens at all levels.

Responses from programme staff and facilitators corroborate this vision. They equally disapprove of the prevailing governance structure, citing it a major inhibition to programme development. Staffs expressed their collective desire for more autonomy; they agree the
would-be service model embodies literacy work. The non-formal programme will be better envisioned as a service than part of a structural system.

**Learner Mobilization and Facilitator Recruitment**

Learners’ participation has sustained the literacy programme, thus the intervention is constructed as a learner-driven programme. This reality situates the learner as a key power player in the programme’s sustainability. Staff succinctly theorized this phenomenon as: “no learner, no programme and no programme, no job.” I would postulate that community animation, learner mobilization, and subsequent recruitment should be critically contemplated as elemental processes if NFED is to achieve its goal. The mobilization process is conducted in both communities and in churches so each entity recruits it members. However as stated earlier; community-driven recruitment and classes held in secular/public community spaces are more likely to draw diverse individuals than the ones that are not.

When recruitment is conducted by a church following announcements made from the pulpit in regards to learner mobilization, interested members join the literacy classes organized on the premises. While this is not in itself a problem, in rural locations potential participants normally only have one option: the class is either held in a secular or religious space. Community members who do practice that belief system or are non-congregants are less likely to attend classes held in churches. Thus the space itself is considered a potential threat to alienating identity. For this reason, classes held on church premises have comparatively lower attendance.

Under this categorization, space in theory becomes a deciding factor when making a choice to learn or not. Staff accounts corroborate the idea that participation quotas were unattainable
as communities and members have to navigate this circumstantial inclusive/exclusive binary to become literate. It is because many were being excluded by the very spaces in which the classes were held.

For some reason, the NFED field staffs have been indifferent to this issue and therefore failed to articulate it as a threat to potential learner involvement. They focus Instead, on blaming the Head Office for non-cooperation. I understand this arrangement has become the standardized way of “doing things” as NFE practices has been restricted and unrevised by successive ruling governments in Ghana and the MoE for two decades. Procedures have been normalized by practitioners.

The issues inevitably reflected in learner constitution. Learners who professed the Christian faith constitute about 70% of total learner participants - more than any other group. Interestingly, number of learners in the Ekome class - the one held in a secular community space, outnumbers the total number of learners in the faith-based classes of Obaanye, Noyaa, and Gbenta. They constitute about 50% of the participants. Only a handful of learners - 15%, 10%, and 25% respectively - were present in each of the faith-based spaces. Facilitators complained about high turnover in the three classes. How can we interpret the philosophical outcomes in learner behaviour? How does participation impact on learning? The community entry and mobilization process should unquestionably realign as such activities have direct bearings on participation and literacy acquisition. As Polat (2011) suggests,

It is important to clarify inclusive education as a means of shaping inclusive society … inclusion is inclusion of all regardless of any other aspect of an individual’s identity that might be perceived a difference. EFA as a means towards accomplishing an inclusive equitable society needs to take into account a broad range of diversity (p. 51).
Polat’s assertion resonates with the case under enquiry as inclusion cannot simply be assumed. It must be exercised. Inclusion is a process as well as a practice; this reality is dependent on respect and neutrality to attract individuals to participate. Only when the two factors align, and present can we argue, inclusion has been achieved.

Three facilitators were also interviewed. They had volunteered with NFED for fourteen, twelve, and two years respectively. The third, with only two years’ experience, happened to be facilitating for the first time. I observed a cordial facilitator-learner relationship. Majority of the learners - 90% expressed gratitude for their commitment and care. Learners know their facilitators are not paid salaries rather NFED offered gifts of tokens at the end of each training cycle. Participants made several inferences about facilitator remuneration process during our interactions. The communities were actively involved with facilitator recruitment; members had to decide who their teacher should be in both church and community-run classes. Learner voice was therefore critical in facilitator selection. The staff explained that the rationale for learner involvement is for learners to bond with their teachers and it is the reason for offering the opportunity to select the one to lead them. Learner and facilitator recruitment were conducted simultaneously.

According to staffs, after a class is constituted a community/church is approached to select their would-be facilitator. The selection criteria was basically zip: facilitators has to possess at least MSLC education, but otherwise were selected on the basis of reputation, personability, and their willingness to spend quality time with the programme. The chosen facilitator would then receive training by NFED.
I laud the process as participatory as it exudes strong community voice and agency in decision-making. Two of the facilitators interviewed were middle school leavers. The other was a retired trained teacher also with a MSLC. Facilitators go through five weeks of training that precedes their teaching appointment. No remuneration was offered throughout the twenty-two-month. After completion, a sewing machine and/or a small amount of cash was offered as a token in appreciation for service.

Evidently, facilitator responsibilities were entirely voluntary. This was an issue participants discuss passionately during the interviews. They complained that the absence of cash for almost two years de-motivates active facilitators and fails to attract potentials. Participants attribute the practice as the cause for fewer literacy classes in the municipality. Their desire is to see a literacy class in each village or town. But as Naa Tsitse pointedly stated; “Only if NFED can pay facilitators will they offer their services.” Such observation resonates with several arguments in the literature (see Owusu-Mensah; Stromquist) that facilitators often possess lower levels of education, a fact that in some aspects impacts on the pedagogical experience. Nonetheless, facilitators I interviewed felt privileged to be part of literacy drive. But lack of funds has been burdensome. All three made reference to the issue in our interaction. For example, Mr. Ako, the male facilitator, informed, that

“Learners sometimes expect us to finance their transportation as an incentive to attend class but we are not in that position to assist so some stop attending the classes.”

Sister Moko, another facilitator, said,

“Though the work is free (voluntary) I use public transport to get to class so I will require some money to offset my travel expenses and to top up phone units to communicate with learners about their well-being so at least they know I care.”

Sister Ehia, the third facilitator, concurred with the others. According to her;
“Almost all my learners live right here in the village so there are no monetary expectations from me but I have to either phone or walk-in to their individual houses to remind them about the classes. A little monetary compensation will be appreciable from NFED for a drink at least and to top up my phone units.”

All three expressed an appreciation towards a monthly remuneration but none speculated an amount. Ms. Cece, a programme officer, lauded this suggestion. The question is simple: can the NFED afford and/or sustain this commitment based on the institution’s present financial resources?

**Empowerment and Change Projects**

Empowerment is dependent on the state of individual participant. Sister Mama pointedly captured empowerment as freedom, or the act of feeling free:

> “An empowered person can pick up her handbag and leave the house for a function without her spouse’s interference, but you know, Sister? That is not the lesson from the primer. It teaches us respect towards our spouses. So for me empowerment is to learn to negotiate to have your way.”

Interpretations on empowerment are diverse. For some it was simply been able to engage with text; for others it was praise they received for taking part in the class; for others still it was the interactive exchange between themselves and other women - this new network/connection exudes feelings of power. For one woman, observing the facilitator allowed her to create an image of her future self as one that will facilitate a literacy class. Evidently, though all eighteen women engaged in the same activities, the outcomes turned out quite differently for each.

Empowerment consequently has different implications for different people. We could conclude; arguments that include the idea that literacy itself is an empowering end - as many authors and development agencies suggest - is ideologically problematic and theoretically
unrealistic. As the research illustrates, some learners still feel *unpowered* despite equally participating in the literacy class. Others were however empowered by being in the class - adjacent phenomena that varied in terms of how much they were related to 3Rs skills. The facilitators and staff connected the concept to everyday skills and practices.

Learners, however, subjectively theorized their transformative experiences in relation to their personal progress through literacy. Ms. Ehia a facilitator for example conceptualized empowerment as personal transformation. She explained,

“*I observe an empowered woman as a changed person; her attribute change after the class and her relationship, especially with her spouse also changes for the better.*”

Such observations theoretically places the notion of empowerment a process (Rowland, 1997; Puthamkalam, 2004) linked to learners’ personal self-reflection; they appraise the skills acquired by contrasting their before and after experiences with literacy to demonstrate the operationalizing of the concepts. Sixteen women, which is 88% of the eighteen endorsed feeling *empowered* by literacy. Only two, 11% felt unrelated to this experience. They explained; that much as they appreciate the personal literacy skills they had acquired them did not visualize empowerment as a state solely anchored in the ability rather is related to other factors and elements. But even though the two responses were a minority opinion, they notwithstanding are invaluable; they contradict the neoliberal argument that non-formal literacy initiatives must obviously result in empowerment. Such assertions debunk the notion of 3Rs empowerment as a panacea for all poverty (Wong, 2003) and to which Giroux (1987) concurs:

Literacy within the dominant discourse is not merely the inability to read and write, but also a cultural marker for naming forms of difference within the logic of cultural deprivation theory … since the importance of developing a politics of difference in this view is seldom a positive virtue and attribute of public life as difference is often
constituted as deficiency … and which is subjugated to the political and pedagogical imperatives of social conformity and domination (p3).

In other words, empowerment must be viewed as a relational, interactive, and dialogical process rather than a happenstance. Giroux (1987) adds, “Literacy is best understood as a myriad of discursive forms and cultural competencies and constructs that make available the various relations and experiences that exist between learners and the world” (p. 10).

Responses in regards to the meaning of empowerment are thematically identified under four analytical area: self-esteem, economic advancement, autonomy and agency, and self-improvement.

Five learners constituting 28% of the eighteen focused on self-esteem as the purpose of empowerment. Their conceptualization of an empowered woman was one who is confident, fearless, articulate, and motivated - in their words, literally, “She knows where she is going.” Auntie Jay, for instance, asserted, “The gait of an empowered woman differs from the one that is unpowered.” She then stood up and demonstrated the two different gaits. She referred to the empowered gait as “rompy” and the unempowered as “draggy.” Auntie Gigi’s articulation of an empowered individual was equally based on ambiance, appearance, and clothing; “An empowered woman she explained; is assessed by her outlook her appearance is very unique. She is smart and wears neat clothing.” She then stopped to point at her own shorts and blouse, and continued, “Not the type I’m wearing at the moment.” Sister Meele explained the concept in terms of confidence in a different context:

“Empowerment is the ability to stand in front of people and read for example, the Bible, in the women’s group. I couldn’t do that initially; I was an active listener. This however changed when I joined the class. The reading and writing skills have supported my confidence-building.”
The above responses critically position social behavioural attributes discernable with empowerment. While the focus of literacy programmes may be to provide 3Rs skills, the outcomes of this training are unimaginably impactful and dimensional than lineal.

Also, eight out of the eighteen learners that is (44%) equated empowerment with economic advancement. In their opinion, empowerment meant having a job and access to micro loans, the ability to manage your personal capital for trading or to establish an income-generating venture. Such respondents perceived literacy more as an economic (ad)venture; they had envisioned the programme as an IGA training or an NGO which would offer micro loans for small businesses. The preference of this group appeared to be more hands-on, practical literacy than dreary 3Rs cognitive skills. They explicitly expressed their frustrations as this was not the case. Sister Mama, while throwing her hands, argued,

“I thought we would be offered some loans during the training to work with because money is power but it is not so! A friend in another village has improved her business through micro loan from an NGO. We have nothing in this programme. I hope your presence will bring some changes.”

In addition Sister Maggie, a learner with an outgoing personality, stated,

“If the literacy programme claims to be empowering women then we should learn skills like baking and sewing besides the 3Rs to demonstrate to our families that we are making progress. But I doubt whether they (meaning NFED) can do this … you know they cannot even provide money for our transportation so…I don’t know. Empowerment is money in your hands as money commands respect.”

Other women expressed their readiness to take up community leadership positions. Others actively participate in programmes and claim they ask questions during local meetings about community development. Literacy seems to have awakened their interest in social affairs.

Participants’ equally identified the idea of autonomy as empowerment. Two participants which constitute 11% of the learners paralleled empowerment with autonomy and agency.
According to the two, an empowered person is identified through her everyday socio-political and cultural interactions. She is accessible, no hurry, and has a sense of presence. As I listened to Sister Dey for example, I was struck by the way she likened autonomy to freedom:

“To be empowered is to do what you want to do without being instructed or suppressed. For example, I am no longer anxious about my home. I can manage myself better than before … you know, I practice what we learn from the Primer at home.”

Sister Fafa added,

“Empowerment for me is interaction. What I mean is; to be in the midst of people has boosted my confidence. I kept a low profile and used to be very, very shy because I cannot read and write, but that trait is gradually changing.”

She smiled. The responses indicate the extent to which women are actively negotiating the meaning and practice of empowerment for personal purposes.

Three participants’ who constitute 16% of learner interviewees also equated empowerment with self-improvement. The women argued that literacy had provided skills to directly transform and enhance their personal images. For example, Gracy said,

“Community presently acknowledge me as one of the learners in the literacy class. Some seek my opinion and also question how it feels to be in school as an adult. I feel proud that someone is aware I am educating myself and that specify self-improvement for me.”

Claims by the three women that ordinary gestures like waving, recognition and acknowledgement from the community in their opinion is motivation has sustained their self-improvement. For example Auntie Keke explained what self-improvement meant to her. She said,

“Sister, can’t you imagine, that to be in school as your children are is empowering? We discuss what we learn from our various schools - mine though not a school. My family acknowledge my progress; at least that for me is empowerment.”
The third, Sister Obese said,

“...I pick up clues from observing my facilitator in order to build my teaching skills. I want to be a nursery teacher you know so I need to learn the skills whilst I am part of this class.”

Facilitators equally articulated the notion of empowerment. Mr. Ako emphasize on confidence building arguing, that

“If one can stand in front of others to read the Bible (Christian text) then that behaviour can be classified as strength; it is a form of empowerment.”

Ms. Cece offered a similar statement:

“If a woman who doesn’t worship in this church is able to walk into the yard to attend class without any encumbrance whatsoever from her spouse then that women by our cultural standards is considered empowered.”

Sister Moko on the other hand is interested in the economic aspect of the practice. Her position is;

“Women who once could not read and write can now do so. Some are casual workers in our community water project. They now earn some income. I articulate this progression as empowerment.”

Empowerment whilst varied is personal and although the difference happens within the self the feeling of attainment is identifiable by society through acts and expressions.

**Access and Availability of Resources**

Availability of, and access to resources has been a persistent challenge for NFED. The institution’s resources collectively include funding, infrastructure, supplies, and transportation. But the demand for, supply of, and access to such capital is unstable and shifting; the instability has encumbered NFED operations and literacy training.

Staff and learners equally discussed the institutional funding situation and expressed uncertainty about programme’s survival under the present circumstances. According to
respondents, funding has been a long-standing drawback and obvious challenge for NFED as the institution has to plan its activities around the 1-3% annual budget received from MoE.

The funds allocated to NFED are very minimal. Moreover, government directives restrained NFED from sourcing funding as an independent institution. Interestingly, while such deficiencies were clearly evident during my visit, funding discussions contrarily are marginal in the literature. While Arietta and Wake (2006) report on World Bank/Ghana NFLP funding figures, Owusu-Mensah (2007) fails to make a very pressing case on funding issues in the country profile on NFED. Testaments from NFED staff corroborate Aryettey and Kwakye’s (2006) report, attributing the programme’s struggles to the World Bank’s exit. The Bank had been the major donor between 2001 and 2005. Likewise despite long-term collaborations with specific NGOs which concerned themselves with programmes on life skill, health and reproduction, and IGA training, the agencies do not offer supplementary funds for the literacy work. They merely affiliate with the institution to draw on government consent for operation in this sphere of work. As Mr. Gogi indicated,

“Much as the government of Ghana is a signatory to the international literacy agreement and was expected to spend not less than 3% of the Ministry of Education (MoE) total budget on literacy that is not being done. I expect MoE to allocate more funding to NFED to expand our learner recruitment drive in the various communities. In terms of international funding, we currently have collaborators, I will say and not funders. We collaborate with World Universities Services of Canada (WUSC), the Hunger Project International, World Vision International, and with a few more NGOs and CBOs; no funding from donors.”

Certainly, programme quality is been comprised by the absence of funds. Staffs are on edge about job loss due to decline learner interest and class attendance which they allege signal the gradual collapse of the non-formal literacy programme. Uncertainty funding and future budgetary allocation to address organizational needs and to support field work have deterred
the programme; the uncertainty was expressive in the physical space and layout and in staff
demeanour and attitude. That said NFED has initiated a desk as means to strengthen NGO
partnerships, institutional relationships, leverage resources and promote its presence.

I learnt that to be a public service is to be part of the local government decentralization
system. Its a step to include the institution in the Education Budgetary Allocations Plan at the
micro-level for community development. NFED intends to access the funds to support the
expansion of the recruitment drive.

Space, whilst a very scarce reserve in the municipality and villages was ironically available
at the Head Office. NFED’s Head Office is located in a three-story building. The Gbenta
Municipality office is a shared space in a four-bedroom building occupied by other
government departments who work in the municipality. What it calls “a Municipality
Office” is literally a huge dining table surrounded with a couple of chairs. The Programme
Coordinator sat behind this massive desk and in front of that were two chairs for visitors. On
both sides of the table was the 8-12 plus-member staff, mostly women, with their handbags
on their laps - a very depressing spectacle. Majority of the employees looked dull, exhausted,
and unwelcoming. The 40’ x 40’ space harboured three other government entities and all four
“offices” were served by a lone secretary with a single computer, printer and fax machine all
on a table beside her and that set-up served as her office. I was admittedly confounded, and
began to despair over what offices and learning locations further away from the capital city
might look. The coordinator, Mr. Sege, confirmed my wonder as he threw up his hands and
invited me unto a chair:

“This is our office! Welcome! This is where we work. How can you reflect and plan,
my sister, when everyone is moving up and down like this? About 30 people share
this tiny room. It is ridiculous; my staffs are unhappy. We have to cope in this difficult environment.”

It was unimaginable whether any meaningful work could happen in this chaotic environment. As Hewamanne (2011) confirms, “The particular social relations and cultural practices within a space define and label a space” (p. 295). Structurally, the aesthetics and ambience of a space impact on and contribute to the power of our imagination and ability to think, reflect, and create. I cannot say the same for the NFED.

The learning spaces are not much better. In some cases, the GES allows NFED to use of spaces under its jurisdiction for literacy training, but that support is inconsistent. Most rural locations in Ghana have one or no school buildings. They are mostly not wired to provide electric power to support evening classes. Others are too far away from the central location of the village so learners are unwilling to walk long distances to study for a relatively short time. It is also unsafe to walk alone in remote villages at night. In certain instances, the classrooms are locked due to mere bureaucracy and personal power show-off between head teachers and organizers. Thus non-existent resources to support citizens learning further marginalize them as opportunities that could provide second chances, especially in education, are inaccessible. The issue of unsuitable accommodation, both for staff and learners is an obstruction for NFED.

The instruction duration and materials were equally discussed with interviewees. The proposal overwhelmingly from both staff and learners are for NFED to change the duration for the 3Rs training period; at the same time, those in favour of such change did not specify a number of months this should be. Instead, the suggestion was for a two-part training cycle. The first half should focus on 3R skills and the second, on IGA. Respondents justified this
shift emphasizing the boredom of studying text without the acquisition of tangible skills. For instance, Gracey a participant stated; “We’ll appreciate some hands-on learning.” In relation to the above I understand an on-going institutional research is in progress and the assessment and findings would hopefully change the future of NFE. Details were not postulated for ethical protocol purposes.

As Howard (2012) observed, “Through writing, they [learners] could become historical actors which certainly defies the generalisations about lives of uniformity or passive victimhood … therefore writing was itself a hard-won act of human agency” (p. 3). The Head Office is responsible for the provision of study materials and classroom supplies -chalk, writing boards, tables, and chairs in cases where the classes are held in spaces other than regular classrooms. Such materials have not been forthcoming.

For example, I attempted to contact the Municipality’s PC, Mr. Sege, on the phone prior to the community entry. I had difficulty reaching him. I got to know when we finally spoke, that he was organizing for an easel for a newly constituted class. The board had to be transported from the Head Office to the municipal office but delayed. He persisted because the class was to start the next day. He further explained the issues when I visited:

“Ms., see, learners have to experience how to write. This cannot be done in the air but on the surface of something. You see, it’s hectic here. We like the job, but, hmm, head office is not very supportive. Simple basic things, my sister, we have to make several phone calls before they are brought over; the learners can’t wait!”

Much as instructional materials are essential to learning, supplies essential to support critical pedagogy in terms of reading and writing are treated as something external rather than integral to human development. I classify this phenomenon problematic as learning and
knowledge cannot generate itself, rather they must be guided with certain accompaniments to engender the desired outcome.

The proprietary control of the Ministry of Education restricts NFED from acquisition of physical or material assets and denies autonomy to engage in income generating projects as an institution. In short, institutional decisions are micromanaged politically thus each requisition is scrutinized by MoE. Executive powers are limited in terms operational decisions. As Mr. Gogi noted, “Government and political bureaucracy have crumbled our efforts.” For example; although the Head Office is located in a prime corporate zone and had space that could be sublet and leased to generate income for NFED programme financing, this decision could not be initiated within the institution due to adherence to directives from the status quo.

Ironically, while NFED’s responsibility is to facilitate citizen empowerment, the organization’s own power has been compromised by bureaucracy and external controls, making it impossible for achievement of goals. Yet, socio-economic development and growth process encourage internal diversity and change. Discourses advocating for the promotion of concepts and initiatives in favour of development-from-within tend to be useful alternatives. Technically however organizational change can only happen within a broad spectrum of resources.

Community Attitude Towards Literacy – Individuals, NGOs and Organizations

About 30% of participants largely confirmed community active involvement in the programme. Philanthropic gestures were seemingly deficient in my four research locations. I learnt from Mr. Gogi this happens elsewhere across the nation. In Ekome and Gbenta, for
instance, village leaders and church elders only occasionally visit the classes, but such cordiality was absent in Noyaa and Obaanye. Respondents were unable to articulate reasons for the difference. In some cases, community chiefs and leaders were involved in the establishment of the literacy classes. While rural areas were impoverished nationwide, according to Mr. Gogi some opinionated leaders and individuals volunteered time and resources, offered their backyards and donated items like lanterns, gallons of kerosene, and chalk to support the classes. Both learners and staff were equally disappointment about NFE absence and lack of recognition in many rural communities to engender such philanthropies.

Based on the findings of the study my theoretical definition of community in this narrative encapsulates both community-of-actors and community-as-location. The observations suggest - and respondents implied - that the role of non-formal literacy in educating citizens as part of the social development process is not yet fully understand at both the macro and micro levels.

Field staff attributes the misconception to lack of assessment. But how can learner ability be determined since non-formal education is not held in formal settings where standardized testing could be conducted? In other words, the informality, intangibility of the programme and skills do not appeal to the community.

Moreover, NFE literacy constitutes different forms of learning. I expect to find other government stakeholders actively involved in one way or another with the programme. For reasons already discussed, this is not the case. With the exception of training organized by GRATIS and PPAG involving HIV/AID and reproductive issues such collaborations are very
minimal. Such pessimism has contributed to devaluing the distinctive attributes of literacy as boundless, immeasurable, and non-certifiable as the practice lack recognition.

There is a possibility of amelioration. It was a unusual that government organizations like the Rural Integrated and Development project, the National Commission on Development (NCCD), the Department of Community Development (DCD), the Ghana Water Company (GWC), and the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) were not partners with NFED. Likewise, Department of Social Welfare (DSW); the Ministry of Culture and Sports (MoCS); the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG); the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection; and the Police Service’s Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) are likewise not NFED collaborators. Some institutions have local offices in this research location. The Department of Social Welfare (SWD), for instance, runs a pre-school teacher training programme in the same municipality as the NFED office yet no known relationship had been fostered between the two entities. It appeared NFED has been practically operating in a bubble. Thus questions regarding the absence of such collaborations did not generate satisfactory responses.

The bilateral relationship between government and funding agencies concerning literacy work appeared ineffectual and inconsistent. Having worked with an international humanitarian organization in Ghana which partnered with and financed local NGO projects, I am well aware of the impact of funding dynamics on programme implementation. I was therefore keenly interested in such questions and responses during the interviews. Mr. Gogi however stated:

“Collaboration is more in terms of what we [NFED] can offer. We are the experts; they [meaning other agencies] come for consultation as we provide free technical
resource. The gesture is to help them reach out to non-literates population as well. We cannot do the work all by ourselves. Our responsibility as mandated by the Constitution is to coordinate other literacy programmes in the country. It is the reason we support agencies to strengthen the literacy drive.”

Nonetheless, coordination and supervision on one hand; and consulting services on the other are two distinct responsibilities that must be separated from each other. Whilst the former is considered part of the role of public service, the latter is engagement of knowledge and expertise time which ought to be quantified on monetary terms. Consultation should attract fees. NFED need to design a fees-for-service package to operate as such.

I have emphasized the word free here based on feedback from the interview for critique. While NFED is in dire need of financial resources to turn the institution round, it still offers technical services for free to other organizations that could afford to pay or offer in-kind donations. How can the institution regenerate itself with a non-presence partnership base?

Furthermore, the degree of traction World Bank funding once offered to the programme is equally worth considering. My understanding was; that the World Bank had been a huge donor and was actively involved with the programme for nearly two decades from 1990 to 2007. Respondents’ associated current programme challenges numerous with the Bank’s withdrawal. Mr. Gogi elaborates:

“The World Bank appreciated the progress made by NFED and that prompted the funding of the literacy work. A change in portfolio at the Accra office however altered the Bank’s objectives and cessation of the funding. But the government took back the funding responsibility because of its interest in literacy. Inadequate state funding unfortunately, cannot support our work so we were compelled to decrease our target for the learner recruitment drive.”

How can a national institution solely rely on a single donor considering the fact that donor funding are uncertain in most circumstances? A participant posed the questions differently:

“What can we do as our programme seems invisible to the nation?” My response would be
equally theoretical: in what ways can the literacy programme be made visible nationally to fit into the global literacy drive?

“No man is an island,” so the adage goes. This idea echoed in participants. Five learners, two facilitators, and three staff expressed interested in welcoming external visitors to the field and in the learning centres. A feeling of seclusion was expressed by associates due to NFED’s inactive relationships-building process and for which has somehow made the institution unpopular. This open-door proposal resonates with Stromquist’s (1997) study on a literacy programme in Brazil. Stromquist declares her intention for that research:

To portray the social and political dynamics of a literacy programme that promised to contribute to the citizenship and rights of its participants’. The detailed examination of these dynamics enables policymakers and practitioners to understand what pedagogical and curricular improvements can be introduced to strengthen and sustain the literacy habits of men as well as women (p. xi).

Participants envisioned that visits to be made by external parties can accelerate the programme’s emphasis on empowerment. They cited instances of significant negligence to exemplify hindrances to their sense of belonging. I suggest the Foucault’s notion of governmentality and systemic control symbolize the root cause of the isolation being experienced by associates. The individuals construe this feeling as spiritual as systemic discrimination coupled with structural imbalances seems to have pushed out actors. Participants expressed the frustration in diverse ways. For example, Miss Asma asserted,

“It seems no one cares about the programme. We are here by ourselves; until Head Office calls on monitoring or an interested individual like you visits, nobody bothers to visit. It is the reason people are unaware about the challenges we experience in the field.”

Two facilitators narrated similar issues. First was Mr. Ako. He articulated,
“We need feedback on our teaching to ascertain whether we are on track with the pedagogy. We would like to show off to the “big people” (NFED and government officials though Sister Bea [project officer] and others supervise our work.”

Ms. Asma’s observation contrarily was simplistic. Her concerns focused on learner motivation. She shook her head and claimed;

“Head Office has to explain our responsibility to learners. They ask for favours that are beyond our reach. It’s stressful. We are unable to meet their expectations (financial). Head Office needs to sit up.”

Such ambiguity has created sensitivity among learners. As discussed earlier, the animation process made enticing promises that NFED is not equipped to fulfil. Staff members are emotionally and physically worn out as learners incessantly revisit unfulfilled programme promises. Despite this demur atmosphere, learners and staff alike expressed their personal gratitude for my presence and interest in the programme.

**Post-Literacy Plans**

While NFED programmes combine curriculum and development activities in communities to fulfil the *functional literacy* philosophy, the expectation is for learners to create their own income generating activities. In contrast, learners presented the development of IGA initiatives as NFED’s responsibility; an obvious case of incongruity in programme communication. It is doubtful whether such contradictions will be diminished in the future.

Besides English language study, which NFED suggest was a post-literacy consideration; IGA training was detached from the plans. The plan was presented as a community rather than NFE initiative. Of course, acquiring IGA skills and funding IGA programmes are two different processes so individuals could create income ventures. Learners interested in IGA skills, funding, and literacy (3Rs) often expect all three to happen within the twenty-two
month cycle. Unfortunately, institutional directives on the subject-matter seem superficial. At the same time, respondents lauded post-literacy plans as a sustainable issue. Neither post-literacy plans nor plans for post-literacy IGA projects existed in any of the four communities. For example; plans for libraries or reading projects were absent as the spaces being used for classes are temporal; they belong to other entities. Learners were pointedly interested in post-literacy ventures. For instance; Sister Dey simply declared, “We would appreciate to have an English class after the Ga lessons.” Aunt Dey also stated:

“We are interested in post-literacy programmes to sustain the literacy work in our village. We were promised sewing and baking classes; the cycle is almost over and we have seen nothing!”

Mami Meele concur Aunt Dey’s statement: “I wish the IGA class immediately follow the 3Rs so I do not lose interest in the learning.”

While the above assertions explicitly suggest that literacy training seems to end in the classroom, the pedagogy assumes it to be a lifelong learning process. Of the four communities, only Ekome mentioned an on-going income-generating activity. It is a water project established by the government and which employs a handful of learners to retail the water. The facilitator in this village explained, that “the employee-learners use the interaction and business exchange to practice their literacy skills.” This case was an exception. Albeit, we must ask: what is the fate of the numerous learners who do not have projects in their communities?

Staff members also argued for programme sustenance although reasons articulated were at least in part, motivated by self-interest. Ms. Ansa noted,
“We try our best to encourage learners to attend classes because we can’t call it a programme if learners fail to show up; that means we will be redundant and be subsequently laid off.”

Learners identify themselves as the powerless group in the programme’s hierarchy. I have to point a point in context. Learners, enrolled in the programme perceived, they are in to be empowered. It is unfortunate they are unaware of the profundity of the power they wield politically in sustaining the programme. I would suggest that learners be made cognisant of their level and influence and power as part of the empowering process in the learning.

In the absence of post-literacy measures learners undertake alternative possibilities to keep their skills from eroding. Adjah (2005) argues for post-literary plans to support literacy and development through libraries and the provision of reading materials for learners in Accra. It emerges that communities take sole responsibility to handle their individual post-literacy strategies; this is truthfully the result of the financial and resource constraints placed on NFED. As Mr. Gogi postulated,

We have tried different ways of retaining literacy for our learners and one of them was to encourage learners to write articles for publication in local newspapers in the past. The process cannot be sustained due to funding. We currently operate a mobile library where learners can borrow books to read in order not to relapse into illiteracy. We have games that teach marketing and money management. Funding is required to support the functions. We have not been able to concentrate on that though they form part of our post-literacy plans. It is one means of retaining our learners to sustain the knowledge. So our arms are open. We have plans on our drawing board, but we need funding to execute them.”

He also suggested that the four research locations may be future beneficiaries of such plans, but specifics on timelines was not made available during my visit.
Research Constraints and Programme Challenges

Physical, spatial, and emotional challenges abound in field research. Such unanticipated circumstances may be accommodated, negotiated, or considered as minor incidents if they do not cause considerable distraction or interference in the study process.

Respondents detailed numerous programme challenges as discussed above. The programme implementation processes have not changed for over two decades. The structure, employee development, mobilization and organizational process do not correspond with the contemporary change in population growth and rural-urban demands.

Staff members similarly expressed anxiety about losing potential learners from participating in the programme. Although statistics a decade ago (see Owusu-Mensah, 2007) suggest a stable increase in learner participation, recruitment levels have decreased due to funding challenges (see also interview with Mr. Gogi; 2009 Functional Literacy Statistics). Similarly, temporary and poor learning and office spaces marginalize identities and, as all participants complained, situate individuals involved in NFE as persona non grata because space influences community thought and perception. Only one facilitator was assigned to each class; there were no substitutes. The learners desired to see the back-ups as classes get interrupted when a facilitator had to be genuinely absent. Sister Hay, for example, made a note of this eventuality. She stated:

“Our facilitator is the only one here; classes are called off on days when she is busy because equally has issues to take care of. Why can’t we have two people as the facilitators are our blood line for the programme?”

Again, field supervision entails exclusively amount of mobility since the staffs work both day and night. There was no means of transportation however for the entire programme.
Decisions on available motorcycles had not been communicated by Head Office so the bikes are parked in the garage. Ineffective communication, stringent government directives, bureaucratic red tape, and absence of institution-to-institution donor contact have interfered enormously with NFED’s work. NFED’s on-going political consultations with successive ruling governments - a bid to sustain the political will of literacy have been a wearisome process. Where is governments’ commitment towards the global Education for All initiative? We expect the initiative to include formal and informal ways of educating people of all ages and gender and those who aspire to become literate. I attribute this insensitivity to the absence of a statutory legal framework for NFED activities.

Learner turnover was another significant issue identified. Mr. Gogi estimated the current dropout rate to be 18 to 20 percent which he claimed, is one of the lowest globally. He attributed the issue to migration, relocation, and the reality that many adults often felt pulled towards work more than schooling. The institution need to be in a competitive position to negotiate/lobby government to leverage resources from external agencies to boost its organizational development and practice.

Low learner turnout and increased turnover has been due to the monotonous in pedagogy which has failed to align with current learner interests and modernity. The promises made during the animation process regarding the potency of the programme are not delivered. Such incongruences have created a disconnection between learner aspiration and self-actualization. Learners often feel misled and coupled with the challenges of adult learning and socio-cultural issues, they exit from the programme or fail to participate, whatsoever. For example, Sis Mama recalled,
“We were informed the literacy class could be a springboard to formal schooling. This seems impossible as the class is conducted in only one language, Ga but and not English. How can one progress from here? Sister, this is a reason for the high turnover.”

While saying that last sentence, she pointed at the empty classroom around us. Mame Dey reiterated,

“I want to speak English, the Ga is our language we can manage that. We haven’t yet heard a word from the office about the English language study.”

Mr. Sege, the PC confirmed her assertion. He was equally expressed his disappointment and said:

“You see, times are changing so the NFED should change with the times. Boredom sets it after learning the reading and writing for a long time. They should have some hands-on project alongside the 3Rs. Things are difficult here. The learners are ready to use their time effectively but Head Office just doesn’t care!”

Evidently, interests stimulated during learner mobilization unintentionally outweigh the actual service delivery; participants desire more applicable skills to meet the demands of the changing economy. Obviously, frustration should be understood; the expectation are not forthcoming.

On my part, although I encountered few experiences which were honestly unexpected, generally my research trip went quite well. Choosing an appropriate location initially posed a challenge as literacy programmes are held in most parts of rural Accra; therefore, I was torn between other options when presented with a list of municipalities to choose from by NFED. The Gbenta municipality stood out for me because of the differences in the levels of the classes in the programme learning cycle. I theoretically perceived it would be informative to examine nuances in the differences to situate learner empowerment through literacy. My hunch was right.
The visit to some of the classes however delayed. I had to hold on until learners communicate their schedules. As this research is learner-driven and intended to advance voice to women, I have to ensure they have the power to set the agenda, time, and location for the interviews. Consequently, I had to make multiple trips to the various villages to meet with individual learners. The attitude is a social performance in rural cultures of which I am aware of. Outside of some of the staff in the municipal office, whose demeanour was unwelcoming as they assumed my real priority was to do due diligence on their work, the programme team was very cordial and helpful.

The one-on-on interview process took off smoothly, because I speak the same language as participants. Only two participants were reluctant to provide responses after consenting. Their responses were simple “yes” and “no”. I had to accommodate their introverted personality, but we continued with the interviews regardless as they had agreed to participate. As expected, the substance from the two interviews had to be discarded during the coding process. The scripts failed to provide substantial feedback for analysis.

The level of learner absenteeism was alarming. Whereas Gbenta and Ekome had large classes with about twenty learners I counted twelve and ten learners respectively in Obaanye and Noyaa. I have covered the possible reasons for this elsewhere, but my initial reaction was to wonder why individuals were not taking advantage of the opportunity to learn. This is a social enquiry for another research.

I also had an informal conversation with a pastor about the literacy class in his church; that site did not form part of the study. His complaints were not noticeably different from the ones I recount above. However, it is worth mentioning that this particular class had been
dysfuncct because the facilitator happened to be a young adult student. He is compelled to teach the literacy class from 1-3pm. The training schedule naturally poses a challenge for the women who will be working during those hours of the day. The facilities for learning in this unique case was present – space and supplies but no facilitator; human resource. I guess it would have been a different story if facilitator remuneration is altered from what it is presently.

**Summary**

The adult learners and other participants in the NFED literacy programmes in the four communities candidly expressed their subjective opinions about the impact of the studies on their lives. The issues and challenges identified ranged on a continuum from individual, interactional and institutional levels. While perspectives vary on issues, the views are useful in charting epistemological interpretations. Women outnumber men in the literacy classes. Both learners and facilitators were enthusiastic about the programme, however institutional challenges, specifically funding, pose enormous setback which had culminated in a high turnover among learners. Obviously, learner interest had shifted towards IGA and English skills which are a call for programme variation to sustain the interests.
“I wish someone could explain our situation to Head Office. The lack of resources and means of mobility exacerbate our work load in the office and on the field. We risk our lives every day for this work. – Mr. Sege

Chapter Seven

Interpretation of Data and Research Findings

Introduction

I interpret the research findings in this chapter to establish a theoretical link between the literature, participants’ voices, and my own views to develop an objectified standpoint from the analysis. The goal is to convey meaning and perspective to the data or, as Creswell (2002) puts it, “to situate findings within larger meanings” (p. 556). Likewise, interpretative analysis Charity (1995) explains, “promotes and raise public and private consciousness to collectively work through decision-making process, help isolate choices, core values, utilize expert and local systems of knowledge, and facilitate deliberative civic discourse” (p. 4-8 as cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

Theorizing Interpretation

As Firmin (2000) and others note, “Data do not necessarily speak for themselves but rather findings are viewed from multiple perspectives” (p. 458; Creswell, 2002; Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2005) to represent the account. My objective in this argument is to represent differences in interpretations, and draw meaning from diverse perspectives in the literature to determine the cause-effect within the narratives. Interpretation as it is has presented a channel to build on different layers and parts of the narrative as well as broadens the epistemological reflection on statements by the different voices, and why and how it is articulated and understood. It is through the interpretation that current issues in non-formal
education are situated into meaningful constructs to draw an assessment on the situation. This interpretation in other words uniquely positions oneself to reflectively identify the opportunities and constraints of the project as they were assembled on a continuum to classify the array of issues - participation, resources, funding among others for crystallization.

As a strategy, the analysis conducted for this research is understood as a ‘’stretching exercise’’ (Janesick, 2000, p. 386) as my imagination was creatively task to weave the strands of intervention problems and solutions. In this particular case, my imagination was stretched to breathe life into the analysis to translate the epistemological, analytical and representational variations from the narrative to policy proposals. For that reason, the interpretative landscape from authorial stance (Creswell, 1998) created a platform for reflection on the multiple conversations held by participants and the literature in the narrative.

Subsequently, integrative lens (Gay et al, 2006) reflectively guides the abstractions, inferences and questions raised to understand the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al, 2006, 2012). Inter-subjectivity obviously plays out in social interactive analysis (Anderson 2002). That said, personal biases naturally in selective and specific ways shape peculiar observable issues as well due to one’s engagement with the text, the study and experiences.
Interpreting Emerging Issues

Interpretation in this sense is like completing a conversation to dynamically harmonize the ideas generated, possibilities identified and approaches to strategize for the future.

In other words, citing Creswell (2012), I had to “step back and form larger meaning about the phenomenon based on personal observations and comparisons with past studies” (p. 257) as my subjective feminist orientation is inevitably reflected in the ontological and epistemological issues observed.

Certainly, we progress from applying triangulation lens to employing crystallisation lens ((Richardson, 1994; Janesick, 2000) to centre the analysis. Relatedly, citing Janesick 2000, she wrote:

Richardson elegantly explains the concept of crystallisation as part of the postmodern project. Crystallisation recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life. The image of the crystal replaces that of the land surveyor and the triangle. We move on from plane geometry to the new physics. The crystal ‘combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angels of approach. Crystals grow, change and alter, but are not amorphous’” (Richardson, 1994, p.522). What we see when we view a crystal, for example, depends on how we view it, how we hold it up to the light or not. Richardson continues, Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic ” (p.522). (Cited in Janesick 2000, p.392),

The interpretation section as stated invariably pulls up the issues from the different dimensions in the narrative to achieve the fact embodies by Richardson’s statement.

Institutional Management - Impact on Literacy Programme

The authority and influence of an institution is largely framed in its energy and this reflects in its public engagement and relationships. The institution’s embodied norms and values
essentially shape individuality, identities, and people’s attitudes either through association or by interaction. It is problematic, then, that the participants’ analysis of NFED depicts concerns about institutional powerlessness.

Owusu-Mensah (2007) elaborates on the extent of state restraint on the institution: are the experiences and challenges institutional-specific or politically-originated or the two are interconnected? To what extent has external/internal governance structures shaped non-formal literacy culture in Ghana? How can macro-policies be put into practice as micro-level education in a constantly changing environment? Do individuals have a voice in macro-institutional policies in social development processes in Ghana (see Polat, 2011; Nordtveit, 2008; Riddell, 1999)?

While it is not my intention to chart, as Kettley (2010) puts it, “a taxonomy of the barriers to learning” (p. 13), literacy programmes in Ghana is actively impeded by a gamut of issues that immobilize the learning process. Researchers have examined some of the issues on literacy in Ghana in last decade. Such examinations include Mfum-Mensah’s (2003) research on literacy in pastoral regions; Kadingdi’s (2006) paper on policy and basic education; Owusu-Mensah’s (2007) country profile on the state of literacy; Agodzo’s (2011) thesis on literacy and community development; Abudu, Fuseini, and Nuhu’s (2013) article on the role of functional literacy; and Fuseini and Abudu’s (2014) survey on inducement factors to participation. With such knowledge on the constituent of the pattern of challenges, my interpretation purposefully focuses on the creation of an understandable dynamic interdependent process to redefine policy proposals that could speak to change literacy delivery in Ghana.
Learning and Beyond - Epistemological Implications

Depending on who has been questioned, diverse philosophical and epistemological responses will result from a straightforward question like, “why literacy, and particularly why literacy for women?” Such diverse responses axiomatically validate previous and on-going arguments that the goal for literacy is complex, compounded, and varies ideologically.

Within this research, literacy in Ghana is meant to address the educational needs of the marginalized in this time and history. As Mr. Gogi (2013) stated,

“Literacy during the Nkrumah regime was a form of communication to educate the masses to understand democracy and policies being initiated for development as most citizens were non-literate then. The objective previously for providing literacy by the colonial masters and Wesleyan missionaries was for indigens to read the Bible. Again, in 1989 government interest in literacy was for citizens to understand World Bank and IMF SAP policies whilst the World Bank subsequent interest in funding NFED was development-oriented.”

Obviously, the individual’s interest has not been present in any state/institutional agenda on literacy, so how do we depart from antiquated notions of literacy to reconceptualise it as a social practice to uphold its complexities in identity formation (Nyerere, 1967, Owusu-Ansah, 2007; Stromquist, 2000; Hooper, 2006)? Likewise, how do we harmonize the difference interests (motives) in literacy to (re)shape and recreate diverse learning (motifs) for future education policy planning?

Further, literacy is presented as a form of decentralized service; a macro-objective representation for micro-subjective structuring. Literacy is conceptualized within this correlation as a political tool in democracy and citizenship learning, and also as a social change strategy to lever social development, and as a personal necessity that psychologically satisfies innate aspirations for self-actualization. An empowering education system should
represent change, power, and sustainability. This concept perceptually animates intense debates wherever it is mentioned irrespective of ideological or philosophical inclinations or differences. Moreover, it has a past which, in innumerable ways, has influenced the present and will shape the future of learning as it is an alternate form of education with the capacity for knowledge production that needs provision to sustain it.

In theorizing equity and inclusive education Dei and Ashgarzadeh (2005) suggest that “we should pay attention to the cultural and social background of the community … as is that which responds to the concerns, aspirations, and interests of diverse body politic by drawing on the accumulated knowledge, creativity, and resourcefulness of local people” (p. 220). Good, but how do we contextualize literacy to be space-place specific? How imperative is it for Ghana to accelerate space and place simultaneously if literacy for development as non-formal education is relegated to the background (Ogawa, Sifuna, Kunje, Ampiah, Byamugisha, Sawamura, & Yamada, 2009; Kadingdi 2006; Luke 2011)? Existing ideologies and education policies underestimate theories and structures of interaction that construct women’s identities. Yet, there is more besides participation, as Dewey (1909) notes:

In social life, the school has neither moral end nor aim. The end of education is harmonious development of all the powers of the individual. Here no reference to social life is apparent yet many think we have it in an adequate and thoroughgoing definition of the goal of education (p. 12-13).

What is the goal of education? How is education enacted within or outside of the social context? It is imperative to such epistemological responses, as Dewey (1909) proposes, that we “know the social situation in which the individual will have to use ability to observe, recollect, imagine, and reason in order to have any other way of telling what a training of mental powers actually means” (p. 13).
In other words, the literacy classes serve multi-functional purposes for marginalized individuals and women. They are construed as social spaces which function beyond just teaching literacy to become sites of social distraction, self-help and informal social club (Stromquist, 1997). In that case, how can such varied expectations be synchronized with the learning process? The problem, Crocco (2010) has identified, is a failure to “recognize our own historicity and cultural specificity, what feminists call ‘situatedness’ … as uncovering stories can only partially be explained by the larger sociological and historical context … from which women’s stories can diverge and deviate markedly” (p. 31). As Sister Gigi a participant mentioned; “our stories should be heard. Sister Maggie added; “people have to know what we do in the literacy class to accord respect.” Dighe’s (1995) assertion which constructs the virtue of strength in women’s interaction as producing magical results is thus understood within this socio-environment context of learning manifest in this analysis.

**Beyond Automaticity of Empowerment**

Axiomatic conceptualization and assumptions of empowerment as an instinctive end result of interventions emerge from my findings. For example; when a participant Yenyemi stated; “How do I feel empowered if I don’t have money? Sister Kuku added; “Just knowing how to read and write do no translate into cash”. Learners appear to be questioning the validity of empowerment. Here I problematize this essentialist misconception as doxa – the taken-for-granted consensus and invisible categorization (Bordieu, 1977/1972) because consideration to individual ingenuity attributes, values, and other forms of attribution could possibly be discounted and normalized by this claim. Participants’ descriptions of empowerment highlight the diverse and graded nature of the concept in practice which implies an individual knowledge of what it means to be empowered. In fact, it is apparently desirable for the
women to accentuate the differences and differential elements in their own empowerment (Massaquoi and Wane, 2007).

To understand the concept either as a *process* or an *outcome* dialectically underlines that the transformative pattern within empowerment could be layered on a continuum of assessment. I would instead theorize that expectations from the interactions should be mediated among actors who participate within them - that process may reveal knowledge/material for innovation. Short-term impact may differ in cases where expected outcomes are *in situ* or are purposely guided; this is because a one-time project cannot create long-term behavioural change.

Empowerment outcomes can differ even when the same resources, actors, and environment are employed in an intervention in the same location a second time as, technically, the constituent elements of place, space, time, staff competency, resources, and unanticipated events impact these interventions differently. This study is a classic example of the above assertion. Much as NFED‘s intervention employ similar resources to engender empowerment in all four learning locations, the outcomes as we have understood were very distinctive from one another. Gbenta has a more dynamic class than Ekome. The learners in Noyaa were observed as unmotivated whilst those in Obaanye were more enthusiastic. Likewise, the locations may be rural but the manner in which social life and activities are organized by members in each case may or may not impact empowerment. How do we construct empowerment by theorizing the nuances to contextualize subjective experiences from interventions in varied settings?
I argue, similar interventions re (produce) divergent results, and consequently empowerment discourses should depart from a positivist automatization of the concept. Rather, conceptual analysis needs to exhibit a postmodernist antifoundational approach to question “human nature,” “rationality,” and “morality” in such programmes, as the former does not encourage growth and development (Rorty 1996.p. 334, Dewey, 1916). Its obvious empowerment cannot be granted; it must be claimed. It is not neutral, and therefore the importance of been or be-coming transformed can only be reinforced as programmes only facilitate conditions and process for women to empower themselves (CIDA/IDRC n.d; see Puthamkalam, 2004) as such conditions presently do not lend power to the women.

The social reduction of educating the girl-child in Ghana is a problem, and one that explains the participation of female learners in NFED programmes. But the gender disparity gap in education remains high as GES, NGOs, and CSOs try to mitigate the situation through advocacy and capacity-building for communities on girls’ education and literacy projects. The reality is; education planners have failed to conceptualize the concept beyond boy/girl and women/men binaries in social development despite worldwide gender initiatives in education.

I attribute this misconstruction to embedded norms in socialising males and females in Ghanaian cultures and dominant patriarchal voices in social planning. A gender framework for literacy activities is absent despite the certainty that NFED target non-literate women for training. Consequently, such conventions predictably constitute reasons feminists reject denigrating assumptions that perceive women as totally passive in response to subjugating structures. So how can we identify key differences in gender inequities to create strategies to maximise women’s literacy needs?
Aetiological Examination in Changing Learner Interest

History, modernity, and environmental psychology have collectively swayed the ideals of the contemporary non-formal adult learner. The shift has become apparent in the sense that as much as routine action, as Dewey (1916) notes,

May increase skill to do a particular thing, it does not lead to new perceptions of bearings and connections; and limits rather than widens the meaning-horizon but experience or activity is educative, and all education resides in having such experiences (p. 78).

Unsurprisingly, the primary reaction of a relative majority of the participants in NFED literacy programmes is to desire a more rigorous and strategic response to pedagogy.

Dewey’s statement implies that learners’ expectations towards differing forms of literacy harmonizes aspirational, innovative desires and further lessens confidence in 3Rs skills as an end unto themselves. For example, Maa Bene succinctly articulated her aspirations, that “My knowledge should translate into money.” Aunt Gigi stated: ‘To be empowerment is to be able to trade with your own money. My petty trading is been made possible because I got a loan from someone.’ Again, Maa Hewane proposed, that: “As an incentive and a form of appreciation for been in the programme, the NFE should provide us with a small loan to trade with upon completing the school.”

These axiomatic expressions signify the extent to which learners perceive literacy classes as formal schooling. In view of this multi-thought learners expect the pedagogy to mould/model individual’s employable skill as a way to accentuate the social benefits of schooling than for the private benefits for women/girls (Jimenez & Patrinos, 2008) only. Learners, as a result would inherently appreciate opportunity for the acquisition of such skills
- that is if it would be offered because it distinctively engender capabilities in individuals to effectively participate in the private-sphere. Connecting to this observation, Dewey (1916) notes, “Education may be conceived either retrospectively or prospectively … it may be treated as process for accommodating the future to the past, or as a utilization of the past for a resource in developing the future” (p. 79). Dewey’s assertion in this instance reflects on the course of teaching learners anticipate. Whilst learners are stimulated by acquired 3Rs skills, the capacity for growth unfortunately falls short of their future expectations and aspirations towards phenomenal life-changes.

Simple yet sophisticated as learner intentions may sound, right-based GAD approaches to education, access and equality, rights, and capability seem to be overriding/contrasting post structural WID frameworks of deconstruction, identity formation, and difference (Mannathoko, 2008) in female education. In contrast, however Mannathoko (2008) says, “WID focuses on access and equal opportunity whilst GAD examines education impact on the genders” (p. 131). The education expected for non-literate women is that which should be humanly sustainable to alleviate individual poverty. This expectation resonates with Luke’s (2011) observation that “education as products of histories and cultures is always contingent and contested … and work as part of a larger government and community commitment to specific visions of education as a public good” (p. 374). Related to the assertions above, and in the interest of community development this process must be understood for planning purposes.

We therefore need to consider the dialectic theories of critical educators like Giroux, McLaren, Freire, and Kinchlooe to validate changes in literacy. We are to posit literacy as Giroux (1987) did, citing Gramsci, “as a double-edged sword that could be wielded for the
purpose of self and social empowerment or to perpetuate relations of repression and domination” (p. 6). The proposal obviously leans towards social self-interest as it aligns with Freire’s perspective and philosophy on literacy. To Freire (1998),

Literacy is a dialectic relationship between human beings and the world, on one hand and language and transformative agency, on the other. Within this perspective, literacy is not approached as merely a technical skill to be acquired, but as a necessary foundation for cultural action for freedom, a central aspect of what it means to be a self and socially constituted agent (p. 7).

Freire’s argument implies that much as learners look beyond the 3Rs into the acquisition of more complex skills, they are reminded; the entire learning process is an embodied form of secondary socialization which is another process in the formation of knowing and becoming. It is through this process that agency is developed as literacy becomes a currency and an elemental magnet for social voice because it hinges on individual social and cultural capital for advancement to advocate for progress. The principles of perception change in the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1999; Cranton, 2012; Daloz, 1987; Taylors, 1999) capture the theoretical arguments of modelling behaviour in this discussion as the objective is to assert representation. Thus individual agency reconstitute “political-pedagogical activity” (Freire (1978, p. 57). According to Freire (1957), “It is one that puts a dialectical theory of knowledge in practice - becomes, in itself as fundamental dimension of the task of national reconstruction” (p.57).

Obviously, it is not out of place that learner interests is shifting as this new way of learning (and knowing) is futuristic and multi-dimensional; it is been influenced by modernity and change of which multilingualism, community leadership and self-employed skills have become symbolic with, and symbols of social exposure (Mr. Gogi, personal interview). On this note Freire (1978) argued;
Only at a distance can (people) get a perspective that permits them to emerge from daily routine and begin their own independent development. It is when people are able to see and analyze their own way of being in the world of their immediate daily life, including the life of their villages, and when they can perceive the rationale for the factors on which their daily life is based, they are able to go far beyond the narrow horizons of their own village to gain a global perspective on reality (p.56-57).

Certainly, the practice of generalizing all learners in literacy classes as stack illiterates socially is biased assumption and observable misrepresentation. Here, learners’ actions affirm the idea that our social realities inform our individual needs assessment to capture the philosophical essence and social relevance of learning, especially when time and resources must be efficiently apportioned.

To acknowledge such social causation in agency formation Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) proposal is to symbolize the influence of culturally mediated ideals. They note that “culture includes both modalities of actual behaviour and group’s conscious and unconscious design for living” (cited in Anderson et al 2002, p. 758). Thus, foreboding neoliberal human capital and capability theories render social explanation theories of group ideals and consciousness in building cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in education redundant.

I also concur with Mezirow (1994, 2000) and Rowlands’ (1997) arguments in this instance; it is sociologically imperative that we emphasise ideas, values, events which characteristically (re)inform behaviour and knowing in ones environment as the infosphere - ideas and values - that influence the actionsphere - people, places, human cultures (Macdanielf, 1989). Those elements aetiologyally originate symbiotic relationships between learner aspirations and prevailing socio-economic demands to influence the demand-side of learning.
To push the argument regarding shifting learner interests forward therefore is to theoretically understand the analysis of changing power – empowerment that is creating the power-within which is attained through habit of change. This change theoretically is about the quality of life. To understand the concept, “we strive for what Max Weber (1968) called *verstehen*, understanding on a personal level” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1990 p. 36). The institutional objective of literacy has “pulled off a political right to convince a broad populace that its programmes meet deep needs and fears at the same time” (O’Sullivan 1999, p. 236). But while there are many ways to define the quality of life, as Taylor and Bogdan (1990) emphasize, “it must be studied from the perspective of the individual and be understood in terms of people subjective experiences” (p. 34). Relatedly, O’Sullivan builds on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990, 1993; 1997) work on “quality of life” to argue,

> Education for quality of life is our way of growing into life with energy, vitality and joy; what Csikszentmihalyi identifies as the “flow” … a genuine sate of consciousness that involves us in the very deeper recess of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption. This type of absorption is a foundation for developing quality experiences in our lives. The fullest possible life is one that has a sense of human needs that honours differentiation, subjectivity and community both within the human community and extends to the very life of the earth and the universe itself (1999 p. 237).

From the foregoing analysis I propose the inclusion of learners’ voices in literacy and education programme planning as subjective modelling and collectivity are essentially more important and empowering than objectivity, at least in knowledge production.

Ultimately, changes in learner interest could potentially broadened life choices to better their material well-being (all things been equal). I do hold some reservations about this aspiration, that: learner desire may become utopian rather than realistic. The reason is; NFED budget and resource constraints are unlikely to accommodate such prospective steps towards
literacy. So while the innovations are laudable they may be unattainable currently and even in the near future. Paradoxically, this is what empowerment is about; thinking through issues and having the moral courage to pursue them.

**Neo-liberalism and Social Services**

Ghana has experience the reproduction of the relationship between the political state and educational policy formation. Despite the sovereign powers of the state, opinions of reproductive theorists differ in arguments regarding the importance of the state. For example, Althusser argues:

> Here are significant differences among them - reproductive theorists - as to what the state actually is, how it works, and what the precise relationship is between the state and capital, on one hand and the state and education on the other … it is the embodied hegemonic contradictions in ideology, production of social relations, class, cultural reproduction, gender, and manpower in state-education relationship (Citing Althusser in Giroux, 2006, p. 20).

How do we bridge the different theoretical standpoints to resolve challenges in education?

Furthermore, competing funding regimen attributed to government red tape and bureaucratic processes were synonymous with colonial governance and this administrative legacy of the colonizers has been inherited and posthumously been applied in a post-colonial context. Current administrative systems persistently reflect such systematic practices in Ghana to exacerbate management policy decisions. Thus bureaucratic dysfunctions have obscured government funding so disbursement policies fail to assess institution-specific requests on a case-by-case basis to objectively appraise needs. The failure of MoE to deal with particularities in education funding has obviously impeded NFED fiscal inertia for programme effectiveness. This tiered system of allocation clearly jeopardizes funding for institutions which are comparatively insignificant.
Further, neoliberal inhibitions of public financing and spending also included subsidies on education, health, and other social services and were discontinued as part of the economic restructuring process in the 1980s and 90s. Such imperialistic principles do not visibly augment education services because of their emphasis on commercialization tacitly coupled with more-capital-less-human traditions of governance when addressing educational needs. This approach to meeting development needs bifurcates the meaning of human rights and right-based approaches towards citizens’ education instead of harmonizing the two principles. Apple (1999) makes a similar argument on neo liberalism and education:

To their way of thinking public institutions such as schools are “blackholes” into which money is poured and then seemingly disappears but do not provide near adequate results … rather than social motivation is a vision of students as human capital. In the neoliberal universe students must be given requisite skills and disposition to compete efficiently and effectively. Any money spent on schools that is not directly related to these economic goals is suspect. Partly, this is the result of “producer capture” as schools are built for teachers and state bureaucrats, not for “consumers”; thus “consumer choice” is the guarantor of democracy (pp. 203-204).

Neo-liberal ideologies in diverse systems undermine Freirian and other emancipators’ ideals of educating for liberation. As, Apple (1999) reiterates, “democracy is turned into consumption practices where the ideal citizen is the purchaser, not the worker with momentous ideological effects. Because, rather than democracy being a political concept, it is transformed into a wholly economic concept” (p. 204) in the epoch of neo-conquering. Referencing the forgoing arguments: how can non-formal education attract finance in dependent environments restrained by neo-liberal regulations? And how is marginalization accommodated under conditions of austerity where education has been commoditized?

In view of this official conceptualisation of its so-called business relationship between NFED and its partners the institution has failed to garner funding for its operations. Monetary
exchange in favour of NFED either seems to be weak or absent in Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) as many of the services are offered on pro bono basis. To interrogate the concept of free, here, it implies without charge, complimentary, at no costs, boundless, open, unregimented, and uninhibited. Ironically, much of the technical services offered by the institution expertise are invaluable and sometimes indispensable to partners and that potential could attract capital for the institution.

However, services offered without monetary value are certainly and likely to be devalued and de-essentialized at the expense of budgetary needs, especially in developing contexts. It is not surprising that non formal education work has been trivialized and situated within the assumption that free implies insignificant because this disparaging impression of non-formal education historically originates from the objectification of the concept in both theory and practice. The above assumptions, coupled with irresolute state decisions and NFED’s sole reliance on government budget allocation, undoubtedly has risked institutional needs to the extent where demand outweighs supply. Holding back alternative funding sources instead of effectively mobilizing such capital cripples NFED’s institutional mandate.

Of equal issue is the fact that while government spaces such as schools abound and offer neutral grounds for accommodating learners in some parts of Ghana, such spaces are unfortunately absent in most rural locations where literacy classes are most likely to take place. Much as literacy training has been supported by religious bodies in Ghana, organizing learning classes in faith-based spaces - especially when such places happened to be the sole spaces in the communities potentially isolates individuals not professing that faith. To link this observation theoretically to participation, I subscribe to the social network analysis which argues for a shift of space as a theoretical tool for analysis. Space and place
simultaneously shape identity as space - a set of relations is particularly linked and established through networks that bring some people together while concurrently pushing others out (Scott Dempwolf & Ward Lyles, 2012). The spaces in question have further isolated some individuals who perceive themselves as the “Other” (Said, 1994), despite the devolution of the space to a need.

Similarly, the absence of an ergonomic work space for programme staff has caused an imbalance in work safety, job security, and productivity as NFE business is conducted in the open through shared resources where privacy is non-negotiable. Visual aesthetics and decor also enormously contribute to produce ambiance to transform spaces. A lack of such essentials directly or indirectly imparts on human productivity. Undoubtedly, the operative combination of place and space epistemologically offers and creates community, a sense of belonging, and security. NFED’s complete lack of office necessity obscures an already marginalized programme.

**Literacy and Neo-Liberal Ideology – The Tension**

Literacy which was hitherto organized by individuals and religious bodies is presently NFED’s responsibility in a neoliberal era where equality and freedom is assumed for all in a free market. Neoliberal agenda in economic and social transformation demand institutional arrangements in project implementation (Braedley and Luxton, 2010). According to Braedley and Luxton, (2010) in neoliberalism, “needs formerly met by public agencies on the principle of citizen rights, or through personal relationships in communities and families, are now to be met by companies selling services in the market.” (p.23). Literacy happens to be one of the affected services. As education is commoditized under neo-liberalism, government is
compelled to reduce public expenditure because the dominant social ideology promoted by political elite is entrepreneurship, business, profit, individualism and competition (Steger and Roy; 2010; Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Cahill, Edwards and Stilwell, 2012). Yet, economic organizing has implications for literacy; so, in what ways has NFED adjusted to the changing markets and institutional transformation considering the inevitability of neoliberalism?

NFE has not impacted neoliberalism as literacy in this case is ideologically socio-cultural than socio-economic to objectively enhance individual social development verses state formation. Obviously, NFED is stuck with its old “social welfare-social service” mechanism of project management when the neoliberalism calls for market competitiveness. Whilst learners on the other hand argue for skills adaptable with the changing markets so they can align their skills with the global dictates NFE resources are unable to accommodate such demands. How is this tension been addressed by NFED? Similarly, how will NFED navigate around the tensions of; learner interest and neoliberal interest simultaneously to survive under the present market conditions; or will it crash under the pressure of the market if it’s unable to compete to meet expectations?

**Programme Sustainability**

Sustainability in development discourses and analysis implies attempts and projections to guarantee succession for the future. Contrary to this claim, the sustainable prognosis between the federal government and NFED internal affairs have placed sustainable literacy in jeopardy. A gamut of components of NFED’s micro-service delivery pattern including community animation, participant recruitment, facilitator availability, pedagogy, staff input, and field supervision have fallen short of expectations with obvious gaps.
As a theoretical response to this problem I propose a term called the *participation space analysis* - a process through which spaces should be composed to accommodate; that is include rather than deter or exclude certain group or categories of people from participating. This critique particularly focuses on the community animation process to essentialize space as a critical component in the literacy programme as it critically informs and possibly attracts participation. It is an integral part - a pull factor to literacy and not an afterthought – an extension of organizing. The notion of space must be conceptualized in ways beyond everyday orthodoxy of place and location. Instead space must be perceived as a place of interaction and solidarity within the context of learning (Rytina, 2008). Under this circumstance, the learning space becomes a place of community for learner integration and an extension of the community rather than a ‘place out there’ to accommodate excesses. Yet certain community members are unintentionally excluded from learning in these spaces. In that case, space thoughtfully becomes an integral part of programme sustainability and that distinction need to be made by NFED if it is to retain learner participation. Following on the arguments, how can individuals professing other beliefs participate in a programme when the space in which it is located compromises their beliefs?

While I appreciate that the above process is held unilaterally, the multiplicity of the models in *Education for All* should reflect in education planning. As Kadingdi (2006) notes, “education reforms in Ghana are extremely complex; successive initiatives over several decades contained a number of internal contradictions and inconsistencies as seen by various strategic approaches adopted by the Ministry of Education, its agencies, and the various donor organization” (p. 13). The process of educating and education in Ghana is clearly a daunting task.
The situation especially confirms what I did term *staff-learner retention* - a situation that has created much anxiety and lethargy among staff because of concerns about job security that are tied to programme sustainability. A decrease in learner numbers implies field staff redundancy as the institution’s meagre budget is unlikely to absorb redundancies and excesses. Besides, I attribute lack of motivation among staff to a combination of issues: strapped resources, lack of re-training or professional development, and the absence of external public and vibrant corporate interest in the programme. This low sense of vitality has led to apathy and a decrease in productivity. The impact of such forces is overwhelmingly cyclical yet, staff performance is unlikely to be optimized in an institution incapable of regenerating itself (Adjah, 2005; Owusu-Mensah, 2007; Stromquist, 1997, 2000; Fuseini & Abudu, 2014).

Moreover, inadequate facilitator remuneration has failed to entice potential facilitators into the programme. All three facilitators interviewed have the same level of education: a Middle School Levers Certificate. Is this minimum level of schooling expected of facilitators? If so, in what ways does this uniform set of skills support innovation within the literacy programme?

One participant suggested a basic amount of about $200 Ghana cedis monthly as remuneration for facilitators as their responsibilities extend beyond teaching. My understanding is that GES is initiating plans to tag facilitator remuneration to the level of primary school teachers. Would a change in reward impact on learner motivation, retention and future facilitator recruitment? I think such initiatives would either attract highly skilled but less enthusiastic and committed individuals, while pushing out committed individuals; or it may attract individuals with formal school teaching background who may be inadaptable to
the non-formal/informal style of learning delivery. Such modifications, though laudable, could sway instructional techniques as either way the unregimented value-tag would provoke perceptible repercussions for learners.

Besides, part of programme sustainability should focus on elaborate partnership as learning is a social activity. Citizens’ learning in later life (Jarvis, 2001) desires to experiment with variety of models that have the possibility to provide deeper meaning (Mezirow, 2000) to accentuate their life experiences. Intensive local and wider community partnership is absent despite such relationships being essential to this particular work. This issue has been due to NFED’s seeming incognito status to other partners in literacy in spite of its coordinating role. Nonetheless, the presence of NGO partnerships, corporate business linkages, and philanthropists serve as partners-of-interest for most literacy work (US, Sweden, Norway, Canada, India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania). Much as the NGO Desk created by NFED is to leverage non-governmental and other external relationships is commendable, the level of expertise engender strategies to harness such resources is improperly set up. Rather than create a separate office for someone with managerial skills to guide the project, the responsibilities has been embedded within the routine office work and oversee by a junior staff. However, urgency for renewal and complexities with government directives regarding NFED funding and external ties necessitate a promising presence and influence for this Desk to ensure potentiality for forging in-depth and substantive inter-relational networks with intensive and active operational capacity in the interest of the programme’s learners.
Summary

The interpretations foster a connection between what was observed and what was understood to crystallize the elaboration on the findings. The chapter subsequently harmonizes the voices from the text to subjectively anticipate the nuances in the narrative and out of which projections and proposals were made by the researcher to reflect a broad range of thought. It became obvious that while women and communities are evidently benefiting from literacy, both community level (micro) and state level (macro) issues are concurrently jeopardizing programme effectiveness. The circumstances unfortunately is not in the best interest of learners as learner curiosity to acquire other skills besides reading and writing is not been accommodated by NFED. Issues of space, staffing and institutional partnership pose numerous challenges and which reflect on contemporary literacy needs. These identifiably multiple level issues were established as unsustainable to social development in Ghana as collectively they adversely affect NFED population outreach in literacy acquisition.
“Our work must be sustained but I doubt this possibility under the present circumstances.” - Ms. Asma

Chapter Eight

Recommendations and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter sets recommendations for the study and policy suggestions. Evidence from the narratives suggests that sustainability is a strategic challenge to NFED. The section therefore features a policy framework and possible programme matrix to engender lasting outcomes to influence micro-macro level decisions. The proposals are posed as strategies for consideration by NFED and the government. They include:

a) Pedagogical revision and learner-centred learning

b) NFED institutional capacity-building

c) Resource, fundraising and business development

d) Active public engagement, awareness-creation and communication

e) Corporate relations in public-private partnership and collaboration

The proposals are designed in a manner to facilitate institution interest and ability for location-specific programme delivery in a national context. They are derived from the analysis, interpretation, the literature, field observations, interviews, and personal experiences. The chapter is structured into three parts. First, the findings will be summarized; followed by elucidations of the proposed frameworks and then a conclusion is finally drawn on the entire narrative.
Summarization of Findings

The research questions have been summarized through the findings below.

Literacy, Feminism and the Context of Change

Much as the gender parity gap in education seem to be narrowing (Refer Ghana Population Census 2010) literacy among rural and poor adult women has not changed much as the ideals of Education For All Initiatives and UN MDG Goals concerning female and adult education are yet to be understood by policy makers and Ghanaians in general. Thus a combination of state bureaucracy coupled with poor national development planning has in multiple ways encumbered literacy service delivery in Ghana.

It was obvious from the discussion that non-formal education, and specifically literacy, is significant for both individuals and institutions. People envisage literacy as an instrument of change in the lives of marginalized populations. Individuals and institutions provide support for non-literate individuals seeking to acquire literacy skills. Literacy training is uncontestably an integral part of social development; and facilitators were found to bring leadership and guidance to the programme. It is the reason why it is such reprehensible that literacy initiatives are inadequately supported in Ghana. Though NFED is the official coordinating body for literacy intervention, and is theoretically supposed to oversee literacy initiatives of international, local, secular, and religious agencies in the country, its institutional autonomy is hamstrung by inflexible government bureaucratic and red tape constraints. NFED does not have the power or funding to take all of the disparate activities of the organizations in hand.
The issues above are exacerbated by practical realities. Learners are not concentrated in a particular location; they are located across the nation, as formal education among the Ghanaian population is comparatively low for historical and cultural reasons. This is particularly true for women, for gendered reasons embedded in the socialisation process for girls, and this explains why so many women are illiterate and need NFED services and literacy training. NFED and a number of NGOs both local and international like the Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs (FAWE), Amassastina Self-Help Group, National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), Christian women’s associations and the Ministry of Local Government MLG) maintain either the Women In Development (WID), or the GAD in their intervention work with marginalized populations. Solemnly do we notice the two frameworks applied interrelated in interventions nationwide as institutions and women’s programme that claims to be working with GAD framework may instead be engaging WID or Women and Development (WAD) ideology.

Much as women need non-formal education, NFED has not adapted to changing ideas about literacy to a GAD perspective. The programme is still framed within the WID only paradigm. Yet the overlap between the two paradigms has implications in intervention. This is because, whereas GAD produces education outcomes, interrogate power differences and analyses gender relations, WID challenges systemic institutional and structural practices that dominate women. Thus through the application of both WID and GAD the empowerment framework in the literacy training allow the identification and examination of ambiguities in gender relations and to engage with systemic powers which reinforce women’s disempowerment. Such linkages offer women insights into pursuits of empowerment to take on the power over tendencies and relations. However, women who need non-formal literacy are not taking
advantage of the services because their interest is on micro credit opportunities more than literacy. The former from women’s perspectives better respond to economic needs than the latter and this has been the subsequent cause in a shift in learner interest from reading and writing skills to economic skills.

Significance of Literacy in Women’s Empowerment

The goal of this study is to generate a prognosis of literacy and women’s empowerment in Ghana as literacy is somehow cogitated as catalytic to providing social presence for individuals. Much as literacy is postulated as a rural/village problem the study totally indicates otherwise. The practice has a strong urban and rural appeal and attracts both males and females. Ironically, whilst learners gravitate toward this vision, the various ruling governments unfortunately, lack authentic political and legal will to support the philosophy and essence of literacy. I argue that either the philosophy is not understood or the practice is politicized and for which has cost literacy and other non-formal activities to be disparaged in social development initiatives. Yet a critical assessment of the NFED operational framework seamlessly weaves into the capacity-building efforts in micro development.

Likewise, while WID and GAD feminist development frameworks vehemently critique structural and systemic barriers for all women and theoretically advocate for the inclusion of all women in development I argue that the frameworks have inadequately valorize literacy empowerment initiatives, especially for rural non-literate women. The frameworks often generalize empowerment for all women but some women are more marginalized than others making them more vulnerable to systemic inequalities comparably to their counterpart. This situation is not a class issue but rather a structural and locational one in Ghana as in most
colonized states. Here I am referring to rural women and those living in precarious situations at the fringes of ‘development’ without identifiable means of livelihood or ones in abusive relationships. I equally emphasize the need to draw on sustainable gender-literacy frameworks that engender both strategic women needs and the literacy skills and that which analyse and advance skills for sustainable living.

Moreover, as much as literacy programmes contribute to women’s empowerment projects it is the interests and aspirations of women themselves that determine the sense and state of the empowerment they receive. Learners consider and describe the concept of empowerment as a state of being rather than a level of attainment. While learners interviewed - as well as NFED staff agreed that development projects in some ways support female empowerment, the women questioned the quality and the content of the process. Its explicitly that women attach sentimental value to the projects or proposals that promoted their interests; at the same time, they had become critical, and in some cases downright sceptical, as to whether their interests were represented in the process.

As individual interest differs so are women in the literacy programme though pursuing the same learning within a defined space. Some prefer literacy - i.e. training in 3Rs skills, which is what NFED presently provides. Others are actually seeking functional literacy -i.e. IGA training in practical skills that might be used to alleviate their own poverty, either because they already have some level of 3Rs skills or because they value IGA skills more. Learners understand the inherent differences in their classrooms alongside varied levels and flavours of cognitive abilities. But some in the class are not participating for literacy per say but rather for functional literacy; even so, they have to be in the same space as their literacy counterparts as the programme merely provides a “single space” (see subsection on
resources) for all forms of literacies in a community. The phenomenon has compelled some researchers (and even NFE staffs) to homogenize all learners in the programme as *illiterates*. Such conceptualization is absolutely misleading for planning interventions.

The role of the literacy programme in social development is invaluable and indispensable than has been assumed. NFED is obligated to endorse this internally to the government and local institutions, and externally to international agencies, NGOs, CSOs, interested individuals, and the private-corporate sector.

**State and Government Responsibilities Towards Non-Formal Education**

Government support and private partnership are insignificantly present for NFE. NFED is fiscally and operationally encumbered by government bureaucracy. At the same time, it offers its institutional and technical services for free. My participants - and I agree - argue that such services offered to external “clients” in any form should attract a fee to be ploughed back into managing the programme. The institution consulting service delivery approach has to shift from a *value-free* to a *value-added* position as a means of survival.

What role does the state play in education and social change? The major concern among education theorists, Giroux (2006) says, “focuses on the complex role of state intervention in the education system as educational change cannot be understood by only looking at the capital’s domination of the labour process or capitalist domination in cultural reproduction” (p. 19). Should the state and government be set apart from citizen development or should they be an active actor in this nation-building process? How can we align the state’s politico-economic agenda/objectives with educational goals to address individual and manpower needs for advancement? (see Dzorgbo, 2001)
Education policies in Ghana are determined by the philosophy of the ruling government. The state has constantly politicized education in Ghana; it is one of the means that successive ruling parties have been able to implicitly express their sense of “being in charge” to the opposition. Consequently, the education system has been a contested space for the past three to four decades. For example, Senior High School (SHS) school completion was scheduled by the NPP government as a four-year period of schooling - instead of the tradition three - during that regime from 2000-2008. This process was reversed by the NDC government in 2009. To revisit post-independence history, education during the days of the first Prime Minister of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah in 1957 to his overthrow in 1966 focused on socialist ideology on development. This was followed the Acheampong era in the early 1970's on self-help, and self-reliance in development. This era was radically shifted by the Rawlings revolution of 1979 and 1981 where education and literacy was perceived as an emancipation tool for transformation and advocacy. It was not a coincidence that it was under the Rawlings PNDC rule that the Non-Formal Education Division was established in 1991. How can we conceptualize the direction of non-formal education in this contested space? Ironically, neither of the above amendments, as Giroux (2006) noted, “has given adequate attention to the underlying structural determinants of inequality as such accounts display little understanding of how political factors lead to state interventionist policies that serve to structure and shape reproductive functions of education” (p. 19). This is the reality in the Ghanaian context.

In what ways can the Ghanaian body politic develop an interface between the social determinants of education and underlying structural determinants of inequality to create a solution nexus that might facilitate the achievement of educational goals?
**Funding and Resources Interface**

Funding issues are dominant and a deep-seated problem in non-formal education, but this issue is unresponsively problematized and somewhat absent in the literature - it is occasionally casually mentioned, but there are few comprehensive discussion to potentially solve this problem. Government funding structures and directives continue to preclude NFED from sourcing other forms of funding; a lack of funding has halted diverse NFED plans and operations in Ghana.

Consider the supposed NGO desk I mentioned earlier: it was a literal desk situated in the 30’ x 30’ space at NFED head office. This desk officer in charge of sourcing NGO partnerships to gain funding was, quite obviously, affected by funding constraints. I sound philosophical here but that is the reality. The desk had no computer, printer, or office supplies. My brief interaction with the officer confirmed my fears: aside from attending a few meetings and workshops, the assigned responsibilities were minimal. Let us be honest, here: if this initiative was truly meant to leverage NGO-NFED partnerships, then the appointed officer should have been an employee with high-level technical competency considering the goals and the intended tasks the position is expected to address. This failure is surprising, perhaps; NFED is now three decades old. It is not an ad hoc agency.

Much as is undesirable to trivialize the intention, the proposal seems to be starting on a false note and this could further deteriorate the institution’s present state of affairs. The fundamental cause is that as a civil service the government has narrowly delineated the boundary of NFED powers and relationship towards both local and international funding bodies. Drawing such boundaries in many ways place a limitation on the extent to which
NFED can engage with partners on the operational aspect of their work. Therefore the directives in diverse ways has implications towards NFED institutional growth as funding happened to be a major issue in promoting literacy.

**Institutional Progression**

NFED is currently negotiating with the government to transform its civil service status to that of a public service entity. Such on-going negotiations are private; discretion is therefore required in terms of how much information can be divulged to the public. Respecting this reality, I did not delve into this process during my interviews with NFED staff to avoid violating any protocol. NFED will eventually become a public service institution that offers a critical service for public survival. This shift will have political implications for NFED. The institution would, in many aspects, become more like the Water or Electricity companies. Institutions often gain a good deal of leverage and autonomy in making this shift, which results in better service delivery and institutional stability. NFED is lobbying government on the issue.

NFED is also working tirelessly to establish an organizational presence through public relations and engagement and stronger stakeholder and partnership development as part of this process. As corporate visibility is an integral part of institutional building strategy, documentation, content-building, knowledge management and information-sharing should be accessible to people if they are to be informed about NFED. However, much as NFED has documented some success stories and lessons learnt from the literacy programme, such valuable information have not been made accessible to the public. How can the public – corporate and citizens get involved on either business or philanthropic terms in they are
uninformed about the institution’s activities, achievements and challenges? If NFED is expected is to be considered a critical partner in the national development process, then it must have a presence in the public domain so the public can relate to the literacy work.

**Proposals and Recommendations**

My recommendation is two-fold. First, some policy proposals will be outlined. This will be followed by an elaboration of the programme and institutional development framework(s). As much as the gender-literacy gap appeared to have been narrowed in the last three decades in Ghana (see 2010 Ghana Population Census), notwithstanding I argue for a shift into multifaceted conversations regarding gender and schooling. The discourses in my opinion should traverse beyond the normalized gender-education comparative theorization of mere male-female enrolment typically based on qualitative analysis to interrogate more nuanced issues in regards to the interconnection between socialization: social determinants of education, family well-being, cultural capital, community development the feminist paradigms in development interventions, emancipation and transformatory pedagogy.

**Policy Development Proposals**

The policy recommendations emphasize a need to reorganize out-of-date practices and processes in literacy delivery by NFED in particular. Constructivism theoretically believes in individual interpretation of the reality that the knower and the known are interactive and inseparable (internet resource). In that case, I attempt to draw what Kettley (2010) calls “a taxonomies of the barriers to learning” (p. 13) and to provide policy recommendations towards programme improvement in this section. Kettley (2010) has suggested that rather than “neglecting the relationship between the quality of primary research, the power of
explanations, and the promise of education policy for solving social problems” (p. 167), we should correlate them for interrogation. My proposition therefore, is to challenge inequalities in education as I position them within the policy proposals. My intent here is to harmonize all three elements as a way to “give voice” to the marginalized group I researched as I stated earlier in this narrative.

My goal other words is to present complementary proposals towards a theoretical assessment of the theory and practice of literacy for empowerment towards conceptual advancement to completely engender a level of understanding to bring meaning to women’s lives. The proposals in light of the above arguments should be perceived as co-created crystallised thoughts resulting from the merger of my authorial point of view and the voices of the women I have interviewed.

**Macro and Micro Level Policies**

My first proposal is towards the reorganization NFED as an institution. The second is to reinforce NFED literacy for empowerment process. There is an irony here though because; until the institution itself is empowered, how can it succeed in its goal of empowering women through non-formal education?

Sustainable institutions cannot be raised on fragile foundations. NFED as an institution plays a critical role in the social development process in Ghana. It serves as a buffer between the government and the public to provide learning. NFED in view of its responsibility needs a level of flexibility and elasticity, and be malleable to openly hold the political axes whilst simultaneously serving public interest. In other words, NFED needs to complete its house-
cleaning procedure in the areas of governmental relations, funding, and institutional public relations in order to be in good standing to affirm its role.

**NFED Literacy Coordination**

NFED’s role as the national coordinating body on literacy activities in Ghana is commendable. The imparted continuity affirms government’s mandate of institutionalizing non-formal education efforts in the country (Urch, 1984; Owusu-Mensah, 2007; Mr. Gogi 2014, personal interview).

NFED has been tasked with the responsibility of advising interested literacy interventionists about knowledge, scope, curriculum, target populations, and number of learners to be trained in literacy nationwide. The problem signified earlier is that while NFED theoretically has the mandate and authority to coordinate literacy activities nationwide, the literacy implementing agencies it oversights obtain, own and control far more funding and resources than the regulator. Predictably, agencies frequently discount NFED’s proscriptions and guidelines in programme interventions. Thus agency-to-agency synergy in regards to literacy work can be described as minimal in Ghana.

But NFED should have the power and mandate to facilitate such cross-institutional programme monitoring to strengthen collaboration among agencies for the benefit of yet-to-reach populations in literacy. It is obvious the institution is strategically positioned for advisory based on its three decades of experience in literacy. Such programmatic knowledge is highly technical and complex, so for NFED to offer this knowledge for free to better-resourced agencies is untenable. It must instrumentally define the scope of deliverables in the
Terms of Reference (ToR) when dealing with agencies to charge the latter fees for service during the transaction.

**Institutional External Relations**

My knowledge of non-formal education was essentially deepened during the research. Participants and associates of NFED were appreciative that I choose the Gbenta municipality as the location for this study (and so am I). Majority sincerely professed that my presence had rekindled their enthusiasm for learning and work in the municipality. I was extended an invitation to revisit, so I shall return. As a public relations professional, I am aware that institutional open-house and facility visits consolidate relations with external actors and publics and potentially facilitate knowledge exchange. In order words, by opening up spaces like NFED’s operations in the municipality, information is prospectively placed in the public domain about the institution and its activities. I highly recommend such organized visits as they could potentially consolidate long-term and rewarding partnerships - even unintended ones.

That said, this kind of public relations strategy has to be carefully organized, not solely for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for potential funders, government visits, or research studies but as an on-going process to attract meaningful collaborative interests and funding leads. The proposed objective should rather be to harness information, ideas, and organized feedback that speaks to programme enhancement.
Peer-to-Peer Learner Visits

The foreknowledge and experiential learning learners bring into a learning space ultimately determine the process as learning is the interaction and exchange of ideas (Freire, 1987, 1970). The differences in knowledge among groups must therefore be shared through peer-to-peer learner visits to enhance women’s social networking in communities where non-formal education literacy takes place in Ghana.

Mobility unfortunately may be an issue for women in rural communities. For socio-cultural reasons they hardly leave their communities as their social lives are wrapped around their village’s life. They conduct their work from their homes and cottages, or they farm small plots and harvest produce around forest fringes for sale in the local markets, and attend church and community meetings. Travels outside this village occur sparingly. Travel happens for specific reasons; to run errands, visit relatives or attend social functions in the city or another village, or to seek medical attention. A peer-to-peer project, therefore, must be organized within the programme and make inter-community visits part of its learning process.

Programme officers will be responsible for facilitating learner visits. One community of learners will visit another community’s class setting and, if possible, hold classes together with their peers. Such visits should occur at least twice within the twenty-two months study period. The practice would enable learners to draw on each other’s experiences, and to broaden their sense of the literacy programme as a form of social network for women. Like-minded peers could be sources of inspiration for one another. In the words of Dighe (1995); “whenever women meet something magical happens” (p. 4). I theorize that such interaction
and the “woman talk” are invaluable as women are likely to exchange business ideas, financial-personal/micro-lending sources, household management tips, suggestions on family life, and even learning strategies about class attendance and learning anxieties among others. Likewise, many of the women involved in the programmes are adults who may be caregivers to older parents or are an “empty nester” with fewer social activities to enjoy. Such visits would also serve to infuse the learning process with an exciting social component.

Further, while the proposed gatherings are not meant to be competitive, they could also serve as motivation to develop social skills and enhance memory as learners are likely to sharpen their literacy lessons to impress each other during subsequent group visits. The gatherings could be perceived as a peer-assessment process when learners would verbally examine each other’s literacy abilities to compare each person’s milestones in the literacy journey. Empowerment projects should be relational if they are in fact to benefit individuals (Rowlands, 1997). Therefore, rather than been a tool for empowerment as Samant (1996) notes, “When literacy refuses to validate a group’s experiences and fails to let them voice their concerns, it becomes the tool of oppression and disempowerment” (pp. 6-7). This is not the anticipated outcome of any intervention.

**Community Strengthening**

As the theory and practice of literacy are indisputably contentious, interactive, and relational, spaces/places where literacy activities are conducted usually become contested terrains (read Paulo Freire’s South America experiences). The success of any literacy programme will invariably depend on an effective relationship between institutions, people, and communities.
In other words, local community involvement is critical to the success of NFED literacy programmes.

Accordingly, the community animation process should clearly emphasize the philosophy and intent of literacy training if NFED is to debunk the skepticism many in Ghana have about the value of non-formal education. Further, the chosen locations for classes in communities must reflect neutrality as classes held in faith-based spaces undeniably infringe on other people’s rights to participation. It is the institution’s responsibility to identify neutral spaces within the community to accommodate potential learners as means to broaden participation. On this note I argue for the creation of a learning nexus rather than a mere learning space.

For example, the community animation process should clearly spell out the responsibilities of community leaders towards the success of their public literacy programme and the relevance of such programmes to their community’s social mobility and development. Community animation and mobilization should also be carried on throughout the full cycle of the programme (twenty-two months) to sustain public awareness and interest. A similar strategy could be employed for corporate and public awareness initiatives. NFED must build relationships with organizations and businesses located within the communities and consider them as partners in learning rather than external entities to the programme. I therefore challenge NFED to forge such relationships - with the caveat, of course, that learner consent would be needed in certain circumstances to protect privacy. However, such relationships must proceed under circumstances where learners offer consent.
The Operational Frameworks

A total of five frameworks were developed to enhance programme development, for institutional restructuring, centre learner interest, and processes to generate funding for NFED. Such were systematically developed in diagrammatic forms to illustrate the process of change.

Justification - New Frameworks for Literacy Effectiveness

Literacy for women is as often perceived as a resource for empowerment yet, critical discourse on sustainable literacy for empowerment has been minimal in development discourses (see critiques by Stromquist, 1997; Rowlands, 1997; Tsikata, 2004; Olivia Kwapong, 2005; Yates, 1997; Robertson, 1987). A proposal to animate innovative frameworks towards sustainable literacy and poverty reduction in Ghana was also identified in an NFED report by Owusu-Mensah in 2007. His critique anchored on shifting propositions to further generate broader themes to accommodate the diverse needs of learners and to more robust ones that are abreast with the changing era of sustainability.

In the traditional sense of literacy, adult learners are ambiguously conceptualized as illiterates - that is, people without any prior knowledge. They become the Other (Said, 1977), and the vulnerable, in education discourses. This approach describes non-literacy as an individual deficit that is only defined in relation to literacy, a normative state. UNESCO reinforced the ideas in 1978 when it conceptualized and thereby framed non-literate population as powerless, unknowledgeable, non-critical, lacking in social and life skills, and unable to contribute to society. But Samant (1996) argues that “self-determined literacy begins with an agenda; a list of needs to be met, lacks to be remedied lie at the start of an
independent process, and this list is drawn up from the experiences of learners” (p. 3). In this study, it is the same disparaged non-literate who are proposing changes in literacy classes to make space for other knowledges they consider relevant to contemporary social mobility to be accommodated in Ghana.

It is an irony that marginalized groups often described as unexposed and lacking are the visionaries initiating for the restructuring of the programme to respond to modern realities. It will be of interest to note that the institutional/empowerment frameworks I am proposing are copiously informed by their ideals. Therefore learner ingenuity in this study debunks this long-held notion of illiterate. My question is; who is an illiterate theoretically? Is formal schooling associated with been literate or certain level of knowledge must be attained before one is considered literate?

I used the word-non-literate rather than illiterate as illiterate in parts of this narrative to me connotes a stack empty headed person. If formal education is equated to been literate then where do we place other ways of knowing acquired through inter-generational, indigenous knowledges, and informal and tacit learning, social learning and from every day interaction? The sustainable thinking attributes been exhibited by learners were obviously not acquired through literacy but from their personal ingenuity. Yet, because the ideas were been proposed by supposedly ‘uneducated’ people the suppositions have been dismissed by NFED. Where lies the bottom-up development-from-within approaches to growth if institutions are unable to accommodate knowledge from within? As Stromquist (2006) notes, “The state reduces the treatment of gender issues to the provision of increased delivery of schooling and avoids introducing contestatory knowledge” (p. 158).
The propulsion to accommodate diversity has been stagnant, especially as Ghana is cash-strapped on education financing yet non-formal education programmes claim to employ the liberatory Freirian methodology in literacy. Freirian philosophy debunks the banking method as a way of learning and rather acknowledges and accommodates the learner as co-creator of knowledge (see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). This frame is absent from the literacy process in Ghana and requires NFED to revise the learning model to realign with the concept of freedom of knowledge and growth.

According to Spencer (1992), “Many programmes following the Freirian approach have adopted the management structures that give students (learners) significant control over the direction of present and future educational activities” (p. 1). If literacy is perceived as a necessity for increasing productivity, and non-literates are perceived as active participants in the social development change process (Samant, 1996), both claims taken together substantiate my argument for non-formal education management and learning processes to employ varied-dimensional models that encapsulate the Frerian philosophy of social change.

Since NFED literacy management and learning implementation processes are not linear but cyclical, the frameworks and planning sequence should seamlessly weave into each other in a sustainable manner. In other words, each step of the process - from location identification, to community entry and animation, learner and facilitator recruitment, class attendance and learner retention, teaching and field supervision, to evaluation and post literacy arrangements - should be conceptualized within an interwoven system of activities. That way, literacy that sustains an empowerment process could realistically be achieved. In this system, applicable core concepts of leadership, governance, and relationships are reinvented; strategic systemic thinking is applied in arenas of practice to improve the quality of learning; and the individual
become the sole subject, subject matter, and focus of the NFED agenda. It is only when the above elements are in sync that the transformation expected within individuals, under a broad rubric of social change, could happen.

Furthermore, the proposed frameworks emerge from the absence and served existence of NFED organizational working frameworks on legal, gender, and human rights. The absence of such universal, essential elements in the provision for citizen’s education undermines NFED’s ability to achieve *Education for All* goals with non-formal adult (female) education in Ghana.

It follows that the frameworks should progress beyond uniformity to a multiplicity of thoughts that conceptualize both methodological and practical notions about literacy, personal empowerment, poverty reduction, community development, and sustainability. The frameworks are not meant to constitute any means to an end; rather, their objective is to hypothesize methodological processes that might narrow the obstructing binaries characteristic of top/bottom, known/unknown, cultural/contemporary, traditional/modern, and literate/non-literate discourses and positionalities that are clearly evident in the postcolonial development nation-building process. The frameworks specifically and analytically represent the collective responsibilities and layered complexities that, in tandem with governmental oversight, meaningfully capacitate learners/individuals to criticality engage with the world. Such models, according to Hall (1996),

Are active, rather than reactive, and are contextual rather than essentialist. They focus on where we are at, rather than where we are from, which means it allows for context specific, critical engagement with cultural (institutional) difference however hybrid or contested that may be (cited in Hammer, Lawrence and Huijser 2011, p. 184).
Hall’s statement implies that literacy for empowerment transcends the normalization and safeguarding discourses on literacy hence the necessity for rigorous analysis to enhance the practice. It is the reason I have presaged literacy in a broad sense to include tangible and intangible elements of policies, practices, decisions, skills, values, and beliefs in the foregoing theoretical proposals. The proposals and frameworks have been identified, defined, and articulated in the forthcoming discussions.

The reason is because learning is a process (Jarvis, 2001), an action and reflection (Freire, 1972), and embedded in a cognitive experience (Mezirow and Associates, 1990). Nonetheless, many philosophical questions have been raised regarding democratic education which imperviously pushes forward a modernist objective, rather than a cultural subjective agenda (Jones, 1995; Noddings, 2013; Wells, 2012; Knopp 2012; Fagerberg-Diallo, 2012; National Research Council, 2005; Dupuis, 1966; O’Sullivan, 1999). At the core of political economy is schooling and education in which we see a split on liberal and radical thought and perspectives on this ideological difference on democratic education.

The arguments prompted some theoretical questions. Giroux (2006) asks, “How do schools fundamentally influence the ideologies, personalities, and needs of students? … Theorists’ working with this model generally agree on relationship between power and domination; and schooling and the economy” (p. 9). The matter-of-factness of Giroux’s statement explicitly speaks to the connection between the theoretical questions concerning learner education which anchored my core points and are imperative to this inquiry. Philosophically speaking, how practical is this literacy for empowerment model? The models categorically respond to the above questions through a step-by-step process within the frameworks.
Under the conditions, the innovations I advocate for are uncomplicated and unsophisticated and for that reason allow one to change and sustain the present to build on that foundation for the future. It is important as they are simplified yet strategic solutions to long-term predictions and plans to support sustainable literacy. The frameworks have been operationalized in the discussions below and used to compile events from the study to suggest a series of innovative schemes to promote sustainable literacy.

**Inter-linked Educational Reform**

Education planning involves an interconnected relationship. This assumption is captured in the first framework as the vari-focal lens to education planning.

**Diagram 1: Vari-Focal Lens Educational Planning**

The first framework is the *Vari-Focal Lens Educational Planning* which proposes a multi-faceted systematic approach towards educational reforms in Ghana.

The diagram represents the four dimensions for holistic planning in education reforms. They include: the educational, the political, the social, and the economic. The conceptual structure
was borrowed from A.R Riddell’s (1999) article and expanded upon, as the multidisciplinary interpretation of proposed policy reforms in this study encapsulates the theoretical arguments he postulates. Riddell’s framework only includes three elements; I have modified it by adding the social. As the framework allows an entry point into the philosophical progression of the disciplines in education policy formation, my objective is to expand his arguments in the direction of education reform. According to Riddell (1999), whereas efficiency is of interest to economic forces in educational reforms, political forces are primarily concerned with process and issues of implementation and educational forces with quality improvements. Riddell (1999) argues,

Creating a “varifocal” lens from all three will not ensure successful educational reforms, but it is more likely to provide a more satisfactory interpretative framework across these divides and therefore some insights into further reform episodes than the much simpler educational planner’s history of educational reform (p. 208).

I agree. But while our interest is focused on the “production, individual, institutional functions, school effectiveness and improvement, as well as teacher/learner interface” (Riddell 1999, p. 209-213), external Western controls and the World Bank agenda - coupled with mediocre and prescriptive planning from the internal political elite - have compromised effective development of the social element I have included here in the reform process. The two political parties in Ghana, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Party (NDC) politicize education reforms as discussed in in chapter two or three. Such contentions unfortunately filter the social lens from the equation with no consideration whatsoever because political exigencies and petty agendas dominate planning sessions that should concern public well-being.
Obviously, the inquiry sociologically, determines the depth and extent to which the social element I have here proposed is factored into education policy reforms. I identify the determinants as quality of life, parental level of education, income and wealth, health and well-being, geographical location, access to resources, and cultural and social capital of individuals.

For Ghana to attain its social development vision requires effective educational reforms which demand a unified-interdisciplinary approach to address the critical issues in education synonymous with developing countries. It is also through this approach that the diverse learner-interest will be factored into the broader national vision by the government if it were to provide the educational skills needed for one to be competitive in a globalizing, technological world. Hence a multi-dimensional solution to synchronizing such ideation is essential.

**Institution and Change Management**

Institutions develop through change, innovation, good leadership and effective governance. Such organizational behaviour in practice is captured in the second framework; Institutional Governance for Literacy Efficiency Model.
Diagram 2: Institutional Governance Literacy Efficiency Model

The Institutional Governance Efficiency Model is the second. This model outlines government policies and NFED change management processes towards literacy efficiency.

To ensure its competitive edge in all aspects of service delivery NFED must position itself as a compatible business partner if it is to draw the public awareness towards its operations. Institutional imaging and occupational renewal are commendable in this sense as NFED needs a 360 degree turn-around as part of its self-promotion strategy. Thus the framework proposes a holistic organizational change management system envisioned for the future. It indicates how elements/actions in each component automatically feed into the other to inform decisions and measure impacts on one another. This is illustrated in a process form.
The diagram which is a three-part process conceptualizes the relationship between institutional governance and institutional change management processes to potentially inform efficiency and sustainability. It conceptualizes the divergent responsibilities of the two entities - government/state and NFED in planning, decision, and actions to ensure programme quality and sustainability.

The process suggests that government/state decisions should inform, mandate and subsequently empower institutions like NFED to re-design and initiate expected changes for programmes as represented in the layout. I agree with NFED’s change from one of civil service entity to public service not only for re-imaging purposes, but also to strengthen private-public partnership, introduce corporate bodies into the programme, and above all authorize NFED to autonomously handle its internal affairs. The NFED Legal Framework, Gender Framework, Disability Framework, HIV/AIDS Framework, and Income-Generation Framework need to be present and functional. As the mainstream frameworks essentially serve as the institution’s guiding principles for effective programme implementation, NFED and other government ministries should work collaboratively to ensure that the ideals of the framework reflect in literacy services. Other modifications include: staff re-training, monitoring and evaluation, and public relations and knowledge management. The above elements should be factored into the (re)planning process as part of organizational needs assessment. I envision the element would bolster institutional identity and hopefully create a domino effect that reinforces NFED’s objective to foster democratic learning. Both internal and external programmes could be initiated without any encumbrance.
Learner Empowerment Framework

The objective of our discussion in this study is to empower the learner. The third framework—Learner Focus Empowerment Framework captures this interest.

Diagram 3: Learner Focus Empowerment Framework

The third framework is the Learner Focus Empowerment Framework. This is a three-way intersecting model in which I argue that learners should be the focal point and the centre of non-formal education programme planning than any other agenda.

The interlocking elements in diagram 3 illustrates the converging strategies in learner needs provision as well as individual resources that need to be present to address diverging learner demands.
The framework is made up of three components all of which assess the converging strategies and diverging conflict in learner needs provision as well as individual resources that address learner demands. It describes elements of policies, operations, and pedagogy in the development of a learner-centred approach to literacy. Although government policies on literacy and development have been discussed earlier in the narrative it is worthwhile to identify and interrogate institutional responsibilities for the implementation of a universal educational framework at the micro-level.

The Ghanaian government is accountable for the country’s education system because the state is a signatory to many global/international educational initiatives. Though I do not intend to speak for all Ghanaians, we would appreciate experiencing the positive side of such changes in the macro and micro decisions concerning education delivery across the country. But is this happening? If it is where the results are, and if it is not how can it be engendered?

The structure of this particular framework on one hand is meant to challenge government to revisit its education policies. This proposal therefore assesses the extent of how the summation of government macro-decisions regarding issues of access, gender, inclusion, citizenship, rights to education, governance, and funding directives funnel down to affect individual learners at the micro-end of the spectrum. It also questions the obsolete framework currently in operation for the learner empowering process. The legal, gender, and human rights frameworks that might construct holistic literacy are non-existent despite the fact that NFED claims to empower learners, especially women (see Owusu-Mensah 2007; and interview with Gogi, 2013). What is the institutional reference point in learner empowerment then? In what ways can authentic advocacy be initiated in the absence of such fundamental rights-based structures?
Central to this framework is learner cultural knowledges and experience which is an eligible capital and a form of social currency that exists in addition to the varied literacies learners envisioned to be introduced during their training. I posit here that the depth of learner-centeredness is determined by and dependent on the extent to which the instruments in the framework align with each other to create an edge for learner engagement.

**Social Venture Interest Model**

The fourth framework is the Literacy Social Income Model. As NFED is neither a for-profit nor a non-profit organization, the institution is in a position to navigate between the blurred lines by effectively employing its *in-between* status to harness multiple resources. Lengthy deliberations have to be held with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry Of Education respectively for tentative decision to be made in regards to this governance practice by NFED. But the question is; how far is NFED willing to negotiate? I would like to propose to the institution to adopt an interlocking social service orientation with economic return perspective theoretically known as the *social economy approach* (Quarter, Mook & Armstrong, 2009). It should also adopt the “social enterprise model to have an integrated approach to its mission” (Hebb, Madill & Brouard 2012, p. 223) towards service delivery. As a component of a *development-from-within* framework I envision the social economy approach could accommodate the propositions being made by learners’ to be in harmony with organizational change.

Here I philosophize that business ideas do not necessarily originate from organizations’ board meetings; they could be instinctively proposed by an internal staff or external individual yet such *off-the-cuff* ideas could transform an organization to change its future.
Therefore, good intentions in education must not merely be mentioned but also carried out (Dewey, 1909). As learners seem to be “directing” the literacy programme based on their micro-subjective material condition, their contributions should be the mission of this proposal. Learner action in many ways resonates with Dewey’s philosophy on learning. Here, Dewey (1909) states:

The individuals must have the power to stand up and count for something in the actual conflicts of life. He must have initiative, insistence, persistence, courage and industry. He must in a word have all that goes under the name force of character (p. 50).

Therefore, sustainable solutions need to be channelled to address present crises in the interests of continuity and human survival for both NFED and its learners. Such steps are highlighted in the framework below.
This framework is deliberately constructed in a pyramid form as the objective is to articulate the input into levels of ascendancy to indicate a social economy building block process for NFED.

The initial step - the bottom layer - constitutes learners’ choice of income generating activities to be pursued within their community classes. This choice should be the prerogative of learners; in selecting specific IGA skills to pursue they will therefore determine the drive and collective interest for participation. Communication for approval and budgetary
allocation at the local office and Head Office follow respectively. Trainers and learners would then draw up the training plan and schedule based on partner-trainer-learner availability. The training should be structured within literacy for empowerment space for learning IGA skills and for the creation of products instead of a space for literacy only. The finished products would then be sold nationwide to generate income for NFED. The entire process is theoretically designed so that learners will have a sense of ownership within the planning and changing processes as part of their empowerment journey. My position on this argument is once again clarified by Dewey (1909):

> When a study is taught as a mode of understanding social life it has a positive ethical import. [Unfortunately] the moral has been conceived in too goody-goody a way. [But] ultimate moral motives and forces are nothing more or less than social intelligence - the power of observing and comprehending social situations—and social power—trained capacities of control—at work in the service of social interest and aim. Therefore, there is no fact which throws light upon the constitution of society; there is no power whose training adds to social resourcefulness that is not moral. (p. 40, 43)

The link between Dewey’s social philosophy and the gamut of the sustainable process is essentially what is captured and proposed in the social economy model. While literacy is presumed as a social good this model also encompasses learner’s livelihoods and institutional financial sustainability. NFED would need to practicalize the successful implementation of this initiative, so I leave it in fairly simplistic form in this case at this point in the discussion.

**Funding and Capital Sourcing**

The fifth framework is the NFED Sustainable Funding Framework. Issues of funding cannot be over emphasized in literacy and development interventions. Unfortunately, literacy as a component of non-formal education is affected by its characterization as being non-formal. This description has caused inconsistencies in non-formal education budgetary allocation and
external funding support. One solution is proposed in the governance model whereby the state can be authorizing NFED to source funding as an autonomous body.

At the same time, most intervention programmes are sustained by internal and external funding or a combination of both. External funding, however, always come with timelines. In that case the institution has to devise strategies to amass supplementary forms of funding once external funding ceases. The World Bank’s pull-out has distinctly encumbered NFED so how can it generate resources to retain and sustain the literacy programme? The response for the above question lies in the details within the forthcoming framework.

**Diagram 5: The Funding Efficiency Model**

![Diagram 5: The Funding Efficiency Model]

The above diagram illustrates the *Funding Efficiency Model* proposed for literacy funding sustainability. An interrelation of opportunities is presented to represent funding sources from which NFED can draw possible funding routines to support its annual/internal budget. The framework is specifically conceptualized and modelled as an interwoven system to identify and illustrate how single funding sources can be pulled together to develop a broad rubric of total funding.
Besides, meagre government allocations NFED would possess the capacity to either source or generate other forms of funding. I have earlier problematized the nuance in free as a service model so I will not belabour it here. That said, some changes would have to be made within NFED regarding corporate relationships and service delivery to amend its present “free service” model if the above funding efficiency is to be operational.

Two separate funding sources are imaginatively categorized within this Funding Efficiency Model based on my research findings and knowledge of NGOs. The first is the partner relations approach (PRA) and the second, the service-rendering approach (SRA). The two approaches could be drawing a capital base and act as a fiscal safeguard for NFED funding challenges.

The social economy model perceptively captures the SRA approach as the two are relatable to the funding acquisition processes in this context. NFED technical services, including institutional fundraising strategies, assets acquisition, and leases and rentals (refer to diagram) are services that have been appropriately proposed as in-house fund raising opportunities. Technical consultations, advisory services, training, and capacity-building for external agencies should be monetized. NFED could leverage its influence to harness the resources been the national coordinating body on literacy. As I previously specified, unused Head Office space could also be rented or leased to generate capital in both the short and long term.

The second layer in this funding process is the partner relations approach (PRA). This involves interrelated donor relationships and collaborative partnership funding. This element explains how philanthropic giving, local/international agencies, corporate grants, and
academic collaborations could be leveraged as funding sources for literacy work. NFED can directly leverage international grants and in-kind donations from corporate communities in its process of *becoming* a public service entity. This collective funding would add up as bulk capital to support operations.

Considering the complexity involved in operationalizing the ideas - and especially in identifying, sourcing, liaising, and communicating with funders and partners - I anticipate the NGO desk would need to be fully equipped and staffed to efficiently manage the development of this highly strategic process.

**Research Dissemination Plan and Results Application**

The dissertation will be submitted to the University of Toronto as this study is an academic requirement for a doctoral degree. Later, a meeting will be held with NFED and the communities where the research was conducted to disseminate the study’s findings to complete the research cycle. The various frameworks and proposals will be presented during this meeting after which participants, staff, and the public would be given an opportunity to discuss its findings and proposals.

As the study is anchored in human rights, rights-based and social justice philosophy in education the voices of participants have to be heard at a certain point in this interaction. The dissemination will therefore be a two-way process in which NFED and the public will interact with me to decipher this study’s perceptions of the programme to determine the way forward. This event would be an information-sharing and awareness creation forum rather than one for the imposition of my thoughts. I hope this discussion can engender some
political/policy feedback and possibly attract the attention of certain representing bodies, which might persuade further (positive) action to be taken.

**Summary**

Proposing ideas and recommendations for change is never an easy task. One needs to step back to the drawing board to offer critical, integrative, and long-lasting solutions to a problem. Proposals were formulated for both macro- and the micro-levels as state education policies cut across levels of governance and impact micro-subjects that are, for most part, relegated to the background of discussion. I have recommended five frameworks on literacy, governance, funding, learner engagement, and income generation to NFED. In broad terms, the proposals focus on public-private partnerships and public relation campaigns in change management and empowerment as a means to sustain the literacy programme. While I am confident that NFED could implement such seemingly ambitious suggestions, I am equally mindful that the extent to which change and development happen is relatively dependent on several unpredictable factors and unanticipated circumstances within a given context.

**Conclusion**

The thesis is set against the background of structural gender inequality as most women in Ghana are at the fringes of educational attainment. The goal of functional literacy established to address learning and to empower women is yet to be achieved. Consequently, many women cannot read and write and for that matter experience discrimination when they participate in community life. NFED while responsible for all existing non-formal education initiatives countrywide fail to effectively implicated women in the programme. We identify a gap in achievement due to high turnover coupled with mediocre class attendance. Though
illiteracy rate is decreasing in Ghana (refer 2010 Population Census Survey) I maintain that the extent to which NFE has addressed the needs of women, and cognitive transformations towards empowerment is unclear. It lack direction hence the demand for a micro-level analysis of the programme.

Several questions derived from the problem statement and the research questions proposed for the study were address through responses offered by participants as has reflected in the narrative. Conceptualization of the key variable - empowerment was offered as the relevant literature review presented theoretical discussions on women, empowerment, feminist epistemologies education, and international protocols promoting women’s education to identify the operationalization of the concept.

The study noted that NFED is driven by a philosophy that stress women’s ability to read and write as crucial factor for enhancing their capacity to improve their life situations and participate in modern society. Women who benefitted from this intervention are expected to experience personal progress and empowerment. The data illustrate that while women experienced varied levels of empowerment the programme fall short to offer learners a nurturing environment and resources to sustain and improve their socio-economic and material conditions. As follows, despite describing NFED work as important, the study identified a number of constraints and challenges in programme implementation at the micro-level from perspectives of the “disadvantaged” and “marginalised” women who are often targets of diverse intervention programmes in recent times.

The study equally focuses attention on the programme delivery by examining the learning environment and resources available. The two were classified as lacking in all aspects of the
programme and was theorize as the source of programme ineffectiveness. The micro-level opportunity permitted both facilitators and beneficiaries to share their stories and experiences about the programme.

By chronicling their voices, the thesis imparts new narratives into feminist and development discourse on programme reality to project programme redesign, monitoring and evaluation. This consideration is important as many interventionist programmes in Ghana are often launched with great expectations but are hardly ever followed up to ascertain performance and impact. The recommendations offered must be of interest to policy makers.

Literacy as realized so far is empirically connected to women’s empowerment. That said, while the pedagogy of literacy for empowerment facilitates habits of change as part of process of creating critical learners (Mezirow, 2000), learner curiosity and interest in economic skill acquisition cause a repositioning within the learning cycle of that pedagogy which I perceive as incomplete in line with personal development.

I would rather conclude this dissertation with a reflection on the subject/concept of literacy for empowerment. How is literacy for women’s empowerment constructed in neoliberal times? While individual actor’s role is peculiar in change processes the contradictions embedded within the process discursively shape and, to a certain extent, marginalize the subject. At the same time, the place of the subject is crucial as philosophically, change in learner perspective also construct the course of change. The state’s denial to acknowledge this difference in Ghana is hinged on neo-liberal interpretations; this denial manifest in encumbering structural interference. Obviously, the failure to address gender education parity exacerbates in widening the gap in literacy attainment between males and females. Granted
that beneficiaries of non-formal adult education are predominantly women, the models of engagement NFED employs must be refined through a GAD and GCAD analysis to effectively engage the institution’s primary population targets.

Literacy enlightens women and creates avenues to effectively engage in the public sphere. But the WID ideology of liberalism and economic empowerment, which marginalizes literacy, is still accepted as a means to narrow the gender gap. Unfortunately, NGOs in Ghana have stuck with the WID approach that indisputably disconnects the learner from structures of oppression due to its failure to factor in the cultural concerns of women. This dissociation squarely misrepresents the notion of literacy for empowerment in development as it displaces women as discursive subjects in the very culture and tradition that encumbers their well-being.

Ghanaians are interested in diverse literacies for political, economic, and social reasons because literacy is a currency that connects the past, present, and the future and is sustained by citizens’ willingness to learn. But while literacy is broadly embraced as a social change process, the programme implementation - and non-formal education in general have been ideologically contentious due to variations in meaning. The different interpretation has negative implications for literacy for empowerment. We must harmonize the differing perspectives if a single vision is to be produced to achieve the goals of literacy for empowerment.

Moreover, outcomes emerging from literacy for empowerment cannot be handled in the same way as that of literacy. While the former is meant to emancipate, to transform, and to raise learners’ consciousness into becoming critical citizens who can challenge the status quo and
rupture the boundaries of power and injustice, the latter’s intention is to deliver quick solutions to basic problems of learning to achieve immediate goals. But literacy for empowerment is long-term, gradual, and sustainable metamorphism of consciousness, both for individuals and communities. Yet literacy has been short term, unsustainable, and in many cases is offered to generate instant outcomes rather than long-term outputs.

Furthermore, learners embrace all three levels of change: personal, social, and economic. Reading the world is literally through the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987). More learners than ever - 80% entreat elements in programme planning to be tailored to their strategic needs. If “education is for all” and “compulsory for all,” and a “right for all” then adult literacy must move past 3R literacy to include other literacies: ICT literacy, health literacy, micro-finance literacy, security literacy, legal literacy, insurance literacy, mining literacy and environmental literacy. It is the expectation of the state that the learners’ I interviewed should be productively engaged in sustainable economic programmes that respond to contemporary life challenges once they complete the literacy class. But literacy for empowerment’s possible outcomes will be protracted until diverse interests and literacies are conceptualized and addressed as emerging issue within the context of development.

Ghana’s paradox of wanting to achieve its goal of education for all while being historically fund-strapped has resulted in an unequal balance of fund allocation. This setback is not only central to socio-economic development but equally important for its citizens’ education attainment. In the case of NFED, alternative fund sources have not been adequately explored as the colonial relationship of dependence on the West is evident. The practice apparently reflects in state governance as the West and development agencies dictates are obvious in a neo-colonialized world – the perpetuated existence of the colonizer on the colonized.
Unequal power relations have persisted and which challenge Ghanaians and NFED to adopt the *giraffe approach* to harnessing resources because *literacy for empowerment* is a cyclic, long-term, life-learning process that necessitates the availability of stable resources to sustain programmes.

Literacy sociologically, has been imagined in a constructive progression from the local to the global, and the universal belief in the practice is within its power of its history as a change element. Within this local-global continuum, “Women live in context, spaces, and relationships that may hold back their ability to act. Changing that environment or conditions is critical to their empowerment” (CIDA/IDRC n.d). An individual’s ability to modify such conditions is dependent on the level of resilience and capacity fostered for change, and that reinforce s/he to contend with issues of power, subordination, discrimination, and marginalization within the status quo. *Literacy for empowerment* as a practice becomes a critical platform for transformation and change, an inclusive space, a place for identity creation, and self-location. It demands reflection about the past and present, and allows one to project self in the future where change has already occurred. Given that it is important to revisit the essence of learning once again within such reflection and action, I will draw your attention once more to schooling to one of Dewey (1909) philosophical reflection pieces. Dewey summed up this reflection and stated:

I am asking your attention to the moral trinity of the school. The demand is for social intelligence, social power, and social interests. Our resources are (1) the life of the school as a social institution in itself; (2) methods of learning and of doing work; and (3) the school studies or curriculum. In so far as the school represents, in its own spirit, a genuine community life; in so far as what are called school discipline, government, order, etc., are the expressions of this inherent social spirit; in so far as the methods used are those that appeal to the active and constructive powers, permitting the child (in this instance learner) to give out and thus serve; in so far as the curriculum is so selected and organized as to provide the material for affording
the (learner) a consciousness of the world in which he has to play a part, and the demands he has to meet; so far as these ends are met, the school (learning) is organized on an ethical basis. (p.43 - 44)

I agree with Dewey in that the call poses a formidable challenge for bodies responsible for mapping intervention frameworks in literacy for empowerment projects as indifference is a disintegrating factor in achieving educational goals in Ghana.

Ultimately, I did like to offer a piece of reflection in closing the thesis. It is interesting to observe how an idea has generated into volumes of pages of information in discussions to create arguments and propose suggestions through numerous processes to harmonize the varied discourse. As I conclude this work I must humbly say that imaginations and ideas do manifest when appropriately nurtured. The objective for this project that is; to examine the prognosis of literacy in empowerment among women has been achieved – at least by my standards. New issues that resulted from the narratives will be examined in another research investigation as they could not be addressed in this context due to time constraints. Indeed, it has been a beautiful journey and it is worthwhile.
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Appendix A

Non Formal Literacy Education in Rural Women’s Empowerment in Ghana: A Micro Level Analysis

Interview Guide - Learners

1. How do you perceive the literacy programme, and what was your motivation for enrolling in the class?

2. Explain your personal aspirations and skills you envision to acquire from the literacy classes to accomplish them? Can you describe your experiences in the programme? How would you apply them in your community and personal life?

3. Describe the concept of empowerment. Do you consider yourself empowered? Explain ways you think development programmes empower or disempower women?

4. Can you explain how the learning materials speak to or are meeting your learning needs? What is your perception about that?

5. Describe challenges you and other women in this community encounter in participating in the literacy programme. Are there any post literacy plans for you?

6. What do you envisage to do differently upon completing the literacy classes?

7. Demographics: Education, age (approximately), and socio-economic status will be sort from participants.

8. Finally, are there any issues you might want to highlight in this conversation?

Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix B

Non Formal Literacy Education in Rural Women’s Empowerment in Ghana: A Micro Level Analysis

Interview Guide – Program Staff and Facilitators

1. Can you explain the non-formal literacy work been undertaken by the NFED in this municipality?

2. Please describe and elaborate on your role as programme staff or facilitator in the programme?

3. Can you explain how communities and learners envisage literacy? How is the programme organized to support this vision?

4. As a programme staff or facilitator, describe the learner mobilization and recruitment process and learners attitude towards literacy in particular village.

5. Can you describe ways through which the literacy programme empowers women in rural locations? Participation is considered essential in development programmes. Is there any way you could speak to the level of women’s participation in the literacy classes in the village(s)?

6. Describe challenges you encounter in the literacy implementation process. How are they addressed? Are there any post literacy plans for learners?

7. Demographics: Education, age, and socio-economic status will be sort from participants.

8. Finally, are there any issues you might want to highlight in this conversation?

Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix C

Non Formal Literacy Education in Rural Women’s Empowerment in Ghana - A Micro Level Analysis

Interview Guide – Management

1. Can you highlight on the mission and objective of the Non Formal Education Division in Ghana?

2. What is the role of government and NFED in non-formal literacy education?

3. How do communities perceive literacy? How does this perception inform participation and programme development strategies? In what ways does the programme support the vision?

4. Please elaborate on funding for NFED and particularly for the literacy programme?

5. Can you explain how the programmes empower women particularly in rural locations? How does this link to women and development? Does NFED has post literacy plan?

6. Describe challenges NFED encounter in literacy implementation nationwide? How are they addressed?

7. Demographics: Education, age, socio-economic status; will be sort from participant.

8. Finally, are there any issues we have not discussed in the interview that you would like to highlight on?

Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix D

**Non Formal Literacy Education in Rural Women’s Empowerment in Ghana - A Micro Level Analysis**

**Consent Form for Participants**

My name is Alberta Akrong, a graduate student from the University of Toronto. I am conducting an interview on non-formal literacy training for rural women for my research thesis. This is an academic exercise which is not meant for any commercial purposes. Absolute confidentiality will be adhered to as this request had gone through an Ethical Review Process and has been scrutinized by the University of Toronto to detect any inconsistencies to protect participants. The research objective is to specifically analyze the correlation between literacy and women’s empowerment.

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. If you wish to withdraw research at any point in the discussion, you may do so. I will capture the conversation from the interview on an electronic audio recorder to validate my being in this community and had interacted with members of the literacy classes been held here.

Our conversation will be kept in total confidence and the evidence will be destroyed after the data has been analyzed and the thesis completed. The outcome of this research will be used to inform policy towards the improvement of the literacy programme in general.

I would appreciate if you could sign this consent form to declare your approval to partake in this research if you agree to the above request. Thank You.

Name…………………………

Signature…………………………

Location……………………………... Date…………………
28th March, 2013

THE DISTRICT CO-ORDINATOR
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION DIVISION
ADENTAN MUNICIPALITY
ADENTAN

THRU:

THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION DIVISION
GREATER ACCRA

Dear Sir,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

The bearer of this letter, Alberta O. Akpong is a Ph.D candidate/student of the University of Toronto. She is conducting her academic research into literacy, women and Development and requires the support of your office to achieve this purpose which will be of immense benefit to the organization.

We count on your understanding and co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

GEORGE BENTIL
(DEP. DIRECTOR, FIELD OPERATIONS)

Cc: The District Coordinator
    Non-Formal Education Division
    Adentan Municipal
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 29151

Dr. Njoki Wane                  Ms. Alberta Odofourkor Akrong

DEPT OF SOCIOLOGY & EQUITY STUD. INDEPT OF SOCIOLOGY &

Dear Dr. Wane and Ms. Alberta Odofourkor Akrong,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Non formal literacy education for rural women's empowerment in Ghana - A micro level analysis"

ETHICS APPROVAL                 Original Approval Date: September 26, 2013

Expiry Date: September 25, 2014

Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education Research Ethics Board (REB) have granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB’s delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible. Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.                     Dean Sharpe

REB Chair                     REB Manager