FEATURE

Analysis of Some Influences on Literacy as Observed by Facilitators of Literary in Cambodia

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Abstract: Cambodia is a country that lags behind many of its neighbors in literacy. Seventh-day Adventist church workers have found that offering adult literacy classes is one good way to introduce Buddhists to Christianity. Many of the literacy students are actually motivated to study because they wish to learn more about the Bible. This study analyzes Cambodian literacy workers’ reactions to the usefulness of a training seminar designed to prepare them to be better literacy workers. They respond to the usefulness of specific sessions of the seminar, as well as giving demographic data about their literacy students, and information on their perceptions of the usefulness of the materials they work with.

Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge eliminated most of the formal education in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. When the Vietnamese drove out the Khmer Rouge from the majority of the country that they controlled by 1980, the government in power still did not establish schools and the Cambodians themselves were too busy trying to survive to re-develop education (Khamm, 1998, p. 172). Most of the educated Cambodians escaped, died or were killed during this time (Gottesman, 2003, p. 73), so only when refugees reached Thailand during the 1980s where relief organizations assisted with schools and clinics was there much opportunity for learning according to testimony by several of the current Seventh-day Adventist Cambodian pastors. Many Cambodians have minimal education and those over thirty years of age in the rural areas seldom have the ability to read and write their own language.

In the early 1990s the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the Seventh-day Adventist Church reestablished a presence in the country of Cambodia and both organizations began adult literacy programs during the next decade. Three adult literacy textbooks with a Christian emphasis were developed by the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) in Khmer, the
Cambodian language, and these materials have been used by both ADRA and SDA church facilitators in adult literacy programs. Recently, REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy Empowering Community Techniques) materials have been introduced and used by ADRA in two provinces of the country.

A simple definition of literacy includes the ability to read, write, listen and speak (Wikipedia, 2006). There are many other definitions of literacy, however, which vary from location to location, and politics, economics and education frequently all pull in different directions on the basic definition (Venezkey, 1998). Venezkey suggests that the definition of functional literacy is joined with productivity as well as employment. There are some who would like to define literacy by standardized skills, but in this paper, literacy will be defined as the ability to read and write and perform simple mathematical operations in order to survive in society.

Although adult literacy and child literacy are different, the generalization in this study is that those aged fourteen and over who are involved in literacy programs would be considered adult learners, and children would be thirteen years of age or less. This is due to suggested guidelines from the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) when using their materials.

Every province in Cambodia has at least one team of workers attempting to witness and bring Christianity to the people according to Pastor Lim Pheng, executive secretary of the Cambodia Adventist Mission. Most of these teams have discovered that people have had no opportunity to learn to read or write and thus literacy programs have been organized. Non-literate adults and out-of-school children have been assisted by volunteer literate members of the Adventist church in these programs using the CMA materials. The materials are designed to bring the student to a level of literacy equivalent to three years of elementary education. A small stipend, textbooks, whiteboard and markers, or chalkboard and chalk are provided to each group facilitator.

This study gathered data from facilitators on their perception of the training session conducted by the Adventist Church and ADRA in order to determine its appropriateness and helpfulness. Also it provided information on the reasons for students to join the literacy program as perceived by the facilitators. This information can be used to compare with reasons found in programs in similar developing countries. As the program is Christian based, and Cambodia is primarily a Buddhist country, there was interest in studying Christianity as a factor in participation.

Information was collected through a survey which was used to assist in training the literacy facilitators in the future and to develop relevant materials for use in the program. Data showing the effectiveness of previous training and some of the current influences for literacy in Cambodia were collected and analyzed, based on the facilitators’ perceptions. During this study, a number of
the literacy sites were visited to make observations of the teaching methods used, the age level of the participants, etc., and to obtain personal feedback on particular training needs or areas that the facilitators felt were lacking. From the survey and researcher observation, changes in the literacy program should be implemented to better meet the needs of learners.

Related Literature

Although it was proposed that the decade beginning in 1993 would be when illiteracy could be eliminated throughout the world, the estimate is that 872 million to more than one billion adults were still illiterate near the end of this period (Wagner, 2000). The numbers have actually increased in spite of efforts to reduce them. Simpson (1990) says that governments or organizations “cannot eliminate adult literacy needs in one concentrated blitzkrieg, even if we had resources available to do so . . . it must become part of the framework of our education system” (p. 218). Today we know that students in schools as well as people with no opportunity to be in school are unable to read, write or do simple mathematics to function in society. Developing countries have the greatest illiterate population, but developed nations also have found that many of their citizens are functionally illiterate. The United States is struggling with issues of adult illiteracy today (Farris, 1992; Nwakeze & Seiler, 1993; Quigley, 1997). Australia, Britain, and Scotland also find that literacy for adults has failed to achieve the goals that have been set (McGimpsey, 2006; Simpson, 1990; Tett, 2006). Although the intent and desire to eliminate illiteracy were positive and strong in the last decade and it was backed up by action, the goal was unreachable. More realistic goals are being proposed for the current decade by those involved in this endeavor.

Cambodian Literacy

The educational emphasis by the Cambodian government is for children to complete at least nine years of education which would place them as adults according to our working definition. However, throughout Cambodia, most schools are double shifting and some triple shifting—with four hours of schooling six days a week. The economic needs of the family often force children to begin assisting in earning money or caring for younger siblings at an age when they should be in school, so few children have the opportunity to actually achieve the government-mandated nine years of education. Rarely are new schools constructed; only when non-government organizations (NGO’s) or donor organizations provide the funds will the government allow schools to be built after much red tape and payment of fees for permits and registration.

The Cambodian population is primarily rural, with more than 60% under the age of 30 (National Institute of Statistics, 1999). Few schools are located in
the remote provincial areas; education is generally available only in the cities, towns and larger villages. Teachers do not want to teach in rural areas. The pass rate of students on government exams given after six, nine and twelve years of schooling is from 50-60% in the rural schools and 70-80% in urban schools (S.M.I.S. Center of the Department of Planning, 2000).

Cambodia’s literacy rate, as reported by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), is 73.6% of the adult population over 15 years of age. This compares with the region’s average literacy rate of 91.4%. Year 2000 statistics from the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (S.M.I.S. Center of the Department of Planning) state that nearly 60% of the adults who began school dropped out by third grade. Thus even the literate population of Cambodia remains a group that has a low level of education. Most have not completed either primary or secondary school. Cambodia currently has 91% of the girls and 96% of the boys of primary school age enrolled, but only 67% of these are expected to complete the primary level up to grade six (UNESCO, 2005). Secondary schools have 19% of the possible girls and 30% of the boys enrolled who have completed six years of primary education and passed the government examinations. Only 3% of the population of tertiary age is enrolled in any study program. In comparison the functional literacy rate in the Philippines was 83.8% ten years ago (National Statistics Office, 1994) so about 16% of the population was not literate. Also more students were participating in education with 64.4% of 7-24 year olds enrolled in school. Of the entire Philippine population, one-third finished only elementary school, an additional 40% finished elementary and high school and 20% more have attended at least some college. There remains a gap in the educational level of Cambodian citizens when compared with levels of the other nations of the region.

Information found on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report for 2005 can be used to compare some countries of Southeast Asia for two additional statistics. The first is the number of students that are enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education as a percentage of the population of official school age. Second, the rank by the UNDP out of 177 countries of the people lacking fundamental literacy skills as a percentage of those between age 16 and 65 (see Table 1).
Cambodia ranks near the bottom for Southeast Asia in both enrollment percentage and fundamental literacy rank. The continent of Africa has most of the lowest levels of enrollment and functional literacy according to the UNDP Human Development Report of 2005 although Haiti, not on the continent of Africa, also is included among the countries on this current report with the lowest fundamental literacy levels.

**Women’s Literacy**

Throughout the world “in 1998 one in four adults did not read or write. 750 million of these are Third World women” (Carmen, 1998). The culture of Cambodia is similar to much of the rest of the developing world as we see women being left behind in educational opportunities. The identification of strategic gender needs of women will help address the problems of “unequal gender relations and women’s economic, social, cultural and political subordination to men” (Walter, 2004, p. 439). The patriarchal society found in Africa and subordination of women has greatly affected education in Botswana and Kenya (Maruatona & Cervero, 2004; Muiru & Mukuria, 2005). This results in a greater percentage of females in the established literacy programs. Information collected by this researcher for work-related purposes during the past seven years shows that the majority of participants in the literacy programs sponsored by the Adventist church in Cambodia are women. The reasons why these women are involved in literacy may be varied, but it is most likely that they did not have the opportunity for education at an earlier period of their life. Some women realize that they need to learn to read as they participate in today’s parental responsibilities, but it is likely they are only involved in these literacy activities to learn to do tasks that involve literacy activities in their daily lives (Rogers, 1999). “Adult literacy policies and programs which are designed around the practical gender needs of women . . . will potentially increase both
women’s participation and the benefits which accrue to them as a result” (Walter, 2004, pp. 438-439). After the formal program ends in many places, the participants request additional classes and materials, but it is the non-literacy benefits that they value more: “Discussions that open their minds to new things . . . to get out of the house, . . . meet with others [and] talk about community happenings and concerns” (Rogers, 2000, p. 237). These are the things Rogers found that the women recount as enjoyable. The confidence building through literacy also enables these women to become more participatory in the communities where they live. This benefit for women has been emphasized as one of the most important reasons for the program in Cambodia and a reason for the establishment of the program in the late 1990s (Personal communication, Linda Bauer, former Mission President's wife).

**Literary Environment**

Another characteristic of adult literacy seen by several researchers is the absence of a literary environment. In Kenya, the traditional lifestyle does not include reading, thus 60% of the newly literate participants lapse back into illiteracy due to a lack of follow up reading materials (Muiru & Mukuria, 2005). It has been found through a study in Malaysia that the population as a whole is reluctant to read due to a lack of reading role models. Both at home and in schools there is a lack of reading resources (Pandian, 1997). Cambodia also lacks the culture of reading. There are few reading books in the markets for sale in Khmer. Few newspapers are published in Phnom Penh and tabloid-type magazines of Cambodian and Thai television soap opera stars are the general reading fare of adults and students who desire additional reading materials. A program of using what Rogers (1999) identifies as ‘found texts:’ posters, forms needed to be filled out by community members, signs on shops, and even advertisements in newspapers or magazines of things the class members can relate to in their own context could help the neo-literate to continue reading after the formal instruction is completed.

**Positive and Negative Influences on Literacy**

In Kenya and other African countries, HIV/AIDS has a large influence on society and literacy programs (Muiru & Mukuria, 2005). Cambodia also is greatly affected by this pandemic which is creating many orphans and street children who have neither resources nor opportunities for education. Many out-of-school children are eager to learn and a literacy program will often have non-enrolled children lingering outside, absorbing whatever they can when the class has been filled. Some of the many out-of-school children are involved in literacy programs in Cambodia, but many more could be involved if teachers and facilities were available.
Cell phone use is increasing rapidly in the developed world as well as in developing countries. Illiterate adults are learning to use these devices—not always every feature and aspect of the cell phone, but sufficient skills are learned for them to be able to communicate. Professor Mohammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his work in microfinancing, in which he provided these devices to poor women in Bangladesh. Skeptics did not believe the women would know how to dial and would not call anyone anyway, but it has proved to be an income generating program for these women. They have begun selling telephone services, and even one cell phone has opened up many business opportunities to a whole community (Byrd, 2006). These skills are learned with the assistance of friends or family to enable the individual to continue functioning in the society fully, even if they are unable to read or write to a high degree (Walter, 2005). The adult literacy programs everywhere should help people to build on their strengths in the society. As illiterate people learn to adapt to changes in society this aspect has changed literacy definitions. No longer can we only include the skills of reading, writing, and basic numeracy as the only facets of functional literacy. Veneky (1998) tells us that many other skills, including computer skills, may need to be incorporated into our definitions of functional literacy in today’s society.

Motivation for Literacy

The major motivation for individuals to join a literacy class is either survival (Carmen, 1998) due to a low economic situation or lack of self-esteem (Farris, 1992). In school poor and paperless environments, literacy projects cannot create motivation (Carmen, 1998). It has been found in Cambodia that one motivation for literacy training is the desire to learn more about Christianity. Interest has been generated in religion through audio-visual outreach programs. DVD sermons and a movie of the life of Christ are often shown in the village or location where a new effort is being started and interested individuals want to find out more information about Jesus. When workers discover that interested persons cannot read, literacy classes are often started. Some facilitators conduct two classes a day, but they are encouraged to keep class sizes low and start new classes when the participants finish the materials after about six months of class. Adult learners above the age of 14, are not usually grouped with children in the literacy classes.

In considering the purposes of adult literacy training, Quigley (1997) asks three questions: should adult literacy be mainly for the purpose of helping learners acquire knowledge? Should it be mainly for societal problem solving? Should it be mainly for self-esteem building and self-actualization? (adapted from pp. 129-131). His answer to the first question is that problem solving is important, but there is also a requirement to prepare learners for the world of work and vocational needs. There is knowledge which needs to be transmitted in

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order to help these members of society to be qualified for work. Illiterate Cambodians in rural areas do not have a high regard for skills that may be necessary for acquiring a job according to this researcher's observations. In urban areas there may be more desire for skilled employment. The second answer is more relevant to the needs of Cambodia and the literacy needs there. The program must start at the learner’s identified problem, not the instructor’s imposed or imagined problem or identified learner deficiency. Literacy skills are tools the learner can use to solve current problems or future ones. The answer to the third question points out that the personal interaction between teacher and learner is important. The key is the relationship between the learner and teacher if improved self-esteem is the goal. There are four motivations for literacy according to Rogers (2004). The first is symbolic: achieving power or status as one of the literate elite. The second is instrumental: gaining the skill to do something such as reading the Bible or Koran. Some only join to learn to sign their name and when that goal is reached, they drop out. The third motivation is to gain opportunities for the future, and the fourth is access to further learning. It could be generalized that these two could be combined as they seem very closely related. As many researchers have discovered, the bottom-up, learner centered initiatives based on local context are the most effective for achieving literacy (Ferris, 1992; Maruatona & Cervero, 2004; Rogers, 1999; Walter, 2004; Walter, 2005).

Training

The training of the facilitators has been limited in most countries, and this is also true in Cambodia. Some have had the opportunity to attend the Christian Missionary Alliance training sessions of about two days, conducted by that organization. The Cambodia Mission has conducted one-day trainings in several locations outside of Phnom Penh and in 2006 they held a five-day training session in Phnom Penh that involved many of the facilitators. The five-day course used a team-based strategy which has been shown to be effective as it increases the knowledge base and models skills such as problem solving and division of labor (Evans & Hugo, 2000). A psychologist was invited for one afternoon session and a medical doctor presented several health and hygiene topics. The primary focus of the session was on how to use the materials and learning strategies. The concept that adults learn best by doing has always been stressed (Rogers, 2000). Typically volunteers in literacy programs in the USA receive less than 20 hours of training before going out and teaching (Farris, 1992). Cambodian literacy teachers often begin programs without any training.

Simpson (1990) relates that “experience shows that some adults learn better with another adult who is not a formally qualified professional teacher” (p. 219). Only a few of the facilitators in Cambodia have had training as teachers as they are unable to live on the stipend provided by the literacy program and can earn a
greater salary as a teacher in the government or a private school. Those two or three with formal teacher training do not have college degrees, as they are former elementary teachers who have received two years of post secondary training. Intrinsic satisfaction is the major motivation for adult literacy educators (Quigley, 1997). The facilitators in Cambodia often teach in order to share Christianity.

Program Weaknesses

A variety of programs and materials are used in literacy programs around the world, and a variety of weaknesses have been found, both in the materials, and in how they are used. In Kenya, literacy programs began in 1963 through efforts by NGOs, churches and the government. One of the weaknesses identified was the fact that the same methods were used for adults as had been developed for elementary children. Also primary school teachers were employed with poor remuneration and motivation. There was no out-of-school program for drop-outs or street children. A major problem was having no clear policy on which language to use. Another factor limiting effectiveness was the lack of coordination between the organizations conducting literacy training (Muiru & Mukuria, 2005). Botswana has had different difficulties as there are few NGOs in that country so the literacy program has been conducted by the government. Decisions on which language and materials should be used and the development of materials in some areas have varied in different locations. One study found that if the curriculum is not responsive to student needs there is a large drop-out rate due to lack of relevance (Gaborone, Mutanyatta & Youngman, as cited in Maruatona & Cervero, 2004). Maruatona and Cervero report that the materials used were developed in South Africa and they have little relationship to many contexts where they are used in Botswana. Their study had a number of conclusions including that the literacy program did not respond to the empowerment needs of the learners, especially women’s needs and it maintained stereotypes of women.

Consistency in the program and a common language are characteristics of the literacy in Cambodia. There have been no reports of the materials not being relevant to the Cambodian learners. These materials have been developed in Cambodia and are periodically reviewed and revised by the Christian Missionary Alliance organization.

Strategies

There are various strategies used in adult literacy programs. Farris (1992) lists some of the most helpful ones. Phonics and sight word drills, language experience, cooperative learning, dialogue journals, books on tape, tutor modeling of oral reading, cloze, mind maps, graphic organizers, and know-want to know-learned (KWL) are all strategies found in adult literacy programs. In...
the USA, Project Learn, a volunteer program that is a part of the Laubach Literacy Action Program, uses many of the above methods in their literacy classes.

Most students in adult literacy classes in the developed world have either failed in their educational attempts previously or moved from place to place thus did not have consistent instruction. In Cambodia, however, most of the participants have never had opportunity for education, thus multiple strategies are usually not needed to interest, motivate or open the student’s mind for comprehension. Providing opportunity for learning, no matter what method may be used, is usually successful. As rote learning and lecture methods are what literate facilitators have seen, this is the methodology primarily used. Training for facilitators is unusual, and the use of more modern techniques is equally rare.

Rogers (2000) describes another model of literacy where an existing community group—with mixed literacy ability—gathers to work together, for example on a water pump or sewing project, and together they work on the needed literacy skills. As the teaching is a shared activity among the adults in the group by those with literacy skills, the adults are able to learn by doing the literacy skills needed for the group activity. This results in transfer of the literacy skills outside the classroom to a real-world, real-life setting. A government rural development organization in Malaysia also conducts classes for illiterates where farmers are taught words related to farming (Pandian, 1997). This approach, emphasizing relevance, has been motivating for the students according to these researchers, and results in fewer drop-outs.

From 1993-1995 a new literacy program was initiated in El Salvador, Uganda and Bangladesh. The Regenerated Freirean Literacy Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) were used by the British NGO, ActionAid (Archer, 2000). This approach has been adopted by about 250 organizations in 40 countries for literacy and empowerment. There is no textbook or pre-printed materials in a REFLECT program. A locally produced guide, preferably developed by the local facilitators, is the only resource. As the facilitator works with the individuals in a literacy circle, they produce maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that reflect the local reality. The map may be of local land use in the village or community. The matrix may be an analysis of local crops that are grown. The calendars may have records of illnesses, workloads or gender activities. Initially these are constructed on the ground using local materials—sticks, stones, leaves or whatever is available. The literacy facilitator leads out in the discussion of this information. Then these diagrams are transferred to a large chart or paper, with words introduced to reinforce recognition of what is represented. The participants copy this into their own notebook or exercise book. Drama, songs, proverbs and poems may also be introduced or shared. As the group analyzes their environment, they will produce twenty or more books or graphics of their community that they are able to use for development or
Discussion of local issues relevant to their lives. The emphasis is on the learner’s writing, not passive reading of a text. This is an expanded language experience methodology. The learners are thus also empowered to make changes in their behavior, attitudes or situation based on the knowledge that they have gained and the ownership that has been developed. Maruatona and Cervero (2004) suggest that the REFLECT program be used in Botswana. As previously mentioned, ADRA Cambodia is beginning to use this program in two provinces where they are conducting literacy activities. During the five-day training seminar, a presentation of REFLECT and an introduction of this methodology was provided for the SDA literacy facilitators. It was suggested that REFLECT be used as a culmination, supplement or continuation of the basic literacy activities conducted by the SDA facilitators.

Evaluation of Literacy

Although Venezky, Bristow, and Sabatini (1994) conducted an empirical study to evaluate the effectiveness of adult literacy programs, it is neither feasible nor practical to do this in the context of Cambodia. These researchers used computers and standardized tests and came to the conclusion that such programs cannot be evaluated by one single measure. A simple test of the students’ acquisition of basic literacy skills in the Khmer language is given at the conclusion of the program. There are no grades or scores given during the literacy class and if the learner is capable of showing skill in more than 50% of the items on this test, a certificate of completion is given. The traditional concept of literacy is that it is a technical process where the learner gains skills in reading and writing. “Illiteracy is therefore considered a deficiency to be overcome at the personal level, and a problem to be eradicated at the societal level through action by the state” (Mpofu & Youngman, 2001, p. 575). The new concept is that literacy is related to the social and cultural aspects of a person’s life. “In this perspective, the emphasis is not simply on the classroom acquisition of literacy, but on how the literacy skills are used in daily life” (Mpofu & Youngman, p. 576). As literacy today needs to be evaluated on this socio-cultural concept, how the former illiterate individual interacts and is involved in the community will be a better evaluation than a computer or paper and pencil test.

Methodology

A survey about literacy training, materials and motivation (see Appendix A) was distributed to the literacy teachers associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cambodia. The survey was translated into Khmer, the mother tongue of these facilitators, even though some of them are also literate in English. This was to improve understanding of what was being asked by those filling out the survey. One modification was made to the pilot draft survey (see October 2006, Vol. 9, No. 2
Appendix A) after giving it to a small group of literacy facilitators in Phnom Penh who provided quick feedback and evaluation. Likert scale questions were designed to indicate the participants’ opinions of the training program. Two open ended questions were to give an opinion of what more or different training activities the participants want to have. The last section of the survey was to give an approximate number of students involved for various reasons and the relation of Cambodian students to those of other countries in various categories.

Distribution of the survey was at refresher training sessions, which were held in three locations: Phnom Penh, Neouk Luong, and Kompong Cham. These sessions were centralized and as the refresher training courses are only for one day, the survey was completed and returned on that same day.

The data collected was analyzed by quantitative statistical means. The use of measures of central tendency helped to know which parts of the training were most helpful. The measures of dispersion were useful as the reasons for attending literacy classes were analyzed. Some correlations were determined between sex, age and location of the participants with the reasons for attending the literacy class. Generalizations were made as to why the participants are attending the literacy classes conducted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Data Analysis

Although there are nearly 80 facilitators, many of these are working in remote parts of Cambodia and only 45 surveys were returned out of 48 distributed in the three locations. Of the facilitators, 58% were male and 42% were female; 60% were from rural areas and 40% from urban – most of these working in Phnom Penh, the capital city. The classes are separated into those for children, 13 years old and younger, and adults, those 14 and older. It was found that only 13% were only teaching adults; 47% are only teaching children; but 40% teach both age groups. In other words, 87% are actually interacting with children and 53% with adults. The population of out-of-school children in the country is high due to poverty–families are unable to send their children to the government schools because they lack money to buy books, uniforms and learning supplies such as paper and pens or pencils. Often, villages do not have schools located close by so parents will not send their young children far to study.

When the facilitators responded about their personal Bible study, the largest percentage, 47% reported that they spent two to four hours each week studying the scriptures; 29% report that they spend less than two hours per week; and 22% are spending more than four hours each week in Bible study. All of the respondents are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some of these people are also actively involved in personal evangelism with their neighbors or teach a Sabbath School class for children each week.
The evaluation of the training conducted in February, 2006 shows that the facilitators felt that the Health presentations were the best part of this program (see Table 2). These presentations were rated as excellent by 60% of the respondents and 20% rated them as good. This part of the seminar was presented by a medical doctor working with ADRA and was related to community health needs. The second highest rating was for the presentation by the psychologist. She received ratings of 40% excellent and 40% good from the facilitators. The use of the newly published Bible Story Books printed in the Khmer language was ranked third as 53% rated this as excellent and 22% good. Break out sessions were conducted to discuss the use of different materials that are provided for teaching children or adults and 33% rated this excellent and 40% rated it good. The learning styles presentation was rated excellent by 27% and good by 42%. The REFLECT activities, which ADRA’s literacy facilitators use exclusively (they were taught separately in the break out sessions) was presented on the final day by ADRA as they gained new knowledge and then were given time to do it practically with the others. Cambodia Adventist Church facilitators had no prior experience with this program and did not find it as helpful as the other activities. Only 13% rated it excellent, 44% rated it good and 18% only rated it satisfactory.

Table 2
Evaluations of Seminar Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Styles</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Use</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Stories</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFLECT</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants reported that they could have used more time on teaching methodologies. While 27% felt that this area needed additional time, 24% would have appreciated more time on Health. Two other areas had 9% of the participants requesting additional time and these were Bible teaching methods and family violence discussion. Although a number of other topics were suggested, only the psychologist, at 7%, had a significant number of facilitators who would have liked to give her more time.

There was a wide range of topics requested for additional training. The highest percentage, 18%, said they would appreciate more teaching methodology. Next at 15.5% was training in how to teach the Bible. Health training at 13% was the third most requested and problem solving, with 9%
suggesting this topic was fourth. This information will be used by planners as continued training activities will be conducted in the future for the literacy facilitators.

Class size is recommended to be limited to approximately 20 students and is usually between 17 and 20. It was reported by 27% of the facilitators that they have 3 to 8 female students in their class. As a whole, 38% report they have 9 to 12 females, 24% have 13 to 17 and 11% have more than 18 females in their class. More than 36% say that they have 3 to 8 male students and slightly more than 16% say they have 13 to 17 males; 7% reported more than 18 of their students are male. The mean of female students was only slightly higher than the mean of male students. The standard deviation was greater for males than females, showing a greater dispersion of the number of male students. Of these students, it was reported that 51% of the facilitators have not yet completed one level of instruction at the time of the survey; 9% reported that 3 to 8 of their students have completed a level, 9% also reported that 9 to 12 students have completed one level; 20% said that 13 to 17 have finished one level of the literacy books; and 4.5% reported that more than 18 have completed a level.

The facilitators reported that at least some of the students in their classes are attending the local worship services (see Figure 1). No one indicated that there were no literacy students attending worships from their class. 11% reported only 1 or 2 attendees, 40% said 3 to 8 people attended, 20% said 9 to 12, 18% said that 13 to 17 were coming and 7% said more than 18 of their students attended the worships. A generalization is that about half of the students may be participating on Sabbath with church activities. The majority of the students according to the survey are not baptized Adventist church members (see Figure 1), as 44.5% of the facilitators report no baptized students. Approximately 29% of the facilitators report that only 1 or 2 of their class are baptized. Less than 18% say there are 3 to 8 baptized students, 2% had 9 to 12 and 2% also say 13 to 17 baptized Adventist members are among the students in their class.

![Attendance and Baptized Students](image.png)

*Figure 1. Comparison of worship attendance and baptized students.*
The influence of HIV/AIDS was either less significant than expected or the facilitators are unaware of the incidence of this disease in the families of their students. The results were that 87% of the facilitators reported that none of their students have family members affected by AIDS. There are 1 or 2 students affected by HIV/AIDS reported by 4.5% of the facilitators and 2% who say 3 to 8 of the students are affected. Also, 4.5% of the respondents did not answer this question.

As cell phone usage continues to multiply in Cambodia, the survey did show that many of the students are capable of using this instrument (see Graph 2). It is significant that illiterate or semi-literate people are capable of utilizing modern technology. As expected, most of the students do not own cell phones as they come from the lower levels of Cambodian society. It was noted that the majority of the owners were rural even though cell phone service is still not countrywide.

![Graph 2. Cell phone ability and ownership.](image)

Within the literature, it is not mentioned that students in literacy programs are enrolled for the purpose of learning more about Christianity or the read the Bible. The researcher intends to do further research to determine the influence of this reason for individuals to be in such programs and would appreciate others who also collect data in this area. Only 2% of the respondents felt that no student was learning to read and write for this reason (see Graph 3). More than 22% reported that 1 or 2 of their students were in the class for this reason. The largest percentage, 40%, reported that 3 to 8 of their students wanted to learn to read the Bible in their classes. 20% say that 9 to 12 students are learning for this reason; 11% say that 13 to 17 of the students; and 2% say that over 18 of their students want to study literacy in order to learn more about the Bible.
Figure 3. Percentage reported studying to learn about Christianity.

A very small part of those in literacy classes conducted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are studying literacy in order to get a job. It has been reported that reading has become a requirement for those who want to work in the garment manufacturing industry in Cambodia. This is the major industry and is economically important for this country. In recent years, many people from the rural areas have been migrating to the urban centers, especially Phnom Penh, in order to find work. Most of those enrolled in literacy classes in the city are recent migrants from the countryside. It is notable, however, that 50% of the respondents report that there were no students in their classes for the purpose of getting a job. Only slightly more than 18% report that 1 or 2 are studying for this reason and a little more than 16% say that 3 to 8 want to read and write in order to get a job.

The results show that a significant number of the class members are studying in order to go further with their education in the future, according to the perception of the facilitators. More than 11% did not report that as the goal of any of their students, but 2% report that only 1 or 2 have the desire to continue schooling. Fully 20% report that 3 to 8 plan to go further in school and an additional 20% report 9 to 12. One third or 33.3% reported that 13 to 17 of the students are expecting to continue in a school program in the future. Also more than 11% say that more than 18 of the learners will go for further education.

When asked about students who are in the literacy program for a particular purpose, such as filling out a form or writing letters, there was a wide distribution of results. More than 18% reported that this is not a reason students are in the program, but a similar percentage said that at least 1 or 2 are studying for this reason. Another 29% reported that 3 to 8 students had this as a reason for studying and 20% report 9 to 12 students who seemed to have specific, immediate goals for their study. Only a little more than 4.5% report that 13 to 17 of the students are in the class for a particular purpose of learning to fill a form, read directions or that type of activity.
Slightly more than 7% report that none of their students seem to be using the skills they learned in literacy classes later in life. Only 2% said 1 or 2 were using reading and writing but 35.5% said that 3 to 8 continue to use what their literacy skills after completing their classes. Another 31% of the facilitators reported that 9 to 12 students use it and 20% say that 13 to 17 use it. Only 2% report that more than 18 of the students continue with reading and writing activities. It is difficult to know if the facilitators are assessing prior students or are seeing current students use these activities outside of the classes. In any case, this is not different from other literature which suggests that many literacy students do not use the skills after the classes are over (Maruatona & Cervero, 2004; Muiru & Mukuria, 2005; Nwakeze & Seiles, 1993, Venezkey, Bristow, & Sabatini, 1994).

The REFLECT program is very successful in some countries according to the literature (Archer, 2000; Kennedy, 2000). ADRA has 17 facilitators who teach literacy in Cambodia with this program. When asked, some of the Cambodia Adventist Church facilitators reported they also use REFLECT methodology. The church program is more formal, however, the facilitators have been encouraged to integrate these activities into their classes. As a group, 31% of the facilitators reported that they use REFLECT activities, but 64% said they do not. In our refresher trainings this methodology has been reviewed and verbal responses have indicated that more facilitators will start using this as they understand how it can be used and that it is helpful and interesting for both participants and facilitators.

Conclusions

The survey provided information that allows trainers to prepare more meaningful lessons that will provide additional skills to the facilitators. As the Seventh-day Adventist Church has simple health pamphlets now under production with a local printer, these materials will soon be supplied to the facilitators for their own learning as well as for use as instructional materials to teach their students basic health practices through reading. Rote and repetition are still the primary methods that are used in schools in Cambodia, thus the facilitators also tend to use these methods as their primary means of teaching reading and writing. Observations and demonstrations with classes during visitations by this researcher suggested that more variations in methods could be implemented. Lack of materials such as duplicators, tape recorders, reference books, computers, etc., requires that simple methodologies be devised and shown to be effective before being taught to the facilitators. Instruction in group work, practical activities and problem solving will continue to be added to their training.

The demographic data indicate a majority of the students to be female, as this sex tends to be marginalized by education more than males. The majority of
the facilitators, however are male. This does reflect the fact that more males receive educational opportunities in Cambodia than females, and due to the low economy, even men will take the task of teaching literacy when there are few jobs available in a community. Also, because of the large number of out-of-school children in the literacy program, the distribution of learners between the sexes is nearly equal.

When analyzing the purpose for students in literacy classes in Cambodia, it seems that the main reason to study is to be able to go to more formal education programs in the future. Again, this may be due to a large number of children who are striving for opportunities to study in a government school later. Even students currently in school often attend the literacy programs both to gain additional knowledge—such as English skill or Bible information. Students in rural literacy programs Although the ages of the students are not included in this study, observation shows that many of these are still quite young and thus parents are unwilling to allow them to travel to distant schools. Observation of government schools shows that bicycles are the major mode of transportation for the students attending these schools, so older children are more likely to be allowed to travel further to go to school. As the culture believes that money results in happiness, it is significant that the literacy students do not seem to see getting a job as a major purpose for their study. It may be that the desire for further education has a sub-motive or future motive after education of getting a well-paying job in the future and thus it does not show up on this survey that the students eventually will need the literacy skills for a job.

The large percentages of students who are studying literacy in order to learn about the Bible and Christianity is a significant finding. The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been steady during the past five years. Most of these new members are from lower levels of society and often they have not had educational opportunities. The influence of the literacy program has been positive according to reports from pastors throughout the country. The data seems to show that learning to read the Bible is a desirable result for very many of the students in these literacy classes, both in rural and urban locations.

Students often drop out from literacy programs according to the literature, but there does not seem to be a significant number who are doing so from the reports of these literacy facilitators. Also, they are reporting that many of the students continue to practice and use the skills that they have gained which is somewhat surprising for a country that has a poor reading culture and a lack of materials available for people to read. It is possible that the influence of Christian reading materials provided to the churches, worship groups and literature evangelists throughout the country enable people to continue to practice and use their literacy skills and that the hunger for information about Christianity motivates them to continue reading.

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Other issues facing the facilitators are lack of materials and facilities. Many of the children especially have no money to even purchase a writing book and pencil. Some funds have been provided but as these are limited, requests are filled on a first-come-first-served basis and more distant locations often have no assistance. Some of the facilitators would like to conduct the classes in the evenings as adults especially will work in their fields or homes during daylight hours. As the country lacks electric power except in the urban areas, vehicle batteries and neon lights are often used after sunset for illumination. Requests for these items have been received but they are not provided for by the donors. Some locations have simple wooden benches and tables, but other facilitators teach the students who sit on mats on the ground and write on their laps. Again, desks are not provided through the funding sources but facilitators often request them.

Replacement of literacy facilitators is necessary during the program as facilitators look to improve their economic status and will migrate to new locations or take a new job. Only about 10% of the facilitators will need to be replaced in any one year. The majority of the facilitators are provided with a minimal stipend but about 20% of the total do not receive any stipend at all but volunteer their services for this program.

Only a small portion of those working in leadership prioritize the concerns of the educational needs of the members and thus the current funding is totally through donations from individuals and donor organizations outside of Cambodia. The leadership of the church in Cambodia has pressing concerns about providing facilities for worshippers as the membership grows. The educational needs rate low, thus the long-term progress of Christian education in Cambodia is at some risk. All Adventist schools in Cambodia are mission schools with many non-Christian students but no subsidy is provided through the church for any of the minor educational programs. There is concern for indigenous leadership to be developed for the future, but without local elementary and secondary school programs and facilities, it may not materialize.

According to Sopeap Horng, the assistant director of the literacy program of the Cambodia Adventist Church, if the expatriate involvement in the program were to end, the entire program also would likely be terminated. Donors are still suspicious of nationals involved with large sums of money and this program does require several thousand dollars each year. There is support by Cambodian pastors and workers, however, the leadership to sustain the programs and expertise in education within the church is absent.
References


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Appendix A – Survey

Cambodia Literacy Facilitator Survey

This survey seeks to gain information about the Seventh-day Adventist literacy program in Cambodia. Information about the training, materials and results are needed. Also your perception of the factors that influence students to join and participate in the literacy class can help us improve the program. It is not necessary to write your name or give more identification than what is requested on this form. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. Please place one mark in a box to indicate your choice of answer:

Example: I am a Cambodian

Yes ☐ No ☐

1. What is your sex?
   Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Where do you teach your class?
   City ☐ Village ☐

3. Who do you teach?
   Adults (over 14 yrs) ☐ Children (under 14) ☐ Both ☐

4. How much time do you spend in personal Bible study each week?
   4+ hrs ☐ 2-4 hrs ☐ less than 2 hrs ☐

Please mark your ideas about the training that was held in Phnom Penh February 2006.

Use this scale to show your idea about this:
Excellent=5  Good=4  Satisfactory=3  Weak=2 and Poor=1

5. How helpful was the health talk?
6. How helpful was the psychologist?
7. How helpful was the information on learning styles?
8. How helpful was the use of the literacy books?
9. How helpful was the use of the Bible story books?
10. How helpful were the REFLECT activities?
11. What area of training would you like to have had more time?

12. What other areas of training do you need?

13. Do you use the REFLECT activities?

Use these numbers to show information about the students in your class:

18+  13-17  9-12  3-8  1-2  0

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14. How many students are female?
15. How many students are male?
16. How many students usually continue to finish the books?
17. How many students will likely go for further schooling?
18. How many students want to learn to read the Bible?
19. How many students are in the class to get a job?
20. How many students learn for a particular reason such as: filling out a form, reading a brochure, get directions for taking medicine, writing letters to family, etc.?
21. How many do you see reading or writing after 6 months?
22. How many students attend worship services?
23. How many students are baptized from your class?
24. How many students are affected by AIDS in their family?
25. How many students have cell phones in your class?
26. How many students know how to use a cell phone?

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