1986

Functional Literacy: Should it be Mandatory?

Jeannette Swartz
FUNCTIONAL LITERACY: SHOULD IT BE MANDATORY?

by

Jeannette Swartz

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in English

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

August, 1986

Dr. Roy Singleton, Advisor

Dr. Mary Grimes, Committee

Dr. William Herrold, Committee
Functional Literacy:
Should It be Mandatory?

Abstract

Millions of United States citizens are functionally illiterate. Included are persons who cannot read or write or perform simple arithmetic at all. The reasons for failure of voluntary literacy are reviewed, and consideration given to mandatory literacy as a solution to the problem. The affect of functional illiteracy on the military is examined, as well as the relationship of illiteracy to poverty and crime. A survey of educators reveals an awareness among them of this illiteracy problem, and also reveals that some of these educators favor mandatory literacy. The issue of civil rights in relation to mandatory literacy is discussed, along with the dangers and drawbacks of functional illiteracy. Suggestions are made for initiating a campaign to eradicate functional illiteracy from American society.
Functional Literacy: Should It be Mandatory?

Chapter I

Compulsory education for the masses has long been an enforced entity in the United States of America. Until children come of age, they must all attend school. This mandatory education is supposed to provide society with a complement of rational thinking citizens who can and will contribute to the productivity and growth of the nation, citizens who will not only vote but who will understand their voting choices. Of immeasurable importance, they will be capable of earning a livelihood.

The resultant knowledge from compulsory education is meant to be no less than that which enables an individual to read, write, and perform basic arithmetic. Today, this minimum amount of knowledge is called functional literacy. The real concern here, however, is not with functional literacy but with functional illiteracy.

The number of functional illiterates in this country appears to be on the increase, presenting a major threat to society (Bailey & Fosheim, 1983). The greatest harm inflicted upon society by functional illiterates seems to be of a financial nature in the guises of crime, unemployment, poverty, and human suffering, not to mention a consequent burden to taxpayers nor an
inadequacy of competent manpower required for national security (Kozol, 1980). But where does the fault of functional illiteracy lie? Does the fault lie with society or with the individual illiterate?

Arguments have arisen which blame schools and teachers for inadequacy in both curriculum and in teaching methods; parents are accused of negligence. Still there is a strong argument which maintains that the illiterate individual is to blame, that literacy is not just an individual right, but that functional literacy, at least, is an individual obligation (Fitzgerald, 1984).

Literacy programs have been developed by federal and state governments in the United States and by private industry. These programs, though, do not appear to have completely solved the country's functional illiteracy problems. Perhaps the reason for the failures is that most programs, besides being of too short a duration, are aimed toward voluntarism, with the belief that the illiterate will not become literate without the volition to do so. The low number of persons who participate in these programs implies that many illiterates do not want to learn.

Unwillingness to participate in a literacy program, however, is not the same thing as refusal to learn or the lack of a desire to learn (Fitzgerald, 1984). Participants in mandated literacy programs, according to Fitzgerald, did not attribute their previous
non-participation to an unwillingness to learn but blamed it on shame, on lack of motivation, on a disbelief that literacy could solve their problems, and on drinking and drugs. If refusal to learn does exist among illiterates, it, therefore, appears to be a somewhat remote determinant in the illiteracy problem. The consequent implication is that the majority of illiterate adults in this country are not unwilling to learn but may be unwilling to participate in learning without, perhaps, some kind of enforced motivation.

However, the many diverse reasons for functional illiteracy among adults in the United States is not the issue here. The concern is that functional adult illiteracy is an existing condition which, it appears, is being unsuccessfully dealt with on the basis of participant voluntarism. This would seem to suggest that the condition could be better dealt with on the basis of mandatory participation.

Thus the questions arise. Does the argument become even stronger that mandatory adult literacy programs could succeed if enforced in the United States? Does society's right to populate itself with a literate citizenry supersede the right of the individual to remain illiterate if he or she so chooses? Should it be mandatory that each illiterate individual fulfills an obligation to become functionally literate?
The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions which educators hold with regard to the use of mandatory literacy programs as a means of eradicating functional illiteracy in America. In order to compare the perceptions of educators whose reactions to the mandatory program approach may differ according to their separate educational roles, faculty members in six diverse types of educational establishments in Northeast Florida were surveyed during the Spring of 1986.

A questionnaire was distributed among teachers in a small town high school, among teachers in an urban high school, among teachers in a school for special education, among instructors in a community college, among instructors in a correctional institution, and among instructors in a military facility. Although their student populations may have many differences and their educational purposes may vary, these six institutions were chosen because they appear to have in common one certain goal pertaining to education. They all seem to want their students to have no less than a basic education, i.e., to be able to read, write, and perform fundamental arithmetic—to become functionally literate.
Definitions of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>basic skills:</td>
<td>the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional illiteracy:</td>
<td>the inability to read, write, and perform simple arithmetic well enough to function within today's society; also the total inability to read, write, and perform simple arithmetic at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional literacy:</td>
<td>the ability to read, write, and perform simple arithmetic at a level required of an individual to function successfully within today's society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandation:</td>
<td>as it pertains to literacy, the authorization which obligates or requires the functionally illiterate to attend literacy programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voluntarism:</td>
<td>as it pertains to literacy, the exercising of free will by the functionally illiterate who decide to participate in literacy programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter II

This chapter covers a review of related literature which exemplifies both voluntary participation and mandatory participation in adult functional literacy programs. Programs based on voluntarism appear to be dominant in the drive against adult illiteracy in America. However, even though less seems to have been written about mandated literacy programs, neither voluntarism nor mandation is meant to outweigh the significance of the other in this review.

Adult Illiteracy: Twentieth Century Awareness

Adult illiteracy has existed among diverse populations in the United States since the birth of the nation. However, it appeared to create no threat to early American society since reading and writing were not required for common labor. Also, literacy was not included in the survival skills essential to the settling of the American frontier as it moved westward. But, according to Cook (1977), it was the connection of the final frontier on the Pacific to its origins in the East that awakened the country to its illiteracy problems. These problems were compounded further, according to Cook, by an influx of immigrants who spoke no English.

Cook (1977) states that by 1900, the census classified over six million persons as illiterates. This was almost 11 percent of the population. An illiterate was defined as "any person ten years of age or older who was unable to read and write in his native
language" (p. 3). However, many immigrants who were literate in their native languages were not literate in English, and, therefore, the percentage of functionally illiterate in English was probably much greater than reported.

During the early 1900's, Cook says that adult literacy programs based on voluntary participation were offered at state, local, and private levels in an effort to solve the problem. Although Cook makes no reference to literacy programs within the military during World War I, she does state that the high illiteracy rate among draftees "alarmed" the federal government. According to Scribner (1984), however, it was during World War I that the term "functional literacy" was originally introduced. Scribner says that the term was used in relation to "skills required to meet the tasks of modern soldiering" (p. 9).

Literacy programs were conducted by the armed forces during World War II and were referred to as a "resurfacing" of a military problem (Cook, 1977). Cook indicates that some of the military programs at that time were mandatory. Immediately following World War II, a civilian adult literacy program was established for the purpose of educating Negroes. According to Cook, the program was conducted on a voluntary basis and lasted from 1946 to 1948. Cook states that it made "a fair amount of progress" (p. 57) but was the only major civilian drive against adult illiteracy during
the forties. She indicates that this program was a result of the high percentage of functionally illiterate Negroes classified by the Selective Service during World War II. Robinson (1966) points out, however, that military data revealed that interracial comparisons did not account for literacy differences; there was indication that in areas of low educational funding there appeared a "degree of illiteracy among both Negroes and whites" (p. 372).

The military, more mechanized than ever in the 1950's, had to deal again with the functionally illiterate adult during the Korean conflict (Cook, 1977). Even though there had always been apparent success in military literacy programs, there appeared to be a growing resentment by the armed forces that civilian institutions were not educating the functionally illiterate people in this country.

However, according to Cook, with the threat of expanding Communism and the concern that the populace be intelligent enough to evaluate its propaganda, basic education had begun to be considered essential during the fifties. Further, functional literacy was becoming a necessity for survival within the industrial community. Cook states that any "operational" action against civilian illiteracy during this period, however, was handled mostly by state legislation and local ordinances, with programs structured for voluntary participation. According to Cook, Federal
participation up to this point had been "solely moral support" (p. 83).

The Campaign of the 1960's

Statistics giving the number of functionally illiterate persons in the United States by the 1960's appear to be of little value because there was still no uniform and consistent definition of functional literacy (Cook, 1977). One of the problems in establishing a concrete definition was that a basic age at which a person was to be called a functionally illiterate adult had to be determined. Another problem was that a level of competency had to be established. Further, the varied and increasing demands within American society by the 1960's affected an individual's survival skills. Therefore, defining a competency level to meet those demands appeared to be rather controversial. Cook also states that although the United States Office of Education seemed to have arrived at "eight years of schooling" (p. 80) as part of the criteria for defining literacy, there was still a problem. She points out that eight years of completed schooling is not always synonymous with "eighth grade level of achievement" (p. 81).

However, federal concern evolved into the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962. Also legislated was the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which included the Adult Basic Education
Program, the Job Corps Training Centers, the Work Experience and Training Program, and the Community Action Program. Once it was a reality, the literacy campaign of the sixties became widespread (Cook, 1977), taking on such tasks as functional literacy programs for the American Indians, for prison inmates, for migrant workers, and for other disadvantaged groups. Public libraries began to interact with the adult literacy programs by providing adult reading materials which contained readability levels of grades one through eight. Televised literacy programming for adults showed a marked increase. Teacher training, curriculum changes, and extensive production of materials were other campaign activities aimed at eradicating adult illiteracy. Cook feels that more was learned during the sixties about coping with illiteracy than in all the five previous decades put together.

But Kozol (1980) seems somewhat disappointed with some of the attempts made during the sixties to improve the teaching of basic skills. He says that Title One as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was intended to "improve the teaching" of basic skills to disadvantaged children but that

If Title One were not a mere expanded version of the errors of the past, we would not have more illiterate adults today than in the year in which that legislation took effect. (p. 4)
The Seventies

The 1970 census used 1.4 million as the estimated number of illiterate persons in America (Cook, 1977). Anyone 14 years of age or older and unable to read or write in any language was classified as functionally illiterate. However, according to Cook, a person who could function at only the fifth- or sixth-grade level was handicapped in the fast-moving world of the seventies. She said that it appeared that a ninth-grade level of literacy met the functional abilities needed to exist in the increasingly technological society. She states, however, that there were approximately 39 million people 14 years of age and over in the United States at that time who did not have a ninth-grade education. The figure was about 31 million when the age of 25 was used.

Also at this time, there was still no concrete definition for functional literacy. It was recognized that if there were, it would frequently have to be altered to meet the changing criteria for survival in an everchanging world (Cook, 1977). Cook states that the Bureau of the Census calculated their statistics in 1970 according to completed years of schooling, not according to levels of achievement. Copperman (1978) verifies this and feels that the following definition would be appropriate:

...When an individual is sufficiently developed in
...skills so that he can successfully apply them to socially required tasks associated with securing and maintaining employment, maintaining his health, taking advantage of the various services available in his community, and meeting his obligations of citizenship, he has reached a state of functional literacy. (p. 22)

Copperman states, too, that the results of a 1975 study revealed that 20 million adult Americans were functionally "incompetent" because they could not read a "want ad" or a W-2 form, or address an envelope, or count change. The 20 million were approximately 20 percent of the adult population. The research also revealed that "another 34 percent...about 39 million adults, were...barely functional in these basic skills" (p. 47).

Kozol (1980) states that "in 1970 the percentage of adult illiterates in the United States was three times that in the Soviet Union" (p. 1). Also according to Kozol, a 1975 study "concluded that sixteen percent of whites, forty-four percent of blacks and fifty-six percent of Spanish-speaking adults were 'functionally incompetent'" (p. 2). He states, too, that a government analyst for the Office of Education decided there were 57 million functionally illiterate American adults--a figure that represented more than 35 percent of the entire adult population.
With respect to those 57 million American adults, Hunter and Harman (1979) break that number down into two separate categories: 23 million functionally illiterate adults who have no literacy skills at all with which to function and 34 million who function with difficulty.

There appeared to be concern that functional literacy programs for adults should include America's youth who were not attending public school. Carsetti (1983) discusses Project READ, a national literacy program initiated in 1976 for "troubled youths." She says that "Project READ has worked with more than forty thousand youths from four hundred institutions, alternative schools, and community-based programs in fifty states and the District of Columbia" (p. 223).

But civilian literacy programs had not solved the functional illiteracy problem, and the military draft in the 1970's presented the armed forces once more with the task of training functionally illiterate inductees (McGoff & Harding, 1974). Since emergency mobilization of the armed forces represents a crisis under any circumstances, Ginzberg (1964) emphasizes why the military's need of an already literate populace to draw from must always be of utmost national concern:

Regrettably, no modern state can close its eyes to the need, if war comes, to be ready to mobilize its
resources quickly and effectively. In both World Wars, the United States entered late. Fortunately, our allies held the enemy at bay until we could mobilize our strength. But in this nuclear age no large nation will ever again have several years' grace after the outbreak of a major conflict. Current defense plans provide for warning systems in terms of minutes.

A nation concerned about the state of its military preparedness must act in times of peace to raise the quality of its population; after the outbreak of hostilities will be too late. (p. 67)

Ginzberg further implies that the Congress of the United States has placed too much importance on stockpiling defense materials and has long neglected the stockpiling of human resources.

According to Hunter and Harman (1979), the military's problems dealing with illiteracy actually begins at recruiting time. The Navy recruiting executive officer for the Detroit district implied that nine out of ten recruits fail the test apparently because they have difficulty reading and understanding it. Kozol (1980) also discusses the illiteracy problems confronted by the military:

A simple example...is documented by Senator George McGovern, in a speech which he delivered before the U. S. Senate on September 8, 1978: "An
astounding thirty percent of Navy recruits...are a danger to themselves and to costly naval equipment because they lack basic education skills. One illiterate recruit recently caused two hundred fifty thousand dollars in damage because he could not read a repair manual." The tragedy of the situation of the worker is underscored in these words: "He tried but failed to follow the illustrations." (p. 3)

But there were civilian activities going on during the 1970's to combat illiteracy. Legislation of the Education Amendments of 1974 gave reading skills statutory recognition. Title VII of the Act expanded the National Right to Read Effort. According to Cook (1977), it was the aim of the Right to Read Effort that "by 1980, 99 percent of the school age children under sixteen and 90 percent over sixteen" (p. 108) would have achieved literacy skills. Section 723 of the Act provided for reading instruction for youths and adults who would otherwise not be given the opportunity to learn.

Cook says that "cooperative efforts" between libraries and adult literacy programs continued in the seventies. In addition to providing materials, library activity included the use of bookmobiles, and, when funds were available, libraries also conducted adult literacy classes in some areas. Adult
education materials were made available in a much wider variety and with content aimed at the age and interest levels of the potential adult students. Typewriters were often used to motivate attendance, along with other "machine-oriented" program incentives; audiovisual equipment was used more often than a decade earlier.

Cook also says that the seventies saw experiments with computer assisted literacy instruction, although it was a very controversial topic at that time. According to Cook, the results achieved with computer assisted instruction were no better or no worse than results achieved through traditionally instructed classes. She says, however, that it was proven that some learners responded better to computerized instruction while other learners responded better to a classroom instructor.

The use of broadcast media for teaching adult literacy continued in the seventies. According to Hunter and Harman (1979), radio "served as a medium for the recruitment of students rather than as a means of instruction...Television has more frequently been used as a teaching instrument" (p. 91). Cook (1977) implies that televised literacy programs for adults had basically proved to be an unsatisfactory approach to the illiteracy problem in the sixties. Hunter and Harman (1979) explain why televised instruction still did not work in the seventies; they say that "because so much television programming in the United States is regional, the
expense and the relatively small size of potential viewing audiences have inhibited large-scale national efforts" (p. 91).

Individualized instruction came into being in the 1970's with an approach to adult literacy education which used a diagnostic and prescriptive process (Cook, 1977). Teaching aids and materials were researched, and the result indicated a need for new materials which would take cultural differences into consideration. Cook also states that there was "an effort to coordinate all of the literacy activities throughout the country" (p. 118), an effort which she feels is required if the campaign against adult illiteracy is to succeed in the United States.

The Outlook for the 1980's

Senator Stafford (Reauthorization of the Adult Education Act, 1984) stated that in the 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk," some 23 million American adults, or one in every five, were reported to be functionally illiterate. He also stated that a 1982 evaluation of adult education programs made by the United States Department of Education identified only a little over two million functionally illiterate adults who had participated in the literacy programs offered.

Bailey and Fosheim (1983) feel that whatever the number of functionally illiterate adults cited, "it is inevitably large, and
most observers believe that as many as a third of our citizens do not meet present-day demands for literacy" (p. ix). According to Power (1983), these citizens do not necessarily fit into a stereotype. They can be from any economic level, speak any language, be in any age group, and be of any race. As for what is taking place in the eighties to help these people, Bailey and Fosheim (1983) report that projects seem to be underway to "make the teaching of literacy more effective and more available" (p. ix). Another approach is to "organize reading and writing to accommodate rather than to exclude persons whose literacy is below the level demanded by society" (p. ix) by adjusting readability and clarity and simplifying document formats.

Carsetti (1983) discusses the report, *Children out of School in America*, and states "an estimated two million children do not attend school each year" (p. 224). Most of these are children who are too poor to afford books, fees, and supplies and children with language barriers. She states, also, that there are at least one million school suspensions each year. These non-attending and suspended children and youths "fall farther and farther behind in their ability to function in a literate society" (p. 225). Carsetti also discusses a 1980-81 report from Project READ: "...In most large cities, at least half of the school age population does not attend school regularly."
In New York City, those estimates are as high as seventy-five percent. With more young people on the street, the numbers of youth entering into the juvenile justice system daily are growing more rapidly than ever. (p. 234)

Copperman (1978) states that studies show that "it takes approximately a seventh-grade reading level to hold a job as a cook, an eighth-grade level to hold a job as a mechanic, and a ninth-grade level...as a supply clerk" (p. 23). He believes that another study which indicated that "as many as 85 percent of the youngsters who appear in juvenile court are disabled readers" (p. 23) vindicates the often disputed correlation between criminal behavior and functional illiteracy.

Tyler (1983) emphasizes the changes in the unskilled labor force in the United States over the past 180 years. His figures (p. 197) are used in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population in Unskilled Employment</th>
<th>Percent of Unskilled Employment that is in Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tyler states further that nearly two-thirds of the employment opportunities in the eighties require at least a high-school
education. Kozol (1980) also believes that employment is contingent upon literacy and states that "although a literate man or woman is by no means certain of a...job...it is probably true that an illiterate man or woman has almost no chance at all" (p. 13).

Strassmann (1983) discusses employment in the eighties and makes this projection:

By 1990, only about fifty percent of the work force will be manufacturing objects and producing food. The rest will occupy most of the time just communicating. From an economic standpoint it is important to be concerned about the effectiveness with which all these people carry out their tasks. Literacy is therefore a special concern since it is one of the underlying capabilities that enable our economy to function effectively. (p. 116)

Strassman stresses that any use of the electronic medium for present or future communication "is not a rejection of essential oral, writing, and reading skills" (p. 121) and that literacy requirements in the future will evolve from and augment literacy as it is known today.

Existing Literacy Mandation

The military has its own system for educating the illiterate inductee; the literacy programs conducted within the armed forces
are either mandatory or closely resemble mandation. Berg (1966) states that "mandatory on-duty classes in reading and arithmetic are held for noncommissioned officers already in service who do not hold eighth-grade status" (p. 52).

In the seventies, the Army initiated a training program called Project FLIT (Functional Literacy) to be conducted over a six-week period (Sticht, et al, 1973). Set up in modules, the program tested and retested the students during their course of study in order to recycle them through any portions of the program in which they needed remediation. Upon completion of the program, exit scores appeared to be 2.6 grades higher than entry scores.

Copperman (1978) reports on a study of naval recruits. The study indicated that a third of the recruits read below a tenth-grade level. As many as 70 percent could not complete basic training because of their low reading levels. Copperman states that "the Chief of Naval Personnel has mandated a sixth-grade reading level as the minimum acceptable level for naval personnel" (p. 18) because of the high cost to the Navy in time and damage created by illiterate personnel.

According to Cook (1977), as many as 112 state prisons and 14 federal institutions during the fifties reported mandatory programs for their functionally illiterate inmates. Those prisoners with
achievement test results below grade five were compelled to attend classes until mastery of that level. Some prisons required eighth-grade achievement levels. The study also revealed that operating budgets, libraries, facilities, and equipment used in these prison literacy programs appeared to be even more inadequate than those in civilian programs. However, Cook gives no indication that this inadequacy had ever been responsible for achievement failure or that any had occurred.

According to Carsetti (1983), Project READ was designed in 1976 to teach literacy to institutionalized youths as well as to those in alternative schools and programs. This, in a sense, was a mandated program, but its success depended largely upon motivational techniques and materials. These youths were taught in a controlled environment, but Carsetti's findings were that "troubled youth, while clearly possessing the ability to read, will not read" (p. 223) unless they are also provided with "self-selected" material and given time in which to read it.

In Chicago during the sixties, the relief director for the city found that no less than 50 percent of the "able-bodied reliefers" were functionally illiterate. According to Thompson (1966), the director initiated a mandatory literacy program in which the local school board provided teachers and classrooms for night school. If those who qualified as functionally illiterate
did not attend the classes, they did not receive relief checks. Thompson says a large and constantly increasing attendance was significantly noted. Cook (1977), however, states that it was anticipated that 50 to 60 thousand people would enroll, but only seven thousand adults joined the program.

Television as a Voluntary Classroom

Fleming (1983) feels that the state and federal literacy programs, including those that subsidize employers who provide such programs in the workplace, are too costly. His alternative, therefore, is to reach the estimated 57 million adult illiterates through a telecommunications system. Fleming says that at least 90 percent of America's entire population could be reached through public television and thereby those who are functionally illiterate could receive training at lesser expense than in traditional classroom settings.

In 1957, a televised literacy program was initiated in Memphis, Tennessee and was aimed at 57 thousand adult illiterates in that area (Cook, 1977). The program continued for two years. An estimated two thousand of the adults attained functional literacy, representing only three percent of the potential 57 thousand. Cook says that one of the reasons for this low success rate could have been that some participants may have considered the pace of instruction too slow; others may have found it to be too fast.
The Philadelphia Public School Extension Division produced Operation Alphabet, a televised literacy program which consisted of 100 half-hour lessons presented over a period of twenty weeks (Cook, 1977). The goal was for the learner to attain a third-grade level of literacy, after which he or she would feel encouraged to enter an adult education class. Cook states that when the televised programs ended, the Philadelphia schools reported a 25 percent increase in the adult education classes. She also says that over 100 other communities were televising Operation Alphabet by 1966. Florida used Operation Alphabet in a study made in conjunction with its statewide campaign against illiteracy. Cook says that its results tell a different story.

...After eight months of instruction, an equivalent of forty-nine hours, 132 out of 243 subjects in the study were still at a first-grade level or lower. It had been anticipated the students would have progressed to grade level three. In partial explanation, the researcher noted that most of the adults stopped watching after the twentieth lesson, thus never completing the program. (p. 90)

According to Cook, this study also revealed that the participants who worked in groups had more success than those who tried to learn alone. Cook reports that Operation Alphabet was also used
in some penal institutions where it "met with very little success" (p. 91).

The Laubach series was a literacy program which was televised in Alabama. Cook (1977) says that "at the end of the program, adult students read less well than the second graders in the Alabama schools" (p. 91). The Lauback televised series was also studied in the states of Washington, Maryland, and Missouri. Cook reports:

The results of these studies seemed to indicate that, although lessons were presented in the privacy of a home, there was a problem in motivating the learner to take advantage of such an opportunity. The cause may have been disinterest, poor timing, or poor pacing of the program, but the conclusion seems to be that the mass approach is lacking in its ability to reach, hold, and teach the illiterate adult. (p. 91)

However, one condition which television offers the functionally illiterate adult is a haven in which to learn. It provides an illiterate person the opportunity to avoid the embarrassment of revealing his or her inability to read or write—an embarrassment which seems to keep many out of the classroom (Fleming, 1983).

Federal Funding

According to Kozol (1980), the first substantial approaches
to the adult illiteracy problem made by the federal government were the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Adult Education Act of 1966. However, Kozol says that "the current federal allocation amounts to only one dollar for each illiterate adult. The funds available reach only two to four percent of those in need" (p. 4). This appears to be reported from data collected during the very early 1980's.

Senator Bell, speaking as Secretary of the United States Department of Education, stated that authorized funding for adult education was $100 million (Reauthorization of the Adult Education Act, 1984). He pleaded at that Hearing before the Subcommittee on Education in 1984 that the authorized funding remain at $100 million for 1985, with an added plea for more as it would become necessary. At the time of the hearing, Senator Bell indicated that there were no proposed 1985 reductions in the funding. He stated that B. Dalton Booksellers and McGraw-Hill were establishing foundations to assist in the campaign against adult illiteracy. He also spoke of a proposed "awareness program" and a "media campaign" through which additional volunteer help might be promoted. However, throughout the hearing, he continued to remind the subcommittee that the $100 million was definitely needed because the situation could not be handled solely with volunteer help.
Senator Bell further wanted a portion of adult education funding set aside for research and development because he believes the last study which gave the present definition of adult literacy and gave the number of adult illiterates was out of date. He further asked that funding be directed toward serving adult illiterates in outlying areas. Another request was that some redtape be eliminated in order to fund programs that could include the elderly and adult immigrants.

Senator Bell told the subcommittee that a "surprising number" of college students were showing a willingness to provide tutorial services to functionally illiterate adults. A "work-study" program had been proposed for these college students, and he stated that 18 pilot educational institutions agreed to this program. He indicated that some of the tutorial services might be provided on a volunteer basis, but that if the work-study program were to succeed, an apparent additional $310 million would be necessary.

Senator Bell also told the Subcommittee that he was disappointed that the administration did not favor increased funding for adult education, since it had made such an effort to publicize that there were nearly 26 million illiterate adults in the country.

Some Conclusions

Robinson (1983) concludes that America "faces...problems--
especially in the face of growing public resistance to high expenditures for education" (p. 15). He seems to feel that decisions to provide literacy training for every illiterate adult, and whether every illiterate adult should receive training, will become difficult issues to deal with. Robinson is further concerned with whether blame for the current literacy problems ought to be aimed in any particular direction. He states:

The schools cannot be blamed exclusively...for the rate of functional illiteracy in the United States. The vastness of the estimated numbers--25 to 57 million--indicates the working of social and economic forces too powerful for their effects to be countered completely, even by good programs in excellent schools. Yet schools have been slow--some of them recalcitrant--in instituting programs of proven value, especially when such programs are aimed primarily at the poor and the ignorant, who constitute the main body of functional illiterates. (p. 15)

Kozol (1980) worries about whether the people in the United States recognize the magnitude of the functional illiteracy problem. He believes that national literacy is a "matter of international esteem" (p. 99) and states that
The United States cannot hope to offer other nations what we cannot yet provide for our own people. We will be able to share with others only a competence that we have first tested and found viable in our own nation...Until we demonstrate that we can come to terms with the catastrophe...there does not seem much reason to expect that other nations will, or ought to seek our advice. (p. 99)

Kozol further points out that there are four countries who have been reportedly able to show total, or at least measurable, success with eradication of illiteracy among their populations. These countries are China, Israel, Cuba, and Brazil, although Kozol says that Brazil may be having some problems today. Kozol personally visited Cuba to study its success and states that it was a case of the literate citizenry teaching the illiterate in an "all out" struggle against illiteracy. He called it a revolutionary campaign and says that, although the United States could not imitate Cuba's revolutionary theory because of our democratic system, the "all out" theory could be put into operation here. Kozol feels that only when functional illiteracy has been eradicated in this country can the United States gain the international esteem it both desires and needs.
Chapter III

A sampling was made of educators who teach in six different types of educational institutions in Northeast Florida and who by profession are concerned with promoting literacy. The numbers of teachers sampled in each school varied in order to obtain the most representative view for each school. Educators who teach either academic literacy courses or nonacademic literacy courses were included, because functional literacy is a requisite for both types of education. The educational establishments included a small town high school, an urban high school, a school for special education, a community college, a correctional institution, and a military facility. The educators in these types of establishments have one educational goal in common. They are already involved with functional literacy in some phase of the learning process, and are, therefore, aware that there exists an individual need for reading, writing, and mathematical abilities in order to function successfully within the American society.

Information regarding the reason for the request (see Appendix A) and a questionnaire (see Appendix B) were distributed among the educators during the Spring of 1986. The questionnaire was designed to determine and compare individual perceptions with regard to the use and appropriateness of mandatory adult literacy
programs as a means for eradicating functional illiteracy. The instrument was completed anonymously. However, the type of establishment in which the respondent is teaching was documented. The questionnaire contained eleven multiple-choice items pertinent to functional literacy, to functional illiteracy, and to the concept of mandated functional literacy for adults. An optional item twelve provided space for additional opinions of or comments by the respondents.

Responses to the questionnaire were used to compare the perceptions held by different groups of educators regarding mandatory functional literacy programs. The statistical data were recorded in percentages according to those teachers in each type of educational setting who favor mandated programs as compared to those who do not.

The rationale for examining the perceptions of educators working in different types of educational establishments was that educators who are involved with students who have not attained adulthood may perceive the problem of functional illiteracy from a different viewpoint than those educators who are involved with teaching literacy to adult students. Educators already teaching mandated adult literacy may view the concept differently than those who teach literacy programs for volunteer adult students. Teachers of special education may have an altogether different
perception of the functional illiteracy problems as they exist in this country. However, as stated previously, they all have in common a concern for literacy, whether or not they agree or disagree with regard to mandatory literacy programs.
Chapter IV

The questionnaire produced a sixty-six percent response rate among the total number of educators who were contacted in the six different types of educational institutions in Northeast Florida. The following data compare the responses to each of the items on the questionnaire according to opinions of the six individual groups of teachers. Unless otherwise stipulated within this chapter, the response choices are identified in the charts with SA for strongly agree, A for agree, D for disagree, and SD for strongly disagree.

In order to utilize the limited space within the charts, Sm-Twn H. S. denotes small town high school, Urb. H. S. denotes urban high school, Comm. Coll. denotes community college, Corr. Inst. denotes correctional institution, Mil. Fac. denotes military facility, and Spec. Ed. denotes special education.

Item 1: The number of functionally illiterate adults presently known to me are (a) none, (b) 1-5, (c) 5-10, (d) 10 or more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though they do not teach adult students, it is significant to note that the small town teachers and the urban high school teachers
know a number of functionally illiterate adults. Also, indications are that more teachers in community colleges, as well as correctional institutions, are directly involved with teaching the functionally illiterate adult than in other types of educational establishments. A community college attracts adults because the courses are basically designed for adult students, and it may be that the correctional institution simply classifies all of its inmates as adults. These data could also indicate that the military is not involved with functionally illiterate personnel at this time. It is possible that discretion is being used in recruitment, classifying the functionally illiterate as ineligible—the country not being at war and in no need of all available human resources.

**Item 2:** All functionally illiterate adults are handicapped in today's society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is notable that ninety-four percent of all the teachers who responded either agree or strongly agree, and that each group agrees one hundred percent, with the exception of ten percent of the community college teachers. Not all of the military instructors
responded to this statement. There might have been some problems with the interpretation of the word handicapped, since one respondent did pencil in a notation to that effect. Handicapped, as it relates to a person who is functionally illiterate, means that that person cannot function as well in today's society as the person who can read and write and perform fundamental arithmetic. This handicap often prevents the person from properly maintaining health, supplying physical comfort in the forms of food, clothing, housing, and security for self and family, as well as performing basic and important duties of a citizen without assistance from another source such as relative, friend, or government. One case in point is the functionally illiterate who endangers himself or herself with the inability to read content labels of poisons and other dangerous substances.

Item 3: The functionally illiterate adult poses a threat to today's society in terms of national security, cost to taxpayers, health problems, and individual responsibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-seven percent of the teachers in all six groups combined
agree and strongly agree. A small number of respondents from the community college make up the entire thirteen percent who disagree and strongly disagree that functional illiterates cause problems for other people as well as for themselves. Observation of these same respondents' questionnaires shows that they also disagree or strongly disagree that there is no correlation between illiteracy, unemployment and crime. All but one of them disagree that the United States should require all citizens to be literate. All of them know at least one to five functionally illiterate people, and one of them knows more than ten. It, therefore, might be possible that these particular educators are in contact with functionally illiterate students who are making special efforts to become literate and responsible citizens. This is not to discount the possibility that these educators are merely exhibiting their personal beliefs. However, this may also be reason to believe that some educators may not be aware of the cost in time and damages already incurred by functional illiterates in the military. Perhaps they also do not realize the price that other citizens, as well as the illiterates themselves, must pay because of crime, poverty, and health mismanagement brought on, directly or indirectly, by functional illiteracy.

**Item 4:** Adult literacy is (a) an individual right, (b) an individual obligation, (c) both an individual right and an individual
obligation, (d) neither an individual right nor an individual obligation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) -</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) 14%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20% 60%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) 86%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60% 40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy percent of all the teachers in the six different types of educational institutions believe that adult literacy is both an individual right and an individual obligation. It is interesting, however, that sixty percent of the teachers in the correctional institution believe that adult literacy is simply an individual obligation. They seem to believe more intensely than other teachers that responsibility for attaining literacy lies directly on the illiterate person.

**Item 5:** An illiterate adult who has attended school, as well as one who has never attended school, should be offered an opportunity to become functionally literate.
One hundred percent of all the teachers in all of the groups responding to the questionnaire either agree or strongly agree. These data are substantial indication that educators firmly support educating the nation's functionally illiterate population.

Item 6: High school drop-outs, regardless of age, should be eligible for adult literacy programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety-three percent of the total number of teachers in all six groups either agree or strongly agree. However, according to additional comments made by respondents, it appears to be the opinion of some high school teachers that public schools should be given the right, as well as the responsibility, to hold an illiterate student within the public school system until he or she becomes functionally literate. There also seems to be concern about mixing adolescents with older age groups in literacy programs.

Of the ten percent in the community college group who strongly disagree, some statements were provided which imply a reluctance on the part of these teachers to become involved with the high school drop-out age group because "they do not want to learn."
Item 7: The government of the United States should require every adult citizen to be at least functionally literate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty percent of all the educators in the six groups either agree or strongly agree that the government should make the requirement. However, there are several notable comparisons to be made between the teachers of these different types of educational establishments. It can be seen that the strongest support for mandatory literacy comes from teachers of the small town high school, with eighty-six percent who agree and strongly agree, and from teachers at the correctional institution, with eighty percent who agree and strongly agree. That sixty percent of the instructors who deal with prison inmates strongly agree, may again imply that there is a strong feeling among them regarding the possible correlation of illiteracy and crime. Instructors at the community college who responded are evenly divided in opinion.

Since sixty-seven percent of the military instructors disagree with the concept of mandatory literacy, it could imply that these educators are unaware of data regarding military problems created
by illiteracy during wartime draft. However, it could also imply that they feel it simply could not or should not be enforced under any circumstances.

Additional comments made by respondents regarding mandatory literacy range from the belief that "Functional literacy should not only be mandatory, it should be legislated, as the future of this nation and this planet are dependent upon citizens who can govern themselves intelligently" to "It would be impossible to enforce" or "I am absolutely appalled at the thought of compelling adults to do something like this" and "You cannot mandate this type of program without encroaching on people's basic rights."

**Item 8**: Literacy programs financed by federal, state, or local funds should require mandatory attendance by the functionally illiterate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total respondents from all educational locations, forty-three percent agree or strongly agree, while fifty-seven percent disagree or strongly disagree. In comparing the different groups, however, it is noted that eighty percent of the instructors
at the correctional institution either agree or strongly agree, again confirming their support for mandatory attendance of literacy programs.

**Item 9:** Literacy programs for the functionally illiterate (regardless how funded) should require only voluntary attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty percent of all teachers in all six types of educational institutions agree or strongly agree, the strongest support coming from teachers in the urban high school and the community college. Eighty percent of the teachers at the correctional institution disagree and strongly disagree, remaining consistent in their opinions. However, there is some irregularity in opinions between this item and item seven which deals with required attendance. Sixty-seven percent of the military instructors disagreed with both items. Small town high school teachers' opinions fluctuated twenty-nine percent in favor of voluntary attendance, and the opinions of the urban high school teachers fluctuated as much as forty percent in favor of voluntary attendance, as did twenty percent of the community college instructors.
These changes of opinions may be a result of the wording in item seven. Had the word mandate been used instead of require in item seven, that item might have generated responses consistent with responses to this item. As it is, there exists a degree of contradiction between the two. However, this may also reflect feelings of indecision or, perhaps, simply changes in convictions.

**Item 10:** The strongest drawback to voluntary enrollment and enrollment retention in literacy programs is probably (a) embarrassment of admitting one's illiteracy, (b) inconvenience (baby sitter, neglect of family duties, transportation, etc.), (c) availability of an adult literacy program, (d) lack of adult learning materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the teachers in all of the educational institutions see embarrassment as the strongest factor preventing attendance of literacy programs. Inconvenience is also considered a deterrent. It can be noted, however, that some of the teachers at the correctional institution feel that there is a lack of available programs. They may be implying that had there been an available literacy program, a number of their inmate students might have taken advantage of them.
They may also be implying that attendance of an available literacy program might have prevented some of their students from getting into trouble.

In some cases, the percentages in this chart do not tally one hundred percent. This is because some of the respondents chose to comment rather than circle a choice. Examples of their comments are "Apathy," "Laziness on the part of illiterates," "Assumption that someone will take care of it," "Attitude," and "Poor teaching." These comments came from teachers at the small town high school and instructors at the community college. These comments also extend the range of reasons believed to deter literacy program attendance.

**Item 11:** There is a correlation between functional illiteracy, unemployment, and crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety percent of the total number of respondents agree. It is further noted that the larger portion of them strongly agree. However, the comparisons according to the individual types of educational institutions are worth noting.

Although the majority of the respondents from the correctional
institutions agree and strongly agree, twenty percent of them do not feel that functional literacy correlates with unemployment and crime. Twenty percent of the community college respondents have the same belief. Since educators in both of these institutions have opportunities to teach functional illiterates, their responses may be a reflection of firsthand knowledge of individual students.

**Item 12:** Use the space below for additional comments or opinions. (optional)

The following are some of the more interesting comments made, which have not already been included within this chapter under a specific item. Due to their lengths, some of these comments are quoted in brief.

* From the community college instructors:
  - "Maybe 23 million is an exaggeration. I'd like to know how the number was determined...." (This party included name and address, and her questions will be answered.)
  - "Any of the above answers are speculative. The adult illiterates that I know simply don't care that they cannot read or compute. They are not interested in learning and probably will not care until they are 'out in the world.'"
  - "I do not believe that the government should say--someone has to be literate after age 16. Funds for literacy programs will help reduce crime and unemployment--but mandatory attendance in these literacy
programs is too much government control. Adults in America have to want to get educated--and that's up to the quality of the teacher whenever the person comes into the classroom."

- "I disliked the wording of question 11. While agreeing that there is definitely a correlation between functional illiteracy and unemployment, I have known many hard-working people who happened to be non-readers but would never be involved with crime. I feel very strongly and you cannot mandate this type of program without encroaching on people's basic rights."

* From the correctional institution instructors:

- "Many of our illiterate people are responsible adults...and many of the elderly people I know who came from foreign countries were responsible, taxpaying citizens. I think the work ethic has just as much correlation."

- "You said it all!"

* From the small town high school teachers:

- "Students in high school should be retained until they are functionally literate. If schools' responsibility is to provide society with responsible citizens, they should be given the right & the responsibility to hold them in the system until they can function."

- "Until we have a president and congress who mutually agree that human development is equally as important as arms to our country's
security, I foresee no accomplishments in educating our entire adult population who are presently illiterate. However, I feel it could and should be done for the benefit of the 'whole.'"

* From the military facility instructors:

- "It is impossible to make people learn anything. Creating a climate in which people are no longer ashamed to admit their illiteracy & advertising the programs available through TV & radio would do a better job in encouraging these 'students' to change their status than trying to legislate that someone learn to read 'or else' (or else what?)."

* From the urban high school teachers:

- "I am absolutely appalled at the thought of compelling adults to do something like this. It sounds Fascist...I also feel quite sure that educators who would consider this compulsion mess are educators who would treat the prospective learners with lack of respect and patronize them. It is no wonder there is lack of enrollment retention."

- "The percentage of high school dropouts who are in prison should be convincing evidence of a positive correlation between crime & illiteracy. Although programs to educate adults should be available, mandatory attendance is out of the question--America is free and its public should be given freedom of choice--even if their choice is wrong."

- "Functional literacy should not only be mandatory it should be legislated, as the future of this nation and this planet are dependent upon citizens who can govern themselves intelligently. People who are
illiterate should not receive welfare or any other type of public/federal assistance, nor should they be employed or granted a driver's license. It is understood that they probably do not vote."

These additional comments to the questionnaire more than imply some strong feelings and beliefs, both pro and con, regarding mandatory functional literacy. They definitely confirm that there is a distinct awareness among these educators that this country faces a serious illiteracy problem.
Chapter V

To summarize, there is an awareness among the educators surveyed that a problem involving functional illiteracy does exist in the United States today. However, there is also an indication that a number of these educators are not fully aware of all of the reasons why the current literacy programs are failing to eradicate functional illiteracy in this country. Existing among and within the different groups of educators are diverse opinions concerning resolutions to the problems and whether the problems can, in fact, be resolved. There is a surprisingly small margin of difference between the number of educators who are proponents of voluntary participation in literacy programs and those who support mandatory literacy. However, there are some who appear to favor mandatory literacy programs, yet tend to believe that attendance of these programs would be impossible to enforce. While a portion of the educators in each type of institution agrees that functional literacy should be mandatory, the strongest supporters of mandatory literacy are those who teach in the correctional institution.

It is suggested that further research might include a survey restricted to educators who have taught five or more years, since teaching experience may affect their opinions. Educators might also be surveyed by sex to determine whether there are any significant differences in male and female opinions. Teachers of a wider variety
of subjects might also be compared, since a degree of literacy is required for all subjects that are taught. A poll of owners, foremen, and superintendents of organizations such as construction companies, who tend to hire literately handicapped workers, may also be of major significance regarding mandatory literacy. The word handicapped in item two of the questionnaire should, perhaps, be defined to more accurately indicate the inability to read and write and, therefore, to function literately. The word require in item seven should probably be changed to mandate in order to maintain consistency in vocabulary and to better qualify the statement. It is also possible that the letter of introduction may have biased the opinions of some of the respondents, and that paragraph one should have been restated with less stress on the inabilities of the functionally illiterate person (although it appears to be the most appropriate method of defining functional illiteracy).

The title of this paper questions whether functional literacy should be mandated in the United States. There has been no intent to determine whether mandatory literacy could be mass enforced in this country, nor what methods of enforcement would fulfill that purpose. However, research has disclosed that attendance of adult literacy programs on a voluntary basis has not eradicated functional illiteracy from American society; on the other hand, forms of mandatory literacy programs in the Armed Forces, as well as in some of the country's
prisons, have attained a notable degree of success.

In addition to insufficient voluntary attendance of programs by functionally illiterate adults, it is found that problems exist with literacy programs themselves because of the lack of sufficient funding, appropriate learning materials, appropriate teaching methods, and availability of programs that would accommodate the nation's entire population of functionally illiterate people. Nonetheless, should all of the problems which involve funding, learning materials, teaching methods, and program availability suddenly be resolved, there remains the question of whether or not one hundred percent of the mentally capable but functionally illiterate population would volunteer to attend the literacy programs and, subsequently, become functionally literate. Lack of attendance, it therefore seems, is the biggest drawback to the success of literacy programs which solicit only voluntary participation.

This research and this survey confirm that the strongest factor believed to repress voluntary attendance is the embarrassment felt by the functionally illiterate adult. The person is simply too ashamed of his or her illiteracy to want to expose it in a classroom. Conversely, the strongest argument against mandatory attendance is that it encroaches upon the illiterate person's civil rights—that mandatory attendance would destroy his or her right of free will. However, embarrassment or encroachment notwithstanding, self-reliance
and, with it, self-esteem remains defeated--that is, the probable self-esteem that the person would experience by becoming literate.

Research reveals, and also as expressed, in essence, by some of the educators surveyed, that when an illiterate adult exercises free will in order to avoid the classroom, he or she not only turns down an opportunity to gain self-esteem through learning, the action often represents a display of apathy in regard to that individual's own illiteracy. Apathy and incompetency are two characteristics of the functionally illiterate adult which appear to pose a threat to national security--apathy, as one responding educator states, in "letting someone else take care of it" and, as found in the research, incompetency resulting in cost of damages and risk of lives.

There is also the consideration of the individual's personal maintenance and welfare. If, by being functionally illiterate, the person proves to be handicapped in caring for himself or herself adequately, then there arises a question of whether free will is as advantageous to an illiterate person as it is to one who can read and write and perform simple arithmetic. However, both the research and the survey reveal that many people believe that the functionally illiterate person should have the right to choose between becoming literate or remaining illiterate. Others, nevertheless, believe that mandatory literacy programs would resolve this nation's illiteracy problems. Yet, there are still others who believe that it would be
impossible to enforce such a mandation within the American democratic society.

Controversy is also present over whether any correlation exists between illiteracy, unemployment, and crime. It has been found, however, that although literacy does not guarantee employment, illiteracy, more often than not, does guarantee unemployment. As for crime, there are literates who are also convicted of crimes, and there are illiterates who never commit crimes. Still, research seems to imply that a large number of prison inmates may have been both functionally illiterate and unemployed at the time of their crimes. The majority of the respondents teaching at the correctional institution strongly agree that illiteracy, unemployment and crime do correlate. These same educators are also of the majority who most strongly believe in the success of mandatory literacy programs. It is noteworthy that their opinions spring from firsthand information and teaching experiences. These educators at the correctional institution may feel that unless literacy programs become mandatory, they will continue their firsthand experiences with functionally illiterate inmates.

The new technologies do not excuse the illiterate population from their need to acquire literacy; electronic technology, especially, simply increases the versatility of oral speech, written matter, and mental capabilities. The need to learn, understand, and rationally
use words and numbers in communication has not decreased but will continue to increase with technological advances. Literacy, in the first place, has made the development of technology possible. According to research, it has already been determined that occupations involving every phase of communication, and requiring literacy, will dominate the job markets of the future. This should constitute reason enough to mandate literacy programs in order to deter future increases in unemployment throughout the nation.

In spite of advanced technology and nuclear arms, it is said that the threat of another major conflict would inevitably initiate another military draft of men and women from many age groups. Because our nation is not presently investing heavily in the education of its citizens, functionally illiterate inductees would again prove hazardous to military equipment, to their fellow men and women, to the nation, and to themselves. Should a conflict threaten, there would be no time to teach these people to read and write as in the past because, due to the nature of the world's technologies, all human resources would more than likely have to be activated with extreme immediacy. This is not to mention civilian resources which are required during wartime. Since the functionally illiterate individual is inadequate in peacetime, then that same inadequacy would be even more acutely felt during a crisis.

The government has recently legislated mandatory use of seat
belts in privately driven automobiles. Since this legislation has made it mandatory that people protect themselves, then civil rights and free will should not be an issue in mandating that people educate themselves; literacy, after all, equally curtails human suffering. It is, therefore, recommended that not only the existence but the dangers of functional illiteracy be highly publicized throughout the entire United States and that intensive lobbying take place in both branches of state and federal legislature. Legislators should be apprised and left with no doubts that the nation must not only provide the means for attaining literacy but also demand that every mentally capable functionally illiterate citizen swallow his or her pride, or forgo free will as the case may be, and enter the classroom.

A nation is its people. If this nation is to merit the esteem reserved for a strong and reliable world leader, then it must demand a citizenry of functionally literate people. It must stop settling for less.
References


Bailey & R. M. Fosheim (Eds.), Literacy for life: The demand for reading and writing (pp. 3-18). New York: Modern Language Assoc. of America.


Dear Educator:

Available statistics indicate that an estimated 23 million adults in the United States have not mastered the basic skills of reading, writing, and simple arithmetic. They can neither read a street sign nor a commodity label; they can neither fill out an application for employment nor an application for welfare, nor can they check the computation of a bill they must pay. These people are functionally illiterate.

A survey is being conducted as part of a masters thesis titled "Functional Literacy: Should It be Mandatory?" The approach to this controversial topic is based on the question of whether all citizens should be compelled to become functionally literate. (How to initiate mandatory adult literacy is not being considered here, nor is the question of how to prevent future illiteracy among our citizenry.)

Please respond to this situation by circling the letters to the answers of your choice on the enclosed questionnaire and returning it in the envelope provided. You may rest assured that neither your name nor the name of your institution will be reflected whatsoever in the compilation of the data.

Your cooperation will be deeply appreciated.
Sincerely,
Dr. Roy Singleton, Jr.
Advisor
/js
Appendix B

Questionnaire

1. The number of functionally illiterate adults presently known to me:
   a. none
   b. 1 - 5
   c. 5 - 10
   d. more than 10

2. All functionally illiterate adults are handicapped in today's society.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

3. The functionally illiterate adult poses a threat to today's society in terms of national security, cost to taxpayers, health problems, and individual responsibility.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

4. Adult literacy is
   a. an individual right.
   b. an individual obligation.
   c. both an individual right and an individual obligation.
d. neither an individual right nor an individual obligation.

5. An illiterate adult who has attended school, as well as one who has never attended school, should be offered an opportunity to become functionally literate.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

6. High school drop-outs, regardless of age, should be eligible for adult literacy programs.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

7. The government of the United States should require every adult citizen to be at least functionally literate.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

8. Literacy programs financed by federal, state, or local funds should require mandatory attendance by the functionally illiterate.
   a. strongly agree
b. agree

c. disagree

d. strongly disagree

9. Literacy programs for the functionally illiterate (regardless how funded) should require only voluntary attendance.
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree
   c. disagree
   d. strongly disagree

10. The strongest drawback to voluntary enrollment and enrollment retention in literacy programs is probably
    a. embarrassment of admitting one's illiteracy.
    b. inconvenience (baby sitter, neglect of family duties, transportation, etc.).
    c. availability of an adult literacy program.
    d. lack of adult learning materials.

11. There is a correlation between functional illiteracy, unemployment, and crime.
    a. strongly agree
    b. agree
    c. disagree
    d. strongly disagree

12. Use the space below for additional comments or opinions. (optional)