**The Intsomi Ambassadors: Using communicative ecologies to enhance home literacy practices amongst working class parents in Grahamstown.**

**Mini-thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree requirements for a Masters degree in Journalism and Media Studies**

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# ABSTRACT

Utilising theories of Communication for Development, the research explores how literacy practices in the homes of a group of working class, English second language parents in Grahamstown are affected by the introduction of new literacy material and insights Furthermore, it discusses how, and through which forms of media, these observed dynamics and changes in practice are best communicated to similar households.

The issue of children's literacy development in South Africa is of serious concern, in particular the role that parents play and the level of support they give through home literacy practices. The context is one in which South African children have performed very poorly with regard to literacy levels in international benchmark testing as well as in national assessments. The summary report on the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found that some of the factors contributing to these poor results were the lack of reading resources in homes, as well as the lack of strong home-school partnerships in which parents took up the role of co-educators, or even of primary educators at the preschool stage.

A group of parents employed by Rhodes University at the Grade 1 - 5 levels signed up to be the recipients of a programme supporting the literacy development of their primary and pre-primary school children. The Intsomi Project is run by the Rhodes Community Engagement Office as part of the Vice-Chancellor's Education Initiative and provides close to 100 families with weekly reading material and educational games for their children, as well as workshops on the use of these materials and how they might benefit the children.

Following a Participatory Action Research approach, a "vanguard" group of parent participants, known as the Intsomi Ambassadors, developed their role as literacy activists, becoming co-creators of media messages that utilised and built on the first stage of their communication within the group. The research explored how the principles and techniques of development support communication, and those of communicative ecologies, could be applied to explore, enhance and disseminate those qualitative changes in behaviour within households that positively affect children's literacy development. In the process, it aimed to explore whether media representations that reflect the stories of parents trying out new literacy practices can create authentic, endogenous messages that resonate with people in similar circumstances, and can stimulate debate around the issue.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

**Research Question**

The research question for this thesis was the following: How does the introduction of literacy material and new insights affect the attitudes and practices of a group of parents in working class homes with regard to the development of their children's literacy, and how, and through which forms of media, can these dynamics and changes best be communicated to similar households and for wider use?

This research question stemmed from the need to create a bridge between my NGO-based literacy development work and my work in journalism. My role as the researcher stems from a deep interest and involvement in South African children's education, especially those in more marginalized communities, through work done over 30 years in non-government organisations, as well as my role as a freelance journalist and my interest in the area of journalism, democracy and development.

A relationship between myself and the Community Engagement Office at Rhodes University led to the opportunity to engage with the Rhodes worker 'community'. Essentially, I would explore, through participatory action research, how modes and patterns of communication within particular communities can be understood, supported and created in order to facilitate the development of children's literacy.

Embarking on a practice-led Masters meant that the research would seek to locate itself as praxis, where the concept of praxis may be described as "a conception of practice that sees intellectual work as a form of social intervention" (Mosco, in Wasserman, 2005: 165), and subscribed to the view that knowledge "requires more than a process of honing and purifying conceptual thought, but grows out of the mutual constitution of conception and execution" (2005: 165).

**Background**

South African children have been internationally benchmarked as some of the lowest performing learners with regard to literacy development and achievement, according to the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Howie *et al*, 2017). This study is conducted at Grade 4 and Grade 6 level, and, in particular, South African children scored very poorly on reading for comprehension. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including the lack of appropriately qualified teachers, outdated teaching methods,

overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, a lack of resources, teacher absenteeism, deficient early childhood development efforts and more – what Graeme Bloch terms the 'toxic mix' of South African education (Bloch, 2009). An additional factor that stood out as playing a role in children's literacy achievement is that of parental involvement, coupled with reading resources in the home.

**Locating the research**

The setting for the research was Grahamstown, a small university town in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, and the group of parents were representative of black working class families living in township areas, with children that attend largely township-based and non-fee paying schools.

The mandate for community engagement (encompassing volunteerism, engaged learning, service-learning and engaged research) in South Africa has been to transform the higher education sector by breaking down the division between 'town and gown', and to make universities more socially responsive and accessible, with the ultimate aim of democratizing the knowledge economy – which is still largely divided along socio-economic and racial lines owing to the legacy of apartheid. Community engagement allows for the co-creation of knowledge between the academy and broader society in mutually beneficial partnerships (Paphitis, 2017).

In an effort to address not only the problem of children's poor literacy development per se, but also to support a 'pipeline' that could feed young people through the school system and effectively into the tertiary sector, the Vice-Chancellor's Education Initiative was established at Rhodes University in Grahamstown in 2015. This was to be a multi-faceted approach that would engage at different levels of the education system and with different stakeholders. One such stakeholder group were staff members of the University who were classified as Grade 1 – 5 workers (essentially those doing duty in areas such as gardening, cleaning and catering services), who at the same time were parents of pre-school or school-going children.

The participatory action research that informed this study is located within this framework of community engagement and making universities more socially responsive.

Literacy practices are located within wider developmental frameworks or paradigms, and the research has tried to take cognisance of what the inter-relationship might be between

particular development paradigms, the literacy practices in these working class homes, and the communicative practices used to 'talk' about them (the discursive processes).

For this reason, the theoretical framework of choice has been that of development support communication, mainly drawing on the writing of Melkote and Steeves in their publication entitled *Communication for Development in the Third World* (2003), complemented by the concept of communicative ecologies. The term 'communicative ecology' (Foth & Hearn, 2007; Hearn & Foch, 2007; Tacchi & Kiran, 2008; Tacchi, Slater & Hearn, 2003) is used to describe the interconnected system of media usage and information flows in a particular community.

The nature of this research also necessitated drawing on the work of theorists in the fields of early literacy development, critical literacy studies and development practice.

**The Intsomi Project**

Rhodes University's Community Engagement Office (RUCE) enlisted the aid of the dominant workers' union on campus (the National Health and Allied Workers Union, NEHAWU) to establish a project that aimed to empower and equip parents to support their children's education at home. This project was established with a pilot group of 26 parents who signed up voluntarily during the course of 2015 to be part of the initiative.

When the parent group was first brought together, they were asked by staff from the RUCE Office to reflect on their own literacy development and attitudes towards it. They were almost unanimous in their emphasis on the role that storytelling in the family environment – usually traditional stories told by grandparents – had played in their development. They also agreed that with the advent of television and other concomitant urbanisation factors, this tradition had largely fallen away and had not been replaced by anything approximating the same kind of language interaction between adults and children. The group members then elected to give the name Intsomi to the project – Intsomi being the isiXhosa (local language) term for 'traditional story'. They felt they wanted to revive in their homes something of this traditional storytelling practice, which they had been exposed to growing up but which had now become a diminished activity in modern urbanized households where technologies such as television and cell phones were beginning to dominate communication activities.

The aim of the Intsomi Project was to support parents in (re-)creating a whole language experience for their children that would engage them in strong, imaginative and meaningful stories that required attentive listening and investment on the part of the children. Story reading activities at home are an important part of children's literacy development, especially to complement the emphasis on phonemic awareness and decoding practices that prevails in many South African classrooms. As far back as 2004, the South African National Department of Education's *National Strategy for Reading in the Foundation Phase* summed it up as follows:

> There are various reasons for South Africa's loss of reading. Traditional societies and orders of authority have been undermined by relentless "progress". Most children grow up without the intimate interaction of storytelling because of a breakdown of family and communal structures and the hegemony of radio and television. Apartheid education reduced the fullness of learning drastically, with its emphasis on a thin gruel of basic skills.

RUCE provided reading resources that could be borrowed from their offices and taken home by the parents on a regular basis for reading with their children, as well as a series of quarterly workshops that would provide further information and support on the issue of children's literacy development. This essentially involved the participants being given a colourful *shweshwe* bag filled with children's reading books to take home and read with their children, which they could then exchange every fortnight for a new one. The books were sourced from Biblionef, a reputable non-government organisation that specialises in the provision of indigenous and relevant children's books in all African languages, and were especially selected according to the age, ability and interests of the children. In the belief that children connect best to stories in their mother-tongue at an early age, each bag contained a mix of books in isiXhosa and English, allowing for a stronger emphasis on isiXhosa for the preschool children and gradually including more English books as the children progress to the Intermediate Phase.

Along with the books, the parents also participated in interactive workshops, and were issued with word games to take home as additional resources for literacy development.

This approach was taken in the belief that phonics programs (such as those mostly provided at schools) work best when embedded in a rich literacy programme that provides ample time for practice and plenty of exposure to real books to develop vocabulary and comprehension, as well as reading for pleasure (Crawford and Zygouris-Coe, 2006).

**Fostering agency**

Layered on top of the literacy intervention was the intention to explore how this work with parents could be further supported in order to develop their agency and their potential as literacy activists – in essence making the targets of change the agents of change.

The aim of locating the study within the sub-field of communication for development and social change was to research how identified forms of media and communication would most effectively support and extend these parents to play the role of literacy activists in their communities.

This particular approach was based on the notion that parents are both stakeholders and important role players in their children's education, and that they need to be empowered to play that role, or to reclaim it in instances where it may have been eroded or diminished through South Africa's apartheid education history, urbanisation, modernisation and the current political dispensation. According to Westaway, in his writing about 'the functionality of dysfunctional schools', parents have become accustomed to being grateful for the role schools play as safe holding facilities and sources of feeding for their children (a deliberate system of State patronage), and have accordingly waived the right of demurring on any aspects of quality education that might be missing (Westaway, 2015).  This is not to say that the situation is unique to South Africa. Putnam, in his seminal paper on social capital, opined that, "Especially with regard to the post-communist countries, scholars and democratic activists alike have lamented the absence or obliteration of traditions of independent civic engagement and a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state" (1995: 65).

The aim of the Intsomi Project was to facilitate a behavioural change in home literacy practices through the provision of, and easy access to, pre-selected, graded and appropriate reading material. It would serve as a way of resuscitating and expanding on the traditional platforms that families utilised to interact around stories. The books would form the focal point for communication around stories and language; a point of connection, interaction and engagement that would foster relationships and make emotional connections with the process of literacy development. This is valuable both for its own sake but also as a counter for other, less interactive practices, such as watching television and playing games on cell phones. Reading together would denote a valuing of literacy practices on the part of the parents and – on the part of the children – an enjoyment of reading because of the emotional connection that they would be making through the shared activity with their parents and their connection

with the narrative structure. Spedding *et al.* (2007) refer to this collaborative nature of learning – a kind of 'community of learners' – which involves the expert (in this case the parent) and the novice (the child) making meaning together to create the learning experience.

In turn, as these behaviours changed and manifested themselves in improvements in the children's reading prowess, the researcher's aim was to support the participants in communicating these experiences to others in their community in order to influence attitudes and bring about behavioural change in other homes. This would take the form of a participatory action research process that focused on utilising knowledge of the participants' preferred methods of communication in their communities.

For Melkote and Steeves – proponents of development support communication who believe that this form of communication can play a role in directing social change (2003: 348,349) – the focal point is the concept of empowerment. They enlist definitions of empowerment that include the following: "Empowerment is the mechanism by which individuals, organisations, and communities gain control and mastery over social and economic conditions (Rappaport, 1981; Rappaport *et al.,* 1984); over democratic participation in their community (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988); and over their stories" (2003: 355). If the aim of the process was to empower the parent participants to take charge of, or contribute in greater measure to, their children's education, and to become active in supporting others in their community to do the same, it made sense for development support communication to be the framework of choice. Coupled with the concept of communicative ecologies, this would place the research squarely in the realm of a grassroots, bottom-up, Freirean approach (illustrated in more depth in the chapter on Theoretical Framework).

There are, of course, different ways in which to go about engaging with parents and community members around the role that they play in supporting and developing their children's literacy. The main point of this particular exercise and participatory action research was to investigate what forms of communication and networking (given the communicative ecologies of the Intsomi participants and their communities) most effectively enabled these parent participants to talk about their home literacy practices and to disseminate certain messages that would influence attitudes and behaviours. A desired spin-off would be a more participatory and interactive public discourse around these issues, but this would not fall within the ambit of this research. The researcher worked from the premise that the most effective communication takes place through relationship; that stories told by ordinary

parents, who find themselves in the same circumstances as their fellow community members, would be the most authentic and be most likely to strike a chord. As Melkote and Steeves explain, "People's right to communicate their stories should be at the heart of the participatory strategies leading to empowerment" (2003: 355).

The Intsomi Project started out as an engagement between the Rhodes University Community Engagement Office and a group of workers at the University who wanted to support their children's education.

Helping the Intsomi parents to (re-)discover their role in their children's education, find their voices and find ways to tell their stories effectively, lay at the heart of the project. Ultimately, if the parents were empowered in this way to communicate with other parents around the value of reading and telling stories to their children at home from a young age, it might lead them into a more active citizenship role where they would be willing to partner with, and pressurise if necessary, state institutions such as schools and libraries to provide greater access to reading resources.

Instead of therefore seeing the parents merely as beneficiaries of a literacy support intervention aimed at their children, they are viewed also as potential agents of change and people who can generate communication around the issue of children's literacy development in their communities.

It is worth noting that although the reference throughout is to parents, this is meant to signify any significant caregiver adult in a child's life, so that it could also mean a grandparent, a foster parent, or so on.

# CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

**Educational context**

The educational context in which this research is located is a complex one. The multiplicity of factors affecting children's education in South Africa is referred to in Bloch's work (2009) and further includes issues such as:

- a non-progressive education system – one that includes rote learning and a preoccupation on the part of government education authorities (and, by implication, teachers) with meeting curriculum and assessment requirements, and where corporal punishment is still present;
- the predominance of an oral rather than a reading culture – many homes do not have the disposable income to spend on books, or don't see the need to have reading material in the home other than the Bible and occasional newspapers or magazines;
- a dearth of reading resources or limited access to books (even where there are books available in classrooms, most teachers don't trust the children to take them home and bring them back unscathed);
- conflicting language policies that pay lip service to mother tongue education but do little to dissipate the hegemony of English, resulting in parents thinking that their children must school in the medium of English from a young age.

Cognitive neuroscientist Maryann Wolf, in her seminal work on how children's brains become wired for literacy development, explains the importance of both telling stories and reading to young children. "The more children are spoken to, the more they will understand oral language. The more children are read to, the more they understand all the language around them, and the more developed their vocabulary becomes" (2007: 84). She goes on to describe how books develop vocabulary – "the special vocabulary in books doesn't appear in spoken language" (2007: 87) – as well as how they develop empathy and an understanding of the "other"; imagination and the ability to predict outcomes; an understanding of grammatical structure and literacy devices, and higher-level understanding. She concludes by saying that, "The sheer unavailability of books will have a crushing effect on the word knowledge and world knowledge that should be learned in these early years" (2007: 103).

These issues are reflected in the very poor performance by South African children in international literacy benchmark tests as well as in national assessments. The summary report

on the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results from 2016 shows South Africa in the bottom position internationally, with 78% of Grade 4 children unable to read for meaning (Howie *et al*, 2017). In accordance with Wolf's research, the report found that some of the factors contributing to these poor results were the lack of reading resources in homes as well as the lack of strong home-school partnerships in which parents took up the role of co-educators, or even as primary educators at the preschool stage.

In 2006, a high frequency of home literacy activities (facilitated by parents) was related to a higher mean overall performance in the PIRLS assessments. In the case of South Africa, fewer than 50% of South African learners in PIRLS 2006 had access to more than 10 books at home, compared to approximately 78% of learners internationally (Howie *et al*, 2008: 31). A further indication that support for literacy at home can play a role in learner achievement is reflected in the statistic that 35% of Grade 4 and 36% of Grade 5 learners, whose parents had a high regard for reading, achieved mean performances 73 points higher at Grade 4 level and 82 points higher at Grade 5 level in the 2006 PIRLS tests than their peers whose parents' attitudes towards reading were recorded as being less positive (2008: 31-32).

These results were echoed in the PIRLS 2016 report. When parents often read stories, sang songs, played with their child and talked to them before the child started school, learners achieved higher mean scores. Learners who had parents who never, or almost never, did any early literacy activities had the lowest mean score (269 points). The quarter of learners who had parents that really enjoy reading achieved the highest mean score at 359 points, in contrast to those whose parents do not like reading, who achieved the lowest score (307). The 1% of learners who came from homes with many resources achieved scores at the international centre point (500 points) (2017: 10).

**Project rationale**

The PIRLS assessments test comprehension as a central feature, which means children have to be able to read a text and understand it to the point where they are able to answer questions about it; in other words they have to be able to read for meaning. We can therefore assume that the poor scores achieved by South African children in these assessments are an indication of them being unable to read for meaning. Van der Berg *et al*, in identifying the binding constraints in South African education, argue that learning to read for meaning and pleasure is the single most important goal for primary schooling (2016: 10).

The proven deficit that the majority of South African children have in being able to read for meaning could have a number of explanatory factors, one of which is the lack of exposure to books, stories and reading activities. Where literacy activities, such as the reading and telling of stories, discussion of newspaper and magazine articles, and visits to the library to loan books for leisure reading, are regularly taking place as part of home literacy practices, it promotes an understanding of how language works and how meaning is constructed. This whole language exposure is important, because learners in South African classrooms are mostly exposed to learning letters and sounds and to the decoding process, which does not necessarily lead to reading for meaning. According to Wolf, "To acquire this unnatural process, children need instructional environments that support all the circuit parts that need bolting for the brain to read. Such a perspective departs from current teaching methods that focus largely on only one or two major components of reading" (2007:19).

Machet and Pretorius would concur: "Decoding is often mistaken for reading. However, reading also involves making meaning from text. In other words it is not sufficient to be able to recognise letters and make out the words in order to read. Reading also entails understanding the meaning or message conveyed in the text. It is mainly the comprehension aspects of reading that you will help to develop when you read storybooks to your child" (2003: 10).

The Intsomi Project is premised on the assumption that the lack of a reading culture and/or deficient provision of reading resources in homes are, in fact, contributory factors to poor literacy development, and therefore a problem worth addressing. While both schools and homes in working class communities are lacking in the provision of reading resources, the Project takes as its point of departure that providing books for children in their homes is an easier starting point than trying to directly intervene into classrooms and school practices.  It is also premised on the belief that it is a justifiable social intervention because the enabling and influencing of parents is ultimately for the benefit of the children; a theme which will recur in the reasons cited by those Intsomi parents who formed part of the action research group.

**Home literacy practices**

In a chapter of the publication *South Africa's Education Crisis: Views from the Eastern Cape* (Wright (ed.), 2012), Hendricks emphasises the importance of providing adequate textbooks for children's literacy and broader cognitive development, as well as the need for learners to

have interesting, current, accessible books to read for pleasure so that they can develop age-appropriate literacy in their home language and in English, the main language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 (2012: 30). This, however, is very often not the case. She describes the situation regarding the need for more widespread access to books and reading practices as follows:

> Several South African researchers (e.g. Taylor *et al.,* 2003) regard the ready availability of reading materials as particularly significant for children's literacy and writing development. Most poor Eastern Cape homes have little for children to read beyond a Bible, and community libraries are rare in rural areas. This means that in order to develop grade-appropriate literacy, learners are almost completely dependent on their schools to provide them with books, and on teachers to show them how to use these books effectively. Yet, unfortunately, 92.77% of state schools nationally have no library materials or librarians (Equal Education 2010) (2012: 26).

Banda, in his article entitled *A Survey of Literacy Practices in Black and Coloured Communities in South Africa: Towards a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,* describes how the apartheid legacy mitigated against a culture of reading and writing in black communities:

> Even taking into consideration the argument that most of Africa did not have a reading and writing culture, the problem in South Africa became even more poignant as government legislation made it difficult if not impossible for the majority of blacks to interact with written text, let alone develop a reading and writing culture. Everyday literacy events such as reading newspapers, books and watching television, as well as easy access to community and school libraries, were seen as part of white culture. Black cultures were expected to have very little to do, if any at all, with such literacy events. The policy of separate development in which blacks were expected to stay in their poverty stricken rural 'homelands', or in restricted crime-ridden high-density townships in urban areas, merely served to underscore the fact that such literacy practices as reading papers or books were seen as part of a white culture. In any case, the nature of apartheid was such that these literacy practices were a luxury blacks could not afford. The poor infrastructure, lack of libraries, lack of teaching resources, untrained and poorly trained teachers, and the poor quality of education in black schools generally under the Bantu education system, only served to impoverish the literacy culture (2003:108-109).

The complex factors affecting South African education and children's literacy development create a challenging environment for initiatives such as the Intsomi Project. In addition, many parents believe that the task of learning to read and write starts when the child goes to school and that the teachers are the purveyors of this ability in children. They are not conscious of the 'pre-wiring' that needs to take place in a child's brain through the exposure to language, stories and books, and the ongoing support or scaffolding that this provides to a child's learning process. Evidence of this lack of understanding has emerged from discussions with

parents in workshops around Grahamstown and also from the focus group discussions held with Intsomi parents at the outset of the Project.

**The role of parents**

Leaving the literacy development of children to teachers alone in the current South African education system is not advisable. In his exposition of the crisis in education, Wright opines,

> The education our children are receiving is the haphazard legacy of what teachers have made of their own initial 'teacher-training', whenever it occurred, and of the educational thinking and practice to which they have been exposed throughout their lives, including remnants of Christian National Education and 'Bantu Education', plus sporadic exposure to in-service workshops on Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), memories of their own time in school and some distillation of their own unique experience in the world. The amalgam is misty and diluted, not clear and assured. This just isn't a sufficiently sound and uniform knowledge-base from which to educate our children (2012:3).

Under these circumstances, the support for literacy development through home literacy practices becomes ever more important.

Research into the influence of socio-economic status on reading ability has shown that the value they placed on literacy or educational activity in the home was more important than parents' income or level of education. It showed also that parents did not even have to be directly involved, for example through helping with homework or direct supervision of literacy activities, but that the important factor was the support and encouragement that they gave to these activities (Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). This, the researcher believes, is a critical part of supporting children's literacy development: placing a *value* on reading activities. This includes assisting children to join libraries and encouraging and enabling them to visit the libraries regularly; asking for story books to be brought home from school; not considering reading to be selfish or antisocial behaviour; not labelling reading as a luxury, or a waste of time, or getting in the way of children doing household chores.

Dr David Harrison, CEO of a leading South African research and funding organisation in the Early Childhood Development field, points out that reading is instrumental in developing three essential factors in young people; what he terms "the three musketeers" of a thriving society: empathy; imagination; and critical thinking. In his opinion, literature and stories fundamentally build up the social fabric of society, because they feed into those three factors (2016).

Facilitating, instituting and maintaining literacy practices in the home can create agency for children as well as parents. This is an agency that seemed to exist before, as shown by the tradition of storytelling (Intsomi) in the home, and which therefore has the potential to be reclaimed, albeit in a different form and with different technologies. Haneda (2000) argues that it becomes particularly significant in communities and homes where multiple languages are used, and where children are by and large subjected to restrictive classroom environments focused on teaching decoding and encoding skills and surface-level comprehension of written texts. She points out that home literacy practices can cross boundaries and can work for children in ways that don't happen in classrooms. It creates opportunities to engage in multiple literacy practices, free from the confines that the classroom environment dictates, which strengthens children's literacy development. "The availability of a support network (of older siblings and extended families) and of opportunities to engage in a variety of literacy practices (e.g. on- and offline, in different languages, for personal use) with others seem critically important in enabling young second-language learners to become literate" (Haneda, 2000:339).

The Intsomi Project as an intervention essentially falls into the framework of what has been called "family literacy", a term that can be used to refer to literacy practices within families as well as to describe an intergenerational educational programme with a focus on literacy (Desmond and Elfert (eds.), 2008). According to Desmond, "There are different ways in which family literacy is being implemented in South Africa, all driven by concerns that young children need more support at home to develop the skills that make literacy a pleasure and not a difficulty." She goes on to aver that, "The family literacy approach in South Africa also stresses the importance of respecting parents and acknowledges that they are the first and most important educators of children" (2008: 39). This statement becomes important in the light of research done by Dixon and Lewis at two schools in Gauteng that focussed on the perceptions of teachers and parents about the roles they should play in developing children's early literacy. The authors' conclusion was that, "It has shown that although the role of parents has been highlighted in national and international research as important in developing early literacy, the opposite seems true in current education practices. Although strong home-school relations are an indicator of school success, these relations are not being fostered" (Desmond and Elfert (eds.), 2008: 49). This is in spite of the South African National Curriculum acknowledging the importance of home literacy practices and advising that classrooms should celebrate and build on this knowledge (DoE 2002).

While the post-1994 government has endeavoured to create universal access to schooling for all children in South Africa, the concomitant resourcing of classrooms has not taken place. This is especially true with regard to providing books in the classroom that allow for extended reading, or reading for pleasure – an essential element in the whole language experience that enables children to read for meaning. The Department of Basic Education (DBE)'s policy requires schools to use their Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) allocation to purchase supplementary LTSM (2014) and this may include books for extended reading, but with some many other demands on the budget, this is seldom adhered to and does not appear to be enforced by the Department.

At the same time, numerous changes in curriculum approaches have left teachers feeling overwhelmed and burdened by the requirements of an onerous amount of assessment, while not being any closer to having the tools to implement an approach that balances phonological awareness with the whole language experience. It appears as if the DBE has confused compliance for quality; that ticking countless boxes and completing numerous assessments passes for a modern education system that will somehow produce the desired effects.

Only a small percentage of schools have libraries, and even fewer have dedicated school librarians. A classroom library project in Grahamstown has found a handful of reading-for-pleasure books present in the nearly 30 classrooms where it has worked, with teachers reluctant to send books home for extended reading because they fear the books will be lost or damaged. By contrast, a Grade 1 teacher from an ex-Model C school in the town sends home two reading books every day – one a practise reader and one a story book; this results in her pupils having been exposed to about 300 - 400 different books over the course of their first year at school.

**Building a culture of reading**

Further seminal research that was done by Sandra Land from the University of KwaZulu-Natal provides a very clear exposition of the differences in home literacy practices between different communities:

> Overall, it appears that the kind of practices observed among mothers without highly developed literacy skills relate to their association of literacy with formal education, and to the strong desire of those women for their children to do well at school, which they associate with gaining access to a good standard of living…It is especially ironic that many of these committed parents, who spend time on helping their children with school work, see reading for fun as wasting time and

lazy. One of my 2007 B.Ed. Hons students, a teacher, said that she didn't have time to read to her children because after school they had to wash their socks. I suggested that if she bought two pairs of socks for each child, they could wash socks on alternate days. It was obvious, however, that she could not countenance such frivolousness as reading for fun when there was serious work to be done. It is clear that her efforts are unlikely to be nearly as effective as those of parents with a more playful attitude (2008: 61).

Land also goes on to point out that reading is even sometimes seen in certain communities as antisocial behaviour: "However, more telling for the purposes of this chapter is that the research revealed a perception amongst some participants that reading is antisocial, and that participants are unwilling to believe in a link between reading story books and achieving well at school" (2008: 62).

Machet and Pretorius, in their publication *Helping your child become a reader*, argue that "the single most important thing parents can do to ensure that their children do as well as possible at school is to read stories to them on a daily basis" (2003: 8). In their exposition of what reading is, they point out that there are two main components: decoding and comprehension. For decoding to happen ('translating' symbols on the page into language), children need knowledge about letter-sound relationships, word recognition skills and knowledge about word meanings and grammar. Comprehension refers to the understanding process where meaning is gained from the whole piece of writing (2003: 8). This requires children to have the ability to link information in a text, to 'read between the lines', to use their background knowledge about the world and people in order to understand what the text is about, to see the main ideas or events in a text, to get involved and make predictions, to see how the author has organised the text and draw conclusions about the author's point of view – all skills that are developed through regularly listening to or reading storybooks (2003: 9-10).

Critical literacy theorists also argue that learners need to be able to do more than just decode words. Australians Freebody and Luke (1990) developed what is known as the four resources model of literacy, i.e. that learners need to act as code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts and critics, and Haneda points out the implication that engagement with these four literacy practices is essential for all learners from the early stages of literacy development onwards (2006: 341).

If one puts together the research on the lack of a reading culture in certain homes on the one hand, with the opinion of literacy development experts on what is needed on the other, it would appear that the literacy context for this research is one that speaks of elements that might be missing, or that are not happening, or factors that need ameliorating and changing, in order for children to gain full literacy development and to learn to read for meaning. In addition, teacher-centred rather than child-centred approaches have tended to be the norm in classrooms, with children seen as empty vessels into which information must be poured. In communities where teaching, or being a teacher, was seen as a source of power and status, it also meant that teachers sometimes acted in authoritarian ways and deliberately placed distance between themselves and parents, as opposed to embracing a stakeholder approach that recognises that there are multiple role players in a child's educational development, including the child itself.

**Socio-economic context**

In South Africa, it is also a context of battling the political, social and economic legacies of the apartheid system, where education for the majority and the disenfranchised was not intended to be meaningful, but useful only for certain purposes. Although all children have suffered to some extent, some have done so more than others. As Wright puts it, "Widespread erosion of quality throughout the state education system, including those white state schools where Christian National Education held sway, created a burden that fell heaviest on the African population, the section of South Africa's population least able to bear it" (2012: 2).

The socio-economic context is a complex one: South Africa as a mix of First and Third World developmentally and economically; a relatively young democracy with a generation still feeling the effects of discrimination and disenfranchisement; the move from largely small-scale rural societies to much larger-scale urban populations; people in a state of flux between the contemporary and the traditional.

Black working class communities, such as the ones where the Intsomi participants reside in Grahamstown, are largely housed in residential 'township' areas that are segregated from the main part of town and characterized by poor housing, few community facilities, a lack of service delivery and inadequately resourced schools. For aspirational parents, the ticket out of this is to send their children to schools outside of the township, especially English-medium schools. This creates its own set of problems, as children are alienated from their own communities,  cannot partake in enrichment or extension activities at their schools because

they have to take taxis home straight after school, and are subjected to learning to read and write in a second language. They are therefore not able to draw on any of their mother tongue vocabulary and conversational conventions to help them master the process of reading and writing.

The 2011 Census Data shows Grahamstown as having 80,390 people, of whom 78% were Black Africans, 91% were South African citizens and 85% were born in the Eastern Cape. A fairly homogenous community, then, or not one housing much of an immigrant population, but nevertheless possibly housing a number of people who have moved in from the surrounding rural areas, especially as a number of farms in the area were converted into game reserves and many farm schools closed down. Education-wise, 57.4% had completed Grade 9 or higher and could therefore be considered functionally literate, and some 89.2% of children aged 5 – 17 years were attending school.

Economic constraints in the town were reflected in the statistic that showed that only 34.5% of the population was gainfully employed, with 62% earning less than R4000 per month and 13% indicating they had no income. Nearly 10% were housed in informal dwellings, and only 75% had access to flush toilets (Statistics South Africa, 2012). These are all indications of quite widespread poverty in the town, with the concentration likely to be in the township areas where the Intsomi Project participants reside.

Socially, the Intsomi intervention is, at heart, a decolonisation project – it aims to ameliorate the disruption of African family life that was caused by migrant labour, rapid urbanization, the Group Areas Act, forced removals and limited economic opportunities. Added to this are a high number of AIDS-related deaths, teenage pregnancies, a fast-growing population, parents who have to seek employment wherever they can find it – leaving grandparents in charge of children – and, of course, the advent of television and cell phones. The fabric of both family and community life has been compromised, and along with it the practice of telling stories to children; of taking co-responsibility for the educating of children.

As mentioned, the aspirational trajectory into modernity sees parents relying on 'better' schools to provide all the answers for their children's education. Parents need to reclaim the space of being contributors to their children's education; to be given the space and the wherewithal to engage in supportive literacy activities with their children at home. This is in line with Street and others who argue the value of context and family for the development of literacy (Heath, 1983; Street, 1993(b), 1995 and 2001).

The paucity of holdings in community libraries, along with restrictive opening hours, has mitigated against libraries being catalysts of change, while, as previously pointed out, most of the working class schools also have very poor stocks of reading books for home.

**Communication context**

The communication context for the research is one where traditional forms of communication (such as word of mouth) seem to persist alongside the use of new technologies. The oral tradition is still strong, and people share information on taxis and at other communal meeting places such as churches and shebeens. There isn't a strong culture of individualised reading and writing.

An interesting statistic from the Census data, given the economic situation, was that 83% of the population owned cell phones, making this a reasonably viable option for communication, if free Wi-Fi zones could be provided and data costs could be kept down. Some 79% owned a television and 69% a radio. Just under a third (30.7%) of households indicated that they had Internet access, mostly on their phones or at work, which points to a lack of access to the Internet in public places such as libraries (Statistics South Africa, 2012). This also means that the plethora of reading and literacy resources available free of charge on the Internet are not accessible to the communities in question.

Legacy media, in the form of newspapers, television and radio, although quite widely used in the communities in question, has had limited potential compared to social media in providing platforms for ordinary citizens to communicate about issues that are important to them, or to build alliances around matters of interest. The media questionnaire (see Appendix 1) showed that daily newspapers are seldom bought, which means households are also missing out on story supplements, such as those provided by Nal'ibali in a range of languages. Community newspapers are more readily available, but mostly only on a weekly basis or online.

The introduction of social media platforms has begun to change the journalism, media and communication landscape: *inter alia* through its immediacy, its accessibility to ordinary citizens and its capacity for sharing news and stories.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In seeking to deal with the issue of children's literacy development and the building of literacy activism in parents, the researcher has drawn on theorists that speak to home literacy practices, as well as those who address issues around communication for development.

**Literacy development in children**

Scholars of language and literacy development in children would argue that it is important – critical, even – for interventions such as Intsomi to take place, since home literacy practices play a significant role in children's literacy development. Wolf (2007: 3) avers that human beings were not born to read, but that it is a human invention, and that it is an illustration of how the brain rearranges itself to learn something new. The implication of this is that a certain amount of mediation is needed to help the brain form new neural pathways and prepare it for reading. Being spoken to and read to are both part of this process of mediation.

According to Wolf,

> Learning to read begins the first time an infant is held and read a story. How often this happens, or fails to happen, in the first five years of childhood turns out to be one of the best predictors of later reading. A little-discussed class system invisibly divides our society, with those families that provide their children environments rich in written and oral language opportunities gradually set apart from those who do not, or cannot. A prominent study found that by kindergarten, a gap of 32 million words already separates some children in linguistically impoverished homes from their more stimulated peers. In other words, in some environments the average young middle-class child hears 32 million more spoken words than the young underprivileged child by age five (2007: 20).

From the focus group discussion conducted with participants before the introduction of the Intsomi Project, it would appear that sharing books and stories together had not been a widespread practice, especially with regard to preschool children.

Land describes a situation where, in a teachers' workshop some years ago, a video clip was shown of a mother reading to her child. The resultant "Aha!" moment stunned the facilitators. Apparently, as soon as the clip was finished, one of the educators leapt up and said, "Now I understand! Now I know what you people mean when you say I should read to my children!" For this parent, the mystery of what people meant by reading to your child and how people could be enthusiastic about it had disappeared in a single amazing instant. Land points out that it was also a moment of revelation for the facilitators, because they realised that the

literacy practices taken for granted in comfortably literate, middle-class families are often completely invisible to people outside a reading culture (2008: 53).

This kind of revelation was confirmed by one of the participants in the Intsomi action research group, who said, "I never knew it was so much fun to interact with children."

O'Carroll, in her work entitled *Narrowing the Literacy Gap* (2013), also argues that literacy development starts at a young age, well before a child enters school; she maintains that there are, in effect, a number of building blocks that need to be put in place, and many pre-reading skills that need to be developed through exposing young children to language, and specifically language as it is utilised in storybooks.

Bloch (1997) would argue that these are not even pre-reading skills, but are simply part of the whole process of becoming literate, as much as babbled words and first steps are the early stages of talking and walking. She urges parents to support and encourage young children's attempts at making sense of literacy activities such as reading and writing, and to make it meaningful, as these are important precursors and forerunners to the more formal activity that will constitute learning to read and write at school. Bloch documents her daughter's emergent writing process, and how her daughter uses it for purposes that are meaningful to her (e.g. writing notes to her mom), and gradually discovers how the conventions of writing work, while Bloch, as a parent, provides continuous support and encouragement of this process.

Bloch also points to the "longer term strategic issue of recognising and using the potential of the early childhood years to address language and literacy issues in ways that will contribute towards providing opportunities and incentives for people to develop and embed literacy in their own and other languages" (2006: 8).

**Communication for development**

Communication for development has been around for some years as a field of study. It is an umbrella term that could encompass approaches on a broad spectrum of participation and empowerment, ranging from minimal participation by those concerned (i.e. imposed communication that purportedly had development as its aim) to a high degree of participation and involvement that resulted in some form of societal change or a shift in power relations.

Servaes and Lie describe some of the evolution in thinking about communication as follows:

> Traditionally, people mainly saw the communication process as a message going from a sender to a receiver; this dates back to (mainly American) research on (political) campaigns and diffusions in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Once people started expanding the definition of communication (as illustrated in Molwana, 1997), it became possible to see communication and communication media as essential supports to development: a means of teaching, of carrying development messages, or of channeling back reactions. In some situations this instrumental role can be direct; in others it is indirect. From this perspective, communication media can support development initiatives by disseminating messages that encourage the public to support change-oriented projects (2013: 7).

This conception of development communication runs the risk of aiding a process of development that is measured in economic terms and is linear in nature, transferred through information campaigns that are engineered by those in positions of power and authority, rather than being messages that were endogenously created. While development might be the purported aim, there is still the idea of media messages as a "bullet or hypodermic needle whose effects are quickly and efficiently inserted into the consciousness of receivers" (2013: 9).

The authors go on to describe participatory communication as a more locally-based, democratic model of communication: "Participatory communication stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation. The point of departure must be the community, because it is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed and interactions with other communities are elicited" (2013: 11). Participatory communication, therefore, attaches importance to the input of ordinary people and citizens at grassroots level when it comes to communicating and taking action on issues that affect them.

The ordinary people in this case were the working class parents who formed part of the Intsomi action research group and gave input about their own modes of communication and those modes prevalent in their communities.

**Development support communication**

Melkote and Steeves' concept of 'development support communication' is closely aligned to this kind of grassroots communication. It seeks to involve citizens in the design, implementation and horizontal sharing of communication and forms of media, for the purposes of changing something that affects their lives.

Development support communication is described by Melkote and Steeves as follows:

> Development Support Communication, a term that was coined and popularized by practitioners (Childers, 1976), was the response of fieldworkers to the realities in developing countries. With this term, the emphasis changed from viewing communication as an input toward greater economic growth to visualizing communication more holistically and as a support for people's self-determination, especially those at the grassroots (Ascroft and Masilela, 1994; Jayaweera, 1987) (2001: 349).

In the case of this research, the aim was to constitute a smaller group of seven parents who would take the lead in communicating about their changed home literacy practices, and then to work together with them to support their communication – both amongst themselves as a group of parents and emergent literacy activists, as well as their communication outwards to other households and members of their community.

Melkote and Steeves make a clear distinction between development support communication and development communication, describing the latter as a  largely top-down, pre-determined process of conveying certain messages in the service of a particular development goal that has been decided by agencies and organisations external to communities, and, as such, belonging within the modernisation paradigm. Development support communication, on the other hand, operates within an empowerment paradigm, and the communication model is non-linear and participatory, useful for conveying information as well as building organisations and capacity at a grassroots level (2001: 352).

 As such, it has links with the approach put forward by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and subsequent Freirean-based approaches, which view education and literacy as ideologically-based. "This alternative approach is termed an 'ideological' and not just a cultural model because it is important to attend not only to cultural meanings, but also to the power dimensions of these reading and writing processes" (Street 2001: 9).

White, in writing about grassroots, participatory communication in Africa, concurs: "A first and central theme running through virtually all of the current research is the validity of the local knowledge, the traditional forms of organisation, and the indigenous modes of communication for effective communication in Africa. This is a complete reversal of the conceptions of the modernisation and state-centred models" (2008: 9).

An example of this would be the strong emphasis by the Intsomi action research participants on using posters (depicting themselves as parents reading with their children, accompanied

by their quotes) that could be put up in community venues such as churches, preschools and spaza shops – places where conversations are generated.

Melkote and Steeves describe development support communication (DSC) as being characterised by horizontal knowledge-sharing between participants at a local level that creates a climate of mutual understanding between participants (2001: 349). In essence, then, DSC is about enabling people at grassroots level to participate in the communication of messages; about a community learning to speak to itself. In this instance, it was about a particular topic, i.e. the development of children's literacy and how to support it in the home. The primary recipients of the media produced were people in the same communities as the participants, and my role was that of a DSC practitioner, enabling and supporting the process.

At this point it might be important to make a distinction between, on the one hand, the use of development support communication and approaches that value grassroots participation and local knowledge systems **for the purposes of communication,** and, on the other hand, the guiding and teaching approach with regard to children's literacy development, which sought to increase parental participation for this in the home. While the input regarding the latter leant towards the use of an authoritative source for new knowledge and guidance, it was nevertheless premised on voluntary participation by the parents, and must be distinguished from the subsequent efforts at communication, where the parent group were considered the authorities on how to communicate with fellow parents in their communities. For myself as a researcher linked to a local NGO as a literacy programme co-ordinator, and to the Rhodes Community Engagement Office as a consultant, it was important to bear in mind this tension between guiding participants into new discoveries around home literacy practices, while at the same time co-producing the media and drawing on the participants' local knowledge in supporting the communication related to this issue.

**Social capital**

Examining the functioning of the Intsomi parent group and how they might influence others outside the Project lent itself to drawing on the work of Putnam and others around the concept of social capital: "By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital – tools and training that enhance individual productivity – 'social capital' refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995:67).

Furthermore, particular kinds of social capital are useful for different purposes. For example, if social capital is needed to strengthen the association between a group of people, particularly those with a shared interest or those who have come together to address a particular interest, then it would be necessary to look at ways of building *bonding* capital. In this instance, the group of parents participating in the Intsomi Project, and particularly those chosen to take the lead in communications around the Project, would need to build their identity as a group and strengthen their understanding of – and bonds around -– the issue of children's literacy development. For purposes of moving outwards and communicating with other families and households, or even fellow Rhodes workers, the notion of *bridging* social capital comes into play – that which enables the group members to communicate outside the group to other individuals or groups of people.

Hawkins and Maurer summarise the difference between bonding, bridging and linking capital as follows:

> Bonding social capital refers to relationships amongst members of a network who are similar in some form (Putnam, 2000). Bridging social capital refers to relationships amongst people who are dissimilar in a demonstrable fashion, such as age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and education (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Linking social capital is the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them (e.g. to provide access to services, jobs or resources) (Woolcock, 2001; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004) (2010: 1779).

Leaning on the concepts of bonding and bridging capital would mean giving the group of participants the opportunity to first deliberate amongst themselves about their experiences, concerns and learnings (building bonding capital) before they venture into communicating with other people in their communities about the issue (building bridging capital).

Linkages, i.e. spreading the messages to policy makers, NGOs and the greater public to influence thinking and practices around the development of children's literacy, would be created through the researcher's journalism about the process and the experiences and learnings that were generated. According to Bank and Makubalo, vertical linking social capital should allow all groups to prosper by making the right connections with the institutions (of the state and market) that can offer them support, resources, opportunities and influence (2004: 7).

These combined processes should assist the communities (in which the participants are located) to build a public sphere around the issue of children's literacy.

**The public sphere**

According to Fraser, Habermas' idea of a public sphere is that of a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" or "common interest", and it is "the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction" (1990: 57).

Kemmis *et al.* regard the building of a public sphere as a very important part, a kind of natural consequence, of the critical participatory action research process:

> We have especially emphasised that the key form of participation in this kind of research is participation in a public sphere – participation with others in communicative action, which is a conversation in which people strive for intersubjective agreement about the ideas and the language they use, mutual understanding of one another's perspectives and points of view, and unforced consensus about what to do (2014: 48).

Following this approach, the identified Intsomi parent participants would become co-creators of media directed at parents similar to themselves, utilising and building on the first stage of their communication within the group. The availability of social media platforms such as Facebook would add a dimension not previously available to development support communication.

Fraser talks about the creation of 'agitational training grounds' in her writing about re-imagining the public sphere:

> After all, to interact discursively as a member of a public – subaltern or otherwise – is to disseminate one's discourse into ever widening arenas. Habermas captures well this aspect of the meaning of publicity when he notes that however limited a public may be in its empirical manifestation at any given time, its members understand themselves as part of a potentially wider public, that indeterminate, empirically counterfactual body we call "the public-at-large." The point is that, in stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics (1990: 67-68).

One of the goals of this research was to investigate how the Intsomi Project could successfully create an 'agitational training ground' for parental involvement in children's literacy development, and for the findings to document how the action research participants do indeed view themselves as having been empowered for literacy activism.

If the group were to move from intra-group communication into the public sphere, the concepts of social marketing and public journalism might also come into play. According to Salmon (1989), the field of social marketing was formally launched in 1952 by G.D. Wiebe with the question, "Why can't you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?" In other words, can the principles used in the marketing of products be applied to the marketing of ideas, particularly those deemed beneficial to society? There are in effect communication strategies and campaigns that can be utilised ostensibly for public benefit; for example an information campaign about public health. But Salmon argues for a critical approach to what is deemed to be in the public interest or promoting social good, emphasising the importance of participation in the framing of the problem or issue by those who may be affected by it: "We must not passively accept that a social marketing effort described as 'pro-social' is actually so; we must question the motives, interests and impacts pertaining to each such effort. Campaigns to improve us, to make our nation stronger, to bring about progress or to make us happier should all be subjected to critical scrutiny" (1989: 47).

Rosen describes public journalism as "a way of thinking about the business of the craft that calls on journalists, those who study democracy, politics and the media, and others who enter into public life, to imagine a different kind of press, one that would : (1) address people as citizens, potential participants in public affairs, rather than victims or spectators; (2) help the political community act upon, rather than just learn about, its problems; (3) improve the climate of public discussion, rather than simply watch it deteriorate; (4) help make public life go well, so that it earns its claim on our attention and (5) speak honestly about its civic values, its preferred view of politics, its role as a public actor." While not all of the objectives of public journalism may be applicable in this case, some of the principles and strategies can nevertheless be appropriated for the media production that will take the experiences and insights from the participants' homes into their communities and into the wider public domain (1999: 44).

**Citizen storytelling**

Although the participants in the Intsomi Project were not necessarily focused on digital storytelling, there is nevertheless a useful principle that can be drawn from Lambert's work on how the stories of ordinary people and citizens matter and can make a difference.

Lambert established the Centre for Digital Storytelling in 1993 and authored four editions of a book entitled *Digital Storytelling: capturing lives, creating community.* He contends that, "We want to help everyone use the power of storytelling to project their authority, to expand their sense of being celebrated, of becoming at whatever level, a celebrity within their community" (2013:2).

It is also about giving everyone a voice – not for the sake of privilege, rank or individual glory, but in order to build community and to recognise that ordinary people have the ability to overcome obstacles and to address issues of social justice. Both Couldry (2009) and Harcup (2015) write about the importance of giving 'voice' to the 'voiceless' within the framework of alternative journalism and media production, which acknowledges that actively listening to, reporting on and collaborating with grassroots, non-mainstream or non-traditional sources of information is important for the promotion of an inclusive, authentic and representative public sphere and citizen participation.

Harwood puts it thus:

> Telling stories of change is critical to the very innovation required to meet a community's information needs. Told well, and over time, such stories can help a community create a 'can-do narrative' about its ability to tackle change, invite people to step forward and help people to see that it is possible for them to engage in productive ways with others. Such stories are especially important in light of the negative conditions that frame many communities' realities. And one must take care in telling them, not offering hype or hyperbole but authentic stories that reflect people's efforts (2011: 23).

The short videos made of three of the Intsomi participants telling the stories of their literacy journeys together with their children, filmed in their homes and other community sites, such as libraries, is an example of giving voice to ordinary citizens, who are then in a position to share their stories on various digital platforms.

**Communication at the hyper-local level**

The publication *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age* (Knight Commission, 2009) provides some useful insights regarding the communication needs of local communities. The authors point out that local communities need at least four things that depend on information; i.e. communities need to *co-ordinate* (for emergency situations, elections, community celebrations, etc.); communities need to *solve problems* (for example around the quality of schooling and children's poor literacy achievements); communities

need to establish systems of *public accountability* (e.g. how are elected officials and official institutions, such as libraries, doing?); and communities need to develop a *sense of connectedness*, through the circulation of ideas, symbols, facts and perspectives in a way that lets people know how they fit into a shared narrative (2009:9). However, information alone does not guarantee positive outcomes: "Unless people, armed with information, engage with their communities to produce a positive effect, information by itself is powerless" (2009:12). If people engage with information and take it to a community level through their social networks, then the discourse can begin to change and community effects can begin to be felt.

Providing information alone would be in line with modernisation theory, which views the provision of information in a top-down way, from experts and government sources to ordinary people, as the way to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviour. This is in contrast with development support communication, which would seek to have a bottom-up approach that will result in empowerment and real development gains at grassroots level. The purpose of the Intsomi Project is to support grassroots information-creators who seek to engage and influence their communities through telling their own stories and relating their own experiences, in places and through networks that are relevant communication platforms in their particular communicative ecologies.

The Knight Commission argues that effective, trusted intermediaries help people engage with information, and that libraries are vital intermediaries for a healthy information ecology, as are higher education institutions and the non-profit sector (2009: 25-26). The Intsomi Ambassadors play the role of effective, trusted intermediaries in this instance. Their stories (information) are relevant to their audiences — they are their neighbours and fellow township-dwellers, whose children by and large attend the same schools. Muhammed Chaudry, CEO of the Silicon Valley Education Foundation, outlined the information opportunity as follows in the Knight Commission Report: "If we want to engage citizens in the process of change in our education system, we must do three things: inform, inspire and involve"(2009: 29).

Harwood's work introduces a further, more relationship-based and community development aspect to that of the work done by the Knight Commission. He focuses on the concept of Healthy Information Communities and how to bring these about:

In reality, most change in communities occurs through pockets of activity that emerge and take root over time. These pockets result from individuals, small groups, and various organizations seeing an opportunity for change and seizing it, often through trial and error. Seldom are the collection of such pockets orchestrated through a top-down, linear plan; instead, they happen when people and groups start to engage and interact. In this way, different groups at different times play a crucial catalytic and connecting role—helping to foster the conditions for people to tap their own potential and join together to forge a way forward. The point for those seeking to gauge and grow a community's information environment is not to see or create a single information destination, but to allow for many and varied touch-points for people who are stepping into and making their way through community and public life. It is important not to try and own the space, control the flow of information, or dictate change, but to generate multiple information sources in the community (2011: vii).

This approach by Harwood resonates with the concept of communicative ecologies – first put forward by Foth and Hearn (2007) and later expanded on by Lennie and Tacchi (2013) – which also also recognises the hyper-local: the importance of place and space, culture, historical conditions, socio-economic status and milieu in determining how and where people communicate, and to what ends.

Lennie and Tacchi, in focusing on the concept of communicative ecologies, point to the 'messy' nature of communication for development. They identify seven characteristics, or inter-related components, to bear in mind when evaluating communication for development (C4D):

**Participatory**: Evaluation is undertaken in partnership with community members, stakeholders and others. This approach respects, legitimises, contextualises and draws on the knowledge and experience of local participants as well as relevant experts and outsiders.

**Holistic**: Understands the wider social, cultural, economic, technological, organisational and institutional systems and contexts within which C4D operates. Takes into account the inter-relationships, inter-connections and networks between the various organisations, groups and agents involved in an initiative.

**Critical: S**eeks to actively and explicitly address issues of gender, race, class, ethnicity, age and other relevant differences, and unequal power and voice among participants. Examines power relations and inequality; is aware of local social norms and the challenges and contradictions that can characterise social change; and is open to negative findings and learning from failure.

**Realistic:** Uses evaluation approaches that are grounded in local realities and based on methodological pluralism; requires openness, freedom, flexibility and realism in selecting approaches, methodologies and methods.

**Learning-based:** Applies action learning and PAR principles and processes in order to facilitate continuous learning, mutual understanding, empowerment, creative ideas and thinking, and responsiveness to new ideas and different attitudes, values and knowledge.

**Emergent** (or evolving): Social change and the outcomes of C4D are seen as processes that are non-linear, dynamic, messy and unpredictable. (It can go in a couple of different directions at the same time, or not in the direction that you as researcher envisaged, or get side-tracked and not go in a straight line between cause and effect, but will still continue to build towards the same outcome). There is a need to be aware of outcomes and ripple effects that go beyond, or are different from, underlying assumptions about the outcomes of initiatives and the process of social change.

**Complex:** Recognises that social change and C4D is complex and involves processes that are often contradictory and challenging. C4D often takes place in social, economic and cultural contexts with high levels of social (and political) conflict (usually in developing countries), involving people and organisations with multiple perspectives and agendas (e.g. teachers and parents) (2013: 22-23).

## Communicative ecologies

The concept of communication for development has been around for some time, but is also being challenged to be more nuanced and allow for greater complexity, through notions such as that of communicative ecologies.

Communicative ecologies give credence to the fact that people consume and generate media within a community context and in ways that might be peculiar to their communities. It also acknowledges that there are forms of communication that go beyond the traditional media, for example conversations in taxis or at church, and that we therefore need to understand the whole structure of communication in people's everyday lives if we are to gauge the impact of particular interventions.

Hearn *et al.* give an overview of the concept of 'communicative ecology':

> Each instance of communication or information takes place within an already existing 'communicative ecology', and each place has its own unique communicative ecology that we need to understand. It is important to look at *everything* that could count as a medium of communication. That is, not just press, broadcasting or telecoms but also roads, buses and trains, visits to neighbours, gossip, and public and private places where people meet to communicate.
>
> Communicative ecologies focus our attention on the communication-related aspects of the contexts in which the people we are studying operate. It places media technologies in the context of all the ways of communicating that are significant locally, including face-to-face interaction.
>
> It is recognised that any 'new' connections and networks (social and technical) that develop as a result of the introduction of individual technologies will be far more effective if they are somehow interconnected with existing, locally appropriate systems and structures (2009: 31).

As Gush points out, the communication patterns for particular communities are peculiar to them, and any attempts at facilitating communication will need to take cognisance of this if they are to be effective and contribute meaningfully to development (2017: 95).

The specific communicative ecologies of the Intsomi participants were explored by way of a media and mobile usage questionnaire administered in a group situation, as well as through a more thorough workshopping process that explored in-depth the communicative ecologies of the seven Intsomi action research group participants.

Thompson gives a sociological account of communication, and his work links to the notion that social context is important; that the context for information exchange, or the 'ecology', could influence the type of communication, because communication is contextually situated: "Symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received in contexts or 'fields' which are historically specific, socially structured and characterised by institutions of various kinds" (1988: 362). It is therefore important, when designing development support communication, to take into consideration the context where it will be consumed and appropriated.

Through this approach we can ask how new media technologies articulate with more traditional ones: how do different media serve different purposes, and how do they combine in people's everyday lives? It is a **systems** perspective that acknowledges the inter-related nature of people's lives and their different persona, and the fact that they are both individuals (with an individual communicative ecology) and members of a community (which might have a slightly different communicative ecology). The aim might be to influence social

context as well as trying to change individual behaviour, which may require a multi-media strategy combined with other specific interventions or actions.

Linked to the idea of communicative ecologies is Pentland's theory of social physics, and how social networks function to produce behaviour change and cultural shifts.

Pentland (2015) maintains that social learning stems from people drawing on the flow of ideas within a particular setting or their particular social networks. Social learning is about tapping into the ideas generated in our social networks, and about learning from the stories, experiences and examples of others in our networks and communities. By introducing an initiative around home literacy practices, the Intsomi Project has contributed to the pool of ideas in particular communities, shared through particular communication networks. As Pentland says, "Each cohesive community has its own stream of idea flow that allows the members to incorporate innovations from other people within it" (2015: 44).

Taking into consideration the aims of empowering the parents participating in the Intsomi Project, building group cohesion and enabling them to act as 'ambassadors' for home literacy practices within their particular communicative ecologies, a methodology that made provision for participation and drawing on local knowledge was deemed appropriate for this research.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the steps followed and the different phases of the research, but it will also attempt to show how the chosen methodology of participatory action research (PAR) is inextricably linked to the theory of development support communication.

**Steps in the research process**

The steps followed in the research can be summarised as follows:

1. An exploratory workshop with the group of 27 service staff workers who signed up with the Rhodes Community Engagement Office for a parent support programme.
2. A few initial focus group discussions around their existing home literacy practices and attitudes to reading.
3. Introduction of the Intsomi Programme of book loans and information workshops.
4. Completion of a Media and Mobile Usage Questionnaire with the group (See Appendix 1).
5. A feedback session with the group after 6 – 8 months and the subsequent nomination of a group of 7 representatives who would serve as the action learning group for the PAR. The aim of this was to support these group members to grow into mediators for children's literacy in their communities (based on the successful outcomes the programme had achieved for their children).
6. The exploration of communicative ecologies with the action learning group and the use of social mapping as a PAR tool to help determine the what, where and how of the ways that people in their communities communicate and get information.
7. The production and distribution of relevant media as identified through the process in 6.
8. Reflection (by the group members) on the usefulness of the media and the degree to which the process had empowered them to become literacy activists.

**Participatory Action Research**

The methodology of Participatory Action Research becomes particularly relevant when working within the chosen framework of development support communication. With the aim of empowerment for more marginalised groups and communities, and to counter the purely modernisation agenda of literacy programmes imposed from the top down, participatory action research was chosen because, as Melkote and Steeves say, "it incorporates liberation

assumptions in its methodology, is oriented to social action, and works towards the achievement of empowerment-related outcomes" (2001:327).

Participatory Action Research aims to initiate collaborative social action and empower local knowledge. The methodology is experiential and allows participants to develop their own methods of consciousness-raising, followed by reflection, leading to participatory social action (2001: 365). Greenwood and Levin define action research as "a set of collaborative ways of conducting social research that simultaneously satisfies rigorous scientific requirements and promotes democratic social change" (2007: 1). The aim, essentially, was to recruit the (identified parent) participants as co-creators of media messages that would be directed at parents similar to themselves. In part, this would be built on the communication that would be facilitated within the group on a Facebook page created for all the participants where they could post and share their ideas and news with each other in a 'safe' media space.

**Qualitative research**

Since the research interaction was with a group of limited size, and was focused on qualitative changes in behaviour and how these are communicated, the research methodology was qualitative in nature and not quantitative. This meant there would not be any measuring in numbers, or counting numbers of interactions and occurrences, but rather an in-depth focus on the nature of the interactions between parents and children and how they change, as well as the nature of the resultant conversations and communication that the parents in the group have with each other and with people in their communities in similar situations. The attributes would have labels or names rather than numbers.

Babbie and Mouton describe the key features of qualitative research as being research that is conducted in the natural setting; that has a focus on process rather than outcome; emphasises the "insider" or "emic" perspective; has as its primary aim in-depth or "thick" descriptions and understanding of actions and events; is mainly concerned with understanding social action in terms of its specific context rather than trying to generalise to some theoretical population; is often inductive in its approach; and sees the qualitative researcher as the "main instrument" of the research process" (2001: 270).

The research methodology therefore did not fall within the positivistic tradition of trying to establish generalisations and an exact cause and effect (Deacon *et al.*, 1999), but rather within the phenomenological tradition of an interdisciplinary situation, which is dynamic, allows

multiple factors to play a role in changing cultural practices and which places human consciousness and agency central to the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This links back to the theoretical framework of development support communication and the concept of communicative ecologies.

The methodology also implies a combination of World 1 and World 2 knowledge. Babbie and Mouton describe World 1 knowledge as *lay knowledge* – the stock of knowledge that we use in everyday life that enables us to cope effectively with our daily lives and tasks – which is achieved through incidental learning, experience and self-reflection. World 2 knowledge is scientific knowledge that is acquired through a more rigorous, systematic and directed process of trying to establish an objective truth about certain phenomena, through a process of reading, researching and enquiry (2001: 7-8).

**The role of the participants and the researcher**

As a researcher, I was interested in finding out how the Intsomi parents would develop their group identity and consciousness and if it would be followed by reflection and social action, such as the sharing of their stories; also then whether the stories which they shared with friends, family and community members around the topic of children's literacy development would be influential, due to the social location of literacy. Would it be through people sharing their own stories of how they interacted with their children, and what effect the new practices had, that some form of change would begin to take place in their communities? This is rooted in critical literacy theory, developed by writers such as Brian Street and Shirley Brice Heath, who argue as part of what is termed New Literacy Studies; that literacy is socially located and takes on different forms in different spaces and for different reasons: "The ethnographic approach to literacy in development derives from recent theoretical approaches which argue that literacy is not just a set of uniform "technical skills" to be imparted to those lacking them – the 'autonomous' model – but rather that there are multiple literacies in communities and that literacy practices are socially embedded (Heath 1983; Street 1993(b), 1995; Barton 1994; Barton et al.1999)" (Street 2001:2).

Prinsloo and Breier (1996) talk about the concept of *mediation* of literacy through social networks. They argue that, "a realistic strategy to explore would be enhancement and development of these informal resources. Whereas formal literacy classes are often initiated by outsiders, literacy mediation and social networks are indigenous strategies and resources.

Their institutional sources are not that of schooling, but of religious and political movements and practices, the public media, the community meeting and local government" (1996: 28).

Morphet, in the afterword of the same publication, goes on to say that, "so-termed 'easy readers' and 'development pamphlets' (on health, housing, and so on) need to be directed from *within* the localised discourses as embedded messages. If possible, they need to be produced from within that context, by the people involved." He argues that, while it might seem contradictory for people with less resources and schooling to produce text, research has shown that they are capable, with support, of doing so if it is for their own purposes. "What such people require are the social technologies and supports to enable them to do so" (1996: 263).

While this was largely focused on adult literacy, the principle of shared learning and experiences within social networks and communities, and the need for development support communication, is equally pertinent in the field of family literacy. Banda confirms this in his paper on literacy practices in black and coloured communities in South Africa, which drew inspiration from Street, Prinsloo and Breier, and concluded that "literacy practices are linked to demographic, geographical, attitudinal, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic factors" and that "as a way of bridging the gulf between community literacies and schooled literacies, the study suggests a multi-literacy approach in which local literacies become vehicles for accessing educational discourses" (2003: 1).

This also links to critical education theorists such as Gonzalez *et al.* (2005), who put forward the concept of "funds of knowledge"; i.e. the premise that people have developed competency and knowledge through their life experience, and that researching families and households will tap into the potential that this has for creating positive educational outcomes.

As both a facilitator and observer in the participatory action research process, there needed to be a mixture of participation and withdrawal on my part; of leading and listening. This is what Kemmis *et al.* classify as 'practical action research':

> The practitioner in such a case might still be the one who decides what is to be explored and what changes are to be made, but in practical action research she or he remains open to the views and responses of others, and the consequences that these others experience as a result of the practice. In this case there is a symmetrical, reciprocal relationship between the practitioner and others involved in and affected by the practice (2014: 15).

This was an important framework for the research, as I played the role of standing both inside and outside the process; i.e. helping to move the process and the project along through my own experience, knowledge and networks, as well as standing back and reflecting on the process. I played a facilitative and mentoring role within the group by chairing meetings, asking questions and mediating discussions about concrete actions that need to be taken, with the view to building capacity and withdrawing at some point in the future.

My demographic as a researcher was probably also important in this instance – as a middle-aged white woman, I  could have been seen by the research participants as a benign and respected mother figure who gave patronage to the project and in whose hands lay the fate of the project. Countering this was the mentoring role I played with the young black staff member from RUCE responsible for the administration of the project, as well as the involvement of young black Journalism and Media Studies students who helped to move the project forward through multi-media and social media platforms that they shared with Intsomi participants. So while there was some influence on my part because of the engaged nature of the research, there was also the ongoing building of agency in order to sustain and expand the project.

The implications of these approaches are consistent with those of development support communication; i.e. the participants in the research process are co-creators of the insights, conversations and media that are developed, utilising their existing knowledge as well as that generated by the introduction of new practices.

The RUCE office introduced certain variables, such as literacy material for children (books and games) as well as training in the use of these, and information about how literacy capacity develops in a young child's brain (drawing on the work of Maryanne Wolf and Shelley O'Carroll). This was utilised alongside the participants' knowledge of how people in their communities live – what the household and cultural practices are, who is listened to, and how the home-school relationship is viewed – in order to develop an effective communication strategy that could build the public sphere for parents of school-going children.

In accordance with the belief by Melkote and Steeves that "people's right to communicate their stories should be at the heart of the participatory strategies leading to empowerment" (2001: 355), the aim was to facilitate this empowerment process by enabling people to

produce media about an issue or issues that they believe are important with regard to the literacy development of their children, and that accurately reflects their journey.

**The research process**

The research took place in phases, which were mostly sequential, but at times also coincided or overlapped.

*Phase 1*

Phase 1 of the programme commenced in 2015 with a workshop where the naming of the project was discussed with the pilot group of 26 parent participants, and where they explored their own literacy histories and experiences. The participants were also asked what kind of bags they wanted to carry the books in, what language preferences they had and what kind of books or stories they wanted.

Working with the core group of parents that elected to be part of the Rhodes (RUCE) initiative at the outset of the project, I mounted an enquiry into how they see literacy, parenting, the educational process and the support of children's learning at home. I also attempted to explore the socio-cultural contexts of these families through investigating the current literacy practices in these households, what access they had to literacy material and media and how these were accessed/used.

Initial focus group discussions were held with the 26 Intsomi participants (in groups of seven to eight at a time), during which they were asked the following questions:

- Which schools do your children go to and why did you choose these ones?
- Do you think you should help your children with their learning?
- Do you think you can/are able to help your children with their learning? If so, in what ways?
- How often do you read with your children? At a specific time?
- How often do they read by themselves?
- Do other people in the house read to them or with them?
- How often do you yourself read, and what do you read?
- How often do you or others in the house tell the children stories?
- What do you think about reading?
- What do people in your community generally think about reading?
- How many books are there in your home?
- Other reading resources?
- Do you or your child belong to the local library? Do you ever go to the library with your children?

- At what age should you start reading to a child?
- Do you notice and talk to your child about print in the environment?
- Is your child able to do emergent writing at home?

*Phase 2*

In the next phase, the book selection was made to provide the 26 participants with reading material for their children on a rotational loan basis. The aim was to provide reading material for enjoyment, so these were mostly picture books, story books and Bible stories, and there was a strong focus on South African stories that the children would be able to relate to.

Book bags were commissioned from a local sewing group, and these were exchanged every fortnight at the RUCE Office. If participants had children in more than one phase, they were allowed to take a bag for each age group.

Based on the information gathered during Phase 1, a series of quarterly workshops was held for the participants during the ensuing months, alongside the introduction of the literacy materials. In addition to the books, games that promote literacy development were also introduced to the parents in one of the workshops, and they were given the opportunity to engage with the games before taking home a Game Pack specially designed for home use by the Wordworks organisation. The aim of the workshops was to provide the parents with information on how children develop language and literacy abilities, what constitutes good reading routines and practices, etc.

I began to collect data that spoke to the question of how home literacy practices had been affected through the introduction of literacy support material combined with the suggested strategies for engaging with children. This was done through focus group[1] discussions, as the aim was to begin building a collective understanding around the issue of children's literacy development that could lead into discussions in the public sphere.

The rationale for focus group discussions is provided *inter alia* by Bryman (1988), who argues that the interaction between respondents produces data and insights that would not necessarily arise in individual interviews, as the group discussion stimulates, elicits and elaborates responses from the interviewees. The focus groups consisted of six to ten people, which Tonkiss (2004: 196) avers is "small enough to allow all the members to participate, but

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[1] A focus group is defined by Tonkiss as "quite simply, a small group discussion focused on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher" (Tonkiss in Seale (ed.), 2004: 196).

large enough to capture a variety of perspectives and enable people to bounce ideas off each other."

Alongside the introduction of the resource materials, a number of steps were taken to create communication mechanisms for the Intsomi participants:

- a WhatsApp group was created by the RUCE project administrator;
- a Facebook workshop was held, and a closed Facebook group created under the administration of a group member;
- a short photography skills session was held, which included how to upload photos onto Facebook;
- a questionnaire was jointly completed to get group members to think about, and articulate, how and where communication takes place in their communities.

*Phase 3*

As a further step in the process, seven representatives were chosen from the group of 26, to form a kind of vanguard[2] action research group who would engage more specifically in an exploration of what the most effective forms and platforms of communication might be in the particular communities where this initiative had been introduced. The seven were nominated by fellow Intsomi participants during a group session with the larger group. They consisted of five women and two men, with five of them working as cleaning staff in various University departments and two of them as catering supervisors. This group of seven decided to call themselves the Intsomi Ambassadors, as they saw their role as being ambassadors for literacy on the University campus as well as in their communities.

A focus group discussion was held to generate ideas about how (and what) media should be produced in ways that would resonate with similar communities and would build bridging capital. Drawing on the concept of communicative ecologies, each of the participants sketched their own particular communicative ecology, and this was then merged into one and combined with a social mapping exercise in order to decide on what forms of media would be produced to support effective communication in their community, and what further steps needed to be taken.

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[2] The Leninist concept of a vanguard party or group is that of a leading group within the working classes who would educate the rest of the group and instil in them a revolutionary class consciousness; vanguardism was seen as a (political) strategy that would draw the rest of the working class along towards revolution (1902). However, the term 'vanguard' has been taken up more loosely in common parlance to signify any group of people taking the lead in advancing a particular field, and it is in this sense that the term is being used here.

*Phase 4*

The next step in the process was the media production, and the first action was to decide how, and by whom, the identified media forms should be produced. Since cost was a factor and this was already a University project, it was decided to approach lecturers and senior students in the Rhodes School of Journalism and Media Studies to assist with the necessary media production. This included the production of newspaper articles, posters, flyers, radio shows and short videos.

*Phase 5*

The action research process requires that the response to these different forms of media be assessed by the Intsomi learning group (as a kind of reception analysis[3]), and the forms of communication and media adapted or changed if necessary.

However, Lennie and Tacchi's theory of evaluating communication for development (2013) allows for a process that may not be so strictly linear and for the complexities and different dimensions of various interactions to be taken into account. To this end, the researcher elected to do individual interviews with each of the vanguard group members (bar one who dropped out because of a dismissal from the University) and ascertained from each of them what they thought about the status of the project, their role as activists, how the media that was produced had supported this role, and what they thought could be done going forward.

**Further phases of the research**

In the interests of limiting the scope of this Masters study, a more detailed reception analysis of the Intsomi media products would need to form part of further phases of the research.

In addition – as a kind of meta-phase of the project, and in order to build vertical linking social capital[4] – the researcher also aims to produce journalism about the entire process and its outcomes. This would be aimed at selected and relevant regional and national media platforms, and the target audience, as previously described, would be Government Departments (to influence policy-making and resource provision), Non-Government

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[3] Reception analysis refers to the exploration of how those on the receiving end of media content make sense of it or respond to it.

[4] Hawkins and Maurer describe linking capital as the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them (e.g. to provide access to services, jobs or resources)(2010: 1780).

Organisations (to influence programmes and practice) and society at large (to influence parents everywhere).

**The methods of data collection**

The methods employed for data collection in this study were a combination of meetings, interviews and focus groups. The interviews were done with individual parents and the focus groups with parts of the Intsomi pilot group. The meetings were those held regularly with the Intsomi Ambassadors to gather reflective insights and plan next steps, as well as weekly meetings with my research supervisor to reflect on my role as a researcher and what areas to investigate. In addition, there were occasional meetings with relevant staff from the RUCE office. The aim was to investigate how parent-child interactions had changed in relation to home literacy practices, the effects of this and the nature of the resultant communication that the parents in the group had with each other, with fellow Rhodes workers and with other parents in their communities.

While no direct observation was done in homes, the participatory action research approach nevertheless borrowed elements of the ethnographic approach. Deacon *et al.* argue that if researchers are not able to conduct a full ethnographic study, they can work with a pared-down version of ethnography, borrowing the basic techniques of observation, open-ended interviews and group discussions, and using them either singly or in combination in a more concentrated way (1999: 8).

The methods focused on the collection of qualitative data and involved little by way of quantitative data collection (e.g. counting of numbers of interactions or occurrences), except for the collection of data relating to what forms of media are accessed by the participating group of Intsomi parents.  This is sometimes necessary. As Servaes and Lie indicate, "The study of communication for development and social change uses a combination of methodologies in mixed and integrated ways. Often one starts with a basic quantitative study to set the stage for more qualitative and participatory investigations" (2013: 13). However, participatory action research remains the overriding approach, being fundamental to the principles of communication for development and social change.

At the outset of the project, focus group discussions were utilised to determine a kind of baseline situation, with questions centred on issues such as participants' perceptions of schooling, literacy development in children, and parental roles. The researcher facilitated and

recorded these discussions and they were held with groups of five or six participants at a time (drawn from the pilot group of 26 Intsomi participants). Focus group discussions were also utilised later on in the process to gauge what effect the Intsomi Project was having on the pilot group of 26 parents.

Investigating communicative ecologies involved the completion of questionnaires, entitled Media and Mobile Usage Questionnaires, during a group session with 18 of the group of 26 Intsomi participants. Although it was a group session, each of the participants individually completed a questionnaire, with the researcher on hand to clarify and explain questions where necessary. There were 29 questions with multiple choice answers, ranging from ones asking about broad general information such as language and level of education, to the more specific ones such as which newspapers they read, which radio stations they listen to, which mobile devices they use and which online platforms they access. There were also two questions about how and where they thought most people in their community currently communicate and receive information.

Following on from this broader process of looking at media and mobile usage, a more in-depth process of looking at communicative ecologies was embarked upon with the vanguard group of seven parents, on the assumption that they were broadly representative of township residents in Grahamstown. The group members were each given a blank piece of A4 paper on which to draw a kind of 'map' of their communication platforms and media consumption. Placing themselves in the middle of the diagram, they were asked to think about, and draw linkages to, all the things that they read, listen to and watch (including details of newspaper titles, radio programmes and television channels), as well as any ways and places that they communicate (word of mouth, meetings, social media platforms, cell phones, etc.). This information was then aggregated in the ensuing group discussion (facilitated by the researcher) in order to distil key ways of communicating for the purpose of children's literacy development.

In line with the qualitative research principle that focuses on an exploration of the insider (or emic) perspective, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with mainly open-ended questions on a one-to-one basis with the vanguard group members (Intsomi Ambassadors). This served to close off the action research cycle, but also as a form of reception study, since questions were included about how the media was received and responded to by peers and people in their communities and interest groups.

These interviews were akin to narrative interviews, which are described as follows by Paphitis (2017):

> Narrative interviews are unstructured tools for data collection, and the questions emerge from interplay between the personal narrative offered by the respondent and the social context in which the narrative arises (Muylaert *et. Al,* 2014). Following this approach, long interviews are used and questions asked are non-directive, generic and reflexive in nature (Leong and Tan, 2013; MacCracken, 1988). Cases for analysis emerge from the stories in narrative interviews through the dialogical interchanges between the interviewer and interviewee, but the reconstruction of events and understandings must always be from the point of view of the respondents. Following this, the interviewer should primarily fill the role of an active listener, but one who has little influence over the factual and symbolic construction of the narrative itself (Muylaert *et. al*, 2014).

The questions put to the individual vanguard group members to guide the narrative interview were as follows:

- What has been the most outstanding feature for you about the Intsomi Project?
- How and where have you used the media that has been produced?
- What effect do you think this has had on people in your community and elsewhere?
- Do you see yourself as a literacy activist and if so, what role do you play? (What kinds of things do you do?)
- Which groups, bodies or individuals do you think you have influenced with regard to parental involvement in children's literacy development?
- Do you feel supported in your role as a literacy activist? What more/else could be done in this regard?
- How do you see the future for yourself and the Intsomi Project?

The validity of the data collected is closely related to the evaluation of the success of the project and its related research, based on the seven principles[5] suggested by Lennie and Tacchi (2013) for the evaluation of communication for development.

To the extent that the Intsomi Ambassadors provided an emic understanding of home literacy practices and the effect of the Intsomi initiative, as well as helped to shed light on the communicative ecologies of their communities through their participation, with a holistic and critical approach that was based in local knowledge (realistic), it could be considered valid data. At the same time, the exit interviews indicate that this project has resulted in ongoing learning and empowerment for the participants within a complex milieu, where the outcomes are still evolving.

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[5] See Theory chapter

**CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

The Findings chapter will examine events as they unfolded in the Intsomi process, and, in that sense, will be a chronological exposition, but then will also look at a thematic analysis of what has emerged from the research, and what the implications are for the process going forward.

**Influencing home literacy practices**

The Intsomi initiative to supply books into homes where they could be used on a daily basis was introduced into a particular milieu of book consumption. In initial focus group discussions, parents indicated that, prior to this initiative, they had very few reading resources in their homes, few were members of libraries and almost none had considered buying books for their children from local bookstores.

Land confirms this:

> In South Africa ….disparities in educational standards reached by South African children persist, largely along racial lines This is partly due to socio-economic differences that also persist, as many black South African families simply do not have money to spend on books and print material. However, there are attitudinal factors at play here, since even high-earning and well-educated African families are unlikely to buy many books. My African colleagues at the university assure me that, on their priority lists, books are way below items like a flat screen TV. Also, few black families are in the habit of borrowing books regularly from libraries, which tend to be regarded by black South Africans as places to study rather than sources of free books…Interesting information in relation to attitudes to reading and literacy among socio-economically disadvantaged South Africans was yielded by another UKZN project, in which researchers visited projects funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to discover what lessons could be learned from them and shared with other development workers (Lyster, 2005)…Among challenges faced were the scarcity of easy to read children's books in African languages, and poorly translated books, unfamiliarity with the concept of library use, and participants' fear that books would be damaged in their homes (Desmond and Elfert (eds.), 2008: 62).

The books were selected and packaged according to three phases of age and language use: Early Childhood Development, Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase. The aim was to provide colourful, age-appropriate and relevant books, and the chosen source for the books was Biblionef, a book-distributing NGO specialising in African children's literature in all 11 official South African languages.

Each package consisted of six books, gradually changing from more isiXhosa to more English books along the age spectrum. A few of the packages contained Afrikaans rather than

English books, because some children were enrolled in Afrikaans-medium classes at school. Therefore, the Early Childhood Development package would consist of four isiXhosa books and two English/Afrikaans books; the Foundation Phase was a package of three isiXhosa and three English/Afrikaans books; and the Intermediate Phase a package of two isiXhosa and four English/Afrikaans books. The rationale for this was the importance of grounding young children in mother-tongue language development (in this instance, isiXhosa) while introducing a second language (in this instance, English or Afrikaans), then a gradual shift to an equal amount of isiXhosa and English/Afrikaans (bearing in mind that some of the children were enrolled in English or Afrikaans-medium classes), with finally a majority of English/Afrikaans books. This is because from Grade 4 onwards (the beginning of the Intermediate Phase), all South African children are taught in the medium of either English or Afrikaans.

The book bags were attractive and distinctive shoulder bags made from pink, brown and turquoise *shweshwe* material (a locally produced material with African motifs and patterns), with a large print of the Intsomi logo (a tree) sewn on. The different colours were used to denote the different phases outlined above.

**Effects of the intervention**

The workshops provided an opportunity for participants to give input and have discussions around the use of the resources, what their home literacy practices were looking like and how the children were benefitting from the experience.

Data from school reports in 2017, summarised into the tables below, show the children of the Intsomi Ambassadors mostly achieving above their average for English. None of them scored below 60% for English, with the exception of Yonela Nzuzo, whose father has an alcohol problem and was dismissed from the University earlier in the year. Although no hard data are available to compare marks from 2015 (when the Intsomi Project was first introduced during the course of the year) to date, the parents all expressed their satisfaction with the improvement in their children's English language ability and how they were doing at school.

| Parent | Learner | School | Grade | English March 2017 | Learner Average | English June 2017 | Learner Average | English Sept 2017 | Learner Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phumezo Dukashe | Khanya | Samuel Ntsiko Primary | 2 | 72 | 69 | 70 | 68 | 74 | 64 |
| Luleka Mhleli | Lukho | Oatlands | 2 | 58 | 58 | 52 | 58 | 60 | 54 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Preparatory School | | | | | | | |
| Siphokazi Yako | Sivuyisile | George Dickerson Primary | 2 | 63 | 59 | 68 | 64 | 66 | - |
| Siphokazi Yako | Eishle | George Dickerson | 4 | 69 | 63 | 66 | 61 | 68 | 58 |
| Thandi Ngqobhele | Wela | Ntaba Maria Primary | 3 | 60 | 67 | 63 | 69 | 63 | 56 |
| Thando Ngeju | Onwaba | Samuel Ntlebi Primary | 3 | 75 | 72 | 55 | 62 | 80 | 73 |
| Babalwa Ngoqo | Anga | George Dickerson | 3 | 63 | 56 | 65 | 64 | 67 | 64 |
| Babalwa Ngoqo | Zani | George Dickerson | 7 | 66 | 60 | 62 | 59 | 60 | 57 |
| Matthews Nzuzo | Yonela | Samuel Ntsiko | 5 | 29 | 44 | 35 | 41 | - | - |
| Precious Mdoda | Kamva | Ntaba Maria | 9 | 64 | 59 | 61 | 53 | 65 | 56 |

In addition, they felt the children readily engaged with reading on a regular basis in the home, and that important routines had been established around reading together regularly. They also indicated that it had benefitted siblings and other younger children in the household, as they would join in listening to the stories being read and so build up their vocabulary and language ability.

**Response to the intervention**

The group confirmed in their meeting at the outset of the Intsomi Project that it was the traditional coming together around stories and language that they wanted to rekindle, because there had been a hiatus between the earlier tradition of storytelling (Intsomi) by the elders (providing, *inter alia*, a basis for family relationships and language development) and today's more nuclear family homes, where schools are relied upon to provide literacy and education and the advent of television has eroded family story times.

According to O'Carroll, "Interventions that support responsive parenting, shared book reading and storytelling have both language and socio-emotional benefits" (2013: 5). This was found to be the case for the parents and children participating in the Intsomi Project, as it was reported that relationships, motivation for learning and school achievement all improved. Spedding *et al.* would concur: "If learning is influenced by the social situation, by familiarity of the task materials and by the cognitive operations associated with them, the need to ensure

all children have access to a literacy rich environment and opportunities to engage in meaningful and enjoyable experiences on a regular basis is apparent" (2007: 14).

One of the emergent outcomes is the fact that the Intsomi Ambassadors plan to start their own mobile library for children in their communities. This is in line with one of Lennie and Tacchi's principles for evaluating communication for development (2013), i.e. that there is a need to be aware of outcomes and ripple effects that go beyond, or are different from, underlying assumptions about the outcomes of initiatives and the process of social change. It is also indicative that knowledge of a particular communicative ecology is important – interactions with other parents in their streets was seen by Intsomi parents as a more effective way to communicate family literacy practices to other parents than legacy or online communication methods.

The response of the Intsomi Project participants and the role taken on by the vanguard group is indicative of a take-up that suggests two things:

(i)     That parents in black working class families are open to changing their home literacy practices, given the right resources, and will even become avid advocates; and

(ii)    That it gives credence to Land's opinion that, while it could be argued that one should not introduce unfamiliar practices into other cultures, on the other hand, "People might value an introduction to practices that support the development of literacy skills they desire for themselves and their children. Also, if we believe that it is desirable to redress race-based damaging differences in South Africa, perhaps it is justifiable and desirably transparent to at least offer a wide-open window on practices that characterise the more advantaged groups in the country" (2008: 63).

**Building group cohesion**

Although its aim was developmental in nature, the Intsomi Project did not have as an explicit aim the building of group cohesion for purposes of communication. This was an element introduced by the researcher, and facilitated by the mechanisms listed in Research Phase 2 (outlined in Chapter 3).

The theory was that utilising social networks to share information about their experience of the intervention and its effects would reinforce the literacy messages within the group and

enable them to be co-developers of media messages that would be appropriate for reaching out horizontally to people like themselves in similar communities. Pentland refers to the social network effect: how identification with a group of people increases both the trust of group members and the social pressure that the group can exert (2015: 71). This approach of giving the group of participants the opportunity to first deliberate amongst themselves about their experiences, concerns and learnings around home literacy practices and children's literacy development, before they venture into communicating with people in other communities about the issue, also leans on the concepts of bonding capital[6] (connections within groups) and bridging capital (horizontal connections across groups), as described previously.

The researcher's point of departure was that, once the Intsomi participants shared in group discussions that which they were experiencing in their homes as a result of changed literacy practices, they should be enabled to tell these stories in a way that resonated with others in similar circumstances, and bring about some form of change in those families as well. This would seem to be an effective way of spreading and sustaining efforts to draw parents in as contributors to and supporters of their children's literacy development; it aimed to empower ordinary citizens at grassroots level to share experiences, and in turn empower people that find themselves in the same situation. Their desire to start or expand the mobile library service also points to the idea that spreading ideas about family literacy are by themselves not enough; that they wanted to back this up by creating better access to books for other homes.

The Intsomi parents have begun, through a series of exploratory processes facilitated by the researcher, to engage with each other and with their wider community – the intersection of individual and community needs. The action research group extended Intsomi beyond its initial intention (of serving individual parents) to become part of a grander education narrative in Grahamstown, and in the process serve the community development approach subscribed to by RUCE.

In accordance with the framework provided by the Knight Commission, the Intsomi Project is an attempt to introduce new voices and new experiences into the information flow in particular communities, and to begin to create a shared narrative around the issue of reading and children's literacy development.

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[6] While recognising that the term 'capital', with its economistic connotations, could be problematic within a development support framework that strives to move away from modernisation parlance, the intention is to draw on the essential meaning of the concept of capital and to denote a sense of empowerment and capacity-building on the part of the participants.

**Exploring communicative ecologies**

During one of the termly workshops, the Intsomi participants were asked to complete a Media and Mobile Usage Questionnaire. From this it emerged that the forms of media most often accessed by the respondents were radio and television, with provincial or local radio stations (such as Radio Grahamstown) being the most popular. The majority of respondents indicated that they sometimes (rather than often) read print newspapers and magazines, and the most popular of the titles was the local community newspaper, *Grocott's Mail*. There were also indications that visual stimulation or interest is vital, i.e. that people are reluctant to read purely text or articles where no photographs are involved.

There were strong indications from the respondents that word of mouth and face-to-face communication in third places, especially at church gatherings, is a popular way for people to be receiving and sharing information. This was also true for taxis, as most of the Rhodes University workers use this form of public transport to get to work from the township areas.

Once it had been established (through focus group discussions) how attitudes and literacy practices had been influenced in the working class homes of the Intsomi participants by the introduction of literacy materials and guidance, the action learning group explored their communicative ecologies in more depth and did a social mapping exercise to help determine the what, where and how of the kind of media that people in the target community access and utilise.

The media forms that the Intsomi Ambassadors elected to use were thus influenced by the exploration of their communicative ecologies. This included the importance of 'third places' as effective vehicles for communication – places such as shebeens, clubs, *stokvel* gatherings, spaza shops, sports clubs and churches. Ray Oldenburg in his influential book *The Great Good Place* (first published in 1991) introduced the notion of third places as those informal or social gathering places where people meet when they are not at home (the first place) or at work (the second place).

The particular forms of media identified by the vanguard action research group as being effective vehicles for tapping into the communicative ecology of the Grahamstown East community to publicise the Intsomi Project were:

- Newspaper articles (including photographs) about the group and the Intsomi Project in the local press, especially *Grocott's Mail*, and possibly also in *Isolezwe*, the

isiXhosa community newspaper. They felt that this would be a useful way to introduce the Intsomi Project to the community, and to showcase the Intsomi Ambassadors as people from the community;

- Large full-colour A3 posters, featuring images of the participants and their children reading or playing the games together, as well as some text telling their story. These would be for distribution on the university campus (their place of work), in public places within their communities such as as churches, spaza shops, schools, preschools, taxi ranks, sports grounds and ward meetings, and possibly also in town;

- Smaller versions of the posters in the form of A5 flyers that could be handed out easily to numbers of people at churches and other community gatherings when doing presentations or having conversations;

- Hour-long radio programmes on the local radio station (Radio Grahamstown), utilising a slot that one of the members already had on a Saturday morning. Because the group felt quite strongly that they would like to reach more children, these programmes would be aimed at both parents and children; i.e. would include some children's stories (either read by the Intsomi participants or utilising pre-recorded stories available as audio files) as well as information for parents;

- Short mini-documentaries of the Intsomi Ambassadors doing literacy practices in their homes and communities that could be loaded onto YouTube. The group indicated that making a video of them engaging with Intsomi activities would be an attractive way to share information, as most people in their communities were interested in visual material and liked looking at and sharing videos;

- Starting a Facebook group called Intsomi Parents would also be useful, because this social media platform was a phenomenon growing in popularity and had a certain amount of trending value.

The social mapping exercise identified the most relevant sites for the posters to be displayed and the flyers to be distributed in their communities: at popular third places such as ward meetings, churches, savings clubs, spaza shops, taxi ranks, etc. – places where people gathered for a particular purpose or to socialise. The local newspapers to be used would be those most accessible to the particular communities from which the participants are drawn and, where possible, local columnists already writing about community issues would be asked to collaborate.

**Media production**

Through a process of developing the necessary skills in participants, making use of external sources and collaboration between the participants and me as practitioner-researcher, the relevant media was produced.

The Photojournalism lecturer in the Rhodes Journalism and Media Studies Department was approached first by the researcher to help recruit an interested student who would be willing to take on the task of photographing the seven vanguard group participants, both as a group and then individually for the A3-size posters. The researcher provided the brief to the student, which was as follows: Each of the seven vanguard group members could choose their own setting for the photo shoot – either their home, or a community setting such as a library, the park, etc. – as long as it reflected them reading with their children. She was to capture intimate literacy moments of each of the seven parents reading with their children in one of these settings. Five of the participants chose to be photographed in their homes with their children, while one chose a park and one the community library. A group photograph was taken of the Intsomi Ambassadors at a strategic spot on the Rhodes University campus (on the steps in front of the main Administration Building and iconic Clock Tower), and this accompanied the first article that appeared in the *Grocott's Mail* about the group and the Intsomi Project.

Upon completion of the photo sessions, images were selected by the researcher and the group members, and these were passed on to a Design student. She was briefed to design a full-colour A3 size poster for each of the participants that would include an image, as well as some personal accompanying text and their contact details. She chose to do this inside a frame of patterns from some of the Intsomi *shweshwe* bags, so as to provide a further link back to the project.

Based on feedback received in the group discussions with the vanguard group, the researcher composed options of text paragraphs for the participants to choose from for their posters. Each participant also put their name and personal contact number onto their poster.

The text paragraphs on the posters were, in effect, mini-stories that encapsulated what the Intsomi Project had meant for each participant. The assumption here was that recognisable community figures, coming from the same neighbourhood as those viewing the posters, and

telling their own stories, would provide an authentic message about the issue of children and adults reading together. The posters were done in both English and isiXhosa.

Examples of the text paragraphs or quotes that were used on the posters are as follows:

> *Since joining the Intsomi project in 2015, I have been reading with my children almost every day. I have realised that I can also play a role in developing my children's language and reading skills, by regularly talking, reading and telling stories to them at home.* (Babalwa Ngoqo)

> *Since joining the Intsomi project in 2015, I have discovered the joy of reading with my child. My daughter and I have so much fun reading together. When you find a story that you enjoy together it's like magic – my little girl now insists on a bedtime story every night.* (Luleka Mhleli)

> *The Intsomi project has shown me how much children enjoy books and reading. All the children in my neighbourhood come to our house because of the books and stories and games. Our children are hungry for this.* (Matthews Nzozo)

> *Since joining the Intsomi project in 2015, I have realised again the value of reading to and with our children. My little one loves his local library in Fingo – it's free and he can get new books every week. I try and go with him as often as I can.* (Phumezo Dukashe)

> *I joined the Intsomi project in 2015 and have since been reading with my child almost every day, and he also reads on his own now. It has made a big difference to his school work and his language skills have improved so much, especially in English.* (Precious Mdoda)

> *The children in my home love the books I bring home to read. It's a great way of spending time together and they all join in now, even the ones that were shy in the beginning. It is also helping them with their language skills at school, where they have to learn in English.* (Siphokazi Yako)

> *I feel so proud of what my child has achieved since I joined the Intsomi project and started reading to her regularly. I am now very aware of how important it is for children to have access to lots of reading books, at home and at school.* (Thandi Ngqobhele)

Each poster then also had the following paragraph that was common to all of them:

> *I wish everyone in the community could know what a difference it makes if you regularly read and tell stories together with your children at home. It builds up skills and relationships, especially when they are young.*

The posters were printed and each participant was given four or five posters to display wherever they chose to. They were also given about twenty flyers each to hand out wherever or whenever they thought it would be useful for purposes of talking about the Intsomi Project.

The next step in the media production process was to commission fourth-year Television Journalism students, via their lecturer, to make short 5-minute videos of at least three of the Intsomi Ambassadors. Their brief was to try and capture these Intsomi participants together with their children, in their homes or other chosen settings, in ways that reflected their relationship around reading. Three participants –Thandi Ngqobhele, Phumezo Dukashe and Luleka Mhleli – were first interviewed by the students and then the videos were shot on location in the township with them. These three were now acting as a kind of 'vanguard of the vanguard'.

The videos were subsequently screened at a special showing organised on the University campus, where the work of senior Journalism students was showcased around Digital Storytelling as well as the Intsomi Project. The videos were also uploaded onto YouTube and the RUCE Facebook Page and elicited a number of reactions from fellow workers of the three Ambassadors. In the case of Phumezo Dukashe, the secretary of the Department where he works as a cleaner also circulated the video amongst all academic and other support staff members of the Department. It resulted in him having a much higher profile in his workplace, as well as recognition of the leadership role that he was playing with regard to literacy development. The videos were subsequently condensed in size in order for the Intsomis to be able to share it on their phones or other similar platforms.

Alongside the production of the videos, a process was embarked upon with the Rhodes Radio Journalism lecturer and his third year students. The aim was to produce Intsomi radio programmes for airing on a Saturday morning, to capitalise on a communicative ecology which indicated a strong listenership for Radio Grahamstown in the township areas and neighbourhoods where the Intsomi Ambassadors reside.

The programmes followed a certain format in order to appeal to both adults (parents, grandparents and caregivers) and children. This meant that there was a combination of recorded stories or audiobook files for the children and interview content for the adults. The interviews were mostly with the Intsomi Ambassadors (in both isiXhosa and English), but there were also some interviews with the researcher, the project co-ordinator and other literacy role players and storytellers in Grahamstown.

The plan going forward is to embed the Intsomi radio programmes more formally into the curriculum of the Rhodes Radio Journalism students as a service learning project and also to involve the campus radio station, Rhodes Music Radio. Negotiations have been entered

into by the Radio Journalism lecturer with local taxi associations, who have indicated their willingness to play recordings of the Intsomi programmes in their taxis for passengers to listen to. The net will be also cast further to include storytellers from other areas of the Eastern Cape and South Africa, and there is the possibility of syndicating the programmes for use by other radio stations.

**Digital connectivity**

What is termed the 'digital divide' – i.e. the differential access that people have to the Internet, online information and communication platforms in line with their socio-economic status – is, in some way, evident in the lives of this group of Intsomi participants. They stand on the cusp between traditional forms of communication and the communication fostered by newer technologies such as cell phones and computers. For example, although all of them are in possession of a cell phone, about fifty percent of them do not yet have smartphones that can access a range of different applications (apps) and perform functions such as searching for online content.

One of the interesting aspects of the Intsomi project was the thrust to determine which of the group of 26 had access to the WiFi facility on Rhodes University campus called Eduroam (available on most higher education campuses in South Africa), and to arrange access where it was lacking. This would be significant not only in terms of what they could access while at work or on campus, but also because another initiative by the Vice-Chancellor aimed to make the whole of Grahamstown a free WiFi zone, or at least provide it to the libraries in the town. It would mean that the group members could also access literacy resources within their communities and during times when they are not at work.

Although some of the group members already had Eduroam access, most did not, and had to be supported in the process, which entailed having to get letters from the Human Resources Division and then going to the Information Technology Support division to get registered. Subsequent enrolments in the Intsomi programme in 2016 and 2017 had pushed the group number up to 121, and there was some resistance from the University's IT Division on granting all these workers access to Eduroam. They cited fears of making the system vulnerable, insufficient administration capacity and there being no need ostensibly for these workers to have access to Eduroam in order to do their work. This seemed to be evidence of how the digital divide is perpetuated, through deeming some eligible for, or worthy of, access to digital technology and others not, based on their socio-economic status.

Of the respondents to the initial media and mobile usage questionnaire, all but one owned a mobile phone. This was reasonably significant, given that the participants are representative of workers in the lower income bracket (cleaners, gardeners, etc.). With regard to the usage of their mobile phones, WhatsApp was a popular choice, as was the sharing of music and videos on their phones.

About half of them had e-mail accounts, mostly created through access at the workplace. Very few indicated that they actively access the Internet or other online content via computers, possibly because they have limited access to these devices.

What is of interest is the fact that two-thirds of the respondents were not utilising Facebook at that stage, whereas eighteen months later, two-thirds of the greater Intsomi group (numbering 120) were members of the Intsomi Parents Facebook group. There are a growing number of people joining, and being interested in, the Facebook group, many of them not formally part of the Project at present. This is indicative of the efforts made by the Intsomi Ambassadors – the group leader in particular – as well as the RUCE project co-ordinator, to promote the Intsomi Project via Facebook, as there is no other way to join the group on Facebook other than by invitation/approval. Whenever the group leader had an opportunity to speak in public or make a presentation, he would mention the Intsomi Parents Facebook page. It could also be as a result of growing numbers of smart phones that allow Facebook access via phones, as well as larger numbers of workers having access to free WiFi through the University's Eduroam facility (something that the Project lobbied for). Although not a great deal of active posting has happened to date, it is anticipated that this might also grow as the profile of the Project increases and more links to online reading and literacy resources are added.

**Key informant interviews**

The study aimed to use the Participatory Action Research approach with the group of seven parents that were nominated by their fellow participants to serve as their representatives on an action learning group (the group that labelled themselves the Intsomi Ambassadors). In line with the recommendation by Chaudry in the Knight Commission Report, where he talks about informing, inspiring and involving communities (see Chapter 3), this group would need to **inform** their communities of the educational challenges and opportunities faced by their children, **inspire** them to believe that there is something they can do to help and support the children and **involve** them in acting on the information.

As a major source of findings for the action research, I engaged in in-depth interviews with six of the vanguard group members. What follows in Table 1 and 2 are thick descriptions of their thoughts and experiences; while there are common threads running through all the interviews, of interest is the fact that each of them came up with a unique idea or perspective on how to take the initiative forward.

Table 1:

| NAME and OCCUPATION | WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE INTSOMI INITIATIVE? | WHAT HAS IT MEANT FOR THEM PERSONALLY? | WHAT PROVIDES SUPPORT OR MOTIVATION? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thandi Mgqobhele: Cleaner in the Drama Dept.<br><br>Daughter in Grade 3 at an English-medium school on the outskirts of the Grahamstown township area | Has significantly improved her child's learning skills, her confidence in speaking English, her language marks at school and her achievements in spelling tests (now mostly 100%).<br>The articles in the local newspaper had been good exposure and people had responded well to the broadcasts on Radio Grahamstown. This had been particularly helpful because many people, including children, listened to the radio rather than using other forms of media.<br>The Intsomi Facebook page had been really helpful in spreading the message about the project and generating an interest amongst parents, especially those who work at Rhodes. It was helping to recruit more members for the Intsomi Project and also creating awareness about the activities of the Project with supervisors and other University staff. | The Intsomi experience, coupled with a deep religiosity and a drive to build up her community and strengthen her child as well as other children, has led Mgqobhele to become a literacy activist in her community and in her work environment.<br>As a literacy activist, she sees her role as that of sharing information, e.g. about the township-based Youth Hub and it's computer/online facilities, about the library services available in the township areas, and about how to download educational games and stories from free sites on cell phones. She also sees a role for herself in networking and mobilising people in her community to play a role in supporting their children's education through regular reading and the support of literacy practices at home. Mgqobhele has been promoted to the position of Supervisor and is planning on taking further her own studies. | Feels supported in her role as a literacy activist through the media that has been produced, as well as being part of the Intsomi vanguard group, and being publicly recognised for her role as a parent leader through an award from Rhodes University's Community Engagement Office. |
| Luleka Mhleli:<br>Catering Supervisor<br><br>Daughter in Grade 2 at an ex-Model C school in Grahamstown | An outstanding feature of the Intsomi Projects has been the *shweshwe* shoulder bags and the books that they contain. The bags attract interest because they are colourful, made from indigenous (locally produced) material with African motifs, and contain the Intsomi logo (a tree). The books themselves are also a drawcard, because they are in different languages – including the township lingua franca which is isiXhosa – and are | Her driving force in becoming a literacy activist has been the fact that she has seen the results in her own child, and in particular how their relationship has improved. Her daughter now insists on being read a story every night.<br> As a mother, she wants this for other children as well, and for them also to benefit. She feels this presents an opportunity for her and her community to build the future of children in Grahamstown. | Feels supported and strengthened by being one of the Intsomi Ambassadors. Fellow workers in particular are recognising her for the work she does and as a parent leader; many have watched the video on YouTube via the Community Engagement Facebook page and have said, "We love what you are doing — well done".<br>This correlates with the responses that she has had to her posters, which is not necessarily an immediate change in behaviour, but rather the recognition of someone in their community as |

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| | mostly African-based stories that have been selected to be age-appropriate to the different levels of the children. | | taking the lead and demonstrating a particular kind of interaction with children. |
| Phumezo Dukashe: Cleaner and General Assistant in the Computer Science and Information Systems Dept. Daughter in Grade 3 at an isiXhosa/English medium school in Grahamstown township area | His participation in the project, which has afforded him the opportunity to take leadership and be part of a community-building project that makes a difference to his society.<br><br>The open Intsomi Parents Facebook page was proving helpful, because if people asked about the project he could encourage them to join the Facebook group and pick up ideas from there (especially if they were not in a position to join the Intsomi Project at Rhodes and/or did not have time to take their children to libraries). | His Intsomi participation had made him feel good about himself and helped him to make new friends and build new relationships; for example interacting with the teachers at a preschool in his community, who had invited him to be the guest speaker at their year-end event because of his involvement with the Intsomi Project (which they had picked up from a newspaper article and photograph in the local press about the Intsomi Ambassadors).<br><br>Inspired by the Intsomi Project, he has started buying second-hand books for his daughter from the local Hospice Shop. | The video has been helpful in that he was able to circulate it in his Department where he works and, in this way, raise awareness about the Intsomi Project and his involvement. This, together with receiving a certificate as a Parent Leader at the Community Engagement Awards Evening, has done much to reinforce his role as a change agent. He has been promoted to a Supervisor position. |
| Siphokazi Yako: Cleaner in a Rhodes University residence Two daughters, in Grade 2 and Grade 4, in an English/Afrikaans medium school in the formerly designated Coloured area of Grahamstown | Yako is of the opinion that the Intsomi Project has been hugely instrumental in her children's academic achievements, because of the books that were brought home and the information she received about supporting her child's educational development. Since the inception of Intsomi, her elder daughter has twice been awarded academic prizes at the school's Prize Giving, made more remarkable by the fact that she is in an Afrikaans-medium class in spite of Afrikaans being virtually a third language for her. Her younger daughter is now also able to read by herself and just asks her mother what certain words mean. Her children also frequently use the books to play "school" with their friends. | Her attitude towards children has changed: "I never knew that working with kids could be so lovely," she explained. She now sees herself as a literacy activist and seeks to influence other parents. Some, she feels, are easier to reach than others | The building up of knowledge about children's literacy development has been particularly significant: "We grew as individuals and in our knowledge – now we can say we are experts!" |

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| Babalwa Ngoqo:<br>Cleaner in the Sol Plaatjie Institute at Rhodes University<br><br>Four children, ranging in age from 6 months to 13 years. | Helped Ngoqo's children to improve their marks at school and develop both their English and Afrikaans language ability (one of her daughters is in an English-medium class and the other in an Afrikaans-medium class, neither of which is their home language).<br>Even the 4-year old was speaking confidently and liked engaging with the books, identifying shapes and colours, and joining in with the Wordworks games where possible.<br><br>The Intsomi Parents Facebook page was proving popular and numbers of people were joining up, even from areas outside of Grahamstown. | Had gained much from the Intsomi Project by way of knowledge regarding children's literacy development, communication processes, and how to help other people to get involved in reading and supporting their children at home.<br>Sees herself as a literacy activist in her community and says it is very important to volunteer involvement in the things that you care about.<br><br>She felt supported in her role as a literacy activist (by friends, family and the workplace) to the point that she could see herself writing her own book to tell her story about how she got involved with the Intsomi Project and what it has meant for her family, as well as about the future of children in her community and the country. | The Parent Leader awards that had been given to the vanguard group had helped greatly to enhance their status and the status of the Intsomi Project: "People could see that this is not a joke, this is serious."<br>The Intsomi radio programmes had also helped to promote the project, since people in her community listen regularly to Radio Grahamstown. |
| Precious Mdoda:<br>Catering Supervisor at the Senior Common Room, Rhodes University<br><br>Five sons, the youngest of whom is in Grade 9 at a Higher Primary School in the Grahamstown township | The Intsomi programme had helped her youngest son to steadily improve his marks every quarter, and the regular reading of the books every day had also got him into the habit of attending to his school homework every day. "He just bought that thing from Intsomi and does it now. He is reading for the senior phase because he can work independently now." | Mdoda expressed a strong interest in working with other children and parents in her area in the future, especially when she retires: "The Intsomi Project stole my heart; to work with children and help them."<br>Her son now helps other children in the neighbourhood with their reading and homework.<br>Since the project started, she had also started buying the local newspaper for him to read. | Takes huge pride in being part of the Intsomi Project, because it had made her get so much closer to her son and strengthened their relationship to talk about problems and have all manner of conversations, built on the time they shared together around the Intsomi books. |

Table 2:

| NAME | WHAT INTERACTIONS TOOK PLACE AROUND THE INTSOMI PROJECT? | WHAT SUGGESTIONS/PROPOSALS DO YOU HAVE FOR TAKING THE PROJECT FORWARD? |
|---|---|---|
| Thandi Mgqobhele | Put posters up at local spaza shops, her church, her daughter's school and her niece's school.<br>Teachers at those schools requested the poster in small flyer form so that each learner and teacher could be given one that they could take home and/or carry around.<br><br>Two of her friends and neighbours spoke to the children at their Sunday School about the Intsomi Project and told them to contact Mgqobhele for more information if they were interested.<br><br>Influenced her sister, who serves on the School Governing Body where her niece attends, to ask questions about the amount of reading material that the school purchases for learners. | T-shirts identifying the Intsomi Ambassadors would be very helpful. Envisages the "team" going around the Grahamstown township areas, and other more rural areas, talking about Intsomi and mobilising parents. Possibly a big mobilisation during Children's Month, where they would visit a number of schools.<br>Although she has been able to influence friends, neighbours, teachers, fellow church members and other Rhodes workers, thinks that the group of Intsomi Ambassadors should be increased to extend the influence.<br><br>Further iterations of the project would include broader distribution of the Intsomi Posters to supermarkets and other shops in town that attract a lot of traffic.<br><br>Particularly emphatic about the need for library and other information services to be extended to reach all areas of the township. In this regard, she has engaged in conversation with the local municipal librarian in charge of the Mobile Library, in order to lobby for the service to be extended. |
| Luleka Mhleli | When people enquired about the book bag that she was carrying, she would show them the books and tell them about the Intsomi Project and the benefits of reading to their children. If those enquiring were fellow workers at Rhodes, she would encourage them to sign up as a member of Intsomi. Otherwise she would encourage them to join their children up to their nearest library.<br><br>She is mostly reaching other children in her neighbourhood, and so possibly the adults through them. The children come into her home and share in the books, and then go home and tell their parents what they have been doing. The mother of one of her daughter's friends asked her for her Intsomi poster so that she could put it up in her community.<br><br>Put poster up at her daughter's school in town, as well as in other communities such as a spaza shop in Phumlani and a crèche in Joza. | According to Mhleli, the initiative is broadening all the time and she is excited at what can be achieved: "If we (the vanguard group) put ourselves in, if we commit, we will see the progress and the results." She suggests that members of the group could drive around the various areas of the township and speak over a loudhailer to say who they are and what the Intsomi project is, and encourage people to join their local libraries.<br>They could also indicate a spot where they might be handing out free books and more information, i.e. a 'pop-up' bookstore.<br>Mhleli felt that this grassroots communication should go hand-in-hand with more national, billboard-type campaigns that raise awareness about the issue.<br><br>Expressed the wish that community libraries should open on Saturday mornings, and said she needed more information and training to help guide people into online reading resources. |
| Phumezo Dukashe | Lent some of the Intsomi books to a Sunday School teacher at his church to read to the children.<br>He is viewed in his community as someone in his community whom children can be sent to for help with their homework and to be read to; in this | As many people as possible should join the Intsomi Project so that they can have the experience of books in the home and reading to their children. He feels the time has come for adults/parents to be involved in their children's education.<br><br>As a volunteer presenter for Radio Grahamstown, |

| | way he is reaching other children and not necessarily adults, but sees this as necessary, because children need to be inspired to love books and reading.<br><br>Put his poster up in a couple of places around his community (e.g., at church, the taxi rank, his child's school) and also took a photo of the poster and made it his WhatsApp profile picture.<br><br>Downloaded the video of himself from YouTube on to a flash stick and showed it to a range of people on his laptop. This includes his daughter's teacher, the participants in a local sports development project and a teacher at a local township high school. His own children have watched it over and over and, according to him, their friends have become envious and also want to "be like the children in the video".<br><br>Arranged for the Intsomi Ambassadors to do a talk for a parents' evening at a preschool in the township area, and collected books for donation. | Dukashe has a particular interest in the radio sector and would like to see an expansion in the role that radio plays in promoting Intsomi. He envisages possible partnerships with that part of the national Nal'ibali campaign that runs children's radio stories as part of their media campaign, and also other SABC programmes.<br><br>The Intsomi Ambassadors could approach the local newspaper to advertise their project and have a page where parents could ask questions, give their opinions, share experiences, etc.<br><br>Have more events such as the talk and book donation they did at the Raglan Road Preschool for parents.<br><br>Intsomi events and workshops could be put on the University's Toplist platform, which is sent out to all staff from the central Communications Department. He believes this would pique the interest of all the staff at the University, including academics and managerial staff, and that a stronger and more cohesive effort could be built around supporting the literacy development of all the children in the town. It would also raise the profile of the Intsomi Project in the process and make it more attractive for people to join. |
| Siphokazi Yako | Put the posters up in the area where she lives and also at a spaza shop that is frequented by many people in her area. Their response was to say, "What's happening? Are you famous now?" Upon which she would explain about her involvement with the Intsomi Project and what it has meant for her and her children.<br>Has encouraged those who work at Rhodes University to also join the project; otherwise advises people to join the library and get books for their children.<br>Shared sites such as Nal'ibali that she has used to download free stories.<br>Some people catch on quickly and others take time: "I always tell people to think about how they can help their child. Can the child read on his or her own or do they need to be read to?" | Yako would like the opportunity to advance her own studies and work opportunities, and she feels the Intsomi Project had helped her to tackle this again.<br><br>Felt that it would be useful for the management of divisions (at the University) to get more involved in the Intsomi Project in order to understand and support it.<br><br>Had the idea that it would be useful for the Intsomi Ambassadors to go to schools and interact with the teachers, to share experiences around reading and to exchange ideas on how to help the children. |
| Babalwa Ngoqo | Put her posters up at her children's school, her nearest library and at her church, and people were communicating with her on an ongoing basis regarding the reading project. She had also shared information with the members of her *stokvel* (savings group).<br>Many people in her community were requesting a mobile library service or even pop-up gazebo or tent where they could obtain books, as libraries are not always within walking distance or not | Ngoqo operates a crèche in her backyard and is thinking of opening it up on Saturdays to help support children with reading and studying. She had not thought to communicate with the parents of the crèche children, because she doesn't see them when they drop and fetch the children; however, she was very receptive to the idea of having a few parent sessions where she could share information about early literacy and perhaps operate a small lending system.<br><br>She was very positive about taking the project forward, and felt that it could help to build literacy from the bottom |

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| | open at convenient times.<br><br>Had used the books in the Sunday School classes at her church, and had downloaded free Nal'ibali stories from the computer at the Rhodes Community Engagement Office onto a flash stick, which she connected to her television at home so that her children could listen to the stories. | up, and so eventually influence results at high school level. "We (the Eastern Cape) should aim to be in the top five provinces of the country for Matric results, not at the bottom. The whole of South Africa can gain a lot in this programme." Keen to see the project at least also expand to the rural areas around Grahamstown, where people did not have the same opportunities as those in town or working at Rhodes University.<br><br>She dreams of the Intsomi Project being on national television ("like Nal'ibali or Gcina Mhlope"), and felt the project should advertise more actively on social media, mainly through WhatsApp and Facebook. |
| Precious Mdoda | Put her posters up at her church and at two spaza shops in her area, where people congregate and many would see it.<br>Also put them up at her workplace and in the passageway to the facility that she manages, so that numbers of Rhodes workers could see it when passing by. As a result, there have been many Rhodes worker colleagues inquiring about the Intsomi Project and expressing an interest to join.<br><br>Had also approached her son's old preschool to ask if the two of them could do a presentation to the parents about the Intsomi Project and their experience. This was done after she and the other Intsomi Ambassadors had done a presentation at another preschool as part of their initial outreach efforts. | Expressed a strong interest in working with other children and parents in her area in the future, especially when she retires.<br>She is also aiming to help the children at her Sunday School and has a vision to take the whole project forward through the structures of her church, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, of which there are six societies in Grahamstown East alone, that form part of a larger district.<br>She would like to tell her story and spread the news about what changes can be brought about when adults and children read and write together, and welcomed the idea of a video to support her in this process. "I wish to start by volunteering with the church first and then take it from there." |

The themes emanating from the in-depth interviews with the Intsomi vanguard group could be clustered around the following issues:

- The impulse to reach more children
- Tapping into communicative ecologies
- Private and public interest
- Empowerment
- Entering the public sphere

**The impulse to reach more children**

Almost all the participants reported other children coming to their homes to participate in literacy activities, because of the availability of the books and games, or they gave examples of how they had shared the books.

There are critical moments in this research that indicate a fundamental shift on the part of participants with regard to identity, consciousness and relationships. In particular, a shift happened in how they experience parenthood and perceive themselves as parents, and in their relationship to their children, but also how they view themselves as citizens and in relation to their communities. The Intsomi intervention has helped them to see what is possible and to redefine their role as parents firstly, and then to consider how they can play the role of change agents for other children and families. "I never knew how much fun it could be to work with children," was a telling comment from one of the key informants; "The Intsomi Project stole my heart to work with children and help them," was another. This relates to the politics of pleasure, and the importance of attending to the basic human need for pleasurable or rewarding activity at an individual level before, or at least alongside, the impetus for civic responsibility. According to Desmond, "Those (family literacy) projects that work closely with families report that both the adults and the children benefit from the entertaining and educational activities that are suggested" (2008: 39).

In traditional societies, communitarianism and the small scale of living arrangements meant that everyone was naturally involved in everyone else's business, and hence also the old saying that "it takes a village to raise a child", which points to the shared nature of child-minding and the socialisation of children. In modernised and more urban societies, many of these communal ties have been broken, but the mantle of being responsible for their own children has not necessarily been taken on by working class parents in individual households, or at least not to the same degree as what Wright describes as, "the intensive individual intellectual coaching and encouragement that educated urban parents lavish on their offspring almost from birth" (2012: 15). What the Intsomi Project has done is introduce to parents the wherewithal to interact with their children around an activity (the reading of books and playing of games together) that becomes part of their home routine, introduces them to the pleasure of sharing books and stories with their children, builds relationships and ultimately contributes to the children's literacy development. Once this fundamental shift took place for them, the impulse was then to say, "We want this for all children". In this way, it begins to

build a bridge between the way of life in small-scale, traditional societies and modernised societies with individual households. According to Christians, "Communitarianism is a normative model that serves as an antidote to individualistic liberalism. It presumes that human identity is constituted through the social realm. We are born into a socio-cultural universe where values, moral commitments and existential meanings are negotiated dialogically. Fulfilment is never achieved in isolation, but only through human bonding at the epicentre of social formation" (2004: 236).

**Tapping into communicative ecologies**

While it can be argued that civic engagement has both private and public benefit for individuals, the impulse for civic engagement needs to be rooted in something; the journey to the discovery of agency needs to begin somewhere. This may require a particular (external) intervention or initiative, or just some 'root powder' to stimulate the growth. Working in favour of civic engagement for the Intsomi Ambassadors is the trend in their communities for quite large-scale participation in church groups, labour unions and societal groups such as *stokvels,* or savings groups. This is in contrast with Western countries, such as the United States, where Putnam's research showed there had mostly been a decline in such civic engagement alongside a growth in nominal membership of large national associations (1995). While there has seemingly been a decline in political participation in South Africa in the post-apartheid era, there are other civic engagements that are still going strong in some communities and where face-to-face, interpersonal communication is still significant. This meant that the Intsomi Ambassadors could have a direct influence on the members of groups where they are actively involved, and the indications are that they have indeed used these platforms to speak about the Intsomi project and the promotion of children's literacy development.

Shopping in the township areas is done largely at small neighbourhood spaza shops, which are both important gathering points for residents and places to get information or share news (witness a number of the Intsomi Ambassadors putting up their posters at spaza shops), while residents also have to pass by one another's houses when walking to the spaza shop.

Given that houses in the township areas are situated close to each other, and individual transport is not as readily available, there is also more potential for people in the same neighbourhood to communicate with each other and for the children to spend time playing together.

**Private and public interest**

One of the themes emanating from the key informant interviews was the desire on the part of the Intsomi Ambassadors to further their own education. This is in keeping with the findings of Desmond and Elfert that, "Family literacy does not only enhance literacy skills but also has wider effects. It can bring about changes in the school culture and in relationships within families. Evaluations have shown that family literacy increases the self-confidence of parents and often is the entry point for their re-engagement in education. Many parents continue with further education opportunities after participating in a family literacy programme" (2008: vii).

There is evidence from the interviews with the Intsomi Ambassadors that their involvement in the Intsomi Project has enhanced both their private prospects for individual and familial development and their public life. This is an extremely important link to make: change promoted at grassroots level is likely to be most effective when the benefits felt by individuals (for themselves and/or their children and families) are translated into them communicating this to others in order to share or spread the benefits.

If people experience something first-hand, such as the effects of the Intsomi Project on their children's language development, scholastic achievement and the parent-child relationships, there is a basis for developing their agency and supporting them as literacy activists. It taps into their humanitarian spirit and the impulse for participation in the public sphere; it represents an investment into human capital and into people's capacity for agency, running counter to a narrative of demand and delivery that is often deliberately created through a system of (political) patriarchy.[7] White is of the opinion that, "It also means reorganizing the whole system of services from depending on paternalistic government agencies to depending on a people's organization that makes certain that the services are provided because you have a right to them. Among these rights are the right to information and the right to communicate" (2004: 23).

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[7] Westaway (2015) is of the opinion that whilst there are some two and half million South Africans who benefit from state patronage, at least twelve times that number (thirty million) have come to benefit from state welfare of one description or another under President Zuma's regime. This goes beyond the child support grants, disability grants and pensions to include EPWP and CWP 'wages', RDP houses and other forms of state assistance. Free schooling and the school feeding schemes are also forms of welfare.

**Empowerment**

According to Melkote and Steeves, "empowerment is the mechanism by which individuals, organisations and communities gain control and mastery over social and economic conditions, over political processes, and over their own stories" (2001: 355), and they argue that empowerment is a process well suited to deal with social change because "it privileges multiple voices and perspectives and truly facilitates equal sharing of knowledge and solution alternatives among the participants in the process" (2001:365).

The problematic effect of modernisation, and literacy's place in that, lies in the balance between the need for children to obtain fluency in reading and writing through the support of teachers, parents and other role players on the one hand, and on the other hand the need for a developmentally-sensitive approach that recognises the value of existing practices such as orality and storytelling. To steer, as it were, another course – one which avoids literacy as a classic project or vehicle of modernisation, or criticism from dependency theorists.

Where technology is tending to leapfrog the reading culture and move people straight from orality into forms of media such as television and cell phones, the Intsomi initiative appears to provide an important bridge that supports children in developing reading and writing skills, and enables parents to include the development of a reading culture as one part of the suite of literacies in their homes.

This use of different forms of literacy is also reflected in the communicative ecology of the Intsomi parent activists, which was a combination of written and oral communication, of traditional media, social media and word of mouth.

Empowerment results from being enabled to do something and from personally experiencing its effects. This is what has happened to the Intsomi parents that have taken books home to their children to read on a regular basis. It has been a revelation to all concerned to see just how much of a difference the introduction of resources directly into homes has made. This speaks to the dearth of resources that exists in lower income homes, but also to the fact that easy access plays a key role. Most of these participants have some access to community libraries, but did not have the time or inclination to join their children up as members, nor do they have the disposable income to buy books for their children. None of the township-based libraries are open on weekends and most close before working parents return from work, making access difficult. Added to this is the fact that most schools in these disadvantaged

areas are themselves very short of reading material for learners, and none is sent home, or certainly not on a regular basis. Only slightly more than half (54%) of the learners tested in the 2016 PIRLS Assessment had access to classroom libraries, and where they did, those learners had a higher mean score at 332 points (Howie *et al,* 2017: 9).

While schools and education experts bemoan the fact that parents are not more involved in supporting their children's education, these complaining voices come from a position of authority and seem to demand performance without heeding what might be needed in terms of equipping, resourcing or empowering people at grassroots level. In the words of education researcher Nic Spaull, "You can't hold people accountable for that which they cannot do" (2017).

A key factor, therefore, appears to have been the introduction of the books as reading resources directly into homes, via the parents who had convenient access to the RUCE offices to exchange books and make use of the book bags. This "access made easy" approach has contributed significantly to the parents experiencing first-hand the effects of reading at home with their children, and, in turn, this experience has motivated them to speak about it to others. It addresses the barriers to literacy practices at the micro level —i.e. the shortage of books and reading materials in homes — where the meso level barriers might be lack of access to libraries in their communities and/or lack of books and reading resources in the schools that the children attend, and the macro barriers would include the inherited socio-economic circumstances and the lack of a reading culture.

To underscore the value of the direct introduction of the books into homes, it might be useful to contrast it with something like the Nal'íbali Reading for Enjoyment campaign, which has been operational since 2013 across five provinces in South Africa. While providing multi-lingual reading resources in the form of newspaper supplements with cut-out stories, these resources have had some difficulty finding their way into homes in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The supplements are produced as part of large daily or weekly newspapers (such as *The Herald*, *Daily Dispatch* and *Sunday Times*) that do not have widespread readership in these particular communities, probably largely due to cost. They do not currently form a significant part of the target group's communicative ecology. So while through Nal'ibali there has been a mediatisation of these cultural products of reading (the campaign also makes use of radio stories and online resources), the mediation aspect of adults reading with children has been missing.

Successfully established parenting programmes such as the Home-School Partnership programme developed by the Wordworks literacy organisation, place a strong emphasis on the basics of home support practices such as "good talking time". For example, there is an exercise where they make big dice with the words "What?", "Where?", "When?", "How?", "Who?' and "Why?' that are intended to be used as a conversation starter with children when they get home from school. The aim is to shift parents into a different paradigm with regard to the support of their children's education and literacy development. This recognises that while the literacy attainment figures quoted at the beginning of the thesis point to a crisis in children's literacy, there are more fundamental or underlying issues that need to be addressed with regard to how children are viewed and who takes responsibility for their development and education. It is critical for parents to see their role as one of the stakeholders contributing to their children's development, but also for them to be enabled to do so and to begin enjoying doing so.

The authenticity of stories that are told and experiences that are shared, whether digitally or face-to-face, relies on the communication being based on the genuine and felt experience of the storyteller — hence the personalised quotes on the public posters, where the Intsomis enticed others to find out more by sharing their own authentic experiences. The images all captured them in intimate poses with their children, reading together, and enhanced their reputations as being people that actively cared about children. This was backed up by the radio programmes aired on local station Radio Grahamstown, the videos, the newspaper articles in local newspapers and the Facebook page.

Interviews done by Rhodes Psychology Honours students with parents, who have been part of parenting workshops at a preschool centre in Grahamstown, reveal some of the needs that parents have for information and support in order to play their role. Some of the quotes from parents were: "I didn't realise it was okay to praise my son; I was afraid it would make him soft"; "I didn't realise my child knew his colours and could count"; "I used to chase away my child while I was cooking, but now I involve him in counting and measuring." Similarly, volunteers working with children on a literacy programme report that much better results are achieved with the children once meetings have been held with the parents and they have been equipped with Literacy Game Packs to take home and play with their children.

What we do need to take into account is that the harsh socio-economic class realities and living conditions of people such as the Intsomi Ambassadors can influence their ability to

participate in initiatives and play their role as activists. For some more than others, life gets in the way and there are issues that demand attention or detract from the ability to volunteer and get involved in activism. An example of this is Siphokazi Yako, who was less able to participate in Intsomi vanguard activities due to being responsible for nursing her sick grandmother, who lives in the house with them. However, I would like to take issue with a statement by Mmotlane *et al.* in an article on parental participation that says, "The finding that respondents in the high Living Standards Measure (LSM) are more likely to participate than those in the low and medium LSM is also consistent with existing literature which suggests that socio-economic class determines parental participation" (2009: 536). While this might statistically be the case, it does not mean that it needs to remain a determinant or that it can't change, given the right interventions (i.e. ones that provide support to parents in a way that empowers them to create activism amongst themselves rather than top-down messaging).

The role of parents or significant adult caregivers is key in mediating children's reading experiences and practices; it is not something that happens automatically, especially not in resource-deprived environments. Once children have built up confidence and enjoyment around reading, the habit is likely to continue, but this is built up over time. And once the habit is established, children are likely to seek out other means of accessing books, for instance through their local library, in their classrooms or even on their cell phones.

The adults themselves need to explore their perceptions and experiences of literacy in order to act as role models and be authentic purveyors of the joys and benefits of reading and writing, both to their children and as literacy activists in their communities. With regard to the issue of the adults' own development or awareness of their literary identities, it has been enlightening to note the responses from the Intsomi participants. They indicated that they would like access to reading materials for themselves, and prompted the Director of Community Engagement at Rhodes to negotiate with the Director of Library Services to create a special reading corner in the Rhodes library for these staff members and to purchase books, magazines and reading material of their choice. Their response to the game packs that were issued was also significant. The packs were opened and the parents were given the opportunity to play the word games themselves, in pairs of two, in order to see how they work. It became evident that the facilitators needed to move really slowly with the instructions, and to provide personalised guidance, as many of the parents were not familiar with games of this nature and had possibly not played games like this before. They needed to experience it for themselves in order to feel confident about playing it with their children.

This links into New Literacy Studies and the social uses of literacy, where there is a strong emphasis on the Freirean approach of grassroots empowerment and meaning-making. A seminal volume of papers on the Social Uses of Literacy in South Africa was produced in the 90s (Prinsloo and Breier (eds.), 1996) with the common conclusion that literacy had to make sense to people in their own environments, and be relatable to their own needs, in order to become significant. Critical literacy theorists who have located themselves within the field of New Literacy Studies argue for the need to view literacy as a social practice that takes on different forms in different spaces and for different reasons: "The ethnographic approach to literacy in development derives from recent theoretical approaches which argue that literacy is not just a set of uniform 'technical skills' to be imparted to those lacking them – the 'autonomous' model – but rather that there are multiple literacies in communities and that literacy practices are socially embedded" (Street, 2001: 2).

The key informants, or vanguard group members, have indicated that they have made these key shifts in consciousness and in relationships with their children, and that this has built their agency, supported by the communication measures and media forms that were put in place by way of development support communication.

## Entering the public sphere

The Intsomi Ambassadors have had a gradual introduction into the public sphere at the level of their community (micro level), through traditional forms of media such as newspaper articles about them and individual posters placed at key sites in their community, as well as word-of-mouth conversations with neighbours, friends, fellow church-goers or club members and travelling companions. At times, these conversations were sparked by the Intsomi book bags they were carrying; at other times it was because of the posters or because of children being attracted to their homes on the basis of the books and games. Gradually, then, by virtue of exposure in public (and private) places, coupled with their felt experiences and the support of media products, the targets of change became the agents of change. Further steps in this process could involve the participants entering the general public sphere at a more macro level, to highlight the importance of parental roles and home literacy practices (and what is needed to promote this) around the country. This might happen, for example, through the syndication of the Intsomi radio programmes to stations other than Radio Grahamstown and to other taxi associations, or through the writing of articles in other community newspapers and for the national press.

The readiness on the part of the Intsomi participants to start communicating to others in their community or similar communities about the effects of reading in the home seems to stem largely from their personalised experiences, but their conviction is strengthened by the fact that they share the experience with others in their group. This bonding social capital will serve to underscore or bolster their willingness to communicate 'to the outside' (build horizontal bridging capital), because they are not doing this alone or as isolated individuals. There is a certainty about what they want to convey (to use the term "message" is perhaps to fall into the trap of top-down development communication): that the introduction of the books as reading matter readily available in their homes has led to a change in family literacy practices; that reading time is now a regular part of the daily routine, and that children's confidence and appetite for reading has grown to the point where it is very evident to the parents in both the attitudes of the children and their scholastic achievement.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Fraser describes how these safe spaces of common interest function both as "spaces of withdrawal and regroupment" and "training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" (1990: 67- 68), while Kemmis *et al.* point out that this impulse by the Intsomis to share their experiences in more public conversations with others is a kind of natural consequence of the critical participatory action research process (2014:48).

The enthusiasm, however, goes beyond simply sharing their stories and "messages". What has also been facilitated in the Intsomi participants is a degree of agency that wants to make it possible for other children and other homes to have the same kind of access to books and educational material. This has been aided by participatory workshops (in one of the University's computer labs) where they have been exposed to online sources of stories and educational games, and different forms of literature such as audio books, many of which can be loaded onto their cell phones. In a country where a high percentage of households have access to cell phones this is significant, and strengthens the 'argument' of the Intsomi Project members that literacy development can be supported in all homes.

The vanguard group's advocacy around the issue of access has taken on different forms: one has volunteered to meet with the librarian from the local municipal mobile library service to negotiate extended routes and extended hours of access; others have offered to take around a mobile library of their own in their community, or man 'pop-up stands' where books are given away; some are showing their friends how to access the online resources; yet others

have joined the Nal'ibali campaign to be trained as Funda leaders (facilitators of reading clubs or reading activities in their areas) and have registered to be part of the Nal'ibali online community.

**Other factors**

The Intsomi book bag has proven to be not only a means to group together books for a certain age group, and a practical form of carrying books around, but also a medium of communication.

The prevalence of cell phone ownership found in the media and mobile usage survey amongst Intsomi participants, and Grahamstown in general, is in line with identified trends. According to Paterson, "Given its rapid and recent uptake and apparent utility for both the poor and the middle classes, the mobile phone has increasingly occupied a central position in discourse about participatory media in Africa. Over at least the last half decade there has been mounting evidence that the technology is being used, to varying degrees, by citizens to contribute to news-making and information exchange in influential ways (Mabweazara, 2011; Moyo, D., 2009; Moyo, L., 2011)" (2013: 2).

However, this study has not shown extensive usage of the mobile phone for communication *about* the Intsomi Project, despite the existence of a WhatsApp group. Rather, it has shown potential to serve as a source of stories, word games and other literacy apps that can add to the resources available to parents and children for use at home. As such, it becomes a tool in the hands of the Intsomi Ambassadors once they have elicited interest from parents to provide reading material to their children. There is, nevertheless, the potential to expand the communication by opening the WhatsApp group to all interested parents on the University campus, and by promoting the Intsomi Parents Facebook page to all of them as well.

Wright argues that the single biggest crisis in South African education is one of teacher confidence and morality, with the concomitant answer to the problem being teacher development (2012:1). Jonathan Jansen, Distinguished Professor of Education at Stellenbosch University, is of the opinion that the lack of commitment on the part of many South African teachers, compared to teachers from Zimbabwe, for instance, is because the church is no longer involved with education in South Africa. He also pointed to the need for professional development that would not just be the provision of skills, but would involve a deep moral reorientation on the part of teachers to the project of learning and teaching (2017).

As parents begin to feel a deeper moral commitment to their, and other, children's learning through the Intsomi intervention, they may be led to make it a more critical intervention by engaging with teachers to offer not only practical help in supporting children to read, but also to bring some moral pressure to bear regarding the shared responsibility for children's literacy development.

**CONCLUSION**

Evans Mahaya, Executive Director of the Association of Reading of Kenya, in his exposition of a family literacy programme in Kenya, made one of the most profound statements regarding the empowerment of parents when he said, "The targets of change became the agents of change" (Reading Association of South Africa/Pan-African Reading Association Conference, 2015). From the evidence presented by the key informants – the Intsomi vanguard group — this has indeed begun to happen.

The vanguard group of Intsomi parents, who called themselves the Intsomi Ambassadors, have taken pride in their role as literacy activists and those promoting children's literacy development. Drawing on the bonding capital built up in the group, due to their shared experiences of the effects of the new family literacy practices, a 'vanguard' of literacy activists has been formed at grassroots level that has built up bridging capital through communicating to friends and similar homes in their communities. The building up of this bridging capital has been supported by the production of media and the promotion of certain media platforms. An example of this is the posters that were made of each vanguard member and distributed in places of their choice within their communities, or spaces where they have access and influence.

This research and its related project work has been a social contract locating itself within the framework that Melkote and Steeves term development support communication. The Intsomi project's inside-out, bottom-up, grassroots approach to communication for change is a contrast to the development communication approach of more national campaigns such as the Nal'ibali Reading for Enjoyment Initiative, which seeks to reach people at grassroots level but is still largely directed from the top down. Despite the availability of the Nal'ibali newspaper supplements in weekly regional newspapers, there existed little knowledge or take-up amongst the Instomi group members of this supplement; this might have something to do with the cost and availability of these newspapers in their particular communities, or with the non-consumption of daily regional newspapers in general — the local weekly newspaper being a more popular choice. Servaes is of the opinion that, "Mass communication is less likely to have a direct effect on social behaviour than personal influence" (1995: 39). This is not to deny that the Nal'ibali campaign is successful, or that it doesn't have a role to

play in raising consciousness around the importance of reading and stories, but to say that it is not enough to effect real change on the ground; that there is a need for both approaches.

Communicative ecologies in the kind of communities where the Intsomi participants live are represented by strong word-of-mouth elements and communication in third places or meeting places. Communication is on a more shared and communal basis than in middle-class and wealthier communities where homes are more insular and people are able to access media on an individual basis in isolation of others. This makes people as instruments of communication more significant, and able to play an influential role in these areas – hence also the need to equip and build up the confidence of the Intsomi Ambassadors as known literacy activists in their communities.

The rationale for the communication process by the Intsomi ambassadors was the notion that the stories of ordinary people have power in relation to each other. It accords with Christians, who says, "In *ubuntu* 'every person is regarded as a fountain of knowledge who has valuable things to contribute to society as a whole' (Blankenberg, 1999:51)". This takes it cue from indigenous practices of storytelling" (2004: 248) — which provides an interesting link back to the reason for the name "Intsomi", chosen by the project participants as a nod to the importance of rekindling the  practice of traditional storytelling in homes. In this instance, not only does this direct link to the literacy practices in families exist, but the Intsomi ambassadors themselves also became storytellers – of their own discoveries, experiences and convictions with regard to the newly developed home literacy practices.

If one is accepting of the role that Christians assigns to journalists, then by extension these Intsomi ambassadors, through telling their stories to others — by means of the posters, radio programmes, videos, and face to face communication — are also asserting themselves as active citizens:

> *Ubuntu* communitarianism assumes that the people themselves are able to articulate their own needs and possible solutions….. The challenge is to create pockets of critical consciousness. Since supercharged, centralised information systems are the problem, the solution must radically redesign the technological form in which cultural life is delivered. Communication super highways carry standardised and homogenised information; to invigorate ethnic diversity, well-worn footpaths are needed within subcultures and among them. While battling the behemoths and seeking a legislative overhaul, a strategy of empowerment is the only genuine hope for revolution. Participation at the grassroots level strengthens local democratic processes and institutions, and in this way undermines the dominant social, economic and political powers…….. In Freire's (1973) terms, the goal is conscientisation, that is, a critical consciousness that directs the

ongoing flow of action and reflection in everyday life. A critical consciousness enables us to exercise the uniquely human capacity of "speaking a true word" (Freire, 1970b:75). Through conscientisation, the oppressed gain their own voice and collaborate in transforming their culture (Freire, 1970a:212-13). Without what Freire calls "a critical comprehension of reality" (1970b:168)—that is, the oppressed "grasping with their minds the truth of their reality"—there is only acquiescence in the status quo (2004: 248-249).

The aim of the participatory action research process was to make meaning together of the Intsomi Project as a family literacy intervention (in a Freirean, dialogical way) and to find ways of successfully communicating the importance of home literacy practices in a particular context. The focus group discussions, the exploration of communicative ecologies and the key informant interviews with the members of the Intsomi 'vanguard' group were the main vehicles for doing this.

The Intsomi research process has sought to explore how the principles and techniques of development support communication can be applied to explore, enhance and disseminate those qualitative changes in behaviour within households that positively affect children's literacy development. In the process, it aimed to explore whether the communication mechanisms and networks that reflect the stories of parents trying out new literacy practices can create authentic, endogenous "messages" that resonate with people in similar circumstances and open up an alternative public sphere around the issue. The job of development support communication is to facilitate the transition from self-interest to public interest. The argument has been that this can best be done through the exploration and subsequent mining of the communicative ecologies of the individuals and communities involved.

The research has shown that this is indeed a complex process that is non-linear, emergent and complex. Exploring communicative ecologies is more than merely examining or recording media consumption patterns in particular communities. It involves a social mapping process that is a deeper exploration of how and where people communicate in particular geographical spaces and socio-economic and cultural contexts.

What is starting to emerge is that the interplay between the three levels of communicative ecologies – discursive, social and technological – has the potential to create and support effective communication for development at grassroots level. The home literacy practices were explored using the authentic, storified discourses of the parents; their social networks

and local knowledge were utilised for communication purposes; and forms of media and technology were brought in to support the process.

Change starts to happen when people internalise processes and information to the point where it causes behavioural change and power relations are shifted. When Fraser talks about "agitational training grounds", it means that in a sub-culture or sub-group of society there is the potential for people to flex their communication muscles in ways with which they are comfortable and for ends that they believe in. The parents that have formed part of the Intsomi Project, and the action research process in particular, are not extra-ordinary people or ones holding any kind of overtly recognised or ascribed power, but they have been supported to find a voice and to speak about an issue that they have experienced and believe in. They are ordinary citizens, whose socio-economic status has been largely determined by the apartheid legacy, but who made a commitment to their children's education by signing up for the Intsomi Project and reading to and with their children every day.

Having experienced the benefits of this first-hand, they have been convinced to the point of wanting these same benefits for other children and families, and have been prepared to engage in communication activities that promote similar involvement in creating a culture of reading and in children's literacy development.

The crisis in children's literacy development in South Africa is essentially a crisis of relationships and human development. The starting point needs to be the human beings who are parents, enabling and empowering them to play their role as parents and to establish relationships with their children that will support their educational development. The same would be true for building a morality and a commitment in teachers and librarians to the project of educating children. The Intsomi Project has shown that it has to start with deep individual development, and even re-orientation, which results in a 'turning outwards' towards children and the community.

Of course, once an appetite has been created with other parents for reading with their children, it has to be fed. Not all of them can join or get books from a Rhodes project, but everyone can join their nearest library for free, or sign up for free resources on websites such as Nal'ibali, Wordworks and others. The Intsomi Project could also serve as an example to public libraries on how to package books for easy access and consumption by families. The same goes for other workplaces and organisations where people regularly congregate.

Indeed, while the empowerment of the Intsomi parents has been a key element, White (2004) argues quite powerfully that individual empowerment is not enough; that there is a need to build activism that will begin to address the broader issue of human rights and tackle the structural inequalities in society in order to bring about long-term change: "The concept of empowerment, as it has been developed so far, is, at best, incomplete and possibly dangerous if it is not oriented more clearly towards the service of society. Empowerment needs to be explicitly located within a broader framework of commonly agreed upon parameters of human and social equity" (2004: 22). The implication of this is that the Intsomi group will ultimately have to grapple with creating greater structural equality in the provision of books and literacy development services for children in their communities. They will need to lobby for the provision of more classroom libraries, more books being sent home, greater expenditure by schools on reading resources, better functioning libraries, etc. – a change in the political economy of literacy in Grahamstown.

The Intsomi Project and the support of its parent ambassadors to communicate with others in their communities has shown how it might be possible to combine the element of individual interest and pleasure with communitarian ways of being in order to advance children's literacy development. Phumezo, Luleka, Thandi, Siphokazi, Bulelwa and Precious – these are some of the Intsomi group members that are so convinced of the value of what they have been doing that they want to tell everyone about it. They have realised that books + adult encouragement = keen readers. And they've derived pleasure from the process, while at the same time getting to know their children better and seeing better results at school. Support may still be needed in terms of executing many of the ideas, but it would seem that the targets of change are becoming the agents of change.

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# APPENDIX 1

## MEDIA AND MOBILE USAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

**NAME:** _____

PART 1: PERSONAL DETAILS

1.  **Home address (street name and area)**

    |  |
    |--|
    |  |

2.  **Age**

    | 16-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |  |
    |-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|--|

3.  **Gender**

    | Female |  |
    |--------|--|
    | Male   |  |

4.  **Contact number (for verification purposes)**

    |  |
    |--|
    |  |

5.  **For each of the following languages, indicate if...**

    |  | You speak it at home | You can understand it | You can speak it | You can read it | You can write it |
    |--|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
    | English |  |  |  |  |  |
    | Afrikaans |  |  |  |  |  |
    | isiXhosa |  |  |  |  |  |
    | Other (specify) |  |  |  |  |  |

6. **What is your highest level of education?**

    | None to some schooling |  |
    |------------------------|--|
    | Matric/Grade 12/Standard 10 |  |
    | Technical college certificate (trade qualification) |  |
    | University certificate, diploma or degree (professional qualification) |  |
    |  |  |

7. **What type of school do your children attend?**

    | Ex-Model C (well-resourced South African Public School) |  |
    |---------------------------------------------------------|--|
    | Township/rural school (under-resourced South African Public School) |  |
    | Private |  |
    | Other (including church schools and farm schools) (please specify) |  |

Part 2: MEDIA USAGE

**8. Do you access content in the following languages?**

|  | News and current affairs | Entertainment |
|---|---|---|
| English |  |  |
| Afrikaans |  |  |
| isiXhosa |  |  |
| Other (specify) |  |  |

**9. How often do you access the following media forms?**

|  | Sometimes | Often | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| Print newspapers |  |  |  |
| Print magazines |  |  |  |
| Radio |  |  |  |
| TV |  |  |  |
| Internet |  |  |  |
| Mobile Phone |  |  |  |
| Neighbours/friends |  |  |  |

**10. Where do you access the following media?**

|  | home | work/school | public places (e.g. library, bar, internet café) | Car/taxi |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| newspapers |  |  |  |  |
| magazines |  |  |  |  |
| radio |  |  |  |  |
| TV |  |  |  |  |
| internet |  |  |  |  |
| mobile |  |  |  |  |

**11. Which of the following newspapers do you read regularly?**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Daily Dispatch* |  |
| *EP Herald* |  |
| National Tabloid newspapers (*Daily Sun*, *Son* etc.) |  |
| National weekly press (*Mail and Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, *City Press*) |  |
| Student press (*Activate*, *OppiPress*) |  |
| *Upstart* |  |
| *Grocott's Mail* (local community newspaper) |  |
| Other (please specify) |  |

**12. Which of these radio stations do you listen to regularly?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Radio Grahamstown |  |
| Rhodes Music Radio |  |
| Radio Algoa |  |
| Radio uMhlobo Wenene |  |
| SAFM |  |
| Other (specify) |  |

**13. Do you have an e-mail account?    YES / NO**

**If YES, what is your e-mail address?** _____
**14. Do you make use of any of the Rhodes computer labs?  YES / NO**

**If YES, which one do you use most often?** _____

**15. Are you on Facebook?  YES/NO**

**16. How often do you visit the following online sites?**

|  | Some times | Often | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Grocott's Mail Online* | | | |
| Makana Municipality online | | | |
| Grahamstown.co.za | | | |
| Grahamstown Parents Network | | | |
| South African online news sites/blogs (e.g. IOL.com, news24.com) | | | |
| International online news sites (e.g. *Guardian*, BBC World, CNN) | | | |
| Local online sites (e.g. *Mobisam*) | | | |
| Other (specify) | | | |

**17. How often do you use the following?**

|  | Hourly | Once or twice a day | Once or twice a week | Once or twice a month | Once or twice a year | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | | | | | | |
| WhatsApp | | | | | | |
| Twitter | | | | | | |
| WeChat | | | | | | |
| Mxit | | | | | | |
| Google+ | | | | | | |
| Skype | | | | | | |
| Instagram | | | | | | |
| YouTube | | | | | | |
| Twitter | | | | | | |
| Google Maps (or Google Earth, or equivalent) *Outoilet* | | | | | | |
| LinkedIn | | | | | | |
| Wikipedia | | | | | | |
| Local blogs | | | | | | |
| Regional/national/international blogs | | | | | | |

**18. Which of the following devices do you use regularly?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Basic cell phone | |
| Smartphone (e.g.Blackberry,iPhone, Samsung Galaxy S4) | |
| Tablet (iPad, Samsung Galaxy Tab etc.) | |
| Desktop computer | |
| Laptop | |
| MP3 player | |
| Digital camera/ video camera | |

Part 4: MEDIA ATTITUDES

**19. What would make communication attractive to people in your community?**

| | |
|---|---|
| If they didn't have to go to much trouble to access the media | |
| If the communication was relevant to them (their age, their area, socio-economic circumstances, etc.) | |
| If the communication helped them or their children to do better in their education and career | |
| If the articles helped them to better understand the world they live in | |
| If the communication was in their home language | |
| If the communication was by people who share the same background as them? | |
| If the communication was accompanied by photographs | |
| If the communication was in some way entertaining (e.g. a cartoon) | |

**20. What do you think are the most effective ways of communicating ideas, information and experiences in your community**

| | |
|---|---|
| Grocott's Mail | |
| The Daily Sun | |
| Other local newspapers | |
| Radio Grahamstown | |
| Other radio stations | |
| Facebook | |
| WhatsApp | |
| Advertising Posters | |
| Word of mouth/Conversations | |
| Other (please specify) | |

PART 5: MOBILE PHONES AND INTERNET

**21. If you do access the internet, what do you use it for?**

| | |
|---|---|
| E-mails | |
| Local news | |
| National news | |
| Sports results | |
| Weather | |
| Entertainment | |
| Online gaming | |
| Online shopping | |
| Banking | |
| Job search | |
| Education/School projects | |
| Other (specify | |
| Searching local info (e.g. addresses and phone numbers) | |

**22. What make and model of phone(s) do you have?**

| |
|---|
| |

**23. On your phone what do you use the following languages for?**

| | Phone calls | SMS/Instant messaging/social networking | Listening/ watching audio and video | Creating audio and video | Accessing webpages | Publishing online content (e.g. blogs) | Other (specify) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | | | | | | | |
| Afrikaans | | | | | | | |
| isiXhosa | | | | | | | |
| Other (specify) | | | | | | | |

**24. When did you last use your cell phone for….?**

| | In the last hour | Last day | Last week | Last month | Last year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phone call | | | | | |
| SMS | | | | | |
| Airtime transfer | | | | | |
| Free services(e.g. voicemail, balance check, plse call me) | | | | | |
| Take pictures | | | | | |
| Listen to Music or Record Audio | | | | | |
| Watch video or take video | | | | | |
| Instant messaging | | | | | |
| Social networking | | | | | |
| Mobile apps | | | | | |
| Email | | | | | |
| To search for information | | | | | |
| Surf the web | | | | | |
| Read or write documents | | | | | |
| Listening to the radio | | | | | |
| Navigate (e.g. GPS navigation) | | | | | |

**25. How do you connect to the Internet on your phone?**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Airtime | | | | | |
| Data bundles | | | | | |
| Wi-Fi | | | | | |
| Bluetooth | | | | | |
| USB cable | | | | | |

**26. If you do not use your cell phone to connect to the Internet, why not?**

| | |
|---|---|
| My phone cannot connect (no 3g or Wi-Fi) | |
| I don't know how to | |
| I am not interested | |
| It is too expensive | |
| It is too complicated/slow/time consuming | |
| **27. Do you use the Internet on your cell phone to connect to local sites? YES / NO** **28. What local websites do you use?** | YES     NO |

| **29. Do you share any of the following using your phone or tablet?** | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Local stories | | |
| Local news | | |
| Local pictures | | |
| Local music | | |
| Local videos | | |
| Comments on life in Makana | | |
| Other (locally relevant) | | |

| Online contents (e.g. eBooks) | | |
| --- | --- | --- |