

The Easy Reading for Adults Initiative

Easy readers for adults in
South Africa:
an investigation into their use

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To Kader Asmal

Minister of Education in the Republic of South Africa

For making adult literacy once again a national priority.

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Abstract

The investigation undertaken by the Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) Initiative (a South African non governmental organisation concerned with building a reading environment by supporting the production and dissemination of easy reading texts for adults in a variety of South African languages) throws light on the status and use of easy reading texts for adults in South Africa. While an impressive resource of attractive readers has been developed and promoted in lively projects over recent years, the use of the resource is far from satisfactory. This disappointing situation is the result of a range of contextual factors in adult education, publishing, book development, language policy - and in the society and economy more generally. On the evidence of this investigation, which comprised a number of sub-studies, the mainline publishing and book selling industries in South Africa are probably not fruitful agencies on which to base hopes for development. Sadly - in terms of the mission of the projects involved in easy texts for adults - the prospects for African language texts and fiction do not look promising. However, expected growth in industrial education and training and government provision could open opportunities for promotion, and it is important that the capacity developed by several focussed adult readers projects should be maintained. Propaganda for the importance of reading in education and training must be pushed relentlessly, with emphasis on the shortsightedness of neglecting local languages and fiction. (Both are considered to have uniquely important roles in cognitive growth.) Places of learning in industry, libraries, communities and schools, must be enabled to invest in texts of various kinds and education practitioners must be helped to encourage and teach reading.

Summary

An investigation into easy reading for adults

This report is the outcome of an investigation into the use of easy readers for adults in South Africa undertaken in 1998 and 1999 by The Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) Initiative, a South African non governmental organisation dedicated to the building of a reading environment by supporting the production and dissemination of easy reading material.

The report includes chapters on the literacy, adult basic education and publishing contexts within which The ERA Initiative works, the history of The ERA Initiative, an account of the origins and aims of this investigation, and chapters on a series of detailed studies on the distribution and use of easy readers for adults.

The current context of ABET and educational publishing

Chapter 2, on the present state of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa, describes the statistics on literacy in South Africa (about 7.5 to 8.5 million adults can be considered to be functionally illiterate) and the intensive policy development in ABET in the first half of the decade. However, the implementation of these policies has been seriously flawed with limited national commitment and a serious decline in the capacity of non governmental organisation providers. ABET endeavours have led to disappointing outcomes and the field has been increasingly dominated by the formalised demands of the National Qualifications Framework.

Chapter 3 points out that the under achievement in ABET has been compounded by a disastrous period for educational publishers, as the post-apartheid South Africa school system failed to regenerate itself. Long dominated by the school book market, the book trade has been hard hit by the fall in government expenditure on books (spending declined from R900 million in 1994 to R150 million in 1998, most of the state's contribution to education having been devoured by the salary bill for teachers) and by failures in planning and liaison between curriculum and provisioning sections in provincial education departments. Publishers invested heavily (estimates go as high as R80 million) and fruitlessly in new developments for Curriculum 2005 (that was slow to be implemented and not at all in most grades). Textbooks have been dismissed as learning tools by both policy makers and some curriculum developers committed to outcomes-based education. The Minister of Education went on record in mid-1998 as saying that "my advisors tell me that learners do not need textbooks". With ABET, the initial expectation that this was a new and potentially profitable market for publishers soon withered and little was done to effectively market what was actually produced. At the same time, the promise of a national effort to promote book development has fallen through. The recommendations of one of the few products of the Book Development Council of South Africa, the *Research report on*

book development in South Africa, were largely ignored. This failure can be ascribed to a range of factors such as lack of finance, the complexities of implementing over ambitious policies, a lack of prioritizing of reading as a skill in the school curriculum, lack of capacity in schools, a lack of ring-fencing of education textbook budgets in the provinces, failures in budgetary planning in provincial education departments, and the high price of books.

The one promising feature is that in late 1998 some R200 million was voted by government towards textbooks at the prompting of a private sector grouping, the National Business Initiative, which was concerned about the lack of delivery in the area of schoolbooks and which drew up a business plan in conjunction with the Department of National Education.

A history of The ERA Initiative and its activities

Chapter 4 describes the origins and activities of The Era Initiative, which was formed in late 1989 as a result of a workshop of concerned publishers, literacy NGOs, libraries and some state education departments. At first a project of the Adult Literacy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, it was managed by a voluntary steering committee and served by a number of sub-committees. It was formally constituted as a trust in 1995. It has a small staff complement and has *inter alia* produced a critical catalogue of easy readers for adults, run multilingual competitions for short story writers, sponsored the production of 40 readers in African languages and generally supported the building of a reading culture in South Africa: working through libraries, the production of book boxes, readathons, reading supplements in magazines and newspapers, consultancy, etc. It has received funding from a number of donors, both foreign and South African and has regularly evaluated its work. In 1998 ERA initiated this research investigation to appraise easy reading materials, examine the issue of why more adults are not reading (a situation of **aliteracy**), and to explore the role of various mediators – institutions, organisations, individual educators and librarians – of reading. Beulah Thumbadoo, The ERA Initiative Co-ordinator and Edward French, a trustee, co-ordinated the investigation as a whole and were assisted by an extremely useful advisory/ reference group.

The role of easy readers for adults

Chapters 5 and 6 provide an explanation of the role of easy readers for adults and examine international perspectives on easy reading for adults. There is a history of efforts in South Africa to publish and sell attractive easy reading material for adults that goes back to early Christian missionaries such as Bishop Colenso in Natal, political radicals such as Eddie Roux in the 1930s and 1940s, and the primers and booklets produced under the influence of Frank Laubach. In the 70s and 80s, advocates of Paulo Freire's literacy approach rejected the production of texts from outside of the learners and their communities, and developed methods to generate learners' writing. Using simplifying journalism that captured the voices of the newly

literate, several little newspapers were established and ran through the 80s into the 90s. Most notable among these was the *Learn and Teach* magazine. Unfortunately, of these newspapers and magazines, only *Learn with Echo*, produced by the Centre for Adult Education of the University of Natal, still exists.

In spite of this valuable work done in various sectors, by the start of the 90s the continuing lack of an adequate supply of reading matter to support and extend adult literacy efforts led to the creation of efforts such as The ERA Initiative and the New Readers Project of the University of Natal to encourage the development of easy readers for adults. A number of publishers also ventured into the field for commercial reasons, while maintaining the commitment to quality literature and authentic adult education. The productivity and accomplishments of these projects have been impressive. The studies conducted during this investigation are concerned mainly with the ways in which their products and packages are being used.

Contemporary reading materials for new readers include general interest information; periodicals; publications of a less didactic, more entertaining nature, such as comic strips; calendars, posters, leaflets, and booklets; and audiovisual media. Such easy texts for adults have been used for a variety of purposes – from extending the command of the basics of literacy, to real, useful instructional reading, propaganda, and a deeply respectful form of empowerment. As part of the investigation, a study was made of recent national and international literature on such easy reading material for adults. The literature was found to be surprisingly limited in scope with an emphasis on writing and production of materials with little attention given to marketing and usage.

From the literature review in Chapter 6 certain themes and issues stand out:

- There is a need for supplies of cheap printing paper (South African paper production is effectively a cartel which has raised its prices to match that of the more expensive imported paper).
- Rural libraries, reading circles and discussion groups are needed to help multiply the number of readers per printed text.
- Post-literacy materials and a positive literacy environment are needed to avoid post-literacy relapses. Currently key policies for education and training in South Africa appear to neglect the need for a sustaining reading environment (however implicit it may be in many policy aims).
- Piecemeal projects, no matter how worthy or necessary, will never become as effective as an integrated solution supported by all the key decision-makers. The ERA Initiative submitted a proposal to the Office of the then Deputy President calling for the active participation of all levels of government and other role players in declaring a national decade of reading from 2000 to 2010.

- The best creative minds in society need to be enlisted and backed by co-ordinated resources to provide the variety of reading materials the population needs.
- In multi-lingual nations, the use of different languages must be complementary, rather than exclusive. Transition to the national language is facilitated when rooted in literacy in the local language – in itself a pedagogically sound process. Recognition of the importance of producing easy readers in the mother tongue led to The ERA Initiative conceptualising of the ERA African Languages Series.
- Building literacy in minority languages depends on a national will that respects and promotes cultural identity within the larger whole. It must be backed by adequate linguistic and motivational research, and be thoroughly embedded in the local community and sustained by it.
- Various guidelines are available in the literature on the steps that are required in the development process of producing of texts in all languages.
- Distribution of reading material is of vital importance (and also a monumental South African failing).
- A warning that emerges is that efforts to build a literate environment may be surprisingly easily undone by changes in an unpredictable global economy.
- Though the electronic media, both television and radio, offer strong competition to reading material in providing information and entertainment and may be seen as being of higher priority in more deprived countries, it is a commonplace that reading is essential for positive engagement with media and information technology, and is certainly not supplanted by the electronic media.

The aims of the investigation and the research agenda

Chapter 7 presents the reasons for the initiation of the investigation and its research agenda. Though The ERA Initiative, alongside other projects in South Africa in the 90s, appeared to have considerable achievements (albeit with certain inherent weaknesses) there was still curiosity and concern about evaluating the uptake and usage of easy readers for adults.

The ERA Initiative had:

- Developed the first critical catalogue of easy reading material for adults that stimulated the publication of new and better easy readers for adults and assisted the positioning of this special selection of books in public libraries.

- Motivated for the establishment of easy reading for adults shelves in libraries across the country. These have played a valuable role in signalling that post-literacy reading material is available.
- Helped produce *Reading Press*, a four-page adult easy reading supplement in a national Sunday newspaper that ran for nine months.
- Created the ERA Book Box with its well-selected range of appropriate materials. Book Box sales proved that funds were more available within the commercial sector.
- Run an annual multi-lingual short story competition in the Club Magazine of Sales House, a large and successful chain of retail stores.
- Conceptualised and brought into being the ERA African Languages Series of 40 original stories in ten South African languages at the four official ABET sub-levels with five publishing partners whose costs were subsidised through funding gained from the Kagiso Trust. In some of the languages this was the first ever publication of titles at that reading level.
- Facilitated the publication and distribution of a *Research report on book development in South Africa* in March 1997 through its involvement in the Book Development Council of South Africa.
- Completed a national audit of Learning and Support Materials for the Adult Education and Training directorate of the national Department of Education.
- Gained a book review slot on **Mochochonono**, a national television programme aimed at adults in need of general information, that enabled The ERA Initiative to publicise easy readers and the ERA African languages Series.

However, reassuring as these indicators have been, The ERA Initiative wanted to know more about what was happening as a result of its work. Was the world of post-literacy any better for its work? Were external factors playing an unpredictable, negative role? If ERA was not being as widely or as well used as had been hoped, why not? The agenda of the research investigation, was, therefore, was to establish whether these self-evidently worthwhile accomplishments were real in the sense of having genuinely contributed to the building of a reading environment in which the production and dissemination of easy reading material for adults is supported.

Partial funding was received from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In January 1998 a successful two day workshop involving a cross section of stakeholders, specialists and activists was run which shaped the further development of the investigation. The ERA Initiative Trust decided to appoint a full-time researcher on a six-month contract. Although this appointment did not achieve what was hoped for, a number of commissioned papers and smaller studies enabled the main objectives of the investigation to be completed within the limited budget.

The research studies

The actual research studies and surveys conducted during this investigation are reported on in Chapters 8 to 14 as follows:

- ❑ The tracking study. Where do all the good books go? Tracking the texts from publishers to sellers to practitioners and readers
- ❑ The Surveys of buyers of the ERA Book Boxes and of Gilbey's Adult Literacy Award winners
- ❑ The ERA Book Spaza. Browsers and buyers at Park Station
- ❑ Using easy readers in some library reading circles
- ❑ Easy readers in libraries and resource centres
- ❑ The ERA African Languages Series. Easy adult readers in African languages – who wants them?
- ❑ The ERA African Languages Series in context.

The tracking study. Where do all the good books go? Tracking the texts from publishers to sellers to practitioners and readers

Chapter 8 describes a tracking study that was undertaken to find out what was happening to easy readers for adults. In early 1998, The ERA Initiative (under a separate contract with the national Department of Education) drew up a comprehensive guide to resources for ABET in the process of an audit of so-called Learning And Support Materials (LASMs). From this audit a random sample of 100 easy readers (slightly more than a quarter of the 376 listed) were tracked in terms of their publishers, languages, themes and subjects, print runs, sales, etc.

Heinemann was the most prolific publisher of titles (22%) followed by Juta, Kagiso, and Viva (all at 12%), the New Readers Project (11%) and Kwela and SACHED Books at 8% each. The ERA African Languages Series had a 5%.

The language of the titles was weighted towards English (39%), Afrikaans (19%) and Zulu (15%). Other languages all had less than 10% of the field – Xhosa (9%), Sotho (8%), Tswana and Venda (3%) and Pedi and Tsonga (2%)

Most of the titles were fiction (usually love stories or on family or workplace themes)(56%). Educational or skills training books took up 18%, 'ordinary lives' 10%, biography 7%, religious 6% and historical works 3%.

Though it was difficult to get data on sales (an indication that easy readers for adults are a marginal concern of the book trade) the main buyers seemed to be bookshops, followed by service providers. The assumption that industry is a major buyer was not born out (though they may of course be buying *via* bookshops). Adult education centres are very poor purchasers. Though it proved impossible to gain comparative

sales data from the major publishers, it is clear that sales are not large. Available data suggests that the highest sales figure from a publisher in one year was 9402 books (from 7 titles) and the lowest 264 (from about 8 titles). These figures are depressingly low (though one small publisher, the Storyteller Group, is unusual because of its great success in publishing huge print runs of sponsored materials). The years 1992 and 1993 were seen to be good years for the selling of easy reader titles, although 1996 provided the peak for most of the publishers examined. Generally, sales seem to have increased from 1992 to 1998 but have dropped off rapidly thereafter.

Five titles from the 100 sample were tracked in more detail but did not provide significantly different information to that obtained from the general tracking exercise. Sales of the five texts were generally small except in the case of one title which was sold in some quantity to a service provider which purchased books for tender for the Northern Province Department of Education ABET sub-directorate.

The surveys of buyers of the ERA Book Box and of Gilbey's Adult Literacy Award winners surveys

Two small surveys were conducted with a sample of informants drawn from two groups of organisations which could be assumed to take seriously the needs of adult neo-literates – buyers of ERA Book Boxes (portable libraries of easy readers selected for particular levels) and winners of the national Gilbey's Adult Literacy awards.

A sample of ten of the organisations that had bought Book Boxes were interviewed and questionnaires sent to the remainder. With the Gilbey's awards, a small sample of 6 was drawn from the 21 winners and runners up. In addition, some learners at the agencies were interviewed. The general impression gained from these two surveys is that there is minimal and marginal attention to fostering free, independent reading. These supposedly model agencies gave low priority to the reading of books, partly because they often have a narrow view of reading as reading course workbooks in class. Reading is not seen as also including easy readers, novels, or newspapers being used in class. Few of the literacy or ABET facilitators seem to prioritise reading in their own lives or to actively promote it amongst their students. The atmosphere of a couple of centres which did seem more productive were those where facilitators said that had read every book in the library before their learners had read them.

With the ERA Book Boxes, it seemed that in most cases they were not used as coherent resources, but are unpacked and scattered among other resources on general library or resource room shelves. It was hardly ever used as a portable library. There seems to be a "policy gap" between the purchaser of the Book Box and the practitioners who ends up with this resource. Indeed many staff were unaware that the organisation even possessed a Book Box (which may partly reflect the effects of the funding crisis on many ABET NGOs which has led to scaled down activities and staff retrenchments).

Facilitators were unable to say much about which subjects or titles were most needed, though some argued for multiple copies of books as against a few copies of many books because all learners in a class are then able to read the same book at the same time and discuss it in class. Some facilitators felt that the ERA grading system levels were too high and that this might discourage some learners. This concern may indicate a mismatch between nominal student level and their actual competence level or simply that learning centres do not provide instruction beyond the lowest levels (often because of financial constraints).

From interviews with staff and learners in the two surveys it was ascertained that learners tend to have little access to actual books (what texts they usually have access to are workbooks and often recycled or shared ones at that). When learners do get hold of books they have usually been pre-selected or brought by the facilitator. Hence learners gain little experience in choosing books for themselves.

Comments on books included complaints that some readers seem to be directed more at children or have child characters. Books with content of genuine interest to adults were liked. Some readers disliked the illustrations.

The ERA Book Spaza. Browsers and buyers at Park Station

Chapter 10 is a case study of the individual buyers and browsers of easy readers at an informal bookstall of easy readers set up on the concourse of Johannesburg's main railway station which caters largely for black working-class commuters. Browsers were observed and occasionally engaged in discussion. Buyers, who were spread across a range of education levels, were questioned about their choices. The study examines the specific reasons given by individual buyers for their choice of easy reading material and the key reasons why they read.

After a pilot study, the ERA Book Spaza began in July 1998 and by the end of September 1998 eleven Book Spaza's, each lasting from about 8 am to 2:30 pm, were conducted at Park Station. Each ERA Book Spaza was conducted with the researcher and two book sellers. The use of an informal trading site (a spaza is a local term for an informal shop) was chosen to target buyers who would not necessarily have the finances or inclination to buy in mainstream book stores.

The researcher noted which books the buyers and browsers picked up and showed interest, as well as their age, race, sex, dress (as an indication of social class), etc. The buyers and browsers were asked questions about why they liked the books – the subjects, the illustrations, the languages and what their key reason for reading or buying the books was. Approximately 52 titles were stocked, including biographies, history, religion, fiction (books and comics), general information, education, sport, and financial guidance. Books were generally priced at R7, with a few exceptions. On the whole these prices were perceived to be reasonable by buyers (about 15 a day) and browsers (about 100 a day). The average age of buyers was late twenties to

early thirties. Most buyers and browsers were men, with only six women buyers of the total 113 buyers. All buyers were black although browsers consisted of all race groups.

The reaction to the stand and to the nature of the books was a positive one from the majority of browsers and the experiment was commended for what it was trying to achieve. As some of the books were of a political nature, hearty debates and discussions ensued between the browsers themselves and with the booksellers, especially around the political biographies such as *Steve Biko* and *Nelson Mandela*.

Some 22 titles were sold (with a total of 140 copies), with the five most popular titles (all of them about political leaders and events) capturing 112 of the sales. Biographies made up 62% of sales, history 21%, fiction 8%, sport 4%, and the rest included general, religious and instructional material 5%. The popularity of the biographies may have been enhanced by their distinctive covers with coloured portrait photographs. The sport books were popular with browsers but there were only two sport related titles. The poor sales of fiction are significant as they made up the majority of titles on display.

There was an overwhelming preference for biographies of national liberators and political achievers, with a strongly didactic motivation. These are seen as providing role models for the children or relatives of the buyer and as a means of learning about politics and good citizenship. History books were seen as providing knowledge about South African history that could inform their children about the past and help them build a better future.

Fiction books, interestingly, were also seen as providing information, often of a dubious sort (such as about how to be a criminal!). Some used fiction books for pleasure reading and other buyers, who said they were in ABET classes, bought fiction titles to familiarise themselves with reading in that particular language and to practice their reading skills.

The few sport titles were generally of interest to male youths. Religious books proved to be of interest mainly to older men. There were requests for books on particular soccer teams and for more religious books. Books of general interest were usually not acknowledged except one on the *Amadlozi* (ancestral spirits) which occasioned some controversy. Although the educational-motivation books and guidance books did not sell well there were many requests for “how-to” books and this may be a gap in the market.

Buyers were happy that the majority of titles were in English, though there were occasional requests for particular titles to be in Zulu (but also some complaints that too many titles were in Zulu!). There is a high demand for books in English and that either all books should come in English and other languages, or the books themselves should be bilingual. Several browsers suggested that the language of the book be displayed on the cover so that it would be easier to identify which book they would be able to read.

It is also clear that the covers and presentation of easy readers for adults should be attractive and not give the appearance of being for children. A comic style and illustrations should be used with great discretion.

Sales were low, an average of about 11 books per day. These sales did not nearly cover the costs of the spaza, which included the wages of two booksellers and the costs of the books. Although the prices of books on sale were well below cost, comments indicate that the limited disposable income of the target population is not likely to be directed towards even realistically-priced books.

The Book Spaza experiment had many positive outcomes. The books on sale were seen as important tools in improving the lives of readers. In addition, the fact that many of the books bought were seen as building knowledge for the individual buyers, with the intention of keeping their children informed, facilitates the development of a reading culture. However, funding for such undertakings would be necessary, particularly as the prices of books would also have to be kept as low as possible.

Using easy readers in some library reading circles

Chapter 11 describes how the Component Life-Long Learning Component of the Gauteng Provincial Library and Information Services (GPLIS) has initiated reading circles in libraries where literacy work is undertaken. People in a reading circle meet together in libraries on a regular basis to discuss books they enjoy (and dislike) and to meet with authors themselves. By interacting with books in this way, readers discover their own preferences, discover new authors and titles and, most importantly, are encouraged to read more and enjoy books more.

The first ERA Reading Circle was established at a literacy project at Babbeljoentjie near Vanderbijlpark in August 1996. A selection of books was lent to the project in the form of a book box, and learners met once a week for several weeks in small groups at different levels to read and chat about the books they enjoyed. Subsequently the Component Life-Long Learning began offering a two day workshop aimed at helping adult educators and librarians start their own reading circles as well as using ERA texts in the established literacy/ABET classrooms. The process of setting up such reading circles is described as well as the type of material that is suitable to meet the members needs. Books should be relevant to learner's lives and have a strong adult content, so that learners are able to identify with the characters and situations. Non-fiction titles are included as well as multiple copies of some titles for group reading. The selectors may also decide to add some children's books which parents can use to introduce their children to reading.

The chapter also includes a case study of reading circles established in the Soshanguve and Akasia community libraries of the Northern Pretoria Metropolitan Sub-Structure. Material for the ERA book boxes was compiled for each group with each reading level in mind. The books were mainly in English, with some mother-

tongue titles as well. The groups themselves, all studying English, comprised some 33 learners at ABET sub-level 1 and 19 at sub-level. During the first few meetings, tutors mainly read to the learners and introduced the concepts of author and title. During later sessions, learners were encouraged to read passages on their own, while other learners would help with difficult words or concepts. Throughout the meetings there was a strong focus on creating an informal environment where learners, regardless of their level of literacy, would feel able to discuss what they had been reading in the group. In March 1999 a questionnaire was given to tutors and learners that asked about the reading circle experience.

The findings from this survey include the following:

- There was an improvement in reading and writing and general communication in English, particularly in respect of greetings, understanding of idioms, vocabulary and the ability to read more and longer texts at a new level of comprehension and understanding. Their writing had improved: learners could now write their name and short sentences and their general knowledge had broadened.
- Learners' ability to study had grown as the improved and faster reading competence had enabled them to study with greater comprehension and confidence.
- Tutors had also used books as a learning tool in the classroom to set comprehension tests and other exercises which had proved quite successful.
- Preferred books included ones on numeracy and money management, the importance of keeping legal and other documents, and bilingual Zulu and English readers. Several books of an inspirational or attitude changing nature were commended. Books in which the reader could identify with the characters were also valued. Tutors felt that the major reasons why learners liked certain books was that of common experience and that they were about practical or current issues. Categories mentioned were: adventure stories, romance, real-life stories and books on rights – labour relations, maintenance, etc. Some learners also appreciated collections of short stories which were less daunting than more lengthy texts. Upper level learners also requested more academic books such as English grammar, mathematics, computer science, biology and accounting. These readers are therefore clearly ready to begin using the formal library collection.
- For most ABET sub-level 1 language learners, the major barriers to enjoying certain books were the small print. Others objected to the pictures in some books and one learner thought that some of the books were physically too small (i.e. childish looking) for adults.
- The learners at all levels generally preferred to read the same title in groups, rather than individual titles on their own and there was consensus that there should be fewer titles and more multiple copies of a book in the Book Boxes.

- Tutors generally agreed with learners' perceptions about the Book Boxes and although some said the books in their book box were too difficult, most felt that given enough time and assistance, learners would be able to read most of the titles. They also found the book box easy to administer.
- While most lower level learners requested extra books in Zulu or Northern Sotho, most upper level learners wanted only books in English. It would seem therefore that many beginners would like dual-language publications or translations of the English titles they are presently reading to bridge the gap to English material, which more advanced learners want exclusively.

Tutors felt very positive about the Reading Circles and their impact on learners' reading and studying abilities. They said that learners preferred reading as a group because it is was easier to solve reading/ vocabulary problems together, where the tutor can help, and, very importantly, they can "share exciting stories". Tutors felt that the benefits for the learners, apart from improved reading, was improved communication skills and self-confidence in the group context where everyone was still learning, and even the shyest learners felt able to participate.

The stock and use of easy readers in libraries and resource centres

Chapter 12 summarises data collected from some provincial library services on their stocks and loans of easy readers for adults. Libraries are key purchasers of books and providers of them to the reading public and it was gratifying that some of the library services were able to provide this data on the relatively new category of easy readers for adults in libraries.

Data was obtained on whether any of the 100 titles selected for the tracking study were held by provincial library services in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng as well as from the Johannesburg Public Library service. Though a fair number of easy readers for adults are available through these library services, on average only 50% of the titles were stocked and the mean number of copies per title was 103 for the Western Cape service, 78 for KwaZulu-Natal and 14 each for Gauteng and Johannesburg. The total numbers ranged from 4833 copies in the Western Cape to 633 in Gauteng (in this latter case it works out to about 20 books per library served by the province).

Data from two ABET resource centres in KwaZulu-Natal (the Tembaletu Community Education Centre in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal ABE Support Agency in Durban) also provided additional data on holdings of the 100 titles. It was found that though copies had been purchased in some numbers, usage remained minimal.

At the Tembalethu resource centre only 19 of the 100 titles were in stock (though this is partly explained by English and Zulu being the dominant regional languages) and little use was made of them (even though ABET classes are run on site) – on average each of 52 copies available had been borrowed only twice.

The Natal ABE Support Agency, one of the larger ABET NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal, runs a large resource centre including an ABE materials bookshop in Durban. It sold 11 965 books over an eight month period. There were 27 of the 100 titles in stock and records in mid-February 1999 indicated that 526 copies had been sold, on average about 20 copies of each title. Most of the titles in stock are English or Zulu.

The ERA African Languages Series. Easy readers in African languages – who wants them?

One of the special ERA Initiative projects has been a concerted donor-funded effort to produce a series of readers for adults in the African languages. Part of the investigation solicited the views of experts in linguistics, publishers and librarians on easy readers in African languages and in particular on the ERA African Languages Series.

The findings (details of which are found in Chapter 13) are an overwhelming, predictable, impression of the hegemony of English and the dominance of the demand for English, and the consequent struggle to get any market attention for non-English books. Language development agencies which might have promoted reading in the country's eleven official languages have not been effective.

A number of experts in linguistics and applied linguistics were interviewed on their assessment of the impact of the language provisions of the new South African Constitution and how this impacted on the publishing industry. Their conclusion was that the hegemony of English is uncontested and that the indigenous languages are under pressure from the stronger and wider appeal of English. Though largely cosmetic changes serve to increase awareness at a subliminal level of African languages and sustain awareness of the multilingual nature of South African society, other factors – fiscal restraints and other socio-political pressures – inhibit the development of the African languages, leading to a stalemate situation.

Six concerned publishers were also interviewed on the views on the impact of the constitution on publishing and sales in African language books, on the general state of publishing in African languages, on the impact of the ERA African Languages, and on appropriate promotion strategies. The publishers had common perceptions of the industry and all stated that publishing in the different African languages was not commercially viable, however politically desirable. Publishers noted the need for relevant and exciting material that was cheap, affordable and accessible. However, even when they engaged in publishing of ABET materials they opted for conventional sales and marketing strategies that had largely failed. This passivity takes its cue from government in its lack of fiscal support to publishers and its

inadequate promotion of the African languages. Large print runs are required to make good business sense and alternate modes of sales and marketing are required. Ideas on more effective marketing included such ideas as the dispatch of promotional copies to key decision-makers, promotional visits to centres of learning, the identification of new and relevant points of sale, direct marketing to individuals, institutions and Human Resource departments, and the use of celebrities to promote reading campaigns.

Statistics were not forthcoming from most of the publishers. They said it was difficult to collate statistics and the market was too small to warrant major analyses. Trends in terms of provinces were broadly identified but could not be substantiated. Publishers thought that publishing in African languages was in a transitional state and had marginally improved though the new constitution had made no impact on sales. There was still a privileging of the “big” languages, Zulu (especially Zulu), Sotho, Xhosa, Pedi, and Tswana. There had been some interest in ABET materials though this was now waning. However some publishers saw continuing hope for ABET publishing in support from industry. Publishers agreed that mother tongue literacy needs promoting in the political realm and in all the media. Subsidies were required to lower the costs of books and popular outlets should be found for the sale of books.

Publishers had little to say about the African Languages Series. Some thought it had not been really successful because ABET and literacy programmes focus on English literacy. Printing costs were subsidised by ERA, but the books have not sold. There are not many literacy programmes that could afford the ERA books. More positively the series was seen as having introduced books to the market which appealed to adult interests.

Another study was a rapid telephonic survey of nine libraries in Gauteng to obtain information about their knowledge and use of the ERA African Languages Series . This survey did reveal that a few of the libraries had copies of some of the ERA titles while others indicated that the budgets did not permit purchases (or further purchases), especially when the demand was not there. There was little systematic record keeping of stocks or the issue of easy readers for adults. Actual stocks of books in African languages appeared to be small, ranging from about 4000 to 500 in lending libraries. Claimed loans in November-December 1998 ranged from 4000 to 50. The Johannesburg Public Library had an instructive breakdown by language of its 894 books loaned in this period: Zulu: 370; Xhosa: 159; Venda: 137; Tsonga: 55; Pedi: 48; Tswana: 47; S. Sotho: 39; Swati: 37; Ndebele: 2. There was little demand for books in African languages and not much was being done to reverse the status quo. No coherent pattern emerged from the librarian’s descriptions of the major users of African language books. Only two of the libraries had run reading awareness campaigns which focussed on African languages. Though some of the librarians indicated knowledge of ERA books, it was hard to ascertain whether they had actual knowledge of the specific ERA African languages Series. The success (or failure) of the African Languages Series is hard to determine in a context where the print runs of the Series are so small and the marketing of the texts less than adequate.

The ERA African Languages Series in context

The intent of Chapter 14 was to assess the use of the ERA African languages Series in the adult basic education and training sector, its contribution in terms of significant output and support by publishers, and broadly to contextualise the role of publishing in African languages in South Africa.

The chapter examines the history of literacy and ABET provision and the understandable reasons for the concentration on programmes and materials in English, particularly during the apartheid period when the government did not provide funding, training or incentives for the broader provision of adult literacy and basic education.

An argument is presented that successful economies recognise the importance of education in the language of the learner. This is not the case in South Africa and leads to the dismal situation of adults being forced to function and receive workplace training in a language they do not understand. If all the sub-levels of ABET provided instruction in a language workers could understand it would become easier for workers to function productively in the work environment.

The renewed interest in and debate on the language situation in South Africa in the 90s was no doubt an influence on The ERA Initiative campaign to enable the provision and distribution of materials for adults in African languages. Though commercial publishers had recently become interested in producing ABET materials, hardly any attempt at all was made to produce these in African languages. The ERA African Languages Series project was started to both strengthen the market for ABET materials in African languages and to test the viability of such a market. During 1995 and 1996 funding was obtained for The ERA Initiative to assist in the production costs of 40 easy readers in 10 African languages in each of the four ABET sub-levels by five publishers. Apart from the obvious aims of enabling adult learners to have some suitable books in their own languages, the project hoped to raise some royalties for The ERA Initiative and to use the supposedly more efficient distribution mechanisms used by publishers (from which more detailed market intelligence could also be gained). If the initiation of the project showed anything, it was that, firstly, commercial educational publishers were not prepared to invest in ABET materials and specifically, ABET materials in African languages and that, secondly, publishers had not undertaken market research in order to understand the nature of the market and its potential. The outcomes of the project show that only slow progress has been made with regard to marketing and sales. There is a high contrast between the low sales of these books and the enthusiasm about them and the quality and level of these books.

A survey of was undertaken of the opinions of stakeholders, both directly involved and not, in the ERA African Languages Series project – publishers, government and trade union officials, and ERA researchers.

The publishers clearly welcomed the project (particularly as it enabled them to publish texts in the 'small' languages) though they admitted that the marketing had not been successful except to a limited extent with an education department in one province. Most of the publishers spoken to expressed their frustration with the inability and probably the lack of interest from their companies in providing sufficient dedicated marketing support for ABET. A provincial education department official said the failure of departmental support indicated a massive failure to engage in either rational budgeting or the control of how expenditure is aligned to the budget. Yet without the provincial education departments buying materials there cannot be any increase in the development of ABET materials in African languages. A trade union official indicated that there are no specific trade union attempts to harness the role of African languages in ABET.

The chapter concludes with suggestions that the 1996 literacy and ABET related recommendations of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) (of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) be revisited as should also be the terms of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB). It argues for a strong non-sectorial lobby group for ABET that will encourage the state and ABET providers to create an environment where ABET can be a tangible market and place systems through which ABET can be further developed. African language materials should be published in a strategic way and translations and adaptations could also be used (though with care). Research is also necessary to ascertain the value African languages can add to ABET and to business and the economy.

Conclusions

Chapter 15 closes the investigation with a summary of a discussion group of stakeholders in this investigation who had been able to read the various sub-reports. Not surprised by the findings, given the observations, they nonetheless re-affirm the commitment to the promotion and use of independent reading, and reading for pleasure in adult education - not just as a marginal pursuit, but as central to national learning and skills objectives as reflected in the Skills Development Act and the National Qualifications Framework. The investigation closes by arguing for maintenance of the capacity developed in the various adult reader programmes, and for immediate extension of propaganda against the folly of neglecting reading at all levels of education and training.

Part 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report is on the origin, design and findings of an investigation into the use of easy readers for adults in South Africa. It was written from within the Easy Reading for Adult (ERA) Initiative, a South African non governmental organisation dedicated to the building of a reading environment by supporting the production and dissemination of easy reading material for adults. The work of The ERA Initiative goes together with the work of a range of other valued organisations in this field.

The report is divided into seven parts:

Part 1 is this Introduction.

Part 2 looks at the literacy, adult basic education and publishing contexts within which The ERA Initiative works.

In Chapter 2 the investigation is first contextualised in a commissioned study of the present state of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa. Intensive policy development in the first half of the decade has led to disappointing outcomes, with limited national commitment and declining fortunes, especially in the NGO sector, while the greatest commitment is in industry. ABET is increasingly dominated by the formalised demands of the National Qualifications Framework. Easy readers for adults in this policy context, and reading more generally, have an important role, yet are likely to be marginalised in practice. It is not surprising then that the sales of the wide array of attractive easy readers for adults produced in the last decade are very small. The Chapter does conclude, however, that the small ERA organisation may be better placed to survive the present attrition than some of the larger NGO literacy initiatives.

Chapter 3 is an account of the origins and activities of The Era Initiative.

Chapter 4 describes the difficult situation of educational publishing in South Africa. Long dominated by the school book market, the book trade has been hard hit by the fall in government expenditure on books after a period when publishers invested in new development for new curricula. At the same time, the promise of a national effort to promote book development has fallen through.

Part 3 provides an explanation of the role of easy readers for adults and also examines international perspectives on easy reading for adults.

Chapter 5 starts by sketching the nature and purposes of easy reading for adults, and Chapter 6 looks into the literature on the subject – which proves to be

relatively limited. Issues of production are uppermost, and there is scant attention to questions of usage or marketing. While in South Africa efforts have been made to publish and sell attractive easy reading for adults that has some intrinsic value, efforts elsewhere seem to be limited mainly to the creation of cheap supplementary literature for basic adult literacy classes. Resourceful and creative efforts in this field, not only using books, but newspaper and media supplements are everywhere vulnerable to setbacks in government and donor agency finances and shifts in the global economy. Efforts seem to be surprisingly easily undone.

Part 4 describes the research agenda of the investigation and the motivations behind its initiation.

Chapter 7 outlines the origins and aims of the investigation. They relate essentially to curiosity and concern about the uptake and usage of the easy readers for adults produced by a number of projects in South Africa in the nineties. The approach to the investigation is outlined. After initial explorations partial funding was received. The expectation of further funding from different sources was not fulfilled, which put limits on the scope of the investigation. A successful two day workshop involving a cross section of specialists and activists was run. This produced insights of its own, and recommendations which shaped the further development of the study.

Part 5 deals in a number of chapters with the major and minor research studies and surveys that were undertaken and their findings.

Chapter 8 describes a tracking study that was undertaken to ascertain what was happening to easy reading for adult publications. The ERA Initiative (under a separate contract with the national Department of Education) drew up a comprehensive guide to resources for ABET in the process of an audit of so-called Learning And Support Materials (LASMs). A random sample of 100 easy readers from the audit were tracked in terms of their sales by publishers. (In the event only 94 were followed through.) As in other areas of this investigation, following through the records was very difficult, and it is clearer than ever the extent to which easy readers for adults are a marginal concern of the book trade. In addition, given the fact that many titles have been produced fairly recently, it might have been too early to obtain a clear picture of an emerging market. A surprising finding, however, is that booksellers appear to be the major purchasers of significant numbers of easy readers for adults, although between the lines one may read that they have bought these on a vague understanding that they are school books. Other experiences reported elsewhere in the study show that large-scale and popular outlets for reading matter are entirely unhelpful in supporting any reading endeavour that does not tie in with high bulk or high profits. It seems disappointing that adult education centres are for the most part very poor purchasers of reading matter. It is difficult otherwise to detect clear trends in the sales, but interested readers with a closer familiarity to the particular texts should find the detail informative.

Chapter 9 described another tracking survey which looked at how easy readers are used in adult learning centres. The centres chosen for this survey were agencies which had purchased ERA Book Boxes (portable libraries of readers selected for particular levels) and who were asked about their use of the boxes, and national award winning adult literacy centres who were asked about their use of readers in their programmes. On the whole the impression is of minimal and marginal attention to fostering free, independent reading. Two centres stand out as actually having a policy and using reading purposefully, with intentness, belief and pleasure. More commonly, centres are preoccupied with their course programmes towards examinations, and concentrate almost solely on their workbooks (where they have these). Book Boxes tend not to be used as coherent resources, but are unpacked and scattered among other resources on centre shelves. There seems to be a “policy gap” between the purchaser of the book box and the practitioners who ends up with this resource. Sense of persuasion and purpose, guidance and training seem to be lacking here.

Chapter 10 looks at a study that attempted a more intimate look at the usage of easy readers. This part of the investigation was a qualitative exercise to understand actual, local tastes on the part of buyers and browsers. After a pilot study, an informal bookstall of easy readers was set up on the concourse of Johannesburg’s main railway station, catering largely for working-class commuters. Browsers were observed and occasionally engaged in discussion. Buyers, who were spread across a range of education levels, were questioned about their choices. Although there is a wide range of individual approaches, there is an overwhelming preference for biographies of national liberators and political achievers, with a strongly didactic motivation. On the other hand, the lack of easy readers on useful self-improvement themes is pointed to as a serious gap in satisfying reading needs. Fiction is not particularly favoured, although this observation needs considerable interpretation. English is preferred and sought for. Although the prices of books on sale were sold well below cost, sales were not high and comments indicate that the limited disposable income of the target population is not likely to be directed towards even realistically-priced books.

Chapter 11 reports from a number of reading circles established by some committed provincial librarians and offers some insights about the reading of easy readers when guided by committed promoters of reading.

Chapter 12 supplements the tracking study of Chapter 8 with data collected from some provincial library services which were asked to provide information on purchasing and borrowing of easy readers for adults. Given that these library services would not have had separate categories for this area of concern ten years ago, the ability to provide such reports on significant numbers of purchases is gratifying. However, usage does not seem to be great. Once again, there are no striking trends, and interest for local specialists will lie in the detail. Data from two ABET resource centres in KwaZulu-Natal is also provided.

Chapters 13 and 14 look at easy readers in African languages. One of the special ERA Initiative projects of the past three years has been a concerted

donor-funded effort to produce a series of readers for adults in the African languages. A brief survey was commissioned to look especially at this endeavour, with a focus on the views of the participating publishers. The overwhelming, predictable, impression is of the hegemony of English and the dominance of the demand for English, and the consequent struggle to get any market attention for non-English books. The response to a pleasing book written in the country's smallest language is to have it translated into English! Language development agencies which might have promoted reading in the country's eleven official languages have not been effective. Striking, however, from this African Languages Series tracking study, is the huge positive distortion to the dismal statistics which is made when a provincial education department decides to purchase a couple of titles from the series. Had government resources been greater to carry through the intended national commitment to ABET and literacy in this decade, there is no doubt that many of the easy readers would have been reprinted several times. A recent invitation to ABET materials developers to submit learning support materials to the national Department of Education (on the basis of European Union assistance) holds some promise for the field.

Part 6 offers some tentative conclusions on the investigation.

Chapter 15 closes the investigation with a summary of a discussion group of stakeholders in this investigation who had been able to read the various sub-reports. Not surprised by the findings, given the observations, they nonetheless re-affirm the commitment to the promotion and use of independent reading, and reading for pleasure in adult education - not just as a marginal pursuit, but as central to national learning and skills objectives as reflected in the Skills Development Act and the National Qualifications Framework. Proficient reading remains central to the effective use of all the communications media, including Information Technology. The findings should not discourage, but should increase the resolve to promote adult reading in South Africa. Members of the team point to promising features in the landscape of adult education. The Skills Development, Employment Equity and Qualifications Authority Acts will put pressure on employers and other sectors to give more attention to integrated education and training, and national plans for adult education could bear fruit. However, there is not sufficient awareness of the centrality of proficient reading (based on extensive practice, experience and enjoyment) on the part of most providers.

Part 7 consists of two appendices, one a list of the books in the ERA African Languages Series and the other an annotated select reading list.

Part 2

The context

Chapter

- 2 *Adult literacy and adult basic education in South Africa*
- 3 *The origins and history of The ERA Initiative*
- 4 *Tough years for educational publishing and book development*

Part two has three aims. The first is to provide a map of the adult literacy and adult basic education (ABE) terrain in South Africa, the terrain within which the Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) Initiative has operated since its founding in 1989. The second aim is to briefly describe the origins and history of The ERA Initiative within this context. The third is to describe the current situation of educational publishing and book development.

Chapter 2

Adult literacy and adult basic education in South Africa

In mapping the terrain of literacy and basic education, the search is complicated by the definitional and discourse problems associated with the terms “literacy” and “adult basic education”. In South Africa today, a discourse about formalised **adult basic education and training** (ABET) has almost completely eliminated other and earlier discourses about **reading** and **literacy** that were dominant prior to the 1990s. Currently ABET has come to be defined as education and training provision for people aged 15 and over who are not engaged in formal schooling or higher education and who have an education level of less than grade 9 (Standard 7). So defined, ABE is essentially an adult equivalent of the basic compulsory schooling that children receive and is to be recognised by the award of a General Certificate in Education (GETC) - the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1 qualification.

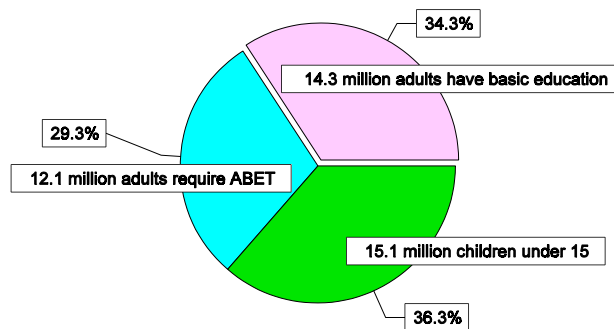
In what senses then, is ABE similar to or different from literacy? If one takes a commonsense view that literacy is about being able to read, write and count, then ABE is clearly a much more formal engagement in classroom curricula in some kind of ABE system, and literacy simply the initial skills upon which that basic education is grounded. But literacy is itself an exceedingly elusive concept and the commonsense view of it is increasingly seen as problematic. Literacy definitions cover a wide continuum ranging from basic alphabetisation through alphabetisation plus varying degrees of proficiency in workplace languages and basic life skills needed for effective functioning in society (so-called functional literacy) to literacy as a complex set of skills and behaviours embedded within the political, economic and social relations of a particular society.

During the 1980s, radical literacy organisations saw literacy work as a political contribution that would enable the disenfranchised to become conscientised and more able to contribute to the various struggles currently being waged against the apartheid regime. This literacy sector, in alliance with trade unions and other actors, showed its initial interest in adult basic education because of a programmatic desire to see that the newly literate and undereducated be exposed to a full basic education that would give them access to the knowledge and skills that an active citizen was considered to need in the modern world. To what extent the current adult basic education and training system in South Africa is a natural outcome of this tradition or rather an alien and technicist replacement and subversion of it will be a matter of future debate.

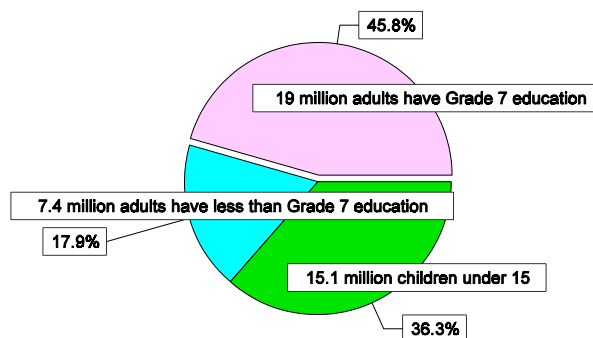
How many adults in South Africa are illiterate or lack a basic education?

South Africa has, according to the 1996 census, a population of 40,583,573 people.

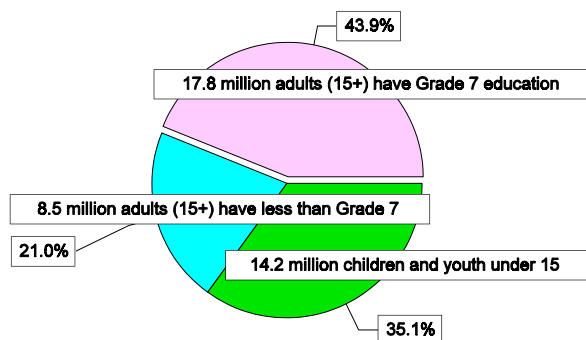
Most countries answer questions about literacy and basic education levels by citing population census statistics on the percentage of the population who have not reached a certain level of formal schooling. Using this method it was estimated from the 1995 October Household Survey that there were about 12.1 million adults (aged 15 and older) who had not received a full nine years of general education (that is, 45% of all adults) (Department of Education, 1997b, pp. 78-81).



Taking a lower, seven years of schooling, level as a crude indicator of functional literacy, there were about 7.4 million adults (28% of all adults) who are functionally illiterate. Of these, about 2.9 million (11% of all adults) were estimated to be totally illiterate (they have received no formal schooling at all).



The 1996 census found that there were nearly 4.1 million adults aged 20 and over (19% of such adults) with no schooling (Statistics South Africa, 1998). For comparison with the above graphs, the graph on the next page shows the percentage of adults aged 15 and over (32% of such adults) who have less than seven years of schooling.

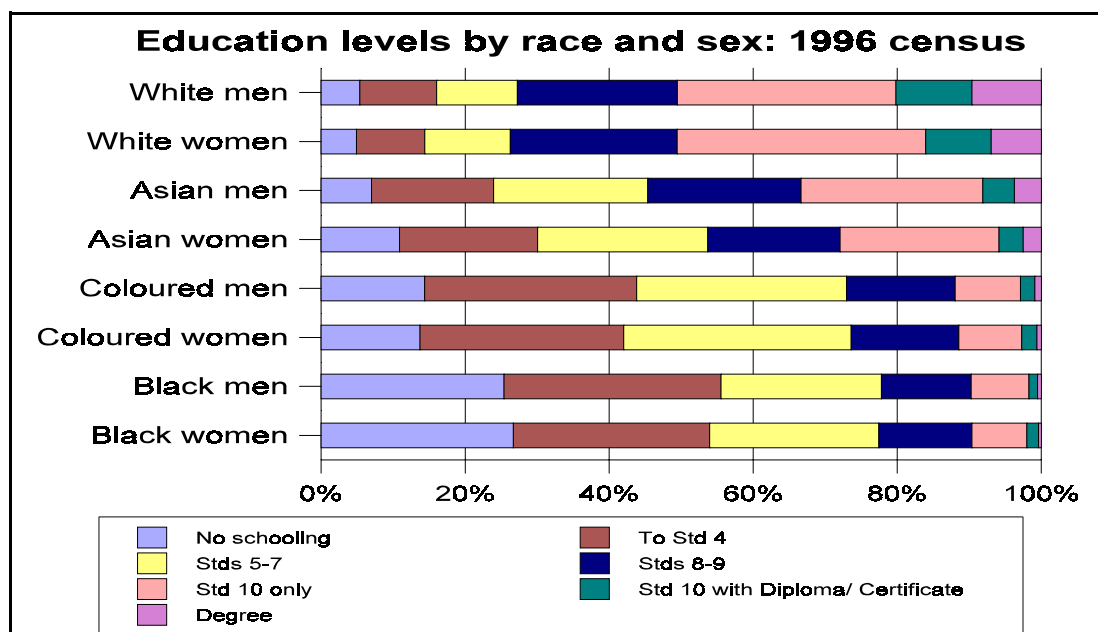


What is clear from these figures is that there has been no decrease in the actual number or percentage of functionally illiterate adults and that in fact it has gone up.¹

Variations in basic education levels exist within the categories of “race”, sex, and geographical location. “Race” is still the single most powerful variable determining educational levels in South Africa as can be seen in the table and graph below:

Level of education of the South African population aged 5+: 1996 Census							
	No schooling	To Std 4	Stds 5-7	Stds 8-9	Std 10 only	Std 10 with Diploma/Certificate	Degree
Black women	26.6%	27.2%	23.4%	12.9%	7.6%	1.6%	0.4%
Black men	25.3%	30.0%	22.2%	12.4%	8.0%	1.2%	0.5%
Coloured women	13.7%	28.2%	31.5%	14.9%	8.7%	2.1%	0.6%
Coloured men	14.3%	29.3%	29.0%	15.0%	9.0%	2.0%	0.9%
Asian women	10.8%	19.0%	23.4%	18.2%	21.9%	3.3%	2.5%
Asian men	6.9%	16.7%	21.1%	21.0%	24.9%	4.3%	3.7%
White women	4.8%	9.3%	11.6%	22.7%	33.8%	8.9%	6.8%
White men	5.2%	10.3%	10.8%	21.5%	29.3%	10.2%	9.3%

¹ There is probably little point to trying to determine the precise number of people in 1996 who could be categorised as functionally illiterate because they had less than a certain level of schooling. Crouch (1999) has argued that the October Household Survey of 1995 is more accurate in its breakdown of the numbers in various levels of schooling attained. While it is true that the October Household Survey is a more professionally administered instrument, Crouch ignores the fact that the 1995 survey was weighted to the 1991 census results, the accuracy of which is now dubious. What is clear is that in both the 1995 survey and the 1996 census about 7.5 to 8.5 million people were found to be functionally illiterate. That the census results suggest that a high proportion of this group has had no schooling at all may have important implications for the methods used for addressing the problem. Further survey research may be useful to examine this more closely.



The above graph reveals, firstly, the clear and continuing educational disparities between the four racial groups of the apartheid era. Whites are best educated, Asians next, Coloureds third and Blacks last. Secondly, the illiteracy figures (No schooling) show that the percentage of Black illiterates remains high and that it is still a problem among Coloureds and Asians (particularly Asian women). Thirdly, women generally have less education than men (perhaps most markedly among Asians). Women generally have less higher education (though it is of interest that this is not markedly so now with black women).

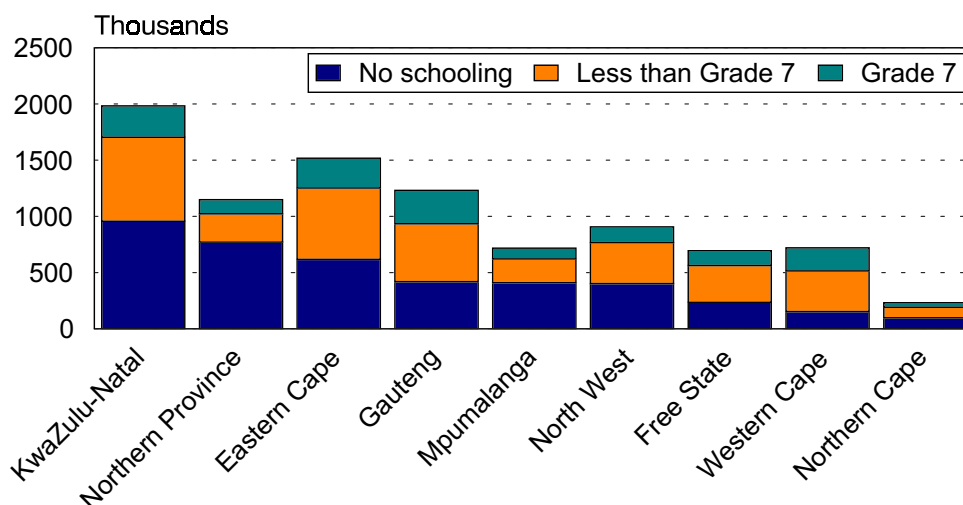
Taking “no schooling” as an indication of total illiteracy, some 24% of African adults aged 20 and over are totally illiterate, 10% of Coloureds, 7% of Indians and only 1% of Whites. The difference between men and women total illiterates, though present (men 41%, women 58%), is relatively small (particularly when the figures are adjusted for the smaller number of men in the population).

In interpreting the estimates of functional illiteracy in South Africa, one needs to heed the caution expressed in Harley *et al* (1996, pp. 31-32) that a large number of the functionally illiterate in any society will be those who are categorised as ineducable for reasons of mental handicap or sub-normal intelligence. In addition, comparisons with some first world countries such as the United Kingdom show that even in such countries a large percentage of the population may be functionally illiterate. A recent report by the United Kingdom’s basic-skills working group, *Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start*, analysed data from domestic and international surveys and found that 20% of adults are functionally illiterate and far more had problems with numeracy. Some 20% of adults are unable to look up a plumber in the Yellow Pages and 25% unable to work out the change from £2 when buying goods costing £1.58. In an international survey published in 1997 by the OECD, the United Kingdom had 23% of adults at the lowest literacy level compared with 12% in Germany, 10% in Holland and 7% in Sweden.

There are considerable variations among the nine provinces in South Africa. Some provinces have high numbers of people in need of ABE though they form a relatively small percentage of the population (as in Gauteng) whilst other provinces may have small numbers but high percentages (as in Mpumalanga). Other provinces have both high numbers and high percentages (as in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal).

		KwaZulu-Natal	Northern Province	Eastern Cape	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	North West	Free State	Western Cape	Northern Cape	Total
No schooling	Male	370111	252673	244416	215729	173490	196177	111254	77819	47188	1688857
	Female	587106	518914	373380	203428	236846	206966	124895	75290	50503	2377328
	Both	957217	771587	617796	419157	410336	403143	236149	153109	97691	4066185
Less than Std 5	Male	315547	112339	286561	284351	105801	185279	165788	183116	45665	1684447
	Female	432039	139948	348914	232273	105415	179018	162288	179168	48905	1827968
	Both	747586	252287	635475	516624	211216	364297	328076	362284	94570	3512415
Functionally illiterate	Male	685658	365012	530977	500080	279291	381456	277042	260935	92853	3373304
	Female	1019145	658862	722294	435701	342261	385984	287183	254458	99408	4205296
	Both	1704803	1023874	1253271	935781	621552	767440	564225	515393	192261	7578600
Std 5	Male	122329	52475	105042	150150	47018	65707	62452	92159	17679	715011
	Female	156106	71902	159194	145494	48765	73296	67857	112252	21899	856765
	Both	278435	124377	264236	295644	95783	139003	130309	204411	39578	1571776
All adults 20+	Male	1848507	850710	1238574	2248163	663173	864314	715328	1101823	215726	9746318
	Female	2329561	1242021	1713111	2176002	730289	914564	748273	1198751	234766	11287338
	Both	4178068	2092731	2951685	4424165	1393462	1778878	1463601	2300574	450492	21033656

Number of people aged 20 + with no, less than grade 7, and grade 7 schooling



Statistics South Africa : 1996 census

In 1996, Harley *et al* in their *A survey of adult basic education in South Africa in the 90s* (pp. 60-62) estimated that adult learners received adult basic education in a number of sectors in the following proportions: State (28.5%), Companies (41.7%), NGOs (18.5%), and other sectors (11.3%). Given the decimation of NGOs in 1997 and 1998 it is probable that the NGO share has declined since then. It is unlikely that the number of adults participating in literacy and adult basic education programmes has exceeded 430 000 people per annum. Harley *et al* (1996, pp. 51-74) estimated that in 1994/95 there were about 335 500 participants. The October Household Survey 1995 revealed a more modest figure of 267 750 participants. There may well have been a significant decline in attendance in 1998 because of closure of many state night schools for several months at the beginning of that year.

The provision of literacy and reading material before the Nineties

The history of adult literacy work under colonialism and apartheid in South Africa has been poorly documented apart from the work of French (1982, 1992), who draws attention to the significant role that the production of reading material played in such endeavours. The work of Eddie Roux whose publishing venture, The African Bookman, produced a number of accessible texts dealing with scientific, agricultural, economic and political matters, during the Thirties to early Fifties is a particularly inspiring example of this.

Adult literacy work went through a dark age during the apartheid era. For much of this period, teaching literacy to black people was illegal in terms of the Bantu Education Act of 1954 (unless it was in an officially approved registered night school, most of which were deregistered and closed). However, in the late sixties and early seventies the Bureau for Literacy and Literature was allowed to do some work in the mines and the more religiously orientated Operation Upgrade worked within community groups such as churches and, after 1976, influenced literacy instruction in the reopened state night schools. Both organisations operated with a conception of “functional literacy”.

In the early seventies, small university groups inspired by their illegal copies of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* tried out literacy work on a very small scale, though the Freirian *process* of conscientisation they used began to inform the practice of the internal anti apartheid movement with enormous consequences, particularly in the Black Consciousness Movement in the Seventies and, in the independent black trade union movement and the United Democratic Front in the Eighties.

After Soweto 1976 and the growth of strong anti apartheid resistance in the Eighties, a literacy movement revived and the small politically committed non governmental educational organisation came into its own. Learn and Teach, USWE and others combined a modified Freirian method with service to trade unions and United Democratic Front groups. Their methods and materials were often of extremely high, if politically tendentious, quality though their organisational structures often limited

the scale of operation. The Eighties also showed some ventures in literacy and adult basic education work by the few universities with adult education departments. The university connection played a particularly important role in the reconceptualisation of literacy as adult basic education, particularly as the possibility of a post apartheid society became realisable. Meanwhile larger literacy and adult basic education providers such as the Pretoria-based ProLit arose and by the end of the Eighties there were uneasy moves towards cooperation between the politically correct NGOs (networked in the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC) formed in 1986) and the others such as Operation Upgrade and ProLit.

During this same general period there had been some parallel attention given to reading and in the provision of reading material. The interest in reading tended to be school and university based but a *Conference on the problems of the adult reader* was held at the University of Natal in July 1979 and a number of short lived reading associations came into being. The Read Educational Trust played a significant role in encouraging library development in black schools and also, later, showed some interest in adult education. Literacy NGOs in some cases produced readers, magazines or newspaper supplements (notable among the latter being SACHED's various newspaper linked endeavours – the last being *Learning Nation*), the English Literacy Project's *Active Voice*, and the University of Natal Centre for Adult Education's *Learn with Echo* (Harley *et al*, 1996, pp. 355-381). This latter body also started a New Readers Project to produce easy readers for adults. The ERA Initiative, dedicated to the promotion of accessible reading for adults, was one of the last of the creative responses to emerge in these last days of apartheid.

ABET policies and programmes from 1990 to 1997

In the first four years of the Nineties there was considerable expansion of cooperation among NGOs - the **National Literacy Co-operation** broadened to include virtually any NGO that wished to join (including a new look **Operation Upgrade** and a **ProLit** which had turned into a delivery agent of some size), though there was a political split with the formation of the **South African Association for Literacy and Adult Education** (SAALAE) in April 1992 which espoused a more Black Consciousness and Africanist line (but which by 1997 was no longer functioning in the literacy field). There was also considerable activity among commercial providers serving industry who had seen the need for a better educated workforce and were also under pressure from the unions to provide ABE. In the period of political transition many people and organisations were waiting for “something” or “the real thing” to happen (which was usually seen as a democratic movement government putting literacy and adult basic education high up on the agenda).

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), set up by the anti apartheid National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) in 1992, produced two reports that deal directly with literacy and ABE issues (*Adult Education* and *Adult Basic Education*) and another which touched on it (*Human Resources Development*). The massive Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was an influential presence within the NEPI and was wedded to the idea of some kind of general education (ABE) being provided to workers parallel to a more rational and generic

form of skills training. Both these issues were strongly present in reports from a National Training Board investigation into a new system of industrial training for South Africa. COSATU then set up its own policy research process, the Participatory Research Project (PRP), that argued for a close integration of ABE and skills training in a modularised system backed by new certification authorities and mechanisms for qualification articulation in every conceivable direction. Also in 1992, the Joint Education Trust (a large new South African Trust with representatives from the business sector, political movements and unions) commissioned a report on Adult Basic Education which recommended that in the interim the Trust should continue to support NGOs (some of which were experiencing funding difficulties as donors prematurely pulled back from the anti apartheid education enterprise) and encourage research into ABE and promote the development of regional support agencies for ABE. Arising out of the report's recommendations, two major JET funded research projects were set in motion in 1994. The one, into the social uses of literacy was led by researchers from the Universities of Cape Town and the Western Cape. The other, into ABE capacity building in the country as a whole, was conducted by researchers at the University of Natal's Centres for Adult Education. The results of both studies were published in 1996 (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 and Harley *et al*, 1996). At the same time the Independent Development Trust (IDT) which had been set up by government, apparently had budgeted about R90 million for literacy and ABE but renege on this commitment.

In 1993 the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) was set up to serve the democratic movement. It had a number of working groups including one on ABE. In 1994 the CEPD was commissioned by the African National Congress to prepare an ***Implementation Plan for Education and Training*** (IPET). Another body that had a brief influence on ABE policy was the South African Committee on Adult Basic Education (SACABE) which represented a wide field of political, trade union, academic and community-based organisation interests but held only one conference in November 1993 and then withered away.

There are a number of key documents produced prior to the elections of 1994 to consider. These include:

- the **National Education Policy Investigation** (NEPI) report of 1992 on ***Adult Basic Education*** (and also the reports on ***Adult Education*** (1993) and ***Human Resource Development*** (1992).
- the **Joint Education Trust's** 1992 commissioned report ***Adult Basic Education: focus on a priority field for funding***.
- The **Independent Development Trust's** 1992 commissioned report, ***Developmental strategy in adult basic education*** (Morphet *et al*, 1992)
- **COSATU's** Participatory Research Projects's 1993 report, ***Participatory Research Project. Consolidated recommendations adult basic education and training***.
- the **National Training Board's** National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) draft document of 1991 and the preliminary report of February 1994.
- the **South African Committee on Adult Basic Education** (SACABE) report on its November 1993 Conference.

- The African National Congress's *Implementation Plan for Education and Training* (IPET) of April 1994 produced by the **Centre for Education Policy Development** (CEPD) as well as its more general policy statements in *The Reconstruction and development programme* (1994) and *A policy framework for education and training* (1995).

The policy and implementation recommendations in most of these documents largely concentrate on matters of a national ABET system – a National Qualifications Framework, national certification, a strong national department of (adult) education, a National Council for ABET, legislation, a national programme, provincial replications of national structures, the building of capacity for systematic planning, a bigger slice of the education budget, guidelines for teacher training, and better teacher training at all levels, audits of skills and infrastructure, etc. It needs to be noted in retrospect the extent to which this policy and planning work concentrated upon a macro system of adult basic education and ignored issues related to transforming pedagogy and the provision of educational materials. Though partnership was frequently mentioned, its principles and rules were not clearly spelt out.

Subsequent to the April 1994 election, literacy and ABE activists were soon disappointed by the seemingly slow pace of development in the ABE sector. ABET did not seem to be a major concern of the new Government of National Unity nor of the national Ministry of Education. The CEPD's proposals for a strong, well resourced adult basic education section within the national department of education were never implemented. Indeed it took until early in 1996 for a Director of ABET to be appointed. A national ABET Task Team appointed by the Minister of Education in September 1994 was rendered largely ineffective by its reconstitution in early 1995 and it was replaced in May 1995 by a National Stakeholders' Forum (NSF) which came to be dominated by formal education system representatives and the business sector. No legislation relating to adult education was tabled. A variety of nationally promoted campaigns centred around the state night school/public adult learning centre system from 1996 to 1997 had disappointing results. Though the amount of money given to state adult education did grow in size, adult education budgets remained a very small percentage of the provincial education budgets (in the 1996/97 financial year overall about 0.6%, that is, six thousandths of the budgets).

Allied with the difficulty the state was having in transforming the situation of ABET, there was a growing crisis in the NGO field which saw much reduced funding as foreign donors now preferred to work directly through bilateral agreements with government and these agreements were slow to be agreed upon and implemented. Older NGOs began to downsize and retrench staff (such as USWE) or even close (such as Learn and Teach), although, ironically, through the National Literacy Co-operation, the field was now better represented nationally than ever before and there was an influx of small new NGOs and CBOs (many of these aspiring to make use of the expected RDP money that never arrived). Through the failure of the state to rapidly reallocate resources, NGOs were thus unable to benefit from new openings in a democratising society - the real beneficiaries tended to be well-capitalised commercial providers contracted by industry and commerce. On a positive note some publishers now saw ABET as a developing and growing field worthy of their interest and some genuine partnerships were formed between NGOs with materials development capacity and publishers.

The reorganised National Literacy Co-operation was now less of a network of affiliates than a national organisation to which affiliates belonged. The positive side of this was that the NGO sector had a more coherent national voice. The downside of this was that as a national organisation it now was in certain respects a competitor with its affiliates. During 1996 and 1997 the National Literacy Co-operation engaged in various attempts at partnership with the national Department of Education with limited results.

Many of the problems in the NGO field occurred in a context of the ongoing formalisation of adult basic education within a National Qualifications Framework and an apparatus of 'unit standards' that would, through prescription of assessment criteria, mould the shape of a new curriculum for ABET. During this period assessment practice was increasingly dominated by the Independent Examinations Board (French, 1997). Attempts to mesh ABE with Training were largely abortive though new initiatives hold out some promise, particularly in the mining industry.

The formalisation process affecting ABET is clearly seen in the key documents produced from 1995 to date include the following:

- The **Education White Paper** of March (Department of Education, 1995a)
- The National Department of Education's *A national adult basic education and training framework: Interim guidelines* of September 1995 (Department of Education, 1995b)
- The research project report of 1996 on *Adult Basic Education and Development* compiled by a group comprising the Department of Education, Congress of South African Trade Unions, Development Bank of Southern Africa, Centre for Education Policy Development, and National Literacy Co-operation (Department of Education *et al*, 1996). This document is interesting in that it attempts to reassert the role of literacy and ABET in development rather than in formal education provision. It had little impact however.
- The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology's Language Plan Task Group's final report of 1996, *Towards a national language plan for South Africa*.
- The Department of Education's October 1997 *Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training* and its *A National Multi-year implementation plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation* (Department of Education, 1997a, 1997b).

The policy and implementation recommendations in these documents were not markedly different from the pre-April 1994 positions (except in the Language Task Group's report which took up again issues of literacy and reading material in the various languages of South Africa). There is a general silence about community empowerment and there are some hints that greater stress should be put on the African languages and South African Second Languages and that there might be state involvement in materials development and an audit of materials. Many of the recommendations are now solidly enshrined in the detailed *A National Multi-year implementation plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation*.

Alongside the policy and planning work largely centred around the national Department of Education and the modest attempts to increase provision by state and NGOs, there were other roleplayers who also exhibited enthusiasm about ABET:

Firstly, the South African Broadcasting Company, manifested a commitment to publicising and working in the field of ABET that was commendable. This may be a reflection of the extent to which the SABC is still an adherent of edifying **public** broadcasting (however narrow and perverted this adherence was during the apartheid era). It proved to be a force for the good in respect of literacy. A number of advocacy programmes were shown on television from 1994 to date such as **Literacy Alive**, **The struggle for literacy**, and **Adult Basic Education in the workplace**, **Basic skills in English**, and **Mochochonono** and also duplicated in the various languages on radio. At an important conference on educational broadcasting held in February 1998, it was reaffirmed that adult education would remain an important priority for educational broadcasting and that substantial resources would be devoted to ABE programmes. It is likely that new SABC initiatives will look at literacy within a wider, more holistic setting than before and integrate programming within a multimedia support environment.

Secondly, libraries and particularly the provincial library services were generally supportive of literacy and the provision of easy reading material (Harley *et al*, 1996, pp. 380-395), although this support has now become more muted because of funding constraints.

A third grouping, the community college sector, is still trying hard to reach take off point. The success or failure of this attempt will undoubtedly have significant consequences for literacy and adult basic education. A **Green paper on Further Education and Training** (Department of Education, 1998a), which addresses many of the community college sector issues, was released in April 1998 and followed in August 1998 by a white paper (Department of Education, 1998b) and in October by a Further Education and Training Act (Department of Education, 1998c).

Things fall apart

By the end of 1997 there was a growing feeling of confidence that the national Department of Education's renamed Directorate for Adult Education and Training, under the leadership of Gugu Nxumalo, was working more effectively and realistically and that, though not without continuing difficulties, partnerships between state and NGOs and university-based adult educators had had some modest successes. The Multi-year implementation plan had affirmed that NGO delivery would supplement state and industry delivery programmes. This, coupled with fiscal constraints on the expansion of delivery by the state, indicated that NGO programmes would continue to be an important component of ABET delivery for some time.

However, at the end of 1997, the future of the NGO literacy and ABE providers remained uncertain, largely because of funding uncertainties, the loss of experienced staff and poor administration. In spite of better national and provincial co-ordination through the National Literacy Co-operation, the NGO literacy field was in some disarray. Their hopes of a rapid change in provision of literacy and ABET had been severely disappointed. Then, in January 1998 came the total collapse of the National Literacy Co-operation. This dismal event had a forerunner in the acts of fraud and

theft that effectively disabled and led to the eventual closure of the World University Service South Africa. In October 1997 the European Union, dissatisfied for some time with the National Literacy Co-operation's reporting, commissioned a rapid appraisal of the Thousand Learner Unit Pilot Programme which they had funded. The review found that the NLC had not fulfilled its obligations and further payments by the European Union were withheld. In January the organisation ceased operating and by the end of February all staff were retrenched and the organisation closed.

The attrition of NGOs continued and by the end of 1998 USWE in Cape Town and the English Literacy Project in Johannesburg had in effect closed, retaining a tenuous existence through some ongoing contracts with publishers. In January 1999 two major ABET NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal, the English Resource Unit and Operation Upgrade were in dire financial straits and retrenchments started. The ending of any regular funding for ABET NGOs from the Joint Education Trust was in many cases their death knell.

Meanwhile in late 1997 and early 1998 the attempts by the national Directorate for Adult Education to get provincial education departments to develop provincial variants of the national multi-year implementation plan (and which was indeed part of the national plan) were moderately successful and some financial support from foreign funders was obtained for this process (particularly for the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province). A number of plan documents were produced of varying practicality. Simultaneously, some attempts at building capacity in areas such as training in outcomes-based education were attempted via a "cascade" model in which each province sent a number of recruits to be trained as trainers in Gauteng with the plan being that they would then replicate the training back home in an ever widening cascade. Whilst an attractive model in theory, in practice it has not worked well because of inflexible timetabling and a lack of support (particularly managerial, logistical and financial) at each level of the cascade in the various provinces.

In November 1998 the University of Natal released a series of draft research reports on ABET in each province and, though there were many positive findings, generally the reports are critical of the lack of progress in implementation and transformation.

Thus, less than a year away from the 21st century, the prospects for the delivery of appropriate and high quality literacy instruction and adult basic education and training remain uncertain. Possible scenarios include the eventually successful construction of a state driven ABET system or the collapse or abandonment of such an enterprise. In the event of this latter conclusion, the extent to which the decimated NGO sector could be revitalised seems dubious. The future role of the business sector in ABET, though probably still the major provider, is also unclear, but current trends suggest that the business community will rapidly phase out ABET and concentrate on the Further Education and Training needed to keep the workforce competitive in the global economy.

In this uncertain situation, the role of an organisation such as The ERA Initiative, which, because of its concentration on reading and the creation of reading material, becomes of particular interest and importance precisely because it is not tied to the success (or failure) of any particular system of educational delivery. Whether there is

an efficient state system with classrooms and curricula or merely non-formal or informal support for the teaching and improvement of reading is not crucial to its aims (though, of course, it would influence its tactics).

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Chapter 3

The origins and history of The ERA Initiative

The ERA Initiative, as briefly alluded to in Chapter 2, arose in the context of the bubbling up of activity, creativity and anticipation of democratisation among small radical literacy organisations and university adult education centres at the end of the eighties.

The University of the Witwatersrand had an adult education department as well as a Centre for Continuing Education which ran extra-mural programmes and a variety of educational projects. In 1989 it set up an Adult Literacy Unit headed by Edward French, who had been a researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council and written on the need for “bridge literature” for new literates (French, 1980) and produced an outstanding survey of literacy in South Africa (French, 1982). Late in 1989 French formed a working party on easy reading and convened a workshop to discuss the lack of post literacy materials. The workshop, held on 16 and 17 November 1989 at the University of the Witwatersrand, was attended by publishers, literacy NGOs, libraries and some state education departments. A decision was made to establish the Easy Reading for Adults Initiative, which became a project of the Adult Literacy Unit.

During its first year The ERA Initiative was served by a voluntary steering committee that set policy, reviewed progress, provided support and tried to ensure accountability. Initially the Steering Committee worked on the two goals of producing a critical catalogue of available easy readers for adults and on initiating a multilingual competition to encourage the writing of such easy readers. A Bibliography subcommittee was also set up in November 1989 and was followed over the next three years with a number of subcommittees (Library, Promotion, Research, Text creation, and Distribution) which operated with varying degrees of success in surmounting the problems associated with a reliance on volunteers. In March 1991 a full-time “ERA innovator”, Beulah Thumbadoo, was appointed to coordinate The ERA Initiative’s activities and an office was established at the Adult Literacy Unit. The steering committee and other subcommittees continued to support the work of ERA.

In 1995 the Easy Reading for Adults Initiative Trust was set up with four trustees – Mary-Anne Bahr, Chimene Chetty, Beulah Thumbadoo and Botlhale Nong (though the latter resigned at the end of the year). The Trust was set up in order to constitute the Initiative in a more substantial way – unlike several other University of the Witwatersrand adult education projects, had always operated independently. In fact the forming of the Trust was soon followed by ERA leaving the University site and connection completely. It now has offices in Yeoville.

The Aims and objectives of The ERA Initiative were:

Aim

To build a reading environment by supporting the production and dissemination of easy reading material for adults.

Objectives

- To harness the energy and expertise of committed organisations and individuals in a collaborative effort. To develop an as-yet-untapped reading market through defined promotional and distribution strategies.
- To formulate, develop and refine a set of criteria and minimum standards for text creation and content.
- To mobilise the production of text meeting the minimum standards and criteria.
- To establish a recognizable mark which could be used to identify texts that embody these criteria.
- To compile and publish a regularly updated critical catalogue of easy reading material for adults (ERA).
- To conduct commission or encourage research into all major aspects of the effort.
- To seek sources of funding and financial support for the initiative.

The Trust was originally envisaged as a small body which would handle the now autonomous finances of The ERA Initiative. There were some initial worries that the previous Steering Committee would now be sidelined but in practice the Steering Committee and various sub-committees continued to play a vital role, particularly in keeping the organisation in touch with and accountable to organisations involved in this field. Organisations which had representatives on the Steering Committee included literacy organisations (TELL, the National Literacy Co-operation, the Wits Workers' School), publishers (Heinemann, Via Afrika, Macmillan, ViVa Books), libraries (Gauteng Library Services, Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand African), funders (Joint Education Trust) and the Independent Examinations Board.

The ERA Initiative has been served since its inception by a number of subcommittees which have waxed and waned according to need and the endurance of volunteer workers. These included the Bibliography committee which played an important role in establishing the criteria for evaluating easy readers, in such actual evaluation work, and in encouraging the development of materials in African languages. It produced *The ERA Initiative Guidelines on Selecting Easy Reading Materials for Adults*, the *ERA catalogue* and its updates. Two other committees looked at Research and Distribution.

One of the reasons for the importance of these committees was the always small staff base of The ERA Initiative. Although in 1991 the envisioned staff complement was five people – the Co-ordinator and a Publishers' Liaison Officer, a Literacy networker, a Distribution co-ordinator and an Administrative officer – funding constraints have limited staffing to two full-time people, the Co-ordinator and (though not always continuously) an Administrative officer.

Funding, as with most educational NGOs in South Africa, came from donor grants. Main funders of ERA have been the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (US\$ 172 000 from 1990 to 1995 for core support), the Kagiso Trust (R 490 000 for publishing the African Language Series), the World University Service (R 100 000 in 1996) and smaller amounts from funders such as JCI (R70 000 for purchasing Book Boxes for mine hostels in 1995), the D.G. Murray Trust, South African Breweries and Eskom. In 1998 funds were received from ABEL (R92 000), German Adult Education Association (DVV) (R70 000) and the British Council (R40 000).

The activities of The ERA Initiative

Many of the activities of The ERA Initiative have been alluded to above. The following provides more detail on some of the work the organisation has done since late 1989:

The critical catalogue

Work was started in 1990 on this catalogue which aimed to be an inventory of easy reading resources, their cost and source, and a descriptive and critical guide to potential users. In 1993 about 600 were sold to libraries and 400 to resource centres. The catalogue has been updated but slow sales in recent years have made its regular updating and publication more problematic.

Work with libraries

South Africa is served by a mix of state, provincial, municipal and private library services. For the general public it is largely a matter of being served by a library run by the provincial library service or by a large municipality. Prior to the creation of the current nine provinces, the four provincial library services were relatively well funded and were obvious routes to making available of ERA materials. To a large extent this did indeed prove a success story. Thus, for example in the early 90s the four provincial library services purchased an ERA catalogue for all of their libraries. Currently, with nine provincial library services, some of them now relatively less well financed and staffed than in the past, support for ERA has been more erratic. In the mid-90s provincial library services bought updates only for their regional libraries. This severely undermined the practicality of producing regular updates. ERA has continued to encourage the provincial library services to promote easy readers for adults and the ERA African Language series.

Short story competition

The Annual short story competition, sponsored and run with the co-operation of Sales House Club magazine (put out by a clothing store chain) generated 800 entries in various languages in its first year, 1990, and has since received between 100 and 400 stories. It has been a great success and has provided opportunities for black, non-academic, aspiring writers.

The ERA African Language Series

In 1995 ERA secured funding from the Kagiso Trust for the production of 40 easy readers in ten indigenous South African languages at four literacy levels. Tenders were invited from publishers and five companies (Juta, Heinemann, Via Afrika (operating as Collegium using the Stimela imprint), Viva and Kagiso (now part of Maskew Miller Longman)) participated. There was a book launch on International Literacy Day 1996 at a function addressed by Deputy president Thabo Mbeki. There were production delays and the marketing of the books did not occur as planned (partly because it was left to the individual publishers) and there were some difficulties between publishers and ERA reviewers. Sales have not been good in spite of the quality of the books.

In a report on the project Dumisani Ntshangase (1998) comments ironically of this project that:

Firstly, it showed that commercial educational publishers were not prepared to invest in ABET materials and specifically, ABET materials in African languages. Secondly, publishers had not undertaken market research in order to understand the nature of the market and its potential. Thirdly, it is a sad indictment against commercial publishers that the production of such materials could only be undertaken once an independent production subsidy was available.

He also notes lack of budgets and programmes in provinces and the lack of an enabling environment for this innovation project.

The ERA Book Boxes

These provide a careful selection of easy readers for adults graded into four ABET sub-levels in their own sub-boxes, together with a facilitator's box with the ERA catalogue and supplements, the ERA guidelines on selection of ERA material, a general handbook on encouraging reading, and an ERA poster and bookshelf banner. Various attempts were made to market these boxes. Results have been modest but reasonably successful; given ERA's limited resources and lack of a marketing arm.

Readathon

Since 1995 ERA has participated in the annual Readathon organised by the READ Educational Trust. ERA's participation has added an adult reader focus and included the production in 1996 of 30 000 copies of a *Reading Handbook for Adults* with funding from READ.

Reading supplements

In 1992 an adult reading supplement, *Reading Press*, was published in the newspaper *City Press*. Because of a growth in circulation of *City Press* in early 1994 some 300 000 copies of this four-page supplement were being printed. Unfortunately the sponsors, City Press and Via Afrika publishers then moved their sponsorship to the SABC *Literacy Alive* series.

Newsletter

This has been published on a regular basis.

Consultancy

This has usually involved assistance to organisations in making educational or informational material more accessible to adult readers.

Evaluations of ERA's activities

The ERA Initiative has engaged in regular reflection on and evaluation of its activities. A March 1992 evaluation led to a reconceptualisation of ERA's role as:

ERA aims to build an environment in which reading is encouraged by supporting the production and dissemination of Easy Reading materials for adults.

Additional aims were to move towards self financing as a step towards gaining the commitment of significant South African resources – financial, institutional and human – for the promotion of easy reading for adults. Plans were made to target companies with active literacy programmes, promote corporate membership and purchases for inter company libraries, and to gain commitment from bookshops.

A second evaluation, in the form of a workshop in November 1996 examined success and failures and in particular any failures of strategic planning.

Successes identified included:

- Readers for various levels had been selected for the Book box and this process was useful to the field and commercial publishers.
- Encouragement had been given to the writing of short stories.
- The National Literacy Co-operation and other ABET NGOs provided distribution points for the ERA Book Box.
- Evaluation and research had been encouraged.
- Skills of reviewers had been developed through the production of the Catalogue.
- The ERA mark had been welcomed by most librarians because it easily identified easy readers and was seen as an award of quality.

Failures or omissions included:

- The ERA mark had alienated some publishers²
- In recent years ERA had been less active in the library sector

Reconceptualisations arrived at included:

- ERA should not become bigger but continue as a small agency focussing on helping projects that lobbied and promoted easy reading.
- ERA should spend time on seeking and developing partnerships for such projects.
- ERA's target audience is much broader than those served by NGOs and includes hospitals, clinics and prisons.

ERA and the context of educational publishing and distribution

When ERA started it was believed that existing distribution channels could be persuaded to support ERA but to date most bookstores are still unwilling to carry easy readers for adults. This clearly indicates that expected developments in the

² Initially the ERA mark was simply seen as a **logo** for the organisation but was soon transformed into a **seal of approval**. The intention was that the seal of approval in a varied range of reading matter would indicate that the texts met the criteria of being:

- enjoyable and interesting
- accessible for people with limited reading and/or language proficiency
- responsive to the interests and perspectives of ordinary people
- free of rigid stereotypes, ideologies of dominance or patronising approaches
- of good quality and not inferior
- attractively produced.

However, in March 1992, it was agreed that it should be seen more as a discrete, non-stigmatised **identification mark** than a seal of approval that would enable potential users to find reading matter to fit their needs. It would not be a form of censorship or quality control but would be awarded to any text in which deliberate concessions had been made to a readers lack of reading or language proficiency or which was simply suitable and accessible to adults needing reading matter. The criteria for awarding this identification mark remained similar however:

- useful and enjoyable
- accessible for people with limited reading and/or language proficiency
- appropriately edited and developed.

Unfortunately, three publishers were unhappy with the use of the ERA mark. In May 1995 the New Readers Project discontinued the use of the mark because they thought it might damage sales to the school market. Ironically this project had been the only group at that time to consistently use the ERA mark. Also, in 1995, Kwela had a book rejected (on language grounds) and this led to a breakdown in relationships and there was also a breakdown with ViVa Books. The Research sub-committee met to evaluate the use of the ERA mark and raised a number of issues and questions needing research.

transformation of the literacy and adult basic education environment had not happened.

The field of educational publishing is in some disarray in South Africa at present. Although in the early nineties there were indications that a far greater stress would be placed on textbooks and reading materials in school (partly influenced by a World Bank study that suggested that adequate supplies of texts were essential for upgrading the quality and output of educational systems in Africa (World Bank, 1988)). Publishers anticipated a huge growth in activity because of the need to replace apartheid era materials, develop new material for new curricula (such as the Curriculum 2005 for schooling) and produce materials for new fields such as ABET. In reality the situation in the late nineties became a nightmare for publishers as provincial education departments ran out of money to finance education budgets totally dominated by salary payments to teachers. The lack of significant state financial support for ABET also frightened publishers away from this field.

In this broad context it is hardly surprising that, as Amanda Jordaan in a 1997 report for ERA, noted that:

The relationship between ERA and publishers has never been an easy one. The existence of ERA is highly dependent on the work produced by publishers and from ERA's point of view the publishers are dependent on the success of ERA's work in growing the adult reading market. Although there are a number of publishers who have realized the importance of the ERA market, many of the bigger publishing houses still remain unconvinced of the economic advantage of entering this market in a big way.

Jordaan also notes, however, that many of the more serious misunderstandings have been between ERA and those publishers that are interested and involved in the ERA market, the difficulties often arising over issues of quality control.

By the beginning of 1999, the situation was, if anything, more parlous as a number of reputable literacy NGOs with experience in materials development closed or existed in drastically reduced circumstances, as funders such as the Joint Education Trust indicated that they were no longer going to fund individual ABET NGOs.

The Research initiative

In 1998 ERA initiated a research project to appraise easy reading materials, examine the issue of why more adults are not reading (a situation of aliteracy), and explore the role of various mediators – institutions, organisations, individual educators and librarians – of reading. Beulah Thumbadoo and Edward French co-ordinated the project as a whole and an extremely useful advisory/ reference group was set up. The findings of this research form the bulk of the remaining chapters of this report.

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Chapter 4

Tough years for educational publishing and book development

Inasmuch as easy reading for adults largely lies in the hands of publishers, it will inevitably be marginal to the school book trade, and will depend on the fortunes of the trade. Educational book spending is driven almost everywhere in the world by social and political factors rather than by cycles of consumer spending, and the book industry in South Africa is no different. It has been deeply affected by the systematic changes in education in the nineties.

In South Africa the trend of textbook provision over the last five years has shown a steady decline, a symptom of declines in other forms of educational delivery. Spending declined from R900 million in 1994 to R150 million in 1998 (*Financial Mail*, 2 October 1998).

This has had an impact on the availability of materials and the health of the book industry, in several ways.

Firstly, the slow pace of curriculum change has led to instances where old, sometimes outdated and sometimes inappropriate books are still being used (history texts and matriculation-level (grade 12) literature set works being the most noticeable examples). This is because approved lists have not changed for years, and education departments are still teaching under the terms of reference of the 'interim syllabuses' which incorporate the approved lists, subject offerings and examinations proffered by previously racially-segregated education departments.

Secondly, provincial departments of education do not have funds to provide for learners beyond a single grade at a time, and even then departments can only purchase materials for a few of their enrolled learners. Even in relatively wealthy provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape, many schools do not receive allocations sufficient to provide for more needs than the purchase of a few dictionaries or readers.

This situation has an impact on both the scale and success of the implementation of the new Curriculum 2005; on the future of school libraries; and on the access by almost 60 per cent of all learners to any educational texts at all, particularly if those learners are outside the 'Foundation Phase' of the new curriculum. Such learners have not had replacement texts since early 1996.

Thirdly, and fundamentally, little or no policy-work and equally little educational planning has taken place around the complex task of educational materials provision. This has serious consequences for the delivery of quality in South African education.

Materials are paid for out of provincial budgetary line items that date from years back, are rigid and do not allow departments either to budget for, or to monitor, spending on materials. Indeed educational books are tellingly grouped with stationery items in provincial budgets (and sometimes appear under the same line item as livestock!).

The respective roles of the national and provincial departments were inadequately defined after the 1994 elections, so that alignment problems often exist between the provinces, which are expected to implement national policies without funds or resources, and the national department, which determines norms and standards it is unable to enforce or deliver.

At a provincial level, the curriculum and provisioning sections in provincial education departments often do not liaise with each other. At a district level, school libraries are often not planned for at all, as library policy is complex, requires co-ordination between a number of government departments and library organisations, and libraries are seen as an easy target for spending cuts.

Indeed the problems associated with textbooks are often not generated by publishers, who after all do not initiate policy but follow the dictates of bureaucracy. “The problems and distortions (in textbook provision) have existed as much in the state’s systems and structures for the provision of books to schools as in the practices and policies of educational publishers” said Glenn Moss of Ravan Press in 1993, and in 1998 most educational publishers would heartily agree that little has changed.

Policy makers have tended to ‘work around’ the existence of the commercial publishing sector. In 1995 and 1996, proposals from the publishers’ association advocating that policy attention be paid to textbook provision was paid little attention by policy developers.

In early 1997 some provinces invested in developing their own materials. One province went so far as to purchase a printing press, and several produced teacher support material for the Foundation Phase of the curriculum as well as the History matriculation syllabus.

Textbooks have been dismissed as learning tools, by both policy makers and the research of curriculum developers committed to outcomes-based education. The Minister of Education went on record in mid-1998 as saying that “my advisors tell me that learners do not need textbooks”. This is a perspective that appears to have shifted somewhat, perhaps due to the President’s impatience with slow progress in the relatively affordable and measurable area of schoolbook provision.

For its part, the book publishing industry has laid off some 2000 staff in 1998, and all educational publishers are showing losses. Printers, who purchased machinery in anticipation of large orders for new curriculum materials have had to look outside the country for contracts to keep their machines running and recoup their investments. Book retailers are closing their doors. An informal estimate of the private sector investment in plant, staff and resources to service the new curriculum is that it might possibly be as large as R80 million, much of which has been irretrievably lost.

Possible projects in areas that have always had to be subsidised, like literature, adult basic education and African languages, will never see the light of day. Businesses that might have opened, such as booksellers in rural areas, will now never open. Talented and creative publishers, designers and illustrators, and the investment their employers made in their training and development are probably permanently lost to the industry. The ultimate losers will probably be teachers and parents, whose freedom to choose materials of good quality has been restricted, and the learners, who now have access to a far more limited range of materials than was predicted in early 1997.

It is not all bad news. There have been recent attempts in some education departments in South Africa to think past the stand off with commercial publishers, and to see the book industry as a useful resource. One idea is the notion of 'constructive partnerships' between education departments and service providers, who might, for example, supply materials by invitation or public tender.

The October 1998 budget adjustment speech by the Minister of Finance voted R200 million towards textbooks. This happened at the prompting of a private sector grouping, the National Business Initiative, concerned about the lack of delivery in the area of schoolbooks, who drew up a business plan in conjunction with the Department of National Education. It was a welcome move for the book industry and a necessary one for learners.

Probably the most important factor that would affect the future of schoolbooks, the success of learners and the viability of the educational publishing industry is the need for policy frameworks concerning schoolbooks, reading matter and teaching and reference materials.

It is necessary to ask the question 'at what price knowledge in a developing country?' We should start acknowledging the book industry as a strategic one. The development of policy frameworks will result in greater state recognition of the social actors involved in materials development, as well as adequate delivery mechanisms that will allow for better diffusion than takes place at present. The Western Cape Education Department, with its COMSEM grouping and the Gauteng Department of Education, with its task team developing policy on learning support materials, are leading the way here.

Unfortunately, the fate of the Book Development Council of South Africa is another indication that the book production sector is not yet recognised as being of strategic importance. With the excitement of the political transition in 1994 there were great hopes around language policy. Linked to this was the promise of a Book Development Council, a body that was constituted at a national meeting attended by 140 delegates from the book world in May 1994. Though it received a grant from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in August 1996, it has been unable to play the role envisaged at its inception because of a lack of funding and a lack of real support and involvement from the book industry (Chupaty *et al*, 1997, pp. 17-19).

One of the few products of the Book Development Council of South Africa was a major *Research report on book development in South Africa* (Perold, Chupty and Jordaan, 1997) funded by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. This report made many well-grounded recommendations, which could have hugely improved the environment of reading, including easy reading for adults. In the event, the resources, structures and powers have not been in place to carry out these recommendations. One of the authors of the report Shanoo Chupty had this to say of the disappointing outcomes (Chupty, 1998):

When I was first briefed about the Book Development Council research I was given to understand that we were to do research that would result in a book policy like most other countries had. The report also has a recommendation on “the formulation of a national book policy as part of the national development plan will do a great deal to drive this process.” The process being referred to is that of transforming the book industry from its present skewed nature to one that contributes substantially to growth and development. Just over two years later we still do not have a book policy that serves as a beacon of our country’s vision for the role that books and reading can play in our “nation’s intellectual, social and cultural development.”

Firstly, there was no concerted effort to distribute the commissioned report, to discuss it or to follow-up in any way. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology has done no follow-up to the research, nor distributed the document for discussion. There has been no development of a strategy for implementing some of the recommendations after the discussion. Though vision, political will, and money may have been lacking, some of the numerous recommendations (Chupty *et al*, 1997, Appendix A, pp. 1-22) could have been acted upon.

Secondly, the book publishing and distribution sector did not ‘buy-in’ to the research or the report.

Thirdly, the Government does not see itself as having a role to play in developing an informed reading public.

Chupty and her colleagues have reflected on the failure of their report to galvanize action and attempted to ascribe this failure to a range of factors such as lack of finance, the complexities of implementing over ambitious policies, a lack of prioritizing of reading as a skill in the school curriculum, lack of capacity in schools, a lack of ring-fencing of education textbook budgets in the provinces, failures in budgetary planning in provincial education departments, and the high price of books. They also note that the South African publishing industry has always been skewed towards educational publishing with general publishing and publishing in indigenous languages lagging behind.

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Part 3

The role of easy readers for adults

Chapters

- 5 *What are easy readers for adults? A little local history*
- 6 *International perspectives on easy reading for adults: a conversation with the literature*

Chapter 5

What are easy readers for adults? A little local history

At about the same time in the nineteenth century that Leo Tolstoy was writing little stories for teachers to use with Russian peasants, Bishop Colenso was sitting with his valued Zulu advisers devising primers and textbooks in Zulu – and other missionaries were doing similar jobs in other parts of southern Africa.

But it is only in the 1930s and 1940s that we hear for the first time of deliberate efforts to develop texts to help adults into the light of literacy. Two very different efforts characterise that period. On the one hand we have Eddie Roux creating challenging, informative and argumentative readers for night-school learners. Although these were concerned with a scientifically simple repertoire in English, they look as though they might stretch the average matriculant today. On the other hand, there was the influence of Frank Laubach, who produced little booklets on worthy and useful subjects in the language of pre-school primers.

Various movements from abroad influenced the way in which easy readers were approached. The Summer School of Linguistics concentrated on calculations of the most commonly used letters or sounds in a language, and on creating primers that used progressively more complex words or grammatical structures. Using the tools of fairly mechanical analysis, evangelical literacy movements developed simplified gospels, while socialists developed simplified uplifting people's texts. Then, in the early seventies, came a very different approach. Paulo Freire rejected the production of texts from outside of the learners and their communities, and developed methods to generate learners' writing. Radicals took up this approach in South Africa, sometimes producing newsletters of learners' writing which fastidiously avoided the imposition of any kind of editing or correction to distort the voices of the learners. The workshopping of learners' stories and communities' own histories yielded some wonderful "easy readers" in the 1980s. These were often experienced as valuable stimulants to learners to see themselves as participants and active subjects in the literate world. Using some of all the approaches – simplifying journalism, some very easy texts, some at a fairly high level, and also capturing the voices of the newly literate – several little newspapers were established and ran through the 80s into the 90s. Most notable among these was the *Learn and Teach* magazine.

Contemporary reading materials for new readers include general interest information; periodicals; publications of a less didactic, more entertaining nature, such as comic strips; calendars, posters, leaflets, and booklets; and audiovisual media (Dumont, 1990). Such easy texts for adults have been used for a variety of purposes – from extending the command of the basics, to real, useful instructional reading, propaganda, and a deeply respectful form of empowerment. In spite of the valuable work done in various sectors, however, by the start of the nineties the lack of an

adequate supply of reading matter to support and extend adult literacy efforts had become a *leitmotif* in the analysis of the plight of adult literacy work. Inasmuch as there were texts, they were seen as far too thin on the ground to satisfy the variety of human needs, or provide any richer pleasure in reading. Many were seen to be low grade, patronising, limitingly localised, and - above all - dull. Work like *Learn and Teach* magazine, which was none of these things, could still not answer the range of needs for formative reading that might also be the ultimate reading experience for many adult new readers.

It was in this context, and in the bright hopes of the early 90s that the new order in South Africa would give high priority to adult basic education, that a number of projects came into being. The ERA Initiative set out primarily to raise the platform on which publishers, librarians, booksellers, the press and other direct stakeholders in a literate society might start investing more in supporting adult literacy. The New Readers Project based at the University of Natal set out to produce a wide array of texts. Viva Books bravely moved into the effort of making easy texts for adults into a commercial venture, while maintaining the commitment to quality literature and authentic adult education. At the same time a number of newspapers and magazines for adults continued in production, of which only *Learn with Echo*, produced by the Centre for Adult Education of the University of Natal still exists.

The productivity and accomplishments of these projects have been impressive. This study is concerned mainly with the ways in which their products and packages are being used.

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Chapter 6

International perspectives on easy reading for adults: a conversation with the literature

The recent literature on the subject of easy readers is surprisingly limited in scope, compared for example to the amount available on this subject during the literacy campaigns of the sixties and seventies. In addition, the emphasis in the literature is on writing and production of materials and little attention is given to their marketing and usage.

This chapter does not seek to summarise the literature surveyed but attempts rather to highlight certain questions or answers that are very different from those usually developed in response to the South African illiteracy situation or ERA's experience. This exercise helps provide some basic information about what has been considered successful methods for developing easy reading material.

The paper comes before the book

According to Harbans S. Bhola (1989):

Third World nations of Africa, of Asia and Latin America must do some things for themselves – and immediately. They must build paper plants on a regional basis as well as suitable printing capacity within each country. At the same time they must invent new social organizations such as rural libraries, reading circles and discussion groups that promote social ownership and social use of print materials so that the same book can be read by multiple readers during its life span.

What Bhola considers prerequisites for the production, development and promotion of post literacy are similar to our South African concerns, but assume a very different context. However, within the South African pulp and paper industry, four companies namely Sappi, Mondi, Nampak and Carlton Paper contribute almost 98% to national production. They cooperate very closely and the limited competition makes paper an expensive commodity because they set their price (through an import parity pricing system) close to the import price. While this may make financial sense for the paper industry, it is a contentious issue in book production (Perold *et al*, 1997)

It seems therefore, that for development publishing, within which field easy reading for adults falls, to take place and be sustained in the longer term, an intervention is required that will force South African printing paper to be made available at reduced rates. That paper for printing is made available appears somewhat more simple an aim than ensuring that the printed books will be used by and available for multiple readers since the latter responsibility must fall to communities possibly dealing with crime, vandalism, and a lack of appreciation of the value of books.

Why is post literacy necessary?

According to Bernard Dumont (1990):

Post-literacy is all the means and activities that allow persons who have recently become literate to make use of their skills and to increase and deepen the knowledge acquired. There are many kinds of literacy. What they all have in common is the merciless test of the durability of literacy's effect: After 1, 2, or 5 years, what will the beneficiaries have retained and what uses will they be making of their literacy? Relapse to illiteracy is one of the most serious threats to literacy because it is very widespread and because it leaves its victims, who have sacrificed to become literate, more destitute and less motivated. The remedy is post-literacy.

He goes on to explain:

The three aspects that are involved in providing post-literacy are the production of materials to which the knowledge acquired can be applied; the creation of a literacy environment; and the possibility of access to higher levels of responsibility for newly literate people.

The ERA Initiative believes that all the three aspects Dumont speaks of are present in one less than satisfactory form or another within the South African context, but that they are neither impactful enough in themselves nor strategically linked to each other to bring about an environment in which post literacy flourishes. Key policies for education and training in South Africa appear to neglect the need for a sustaining reading environment, but this need is implicit in many policy aims.

Whose responsibility is it?

Dumont (1990) contends that:

Because most of the world's illiterate people live in an environment virtually bereft of written material of any kind, the cooperation must be sought of all decision-makers in those areas who are in a position to contribute to the multiplication of public, written information. No literacy project can be effective without attending to post-literacy.

Although this statement is not true of the South African situation, since many functionally illiterate South Africans are surrounded by the written word, the efforts of The ERA Initiative to alleviate their plight over the past eight years has led us to the same conclusion. Piecemeal projects, no matter how worthy or necessary, will never become as effective as they could be until all decision-makers are aware of them and prioritise how best they can act on them. Based on this conclusion, The ERA Initiative has submitted a proposal to the Office of the Deputy President calling for the active participation of all levels of government and other role players in declaring a national decade of reading from 2000 to 2010.

Whom best creates easy reading material for adults?

According to Manuel E. Valdehuesa in his article *Publishing for new literates in Asia* (Valdehuesa, 1985):

We must appreciate and act on the idea that publishing for new literates requires mobilization of resources that are available but uncoordinated. The best creative minds in society need to be enlisted and motivated to provide the variety of reading materials the population needs – whether for children or adults, for technical knowledge or professional enrichment, for general reference or simply for entertainment.

Again, it is clear that not enough ‘buy-in’ at the level of the best creative minds has taken place in South Africa. Easy reading for adults has been on the agenda of a very few university departments, a few publishers and a few NGOs. Although such bodies have made attempts to work together or more closely, various factors, amongst them a lack of capacity, have militated against their combined efforts having maximum effect. Chapter 3 on *The origins and history of The ERA Initiative* alludes to other reasons why these materials makers do not have close working relationships.

What factors need to be taken into account in producing easy readers?

In *Literacy in Minority Languages: What hope?* Clinton D.W. Robinson states that (Robinson, 1990):

In multi-lingual nations, the use of different languages must be complementary, rather than exclusive. Transition to the national language is facilitated when rooted in literacy in the local language - a pedagogically sound process.

It is rather at the village level, for initial primary education and for communication in village-level development that minority languages are not only appropriate, but can be used to better effect than the national language. This is particularly true of village level intervention where participatory goals and methods are in focus; such intervention might include the planning and implementation of rural development projects at the grass-roots for example, of family income generation; cultural self expression; the use of tradition media; access to indigenous knowledge.

Indeed, as experiences in Ghana and Cameroon have shown, the very development of the language itself can lead to some of the intangible social benefits sought after by empowerment strategies: increased self-confidence and initiative, pride in local cultural heritage and a greater sense of equality with groups whose languages already have a literate tradition.

The importance of producing in the mother tongue a specific sub-section of the body of materials for the newly literate has been a personal experience for ERA when it considered, conceptualised and conceived the ERA African Languages Series written about in more detail elsewhere in this document.

Are there different considerations for publishing easy reading material in minority languages?

According to Robinson (1990):

All literacy programmes require some research to establish the target group, the purposes literacy serve, and what structures exist or need to be established to promote literacy.

Literacy in minority languages:

- Depends on the will to communicate with every group, however small
- Must include adequate linguistic and motivational research
- Will be based in the local community, sustained by the local community
- Can lead to improved opportunities to develop human potential
- Respects and promotes cultural identity within the larger whole.

The hopes for minority-language literacy do not rest ultimately, on the availability of resources, for resources follow priorities. Such hopes depend rather on the value which we place on the identity of each community and, in the last analysis, of each individual, and on how worthwhile we believe it is to establish communication patterns with people which will give them the maximum opportunity to develop their own potential on their own terms.

One example of such an intervention was that conducted in the mid-seventies in the western part of the Ivory Coast in West Africa and described by Margrit Bolli in *The Victor Hugos in Dan country – developing a mother-tongue body of literature in a neoliterate society*. It might serve well as a development model for South Africa should we embark on a large-scale publishing endeavour in all official languages. Bolli (1983) summarises the process used thus:

Stage 1 material is written by a speaker of the language and has content that is completely familiar to both speaker and audience;

Stage 2 material includes experiences of the author that are outside the experience of the audience, but written in the style of the local language and in terms of their culture and language;

Stage 3 material is learned vicariously by the author, but is written in the style of the local language and in terms of the local culture; and

Stage 4, the most difficult, is translated material in which both the content and form are modified by their foreign source.

ERA's experience with the African Languages Series taught us that the publisher that worked hand in glove with a literacy project in work-shopping stories from communities of mother tongue speakers was the first to produce the most appropriate texts. Publishing 'going it alone' might therefore not be an advisable approach.

Taichi Sasaoka in *How to Prepare Materials for Neo-Literates* (1990) has come up with nine steps in the development process which can presumably be applied to the production of texts in all languages.

The nine steps are:

1. Identify the needs of the target group through a field survey
2. Select a theme
3. Select the format, based on the literacy level of the target group, how and where the materials will be used and the production costs
4. Prepare the script and illustrations
5. Edit
6. Finalize captions and title
7. Field test
8. Revise
9. Mass produce the materials. Distributions of materials for neo-literate people is the weakest link in the chain in development.

Distribution is also a monumental South African failing. Whether South Africa has justifiable reasons, as poorer countries with less infrastructure might have, for failing people in this way can be debated. ERA recently approached a large grocery chain store to consider stocking easy readers for adults. At first ERA was informed that such a deal would be dependent on reliable delivery which is monopolised in South Africa by a few national distribution agencies. On approaching the latter, ERA was immediately rejected by one agency and although samples were delivered to another that at least considered the idea, they could not come up with a 'procedure' for such delivery because their computers only dealt with bulk. By this they meant that their business was structured to pick up magazines measured in tonnage so they could work out a fair price for their service based on weight. Their computers would have no way of knowing what to do with small quantities of easy reading material for adults! The chain store rejected the proposal anyway so there was no need to take that lightweight argument any further! Who can reverse such decisions?

How can easy reading material be distributed, used, evaluated and its production sustained?

How can easy reading material be distributed? Who uses it and how is it used? How can its production be sustained given current global market orientations? Could its production ever be sustainable? How is its effectiveness or value to be judged? A number of studies have addressed these and related issues.

Semali (1993) in his investigation into the use of communication media in developing reading ability in Tanzania states:

The assumption is that use of media supposes a favourable attitude toward information and information seeking, which in turn may lead to reading. Post literacy programs have been used to produce written materials for newly literate adults, but this narrow view falls short of preventing relapse into illiteracy. Furthermore, the gradual move away from mass educational and government financing of education has put post literacy at greater risk. This study tests levels of retention of literacy among neo-literates in Tanzania who gained a literacy certificate five years ago. Tanzania was chosen as a case study because its government has provided considerable support to adult literacy programs since the 1970s and has consequently been regarded as one of the countries of Africa with a relatively

progressive, though not completely successful, literacy programme. Three radio programmes used for publicity and motivation of adult learners were The Teacher's Teacher, Continue Learning, and Literacy through Radio.

UNESCO introduced Zonal rural newspapers. It was claimed by Mpogolo (1984) that rural newspapers were reaching every household in more than 8000 villages. The Uhuru newspaper has a circulation of over 160 000 copies per issue. The kisomo (literacy) page appears regularly as the ninth page of the 12 page newspaper. This page has been published since 1970 when the decision was taken by the government to declare that year Adult Education Year in Tanzania.

UNESCO established over 3000 rural libraries at district and village level. In the regions, districts, divisions, and wards, rural libraries are supervised by the adult education coordinators who must visit and report on them in their quarterly reports submitted to the Ministry of Education.

The above certainly provides answers to some of the questions about how distribution could be expanded and improved in South Africa so that usage is multiplied. But one comment that can be made about the Tanzanian case study is a negative one because the enthusiasm of the seventies seems to have waned in the nineties due to the shortage of government finances. Does this mean that no matter how much effort a country puts into its literacy or reading effort, there will always be the chance that it may not be able to sustain a positive intervention because of the debilitating effects on the country of changes in a precarious and unpredictable global economy? The sad answer to this is yes. But should this stop South Africa from giving it its best shot?

1990 was designated World Literacy Year and 8 September International Literacy Day. In the same year Edward French, then of the University of the Witwatersrand was quoted as saying that merely highlighting the problem in that year would not alleviate South Africa's acute crisis. "What we need is urgent planning for a decade of literacy." (Screen, 1990).

Almost 10 years later The ERA Initiative, a project started by Edward French, issued an urgent call for a national decade of reading in South Africa! And its basis is a solid piece of research conducted under the auspices of the Book Development Council of South Africa, commissioned by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (Perold *et al*, 1997). From our experience it has become clear that illiteracy does not only occur in underdeveloped sectors like the rural or poor, it is much more widespread as a direct result of apartheid. So targeted state development interventions would not be sufficient as they might be in other countries. We also have the notably strong competition of the electronic media, both television and radio, the latter being a power medium for information and entertainment that makes reading seem not as necessary as in more deprived countries. Yet it is a commonplace that reading is essential for positive engagement with media and information technology, and is certainly not supplanted by innovative modes of communication.

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Part 4

The research agenda

Chapter

7 An accomplished mission, but what effect? The aims of this investigation

In late 1997, with the encouragement and backing of our staunchest funding agency (the Rockefeller Brothers Fund), the ERA trustees decided to embark on an investigation to see what our field's passion, commitment and development work was achieving. This part looks at the development of the research agenda in 1998 and 1999.

Chapter 7

An accomplished mission, but what effect? The aims of this investigation

ERA's accomplishments reviewed

By the end of 1997 the ERA trustees had good reason to be proud of the work of the small outfit since its inception in 1989. ERA had:

- Developed the first critical catalogue of easy reading material for adults, printed 2000 and had sold over 600 copies into the then four provincial library services.
- Motivated for the establishment of exclusive ERA shelves in libraries across the country by marking them with posters of our very striking logo. The libraries up until this point had lumped together all literacy works, some of a very discouraging nature, and not taken the promotion of this genre of reading very seriously.
- Helped produce *Reading Press*, a four-page adult easy reading supplement in a national Sunday newspaper and put up a real fight to have it continued when the sponsors chose to cut it. It ran from February to October in 1993.
- Reached people outside the library sector (largely through contacts gained when ERA was initially based within the Zenex Adult Literacy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand). These were people who were running NGO or business based adult literacy programmes and had come to know about the ERA catalogue and asked the obvious question. How can we get hold of these books quickly? This led to the creation of the ERA Book Box, a time consuming and sometimes difficult process to manage from the point of view of ordering stock via a university bureaucratic system, to criteria for selection of what books went into the box, to what languages should be included. Despite these difficulties, we believed we were answering both a need that had always existed and one we had now tapped directly into through catalogue sales. ERA sold 75 Book Boxes over three years.
- Run an annual short story competition in the Club Magazine of Sales House, a large and successful chain of retail stores catering for the middle to upper income black market. The magazine still boasts a print-run and distribution figure of 500 000 and a probable readership in multiples of this figure. Our entries per year ranged from 800 in the 1990 when the competition was open to all languages to 160 in 1999, with an average of 200 entries every year.

- Conceptualised and brought into being the ERA African Languages Series (ALS) of 40 original stories in 10 South African languages at the four official Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) sub-levels with five publishing partners. The books were not all produced at the same time but were all meant to have print runs of 3000.
- Facilitated the publication and distribution of a 153 page Research Report on Book Development in South Africa in March 1997 through our involvement in the Book Development Council of South Africa. The report was commissioned by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and is the basis for ERA's present lobbying for a national decade of reading in South Africa from 2000–2010.

And had the following in the pipeline for 1998:

- A national audit of Learning and Support Materials for the Adult Education and Training division of the national Department of Education.
- A book review slot on *Mochochonono*, a national television programme aimed at adults in need of general information.
- Further promotion of the ERA African Languages Series.

Was this real achievement?

In some ways all these activities were self-evidently worthwhile. And as a highly self-critical endeavour, ERA had made efforts to elicit feedback. ERA's ongoing preoccupation with the tough question "What must be done to build a reading environment in which the production and dissemination of easy reading material for adults is supported?" had led to adequate evaluation of its efforts, albeit in an unstructured way.

ERA's self-evaluation over the years has taken the form of formal and informal feedback from our peers, of progress reports to stakeholders at quarterly advisory committee meetings, of reports to funders, and of an annual internal assessment and strategic planning exercise.

We would like to highlight some of the indicators of value that have sustained our analysis of the usage and impact of ERA over the last nine years.

1. The development of the first southern African catalogue of easy reading material for adult readers had value because it stimulated debate around the selection criteria for what makes an easy reader for adults "good" or "appropriate" or "exciting" or "useful". It stimulated publication of new and better easy readers for adults, assisted the positioning of this special selection of books in public libraries.

2. Many South African librarians were both pleased and relieved that something was being done about the dearth of appropriate reading material for sections of the population who were not skilled readers but who should have been making use of the library services.

One of the clearest observations from ERA's experience is that individual librarians with the determination and vision to make an intervention around easy reading for adults are the most likely to bring about change within their institutions on a scale that is broadly beneficial. Much of the enthusiasm we encountered from the library sector as early as 1991 and 1992, came from an individual librarian who has continued over the years to keep ERA's work on the agenda of the Cape Town city library services. ERA shelves in libraries across the country have played a valuable role in signalling that post-literacy reading material is available.

3. The ERA Book Box, with its well-selected range of appropriate materials for an audience targeted by ABET practitioners, highlighted the value of supplementary reading. Book Box sales proved that funds were more available within the commercial sector.
4. ERA's participation (providing original content and using stories from the ERA/Sales House Club short story competition) in the production of *Reading Press*, an easy reading supplement in a national Sunday newspaper, was of value in that appropriately written stories were "out there" for a potentially vast readership. It was the only publication of its kind that included fiction, which we believed, would encourage the reading habit.
5. ERA's annual short story competition in Sales House Club Magazine, is a text writing challenge valued by the thousands of would be winners who have submitted their stories.
6. By the early nineties, we became aware that certain sections of the potential users of easy reading material for adults were inadequately served by the predominantly English language readers that we were so proudly advocating through our ERA catalogue. Books were needed in the indigenous languages as well, though publishers were not prepared to invest in African language publishing at the level of Adult Basic Education and Training at this stage. Convinced of the value of mother tongue reading material, ERA determined to act as a catalyst for the production of easy readers in the languages that they were needed in, despite a trend indicating that funding agencies were less keen to subsidise materials development. Our motivation was supported by a forward thinking projects manager at the Kagiso Trust and this gave rise to the ERA African languages series, which has since, for both frustrating and necessary reasons, straddled six years of ERA's work. Forty books in ten languages at four learning levels have been produced. As far as impact is concerned, is the elation of one evaluator in seeing original Tsonga titles at that level being published for the first time in South African history not one indicator that this was a worthy project?

7. ERA facilitated the task and the publication of a Research Report on Book Development in South Africa through our involvement in the Book Development Council of South Africa, in the belief that a central cross sector analysis and lobbying process was timely. But ERA was not really in a position to influence any possible implementation of the recommendations made to government.

Two matters that arose subsequently to the decision to engage in the research investigation and which carried on parallel to the research exercise but are of considerable importance in trying to decide on the value of The ERA Initiative were the following:

8. ERA assumed responsibility for a national audit of Learning and Support Materials for the national Department of Education. The value of this endeavour seemed two-fold: firstly, to affirm the place of ERA and related course and training materials in the centre of the appropriate state education desk, and, secondly, its attempt to ensure that the list of books and materials was as inclusive as possible.
9. A “first” in 1998 was ERA’s involvement in *Mochochonono*, a television series for adults in need of basic information. ERA motivated for and established a weekly book review slot, which often also offered books to the public as prizes. All 40 books in the ERA African Languages Series were profiled. But before long the ERA titles were axed as a consistent feature of the series. The rationale given by the producers of the series and its commissioning editor was to extend the slot to include other reading material as well because it would take more than just easy readers to motivate people to read. While this argument has some validity, the counter argument that the ERA ‘genre’ of publishing needs specific and sustained promotion also holds weight. Here was an instrument that might have been put to far greater use around the impact and usage of easy reading for adults but did not. The fact that we “got in” at all was due to ERA being flexible, available and responsive. We grabbed the opportunity to bring ERA (and most particularly the African Languages Series) to the attention of a potentially very wide group of viewers who could become readers. We thought we needed to write about this here because it is too new to be a part of the formal research, yet it has provided one of the strongest platforms of assessing (albeit on a very limited level) national impact as was noted by the number of telephone calls recorded by the ERA office on a Sunday morning after the show.

Or were they achievements with inherent weaknesses?

However, reassuring as these indicators have been, we wanted to know more about what was happening as a result of our work. We were rather in the position of good teachers and missionaries. We knew that our lessons were inspiring. We had produced an impressive array of texts, services and events. But was the world of

post-literacy any better for our work? Were we leaving traces? Were we missing out by not choosing one role, like marketing well-chosen products and devoting all our energies to this? Were external factors playing an unpredictable, negative role? If ERA is not being as widely or as well used as we had hoped, why not? Despite our efforts in libraries, new library users were not being drawn inside without an active outreach into the local community. Library staff and purchasing budgets were increasingly constrained. ERA's marketing was piecemeal and we were unable to follow up on how *in situ* mini-libraries of ERA were being used, due to lack of capacity. Is it good practice to sell the ERA Book Box but not have the capacity to invest in proper after sales service? Is there a point to the annual ERA short story competition, when the winners are seldom published outside the magazine that runs the competition? Should we not have got involved in the television book slot at all because of the way it panned out? There is certainly a strong argument for sticking to projects that might yield more long term results. And, most importantly, should ERA be profiled on TV and not be available except through phoning through for the publisher's details – so what is the gain?

We therefore set out to attempt to answer a few questions, since the environment in which easy reading for adults in South Africa might develop is much bigger and more complex than the piecemeal activities of The ERA Initiative. And we believed that everybody who was involved in this work (the publishers, the university adult education centres, the NGOs who were also involved in production) would support a study of what had been happening to easy reading publications since the beginning of the decade of literacy, including where they had gone and what kind of reception they had been met with.

The role of The ERA Initiative

ERA's role in the wider post literacy context has historically been that of an initiator, a gadfly, at times a lobbyist. We have been creatively opportunistic and responsive, wonderfully so sometimes, but we have often been unable to follow through, for lack of capacity or for lack of formal partnership (in which ERA would exercise equal clout). And the crisis in ABET provision has prompted us to ask whether we've really benefited from that location - or is the domain of functional literacy development oft times too narrow for action required within the wider indication of falling readership levels?

So, we take note of John Aitchison's suggestion of a paradigm shift from adult basic education towards reading and ironically this seems to be something that our sector can unify around rather than be competitive within. This was borne out in Mary Anne Bahr's view by the positive cohesive cooperation in evidence at the first ERA Research Advisory Committee Meeting, along with the knowledge that the Rockefeller Brothers Fund had supported quite a few of us and it therefore seemed fitting to answer for our efficacy.

But if a concerted campaign is forming then we need some answers to questions that bemuse most of us. Certainly, if non-government people and librarians and publishers know the answers, they are not telling. But we don't think they have

answers either. Their crises also mean they keep their heads down at the page or on the meeting minutes, losing a more spacious view. We unconventional ‘uncommercials’ haven’t therefore even had the benefit of basic market research. Learning something about where ERA had washed up became an opportunity to be grasped.

Consultation – the January 1998 workshop

As ERA had discovered the usefulness of taking advice from a range of interested parties before we launched work on the ERA African Languages Series, we invited individuals representing different stakeholder interests to the first meeting of the ERA Research Advisory Committee, held in Johannesburg on 26 to 27 January 1998 at the National Union of Mineworkers Training Centre in Yeoville, Johannesburg.³

Edward French facilitated the two-day workshop and his introduction was followed by updates on the current state of ABET, the publishing sector, and reading theory as well as market research findings. The contributions offered by participants, who represented a healthily broad range of interests, were informative and challenging.

The first question then posed was what people expected, not so much from the research, but from the two-day workshop itself. A list of desired workshop outcomes was collated, and group discussions to sift through these and establish priorities ensued. The discussions continued into the second day of the workshop and yielded several questions that the research project would have to take cognisance of. It became clear that everything suggested could not be accomplished by any single research study. It was necessary for a smaller group to examine the minutes that would evolve from the workshop. This committee could then prioritise what activities would be most useful to balance the questions raised in the proposal that had originally requested funds for this research, with the questions now raised as a priority by the workshop.

It must also be noted here that the funding raised for the research project was only half of the projected budget. The ERA Initiative anticipated the balance of the funds from the World University Service on the basis of a plan to work nationally with other WUS-funded ABET NGOs. Failing this, ERA was prepared to work with National Literacy Co-operation members in the various provinces towards the same

³ Those present were: John Aitchison (Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal), Betsy Alkenbrack (Flagship Mentoring and Training), Fasielga Arendse (The ERA Initiative – Administrator), Mary Anne Bahr (The ERA Initiative – Trustee), Shanoo Chupty (Scribe), Clive Corder (Market Research Africa), Denise Diamond (Macmillan), Josie Egan (Publishers Association of South Africa/Juta), Edward French (Independent Examinations Board), Mel Holland (Sached Books), Myrna Machet (University of South Africa), Saul Molobi (Heinemann), Neil Napper (Storyteller Group), Dumisani Ntombela (Natal ABE Support Agency), Derek Peo (National Literacy Co-operation), Tana Pitout (Gauteng Provincial Library Services), Carola Steinberg (English Literacy Project), Beulah Thumbadoo (The ERA Initiative), Andrew van Zyl (Gauteng Provincial Library Services), Elizabeth Wafula (Independent Examinations Board/ Department of Adult Education, Kenya), Lindsay Watson (Market Research Africa).

end. Both the World University Service and the National Literacy Cooperation were in dire straits at the time of this first research advisory committee meeting but there was still hope that their problems would be resolved.

The current state of the field therefore gave ERA time to work through the rich resource of ideas, information and suggestions provided by the first workshop as well as get on board or continue negotiations on the newer projects initiated in 1998. We eventually decided that several of the priorities identified at the meeting might be adequately covered if we embarked on five discrete but related fact finding missions:

1. To conduct a literature survey of congruent studies conducted in South Africa and worldwide.
2. To select a random sample of easy readers produced over the past ten years and track their distribution patterns.
3. To select a sample of ERA Book Box buyers to find out how the easy readers had been used.
4. To select a sample of winners of the Gilbey's Literacy Award, projects of exemplary literacy achievement, to establish whether reading had been more or less prevalent in areas that had successful literacy results.
5. To run a book-selling experiment hawking easy readers for adults in an area which many people would pass through. (This last idea, which became known as the ERA Book Spaza, was mooted by Neil Napper of the Storyteller Group and supported by several others. Napper also issued a wager to the commercial publishers present to donate R1000 to get the ERA Book Spaza off the ground. Carola Steinberg of the English Literacy Project recorded findings of a one-day pilot run during Adult Learners' Week in March 1998 with ERA helpers and we were soon convinced that we were on the right path).

Through each of these mini research/fact finding exercises we sought to answer research questions like: How is easy reading for adults being used? What becomes of the books we spend so much time advocating, enabling, developing, producing and promoting? If they are not being as widely or well used as we had hoped, why not?

The second meeting at the end of April 1998

The five pronged work-plan that the Research subcommittee had decided on, as well as the progress we had been able to make in some of these five research areas was tabled at the second ERA Research Advisory Committee meeting, held on World Book Day, 23 April 1998. At this time, the ERA Trust had a much clearer idea on what it would be doing during 1998 and therefore how it planned to manage the research project within its workload.

Both the World University Service and the National Literacy Cooperation (NLC) had by now closed due to serious financial and management crises. The government

tender to conduct an audit of Learning and Support materials in Adult Basic Education and Training which the NLC and ERA had won jointly, was now to be conducted by ERA alone. There had been some consideration given to the fact that the coordinator of The ERA Initiative herself should pursue and compile the research data. This was partly prevented by the coordinator's need to embark on some smaller fund raising activities since there would no longer be any of the promised funds coming through from World University Service. In the light of this, the ERA Trust decided to appoint a full-time researcher on a six-month contract to follow through on the research brief recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

Although certain tasks were completed – primarily around organising and reviewing the progress of the ERA Book Spaza – the researcher was unable to dedicate herself systematically to the five tasks set out above. In short, the appointment was unsuccessful and ERA was left with the difficult decision of releasing the researcher before the end of her contract, having lost the most valuable months of 1998 for such research to be undertaken. Subsequently, various consultants with expertise in the field of post literacy have recovered all aspects of the project and provided material on the context of understanding for the specific inquiries. We also commissioned some background studies.

The ERA Book Spaza experiment, which is a chapter of this document was supported and has also been published separately with funds from the Academy for Educational Development through Project Advancing Adult Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL). The latter money, together with “old” money raised from the Kagiso Trust for the promotion of the ERA African Languages Series have been the only other sources of money for this research project. It has therefore largely been conducted with funds raised solely from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which donated half the budget and this, in addition to the ABET crises, is another reason for why the project was never able to reach the national scope aimed for in the original funding proposal.

Part 5

The research studies

Chapters

- 8 *The tracking study. Where do all the good books go? Tracking the texts from publishers to sellers to practitioners and readers*
- 9 *Surveys of buyers of the ERA Book Boxes and of Gilbey's Adult Literacy Award winners*
- 10 *The ERA Book Spaza. Browsers and buyers at Park Station*
- 11 *Using easy readers in some library reading circles*
- 12 *Easy readers in libraries and resource centres*
- 13 *The ERA African Languages Series. Easy adult readers in African languages – who wants them?*
- 14 *The ERA African Languages Series in context*

The planned research investigation suffered numerous vicissitudes and delays. Originally meant to be one major study under the responsibility of one well-resourced, capable research assistant under experienced supervision, it turned into a series of lesser investigations, some of them done under pressure to make up for gaps or shortcomings in other parts of the research. This was not the result of lack of considerable planning and management, but is rather characteristic of the lack of trained and ready skills, and the numerous pressures which professional agencies are under in our changing society.

Chapter 8

The tracking study

Where do all the good books go? Tracking the texts from publishers to sellers to practitioners and readers

A crucial part of the greater research project was to find out where the easy readers developed for newly literate adults are going. It was hoped this would be achieved by the tracking of 100 Easy Readers from publishers, to buyers, to, ultimately, the people who will be most likely to read them. A sample of 100 titles was chosen by the research team as we, at ERA, felt this number would be large enough to be reflective of the trends associated with distribution of ERA titles, and small enough to be able to assess. Five of these titles were also selected to be tracked in depth. Assessing the ultimate usage of the readers is critical in order to study the impact the easy readers have had in South Africa after approximately a decade of concerted effort on the part of organisations involved in the adult literacy field.

The methods used in tracking

The central research questions are:

- Who are the buyers of the material?
- Who will ultimately have access to this material?
- Who actually uses it?

Of the 100 titles to be tracked, 95 will be dealt with in a superficial manner while five will be examined in detail.

The data analysis will look at all of the 100 titles in terms of their composition and their buyers and associated trends experienced by publishers in selling the material.

A detailed follow up of five of those 100 titles will follow to track the titles from the publishers to the buyers to the context wherein they would be read.

Information was gathered from publishers of the easy readers who participated in the Learning And Support Materials (LASMs) audit, catalogues of ERA material, and information gathered over the years through the ERA office. The LASMs audit was an attempt to identify all learning and support material for ABET learners as well as ABET facilitators' materials available in South Africa during 1998. Unfortunately not all materials were accounted for in the audit, although it is probable that the majority of key publishers involved in the field of easy readers for adults contributed. As the data used was dependent on different publishing groups, the information

gained from individual publishers was not standard. This was due to the fact that each publishing company has separate ways of collating data on sales and buyers. In addition, the information on the identities of the buyers and details about sales had different levels of confidentiality within the different publishing groups. The information supplied by the publishers will be discussed in accordance with the agreement reached between the researcher and the publishers themselves.

Consequently, not all topics examined will necessarily contain data on all 100 titles. In addition, the individual buyers will be discussed according to categories with no individual buyer's details or names being given.

Selecting a sample of easy reader titles

The method used to choose the titles was to make a random selection of 100 easy readers from the catalogue of all easy reading material available in South Africa prepared by The ERA Initiative for the national Department of Education in 1998 as part of the audit of Learning and Support Materials (LASMs) (Department of Education, 1998). This catalogue contains the only comprehensive list of easy readers available in South Africa.

From the possible 478 titles listed by the audit, manuals and workbooks were excluded, leaving 376 possible titles as the sampling frame. A sample of 100 titles was randomly selected from the frame. It was decided to have a random selection so that we would have a reflective sample in the 100 titles chosen.

The composition and characteristics of the sample

The sample chosen was examined according to its composition and characteristics. The 100 titles chosen, because of their random selection, represent a comparative sample of the LASMs audit in terms of publishers, language and themes.

The publishers

The table below illustrates the origin of the sample 100 titles by publisher. The percentage of books per publishing group in the sample tracked is in same proportion as that in the full sample frame of 376 titles submitted by the various publishers to the LASMs audit.

Number of sample titles per publisher / series	
Publisher	Number
Heinemann	22
Juta	12
Kagiso	12
Viva Books	12
New Readers Project	11
Kwela Books	8
Sached Books	8
Other publishers	10
African Language Series	5
Total	100

The Heinemann publishers have the majority of titles tracked constituting 22% of titles. Juta, Kagiso and Viva Books account for 12% each, being closely followed by the New Readers Project with 11%. The category of “other publishers” reflects smaller publishing groups such as the Storyteller Group and organisations that are not necessarily predominant in the adult literacy publishing field and whose main purpose is not the support of literacy acquisition, such as The Trade Union Research Project (TURP) and the AIDS Community Centre. Sached Books represents 8%, and another 8% of the titles tracked are from Kwela Books. The African Language Series relates to a series that focuses specifically on publishing reading material in African languages that have previously been marginalised in favour of English and Afrikaans. Although various publishers have contributed to the Series, they are categorised separately in this research. Six of these books are tracked.

Language of titles

The table below indicates the language of the titles, excluding the six African Language Series titles.

Language of titles		
Language	Number	Percentage
English	37	39
Afrikaans	18	19
Zulu	14	15
Xhosa	8	9
Sotho	7	8
Tswana	3	3
Venda	3	3
Pedi	2	2
Tsonga	2	2
Totals	94	100

The most well represented language is English with 39% of the titles; followed by Afrikaans (19%), Zulu (15%), Xhosa (9%) and Sotho (7%). The dominance of English in the sample (as well as in the LASMs Audit) is a response to meeting the demand from buyers and readers themselves. The fact that Viva Books is in the process of reproducing one of their Venda readers in English illustrates the point that English readers are more in demand by users. Indeed the ABET section of the Independent Examinations Board, the largest assessment agency offering ABET exams, reports a decline in the demand for exams in African languages for ABET.

As one ABET student studying at the Vaal Technikon remarked:

Why learn how to read languages we can speak? I want to learn how to read and speak English as it will be better for me in getting a better job.

This sidelining of African languages by users leads to the situation where publishers are placing more importance on mainstream languages such as English, Afrikaans, and Zulu when developing adult learning material. Consequently more titles will be written and sold in these languages than others because of their popularity.

Themes and topics of titles

The table below illustrates the titles in terms of their content, classifying them under the headings of: educational; biographical; historical; religious; and fiction. The actual classification of each title was based upon the descriptions of the content of the title given in the LASMs audit.

Title themes and topics	
Theme or topic	Number
Fiction (love stories, family, work)	56
Educational	18
Ordinary lives	10
(Auto) Biographical and celebrities	7
Religious	6
Historical (events)	3
Total	100

A significant number of the 56% of books classified as fiction titles concern stories of failed or blossoming love, while others deal with issues such as family, jobs, and money. Educational books account for 18% of those tracked. The educational category refers to books that are developed with the intention of imparting a skill to the reader or motivating them to better their lives. Biographical books, combining the categories of celebrity and ordinary people's biographies or autobiographies, account for 17% of titles tracked. Religious books are the fourth highest represented category with 6%, followed by history related books with 3%.

The characteristics of the buyers

Who are the buyers?

Buyers of easy readers for adults can be categorised thus:

- bookshops
- service providers
- industry
- non-government organisations (NGOs)
- libraries
- adult learning centres
- other.

While most of these categories are self-evident (bookshops, libraries, adult learning centres) others are not and require some further definition. Service providers refer to organisations who provide a service within the ABET field. An example of this

would be The ERA Initiative which sells Book Boxes to literacy projects, industry, etc. 'Industry' refers to corporate groups such as ESKOM, Liberty Life or mines that have purchased books for their own ABET classes. NGOs are the groups that operate within the adult literacy and ABET field but do not necessarily become directly involved in distributing reading material like ERA. Publishers often send sample copies of texts to NGOs in order to promote certain books and receive feedback. The last category of 'other' relates to buyers that do not fit into any of the categories and people such as academics and authors on publishers' mailing lists.

The information that was obtained from publishers about the buyers was not uniform. Analysis of the data will therefore be done by individual publishers and then followed by a general discussion on the buyers of the 100 titles.

Heinemann

Heinemann titles account for the majority of titles tracked in this study as they represent 22% of the total 100. For this publisher four main categories of buyers of these books are identifiable: bookshops, libraries, service providers, and adult learning centres. The table below examines the number of buyers per category.

Number of buyers of Heinemann Books by category					
Title	Bookshops	Service providers	Libraries	Adult learning centres	Total
1. Exiles and Homecoming	20	4	1		25
2. Before the rains come	20	1	1		22
3. Maria	11	1	4	1	17
4. Sefuba se sebe sa Mbusi	6	4			10
5. Ukubuyel'ekhaya kwababhaci	5	1	4		10
6. Boitshoko	7	1		1	9
7. Ighinga Elikhawulezileyo	5	2	2		9
8. 'n Vinnige Truk	6	1	2		9
9. Umkhuhlane kambusi omubi	7	2			9
10. Ho nyalana Afrika Borwa	6	2			8
11. Stokvel stories: Seksuele teistering	3	2	3		8
12. Izinyanya zikamajola	4	2	2		8
13. Tuiskom: Uitgewekenes se onvertelde verhale	3	2	2		7
14. Phambi kokuba ine	3		3		6
15. Amadlozi kamajola	3	1			4
16. Diresepe tsa Mookadi	2	2			4
17. Ngaphambi kokufika kwezimvula	3			1	4
18. Usilinga	3	1			4
19. Izindlela zokupheka zothingo lwenkosazana	1	2			3
20. Ha Heloo!	1	1			2
21. Love and Money	1		1		2
22. Vukati muni	1	1			2
Average	6	2	1	> 1	8

As seen in the above table, on average bookshops account for 66% of all buyers, followed by 18% by service providers, 14% by libraries, and less than 2% of direct buys by adult learning centres. This is consistent with the buyers assessed in the other publishing groups examined.

Sales of Heinemann Books by category of buyer					
Title	Bookshops	Service providers	Libraries	Adult learning centres	Total
Exiles and Homecoming	680	18	65		763
Before the rains come	506	12	8		526
Umkhuhlane kambusi omubi	465	3			468
Stokvel stories: Seksuele teistering	222	3	117		342
Sefuba se sebe sa Mbusi	132	90	108		330
Maria	186	21	105	2	314
Usilinga	56	212			268
Ngaphambi kokufika kwezimvula	99		155	10	264
Izinyanya zikamajola	94	5	129		228
'n Vinnige Truk	151	2	22		175
Tuiskom: Uitgewekenes se onvertelde verhale	7	2	153		162
Vukati muni	30	108			138
Ha Heloo!	30	105			135
Ho nyalana Afrika Borwa	108	3			111
Diresepe tsa Mookadi	91	4			95
Boitshoko	73	2		10	85
Ighinga Elikhawulezileyo	55	6	20		81
Amadlozi kamajola	53	2			55
Ukubuyel'ekhaya kwababhaci	19	10			29
Phambi kokuba ine	28				28
Izindlela zokupheka zothingo lwenkosazana	7	6			13
Love and Money	8		1		9
Totals	3100	614	883	22	4619
As %	67	13	19	1	100

As seen in the above table, bookshops still retain their place as top buyer of Heinemann books in terms of quantity with 67% of purchases of the sample titles. However, in terms of quantity, the second most important buyer is libraries with their 19%. This may illustrate a more library orientated marketing strategy by Heinemann that seems to involve a more direct approach instead of using middlemen such as service providers in contrast to other publishing groups. The final destination of these titles can be assumed from the profile of their buyers to be ABET dominated through individual purchases from bookshops, middleman intervention from service providers, and direct dealings with libraries and adult literacy centres.

Juta

Of the 12 Juta titles tracked, four titles were fiction, two were educational, four religious, and two biographical. Two titles were in Xhosa, four in English, three in Afrikaans, and three in Zulu. Information gained on the Juta books is very limited and relies on data previously collected by the ERA office.

Buyers and recipients

Bookshops feature distinctly in the buyer profile of Juta books. Industry is seen as a key buyer. Service providers such as ERA and the Continuing Education Programme (CEP) have made purchases of the material. A number of free copies are distributed to Juta representatives, authors, illustrators, designers, legal deposit libraries, teacher centres in Western Cape, key NGOs, stakeholders and customers in ABET Directorates in provincial education departments.

Reasons for purchase

The reasons given by bookshops for their purchase of these materials is to meet individual customer demands or for library (mostly municipal) supply. Industry buys these titles for their in-house ABET courses and classes. These classes are attended by employees within their organisation. The books bought by the service providers generally find their way into the adult literacy environment through direct supplying to ABET classes and teachers.

From the above we can argue that Juta titles will be accessible to neo-literates enrolled in industry-based courses and literacy projects (through the service provider's intervention), and those who are frequent library borrowers. We have no record of the free copies but they could possibly make their way to neo-literates in some manner. The presence of the books within municipal libraries also opens up the opportunity of promoting reading for adults by making the books accessible. The core problem with libraries, however, is that often the areas where they are most needed such as the townships or rural areas where illiteracy is high, usually have ill-stocked or non-existent library services. There are also no statistics to show actual usage of the books in libraries.

Kagiso

Information was requested from this publishing group but had not been received at the time of drafting of this chapter.

Viva Books

Twelve Viva Books titles were tracked. The titles generally were fiction or biographical in nature. Seven of the books were written in English, while three were in Venda, one in Xhosa and one in Afrikaans.

Buyers

Information on buyers was only given on ten of the books. However, we can get a sense of the key buyers by just examining buyers of the ten titles in the table below. Bookshops are the biggest buyer of the titles although it must be noted that the lead over the other categories is not that great. Unlike the other publishers, Viva has some sales direct to adult learning centres.

Number of buyers of Viva Books by category					
Title	Bookshops	Industry providers	Service providers	Adult learning centres	Total
1. Death of a son	8	3	4	4	19
2. Doctor Khumalo	1		1	2	2
3. Kippie Moeketsi - sad man of jazz	9	6	6	4	25
4. Mudzimu u Fhira Vhaloi		1	1		2
5. Nightingales and night time girls	5	6	4	3	18
6. Take a chance	6	11	8	7	32
7. The gift	6	7	8	8	29
8. The suit	6	5	5	4	20
9. Umam'uMkhandi ne Skorokoro	1			1	2
10. Waag en wen	5		3	2	10
11. Life	?	?	?	?	?
12. Mulovha na Namusi	?	?	?	?	?
Average	5	4	4	3	16

Sales of Viva Books by year							
Title	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1. Nightingales and night time girls	1285	2466	2680	2012	589	2268	11300
2. Take a chance			3636	2318	1604	1566	9124
3. Life	1482	156	622	655	197	1868	4980
4. The gift				1296	961	1781	4038
5. The suit		1047	606	623	274	344	2894
6. Death of a son				1363	658		2021
7. Kippie Moeketsi – sad man of jazz			558	1135	172	104	1969
8. Doctor Khumalo					114	785	899
9. Waag en wen					598	53	651
10. Umam’uMkhandi ne Skorokoro					253	51	304
11. Mudzimu u Fhira Vhaloi					103	4	107
12. Mulovha na Namusi					103	4	107
Totals	2767	3669	8102	9402	5626	8828	38394

The above table illustrates that 1996 and 1998 proved to be the good selling years for Viva books. The total sales built up from 1993 to 1996 with the introduction of new titles each year (from the existing 2 in 1993, 1 in 1994, 2 in 1995 to 1 in 1996) then dropped off in 1997 (in spite of the fact that five new titles were introduced in 1997) and then increased again in 1998.

The New Readers Project

The New Readers Project is based at the University of Natal, and is specifically focussed on promoting and maintaining neo-literacy among adults.

New Reader Project titles: year of publication, where distributed, and sales by year									
Title	Year	Area of distribution	Sales by year						
			1992	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1. The trick	1991	WC, EC, Foreign	1552	374	420	189	311	251	3097
2. Inkositini	1991	KZN, Gau, NC	1697	225	180	466	140	318	3026
3. What if it's me? help with AIDS	1992	WC, EC, Gau, NC	1206	286	246	460	214	146	2558
4. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu	1991	KZN, Gau	1506	247	217	203	46	105	2324
5. Ngingenzenjani uma kuyimi – AIDS	1992	WC, KZN, NC, Gau	1048	249	179	256	115	134	1981
6. Sengikhulile	1992	KZN, Gau, NC	475	217	164	384	39	64	1343
7. Indoda yezihlala	1996	WC, EC, KZN				82	642	79	803
8. Funda Ngamalungelo akho-ukuxoshwa ngendlela	1992	KZN	330	108	139	76	61	36	750
9. Huis toe met hoenders	1997	WC, KZN					237	2	239
10. Dawid en die bul	1997	WC, KZN					192	41	233
11. Going home with chickens	1991	WC, EC, KZN, Gau, Foreign	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Totals			7814	1706	1545	2116	1997	1176	16354
Foreign sales were to the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Switzerland									

Eleven New Readers Project titles were tracked by the research. The composition of the titles is as follows: six fiction titles; three educational titles; and two biographical stories of ordinary people. Classification of the books in terms of degree of difficulty is categorised through the levels of basic, intermediate, and advanced. The eleven titles contain three basic level books, seven intermediate books, and one advanced book. The sample of 11 titles is, of course, not necessarily representative of the full range of New Readers Project books.

Understandably, ten of the KwaZulu-Natal based New Readers Project's titles are distributed in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Seven have been distributed to the Western Cape, six to Gauteng, four to the Northern Cape, two to the United Kingdom, two to

the United States, and one to Switzerland. This distribution is quite extensive and penetrative and is probably a direct consequence of the Project's commitment and focus on promoting adult readers in order to increase and maintain adult literacy.

The highest number sold yearly is that of 1996 followed by 1992. No details were available on 1993. Given the significant drop in total sales from 1992 to 1994, it is not possible to speculate on the sales for 1993. The best selling years were 1996 and 1992 in both the total numbers sold and the spread of the sales amongst the titles. However, from 1997 onwards we can see a dropping off in sales.

Kwela Books

Eight of the Kwela easy readers were tracked in the study. Of the eight, one title was in English, three in Afrikaans, two in Sesotho, one in Setswana, and one in Xhosa.

Buyers

Buyers of the Kwela books come from the categories of: bookshops (9), service providers (1); NGOs (1); adult learning centres (1); and libraries (2). Once again, bookshops dominate the buyer profile. Though Kwela books do cover most categories of buyers, buyers in each category are very small.

Kwela Books titles sold				
Title	Date published	Total sold by 18 Nov. 1998	Period	Average no. sold per month
1. Zacharia o ya Kapa	34813	611	42 months	15
2. Dans van vreugde	35169	567	31 months	18
3. Tjeka, Tshipo, tjeka!	35589	517	17 months	30
4. Umz'obiweyo	35169	515	31 months	17
5. Die morester skyn helder	35667	423	15 months	29
6. Gesteelde vakansie	35764	376	12 months	32
7. Safe in the storm – a story about getting a house	36031	321	3 months	107
8. Mphatlalatsane e tjabile e hlakile	35667	240	15 months	16
Total		3570	Average	22

The above table lists the number of books sold by Kwela since each book was first published. Sales per calendar year were not available so for purposes of comparison an average of sales per month for each book was calculated. The fastest selling book is the recently published title number 7 with an average number of 107 copies being sold monthly, this is followed way behind by title 6 and 3 with 32 and 30 books respectively being sold per month. All three of these titles are fiction titles.

SACHED Books

Eight Sached titles were tracked. Five of the titles were written in English, and three were in Afrikaans. Themes encompassed in the eight were: one religious title; three fiction titles; two biographies (one of ordinary lives, the other on a political leader); and one history title.

Information received from Sached on the buyers was general rather than dealing specifically with each book. Essentially the buyers of these easy readers come from three groups: bookshops; service providers; and adult learning centres. Fourteen individual buyers were cited. Of these fourteen, six were bookshops, seven were service providers, and one was an adult learning facility. All buyers exceeded purchases of ten books each.

While the service providers together with the adult centre account for 57% of the buying, it is important to note that these eight buyers have a direct link to the ABET field and that the easy readers will be accessible to the readers for whom they were developed. Bookshops are seen to be too expensive to be a direct buying point for individuals in the targeted group of illiterate adults. However, bookshops do act as middlemen between publishers and end users in that they fulfill demands from customers by buying from the publishers. These customers are usually individuals involved in ABET or those who will use the books in an academic context.

Other publishers

The smaller publishing groups and organisations are grouped together here for convenience. The number of titles falling into the sample that were published by these organisations are too small to be examined individually but together they make up a significant percentage of the total sample (10%).

The African Language series is also discussed here briefly. The publishers of the series belong to different groups, some of whom have already been discussed. The series was developed under the auspices of The ERA Initiative and consisted of contributions of titles from Juta, Viva, Collegium, Heinemann and Kagiso. Not all information has been received on these titles, although the buyer's profiles of Juta, Viva and Heinemann have been assessed in this study.

The publishing groups discussed here are limited in size and resources and cannot compete with the bigger publishing groups. Some have ceded their titles to larger groups such as in the case of English Literacy Project (ELP). Consequently, these groups with their limited capacity for distribution are more dependent on bookshops and service providers to distribute their titles. All the titles can be categorised as educational and all are in English.

One publishing group within this category, the Storyteller Group, is unusual because of its great success in publishing huge print runs of a number of titles (10 million copies in seven years, many of them in multiple languages) that could be categorised as being easy reading materials with development communication agendas on behalf

of bodies such as the Gauteng Department of Health, the Community AIDS Centre, the Red Cross, and Old Mutual. The Storyteller group has also, in addition to its core dissemination of these materials in furtherance of the development agendas, often encouraged the sponsoring or commissioning bodies to make available copies for ABET purposes. The one Storyteller book selected for the sample is more like a conventional easy reader, and had total sales of 1742 copies between October 1993 and September 1997.

Groups such as the Trade Union Research Project (TURP), are organisations whose focus is not primarily increasing awareness of or promoting adult literacy. Their involvement in the adult literacy field comes through an acknowledgment by these groups that the persons targeted by their individual agendas may not have very high literacy skills. Thus, these groups have realised the South African reality of widespread adult illiteracy and, in order to achieve their agendas the books are developed at an easy reading level. The books are generally distributed to like-minded NGOs or institutions who share their agendas and service providers that will distribute the titles in an adult literacy or ABET setting. As many of these books are distributed as widely as possible at no cost, rather than sold, the destination of this type of title is difficult to assess.

One of the five titles tracked in detail below is TURP's *Reading the Financial Pages* and more detailed information is given in that section.

The tracking of five titles

The tracking of five titles was undertaken to pinpoint in more detail the exact destination of the books and to assess who will ultimately be reading these books. The tracking was done in the following manner. Firstly, the publishers supplied information on their buyers (but excluding individual and cash sales). These buyers were then contacted to find out their reasons for purchasing the material and/or who they then sold it to. From their information either the tracking continued until the exact environment wherein these books were used was established, or the readers could be assumed.

The five titles represented come from the publishers: Heinemann, Juta, Viva Books, Kwela Books and the Trade Union Research Project (TURP).

Heinemann: *Before the rains come*

This is a fiction title and only one category of buyer has been established, that of bookshops. Some six bookshops bought a total of 339 copies of the text.

The first company purchased 80 copies of this book. This bookshop caters mainly for schools and especially for those in the Johannesburg area. They have a show room, featuring 35 000 books, that is open to the public, although it is generally people from various schools who come to the show room to buy books for the schools. However, this title had not yet arrived in the showroom. The interviewee seemed surprised to discover that the title had been developed for the adult reader as their show room is for school going children specifically. This shows that the books in this specific case are not going to the intended market of adult learners.

Another bookshop buyer who purchased 132 copies did not have a record of buying such a quantity and have no account of this book in their system. In terms of easy readers they said that they usually only stock a Penguin series that could be described as adult literacy material. They mostly leave the adult learning material market up to academic bookshops, and have little interest in it.

A third bookshop that purchased 15 copies was more helpful. They informed us that the books have gone on to the Municipal library and the University library. The sales were seen to be individual buys. Consequently access to the books would be gained by library going persons and, in the case of the University, academic staff or students. Again not the intended target market.

Another bookshop buyer made a small purchase of six copies. This was to meet a demand by the Provincial Library Service for a copy of this book. The Provincial Library Service will then decide whether or not to order more and distribute it throughout the province. The bookshop mainly supplies non-fiction titles to schools, technical colleges, and libraries.

The fact that many of the bookshops contacted about this title revealed that they did not have the book shows a lack of report-keeping on their side as to what books they have in stock. Consequently, the bookshops helpfulness in terms of this study was quite limited.

Juta: Danisela udomo abadanisi basemfuleni

This title is one of the African Languages Series and is written in Xhosa. The details gathered on Juta titles is quite sketchy, but an idea of the buyers and destinations of the book can be gained from the table below:

Copies distributed to buyers and other recipients of <i>Danisela udomo abadanisi basemfuleni</i>		
Buyers/recipients	Number of buyers	Number of books
Bookshops	3	178
Service providers	1	3
Industry	1	3
Free copies		21
Total		205

Sales to end August 1998 of this title showed that 184 copies were sold; 21 free copies were given out and remaining stock on hand was 831 copies. Although the table above may seem to reflect that once again bookshops dominate the buying of this title, the majority of books through the bookshops have gone to libraries and organisations involved in ABET. The 21 free copies went to Juta representatives, authors, illustrators, designers, legal deposit libraries, teacher centres in the Western Cape, key NGOs, stakeholders and customers in ABET directorates, and education departments. Most of those contacted are at least notionally committed to increasing adult literacy.

Juta's Cape Town shop also bought over 100 copies specifically for public library supply. The unrestricted access by the public to these libraries and consequently to the books means that potentially the book is once again reaching the targeted market of adult learners.

Juta also received direct orders from companies that are running ABET courses such as mines and also from service providers that were establishing adult courses. Although numbers purchased are very small, it may be assumed that one book is read by many more than one individual.

Viva: Doctor

Even though this title is written about a popular soccer star, Doctor Khumalo, it has attracted few buyers. The reason for this may simply be that it is written in Venda. It is one of the titles in the African Languages Series.

Copies distributed to buyers and other recipients of <i>Doctor</i>		
Buyers/recipients	Number of buyers	Number of books
Service provider (for Northern Province Department of Education)	1	700
Government department (Northern Province Department of Education)	1	?
Industry	1	?

The three buyers come from three different categories: a service provider, a government department of education, and industry. Total numbers purchased by industry and directly by the department of education could not be ascertained.

The service provider purchased books for tender for the Northern Province Department of Education ABET sub-directorate. Consequently the students who attend these ABET classes would have access to these books. The large number purchased suggests that the books would be given to the students as their own copies, because if they were intended to be kept in resource centres the number would be somewhat less.

The books bought directly by the Northern Province Department of Education would presumably be redistributed to ABET level students or teachers.

It was impossible to track the order to the industry buyer but it may have been going to Eskom's training colleges for employees, where courses are offered to improve the literacy levels of the workforce and teach new skills.

All buyers of 'Doctor' were directly related to the ABET environment and the books will ultimately go to adult learners.

The problem with this title that has led to its few buyers lies in the fact that it is written in Venda – the country's smallest indigenous language. Literacy instruction in Venda is largely confined to the Northern Province. Viva has recognised this problem and is hoping soon to rectify it by publishing a copy in English. The fact that Viva Books is taking this route illustrates the point that easy readers for adults in English are more in demand than those in African languages.

Of all the publishers examined in this study, Viva Books have proved to be the most committed and successful in penetrating the adult learning market with their reading material. This may be largely due to the fact that, apart from Kwela Books, in other publishing groups, the publication of learning and support materials for adults is only one focus of their business. And in most cases it will not be the primary focus. Whereas with Viva this is their primary focus.

Kwela: *Tjeka, Tshipo, tjeka!*

This title is written in Sotho and can be classified as a fiction title. Published in 1997, total sales up to November 1998 totalled 517 copies (making it one of Kwela's best selling titles).

Copies distributed to buyers and other recipients of <i>Tjeka, Tshipo, tjeka!</i>		
Buyers/recipients	Number of buyers	Number of books
Bookshops	8	?
Libraries	2	?
Service providers	2	?
NGO	1	?
Total		517

Bookshops are yet again the key buyers. The bookshops were found to be working off individual orders from customers. Two bookshop buyers are discussed here.

The first is an organisation that is basically a show room for schools consisting of 35 000 titles. The title was not yet on display. This title is unlikely ultimately to go to its intended market - adult readers - as the buyers will be people involved in schooling for children, not ABET.

The second bookshop informed us that the purchase was for the Municipal library and the University library. Consequently access to the books would be library going persons and in the case of the University, academic staff or students.

The other key buyer interviewed for the study was categorised as a service provider even though it is actually an independent publishing group, Viva Books. However, it was felt that their reason for buying the title categorised them as a service provider in this instance. Viva Books pull in titles developed by other publishers such as Kwela, Heinemann, Sached, etc. to strengthen their tenders to certain clients. In one such case, when an ABET department wanted books in Tsonga, Viva bought 400 books from Kwela as they publish in this language. Viva thus aids in the distribution of other publishers' titles because Viva has penetrated the market more extensively and consequently has more supply demands to fulfill. Viva is the only publishing group that networks in such a manner.

Trade Union Research Project (TURP): *Reading the financial pages*

This book can be classified as an educational non-fiction title as it deals with informing the worker or trade union representative how to read financial reports. As mentioned earlier, the aim of TURP publications is not the support of adult literacy *per se*, but to achieve their own agenda, that is, the effective workplace representation of workers through the initiatives of research, workshops, and the dissemination of information to trade unions. The book itself was developed to aid trades union representatives such as shop stewards and organisers in their negotiations with management in their work environment. The understanding of financial reports by such worker representatives was seen as a crucial skill that would lead to more efficient understanding between management and trade union representatives in negotiations. The target readership is clearly those persons involved in labour issues, trades union members and worker representation and not neo-literates in general. However, the production of this text in the form of an easy reading text was TURP's acknowledgment of the South African context where a great number of adults are illiterate or have a limited degree of literacy.

The table below shows the distribution breakdown of this text:

Distribution of TURP's <i>Reading the financial pages</i> by category of buyer		
Buyer or recipient	Number of recipients	Number of sales
TURP mailing list	1	± 800
Bookshops	2	57
Libraries	2	25
Service providers	1	10
NGO	1	?
Totals	7	892

The overwhelming majority of books distributed have gone to persons on TURP's own mailing list and actual sales are minimal (a mere 92 books) and, noticeably, no actual sales at all to industry, trade unions or NGOs. The mailing list itself comprises individuals and officials within trade unions (books were sent to the head offices of different trade unions) as well as academics involved with the labour movement or industrial studies. It was up to the trade unions to order more for their members (although none seem to have done so). The only trickling down of the readers to adult neo-literates would be through its dissemination to trade union officials and shop stewards.

Several key buyers have been contacted in this study to understand where these books are ending up.

The first one was a **library** that deals mostly in material on the labour movement and trade unionism. There is also a bookshop inside the library. It bought ten copies of the book and all have been sold. The library has had a copy of the book for a year. The people who have access to the library and hence access to the book are workers/trade unionists and students. It is likely that the ten copies sold in the bookshop were bought by workers or trade unionists as students generally do not buy from the bookshop.

A second key buyer is a **bookshop** in Cape Town. They have stocked the book for about a year, but unfortunately do not keep a detailed account of the books they sell. The TURP text was put on the catalogue list of the bookshop that is available to about 2000 customers, the majority of them customers from academic institutions either inside or outside of South Africa (and obviously not the direct target market for easy reading texts). The bookshop originally bought ten copies from TURP. These ten were sent to libraries as follows – three South African university libraries (Cape Town, Stellenbosch, North West), a foreign university library (Yale), the Cape Town City Library, and the Western Cape Provincial Libraries Service (which services approximately 200 libraries in the province including those in the suburbs and townships). This means that the title is potentially available to all these libraries. The Western Cape Provincial Library Service then ordered another 37 copies. Potentially, therefore, newly literate adults have access to this title through some local libraries. The Western Cape Provincial Libraries Service has over the last decade demonstrated considerable interest in making available reading matter to neo-literates.

The third buyer examined is that of a **service provider**. Copies were bought by this group for a course they ran on reading the financial pages for shop stewards and labour organisers. The participants on the course kept the copies. This presents the possibility that the title would be more widely distributed among the participants' workplace colleagues as well as possibly the family and extended circle.

The fourth buyer category is **NGOs** and the purchases of one organisation were tracked. The books bought are usually put in the resource centre. This resource centre is frequented by people from the labour movement, university students, and students attending courses at the organisation. Copies of the TURP publication were purchased specifically for courses offered by the NGO covering economics and gender workshops. The students that attend these classes are usually trades union members such as shop stewards and organisers. Although the specific course that led to the purchase of this book could not be ascertained, it is assumed it would be for trades union members who want to be able to understand financial jargon and procedure at their specific companies. All books bought are retained by the NGO and kept in their resource centre. Thus, the books do not go further than the students engagement with the material. Consequently, through this buyer there is limited access to the title and those who do have access would generally be proficient in reading. However, trades union representatives may use the books to improve their English skills.

Overall, the impact this book has is mainly confined within the trades union or labour movement and would be handled by trade union officials and academics specifically.

It is possible that there is some form of trickle-down effect to workers that are neo-literates in that numbers of the text have been disseminated in this labour movement environment. Improving proficiency in English by trades union representatives is seen to be a beneficial offshoot of the title's distribution. However, its impact on adult literacy is hampered by the publisher's own agenda that is firmly focussed on improving effective worker representation.

Some general conclusions

Analysis of the data on the 100 tracked titles leads to certain conclusions about the buyers and distribution of the books themselves. The conclusions are, however, qualified by the fact that although the respective publishers of all 100 titles were contacted, not all the information requested was available or supplied by these publishers (though in some cases data was available that had already been collected by the ERA office and in catalogues used and/or developed by ERA). This is the reason for categorising the titles according to publisher. And unfortunately the different publishing groups do not have uniform ways of collating their data which has led to difficulties in the analysis in a study such as this.

As the titles are taken from the LASMs audit, the language composition of the titles is probably reflective of the easy readers available in South Africa at present. The predominant language is English (39%) and, as noted in the discussion on language, this reflects the demand. Hence the African languages are (quite understandably) marginalised by more popular English (and to some extent Afrikaans titles).

Fiction represents 40% of titles available followed closely by educational books with 30%. This reflects once again the demand by buyers and readers.

Bookshops appear to be by far the biggest buyers of these titles. However, it must be noted that the bookshops, like that of the service providers, are the middle men between the publishers and the readers.

Publishers who appeared to have a definite marketing strategy for easy readers and who targeted appropriate markets within the ABET field were Heinemann, the New Readers Project, and Viva Books, the latter appearing to be the most effective and penetrative publisher in this field (if, of course the wide distribution of the limited number of mass produced free Storyteller publications are omitted).

Interestingly, the appeal of these easy reading titles is not limited to South Africa, in that three of the publishers revealed that their books make their way to bookshops in North America, England and Europe. The books are demanded in these countries because they are seen to be consistently multi-cultural, an element that is found to be lacking in the development of easy readers in these countries.

The groups such as TURP although not directly involved in promoting adult literacy, have indirectly led to the dissemination of these readers to a broad base of workers through the trade unions. The topics are generally those that deal with worker rights and representation, and consequently ensures their appeal to working adult readers.

The years 1992 and 1993 were seen to be good years for the selling of easy reader titles, although 1996 provided the peak for most of the publishers examined. Generally sales seem to have increased from 1992 to 1998 but have dropped off rapidly for several publishers since then.

Quantitatively, the volume of easy readers sold is depressingly low.

Chapter 9

Surveys of buyers of the ERA Book Boxes and of Gilbey's Adult Literacy Award winners

This chapter provides the results of two small surveys conducted with a sample of informants drawn from two groups of organisations which could be considered to take seriously the needs of adult neo-literates – buyers of ERA Book Boxes and winners of the Gilbey's Adult Literacy awards.

The ERA Book Boxes investigation

A researcher, Shanoo Chupty, was asked to track all the buyers of the ERA Book Box – graded portable libraries of easy readers. The researcher reviewed all the ERA files and drew up an updated list of the book box buyers which went back as far as October 1994. ERA had 39 separate ERA Book Box sale records. In total 73 Book Boxes were sold since October 1994. Seven organisations bought two or three times and bought more than one book box at a time.

Every buyer was telephoned and an attempt made to ascertain that the ERA Book Box could still be traced within the organisation. If the person who bought the book box was no longer working at the organisation the researcher then tried to identify the correct person to interview or direct a questionnaire to. In about 12 cases there was either no contact information to start with or it was incorrect and all attempts through telephone inquiries proved unsuccessful. The lack of contact information posed a huge problem in how quickly the researcher could start the actual research.

In some cases, though contact was made, the tracking down of people within organisations was a problem, the setting up of appointments was difficult, messages were not returned, the person currently in the job didn't know anything about the ERA Book Box, or the ABET section of the organisation had closed down. In the case of the defunct National Literacy Co-operation it was not possible to track where all the ERA Book Boxes had been sent.

A list of questions was developed for face-to-face interviews and a questionnaire was designed for circulation. It was decided that ten book box buyers would be interviewed and questionnaires sent to the other buyers. In the end interviews were conducted with nine organisations and questionnaires were sent out to eight others. Although one usually knows that the response to questionnaires is low, with such a small sample it was possible to make follow-up calls, yet the number returned was still very poor.

The questions asked of Book Box buyers

Some of the questions which were directed to the buyers of the ERA Book Box (EBB) included:

- Why did they buy the EBB?
- Would they buy the EBB again?
- Would they recommend it to others as a resource?
- Which are the most popular titles in the EBB? Why?
- Which are the least popular titles in the EBB? Why?
- Where is the EBB kept?
- Who controls or monitors usage of the EBB?
- Has the EBB helped in their learning programmes?
- Is it a useful resource?
- Who uses the EBB?
- Do they think the EBB in particular and easy reading material in general have made any difference?
- Can they describe how people are encouraged to read?
- What do they see as a way forward in reading - what sort of books should there be more of or less of – African Literature Series, fiction/non-fiction, “how to” books?
- Do they have a reading policy?
- Do they have a general library and other resources that support reading available for learners?
- How portable is the EBB? Is portability necessary for their learning environment?

The investigation of the Gilbey’s Adult Literacy Award winners

This investigation, undertaken by the same researcher, attempted to gather information about the linkages between a good literacy intervention and reading from all the winners of the Gilbey’s annual Adult Literacy Awards. The awards are given to organisations or education centres that are judged to be excellent according to a rigorous selection process.

The ERA Research Advisory Committee decided that this might be an interesting area to investigate since if it had been established that these organisations made remarkable progress in furthering literacy it would be useful to see whether this progress had been the product or cause of progress in reading.

The co-ordinators of the Gilbey’s award were contacted and lists of the winners, contact information and the citations on their achievements obtained. A set of questions was developed for face-to-face interviews and a questionnaire was designed for circulation to these Gilbey’s award winners. A table was drawn identifying each winner according to their location and suitability for interviews.

Decisions were then made about which winners the researcher would conduct face-to-face interviews with. This was a somewhat complicated process as the 21 winners since 1995 fell into different categories and some of these and the criteria for each category had changed over the years since the awards were started. Though understandable for a new award finding its way, it was still felt to be somewhat confusing.

Year	1 st prize	2 nd prize	3 rd prize	Runners-up	Special merit award	Runner-up for special merit award	Special award
1995	1			2			1
1996	1			3	1		
1997	1	1	1	2			
1998	1	1			1	1	3

Those interviewed were:

1995: the winner

1996: the winner

1997: the winner, the 2nd prize winner and one runner-up

1998: the winner.

The questions asked of Gilbey's award winners

Some of the questions which were directed to the Gilbey's winners included:

Can they describe how people are encouraged to read?

What do they see as a way forward in reading – what sort of books should there be more of or less of – African Languages Series, fiction/non-fiction, “how to” books?

Do they have a reading policy?

Do they have a general library and other resources that support reading available for learners?

What access do people have to books?

How would they describe their learning environment – as being a rich learning environment that promotes reading or one that does not promote reading?

What other resources are available to learners?

How are these resources sourced if available?

What are learners reading and why are they reading?

Do they have any anecdotes to share about reading, the use of ERA material.

Do they know about the ERA Book Box? If yes, how did they find out about it?

Do they have an ERA Book Box available for the learners? (If they did they were then asked a number of questions about its use).

Questions were directed to both facilitators and learners where this was possible.

The questions which were directed to the learners included:

- What are they currently reading?
- What motivates them to read?
- Under what circumstances and conditions are books read?
- Which books/themes do they like most? Why?
- Which books/themes do they like least? Why?
- Do they read only for class or for other reasons as well? What are these reasons?
- Do they discuss the books they read? If yes, who with?
- Do they encourage others to read? Why?
- How would they describe reading – as worthwhile, a chore, educationally valuable?
- Would they like more era to be produced? If yes, what kinds of books?
- What problems do they encounter in finding, borrowing, returning or buying books?

Generally, learners were shy and did not express their views easily. Translations of the questions by the facilitators did not help in getting responses from the learners. This was particularly so in classes where they were not encouraged to read, if reading was limited to workbooks or if they were very new learners.

Before an appointment for an interview was made the researcher would have telephonically explained the purpose of the research and why the researcher had selected the organisation for the interview.

Findings from the surveys

Reading is not happening

Generally the macro research question, “Was reading happening?” was answered with a big “No”. Indeed, sometimes at the beginning of the interview facilitators said that they do not have access to books, or that reading is not part of the curriculum, or that the learners do not read books. It then became difficult to decide how to proceed with the interview since the list of questions was not appropriate.

A number of reasons can be uncovered for the low prioritisation of reading. Sometimes a very narrow definition of reading seemed to be an important factor. Although most people will say that reading is important or that it happens in class they do not extend the definition of reading to readers, novels, or newspapers being used in class. They define being able to read narrowly as being able to read the workbooks. So facilitators can easily say that reading is happening in every class. New facilitators take their cue from the older ones – if the older facilitators do not incorporate reading into their curriculum then the new ones are unlikely to do so either.

Another cause was the facilitator's own reading habits (or rather the lack of them). Often the facilitator was not reading anything besides the occasional newspaper or magazine and they in turn did not pass on to readers the importance of, the need for or even the love of books. One could see a positive difference in those centres where facilitators said that had read every book in the library before their learners had read them. At such centres the learners seemed highly motivated and keen to read as well. The atmosphere of the classroom or centre seemed more productive and it looked like a place where active learning occurred.

Even in organisations where reading is encouraged, there is no reading policy as such. So although some facilitators may encourage their learners to read because they see the value in reading, other facilitators may tell their learners to read but may not actively promote it.

The ERA Book Boxes are not being used 'as such'

The ERA Book Box books are almost always taken out of the box and stored on a shelf as part of the general library. It is hardly ever used as a portable library. This is why many people said that they did not know the ERA Book Box. There were only two places that maintained the ERA Book Box books in their original holders and this was at Transnet where the library at Esselen Park was quite big and at AECI which had a very small collection of books. Portability of the book box was only considered a good idea at Umgeni Water in Pietermaritzburg because facilitators travel large distances to various training sites. However, they had not bought an ERA Book Box but had developed their own collection of books.

Another reason for lack of familiarity with the book box was that many of the people interviewed came into their jobs after the box was bought. This was also a problem in making initial telephonic contact with ERA Book Box buyers, especially from many years back. New people said they did not know the box but when they were asked if they had resources, or if they used readers and were faxed or shown the list of books in the ERA Book Box, then some acknowledged that the titles were familiar to them.

Interest in title categories

With so few books available for their level of learning even in well stocked libraries, learners are not too particular about the topics covered.

The researcher was intrigued that learners and facilitators both say that there is a need for books that teach how to fill in forms. This is something that would be covered in a workbook rather than an easy reader or that facilitators would design a lesson around such a need and ask the learners to bring in samples of forms from different banks and practice filling them out in the class. In this way they would not have to rely on a book being published but could learn the skill as part of their lesson. There also seems to be a need for ABET level dictionaries.

Learn with Echo, an easy reading supplement to the *Natal Witness* and *Echo* newspapers in Pietermaritzburg is very well used by the two projects that were interviewed in that city.

In KwaZulu-Natal, political titles, like *Chris Hani* and *Nelson Mandela* are not popular but in Gauteng they are the first to go off the shelf.

Funding of ABET NGOs

Funding is a huge problem for many NGOs and adult education centres. For example, the English Resource Unit in Durban has had to retrench staff in early 1999 and is operating with very few people and they have had to cut back on classes. The classes run in industries fund the classes run in the community and the situation has become worse since industries have been cutting back on their spending. The situation at Project Gateway in Pietermaritzburg is even worse. From 13 classes in 1998 they are down to five learners twice a week for two hours in Zulu at ABET sub-levels 1 and 2.

Multiple copies and photocopying

In some centres multiple copies of books are preferred to say one or two copies of the same book being available in the library. Where this was the case, facilitators said that all learners in a class are able to read the book at the same time and discuss it in class. Photocopying the books was more likely to occur at such centres with no regard to copyright issues.

Learner access to the books

Often learners have little access to actual books but have no choice but to use workbooks that have already been used by other learners or to share workbooks. Books are most often accessed by learners through the facilitator at centres which have libraries, the books often being brought to local classes by the facilitator who travels out from a central office. This means that learners do not get to choose from a range of books but perhaps from a small selection that the facilitator may consider appropriate and which get passed around in the class. This also means that a learner has to wait for books if they should finish their one before others in the class are ready to exchange them or the facilitator brings in new ones.

Levels and progress

There were differing views on the grading of the books. Some felt that the levels were too high and that learners who were unable to read a book for their level then became discouraged. Others experienced no problems with the grading.

The literacy class at the Fourways Adult Education Centre reminds us of the early Level 0 that the ERA catalogue had to describe learners who are below ABET sub-level 1. This was done away with when it was acknowledged that every learner had some knowledge and could not be graded as Level 0.

We were concerned that the low expectations of facilitators can set even lower expectations in their learners. For example, at the literacy class run at St. Martins in the Veld to only play a social or recreational role and not to want learning “to be a labour” sets too low an expectation for learners. To be so unstructured that they are at the same level for a few years and not to have their learning geared towards any accreditation or even some learner centred outcome is not constructive.

Another area of concern is that some centres like the Post Office and the Western Metropolitan Local Council do not offer classes beyond a certain level. So learners are taken on the lower levels and then have their opportunities for learning discontinued because of a lack of funds. This must be very disappointing for learners who are truly motivated to learn. I am not sure whether it is better to have fewer learners going through all the levels or more learners doing only Sub-levels 1 and 2.

Comments on books from specific publishers

Heinemann

There were differing views on some of this publisher’s books. At one centre the early books were liked but not the more recent publications. At another centre they did not like the early books because the child is the main protagonist and this is not appropriate for adults and the books are considered to be politically insensitive.

Kagiso

The illustrations and graphics were not liked and considered not good.

New Readers Project

The Know your Rights series is very popular. One title, *The Trick*, is very popular.

Viva Books

These were considered easily recognisable and enjoyed because they are considered to be more in touch with adult readers’ needs.

Soul City

There is a great demand for themes that are already covered in the Soul City series and learners and facilitators mentioned the need for such topics to be covered in easy readers. For example, health issues, like AIDS, TB, Hypertension, Land and Housing, Personal Finance. Facilitators were often given the Soul City contact information for them to access back copies of the booklets.

Chapter 10

The ERA Book Spaza Browsers and buyers at Park Station

I am 78 years old...I am still learning so I can pass information onto the younger generation...the importance of reading is that you can read about your rights and realise that all people are equal.

A man currently enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand completing computer and theology courses

I read to feed my soul ... and to keep up hope that we can change our world. Like Steve [Biko] we have to have serious minds to make a difference. ... we get useful minds from reading.

Man in his mid-twenties

This chapter is a case study of the individual buyers of easy readers at a book stall experiment at Park Station in central Johannesburg. It examines the specific reasons given by individual buyers for their choice of easy reading material and the key reasons why they read. This qualitative slant allows us to assess their satisfaction with the material and to isolate the areas within which their book reading and buying interests lie. Consequently, the chapter is of particular interest to those involved in developing and promoting easy readers in South Africa as it gives specific feedback on the structure, themes, and design of adult readers for adults from the individual buyer's perspective.

Introduction

In a research project that targets reading in South Africa in the field of adult literacy, an analysis of the reading material is crucial. However, an analysis of the easy readers would be more meaningful with a qualitative slant that takes into account the acceptability of these readers to those that will ultimately read them. One way of assessing this is through the gathering of perceptions and insights about the material from the targeted buyers.

Consequently, the individual buyers of easy readers speak in this chapter. The quotes of the buyers featured above clearly illustrate the fact that reading means different things to the different individuals, but ultimately both acknowledge that reading perpetuates knowledge for themselves and those around them even if what motivates them differ.

The central question the ERA Book Spaza investigation asked was “Who are buying the easy readers for adults, why and, what are the factors that influence buying?”

Essentially, the research was interested in establishing buying trends with regard to easy readers for adults. Carola Steinberg of the English Literacy Project conducted an initial pilot during Adult Learners' Week in March 1998 at Park Station. She recorded her findings in order to determine whether such an experiment would work. It proved successful and so the ERA Book Spaza project was commissioned for an extended period both to provide an independent report to interested parties, particularly publishers, in the field and in order for the findings to be formally included in the broader ERA research project.

Venue and duration

The ERA Book Spaza began in July 1998 and by the end of September eleven Book Spaza's were conducted at Park Station in Johannesburg. Park station is a train and bus depot near the city centre and was chosen because of the number of people passing through the Station on a daily basis. In addition, the target market of easy readers are generally black working class persons whose regular mode of transport might be public transport such as trains and buses. So we at decided that the Park Station offered the ideal setting for such an experiment. We sacrificed the original aim of diversifying the settings of the ERA Book Spazas for a number of reasons. Firstly it proved time-consuming to "break-in" to other suggested venues such as the Southgate Shopping Mall and Daveyton city-centre. Secondly these venues came with cost implications which a young experimental project could not carry and, thirdly, it seemed just too hard on the team to keep moving around. However, it was also eventually agreed that the semi-permanent setting at Park Station would be better for the research findings in that they would be more accurate and open to generalisations about trends at Park Station, Johannesburg. Another point to note is that potential browsers who could not afford to purchase on a certain day were relieved to be able to come back the next day or the following week to buy the book.

The methodology used

Since the data to be gathered involved the collection of the opinions and perceptions of individual buyers, qualitative research techniques were agreed to be the most appropriate. Consequently, participation, observation and standard questioning of buyers were used. Buyers were observed in terms of what they picked up and showed interest in, also their age, race, sex could be noted. In addition some presumptions on their social standing could be hazarded by observing their manner of dress, etc. The buyers and browsers were asked standard questions such as what was it about the book that they liked – the subject, the illustrations, the languages and what their key reason for reading or buying the books was.

As, after the pilot in March 1998, the ERA Book Spaza was only conducted on eleven different occasions, the findings put forward by this chapter are in no way conclusive evidence of general South African buying trends regarding easy readers for adults. However, the manner in which the research was conducted does allow us to record remarks buyers made when choosing their books and this gave us some

insight into their likes and dislikes. The books and topics that appealed to buyers are contained in the analysis of the top sellers discussed below.

The ERA Book Spaza set up

The term spaza refers to an informal shop that sells anything, sometimes on a temporary stand in public areas such as on the side of the street, outside shopping centres or, in the case of this research, books in a train station and bus depot. The informality of the experiment was key as we were targeting buyers who would not necessarily have the finances or inclination to buy in mainstream book stores.

Three book sellers were hired. All three came with some training or experience in adult basic education and training (ABET) and proved to be highly motivated in promoting the concept of “easy readers for adults” since it is something that they are committed to. Each ERA Book Spaza was conducted with the researcher and two book sellers. Stock for the project was procured from various sources: from the ERA office surplus; by ERA buying specific titles that seemed more popular; and kind donations from some publishers that responded to ERA’s various appeals.

In all, approximately 52 titles were used in the experiment. The titles can be categorised into religion, history, biographies, fiction (books and comics), general information, education, sport, and financial guidance. Books were generally priced at R7, with a few exceptions for bigger books such as Old Mutual’s *Financial Guide, June 16th* and *Chris Hani* that were priced at R10. On the whole these prices were perceived to be reasonable by browsers.

The stand consisted of two vertical boards with two shelves for the books to sit face outwards, so commuters passing by could see them easily. One stand was placed on a portable table with the other placed on the floor. The shelves were positioned in these different directions to maximize the visibility of the stand. All people leaving or entering Park Station were able to see the stand and were forced to pass around the stand. We were situated at the end of the Station’s concourse before it became the flea market, and there was constant traffic past the stand all day. The table was set up next to a pillar and ERA posters displaying publicity material for ERA and ERA titles were placed on either side of the pillar. These posters with their attention-grabbing colours and illustrations were quite successful at stopping people and getting them to look at the stand. In addition to the posters, ERA newsletters and pamphlets were distributed to interested browsers and buyers.

Neighbouring flea market stalls were stands selling perfume and cosmetics; Compact Disks; flowers; leather goods; clothes; and electronic goods. There was a book hawker who sold all types of books but not easy readers. The other stall owners were not threatened by the attention paid to our stand as they felt that readers for adults was something to be promoted. In addition they felt that the commuters stopping at our store through its proximity to their stands would increase their sales. The Book Spaza was also used as a promotional device as it introduced the commuters to the ideals of ERA through the bright posters and the distribution of ERA pamphlets that were given out to interested browsers and buyers.

Selling and browsing

Each ERA Book Spaza was conducted for approximately six and a half hours from 8am to 2:30pm on any given day. The reason for this was that we felt that after 3pm we would not be completely safe in the middle of town accepting money on Fridays and Saturdays. Each day saw two types of individuals coming up to the stand: the buyers and the browsers. Both of these groups were considered important as both could be questioned on their interest in particular books and their opinions noted.

The highest number of books sold in one day were 15. With an average of a hundred browsers per day, there were definitely more browsers than buyers. The prices of the books were lowered to R7 and R10 to be more affordable for buyers and this proved successful.

As some of the books were of a political nature, hearty debates and discussions ensued between the browsers themselves and with the booksellers, especially around the political biographies such as *Steve Biko* and *Nelson Mandela*. These discussions drew more browsers to the stand and often the booksellers engaged with the customers to allow this to happen.

The reaction to the stand and to the nature of the books was a positive one from the majority of browsers and the experiment was commended for what it was trying to achieve. This is illustrated by one man in his mid-20s who bought *The Forgotten Hero*, but initially was interested in *Steve Biko*:

Lifelong learning is so important ... in the system today black people have become dormant ... we need to read ... people do not know why they even do things or why they enjoy things because we have let our minds become stupid.

The fiction titles were generally ignored with the political and sporting books being picked up the most. This is shown in the list of books that were bought as seen in the table below.

Who were the buyers?

The average age of buyers was late twenties to early thirties. Most buyers were men, with only six women buyers of the total 113 buyers for the duration of the experiment at Park Station, it seems that men are more aware of the role models depicted by the books. When we told one of the women buyers she was one of a small number of women who had bought books, she responded that: “women only know how to wash dishes and are lazy to know things.” Browsing, also saw a significant preponderance of men over women. All buyers were black although browsers consisted of all race groups.

What they bought

The tables below give details on the books sold during the experiment. The first table tells us the percentage each title made up of the total number sold. Only 22 of the 52 titles available sold on the twelve occasions of the EBS Book Spaza (that is, including the pilot in March 1998). The second table divides the books up by category.

Titles sold in the ERA Book Spazas			
Title	Publisher	Number sold	As % of sales
Steve Biko	SACHED	42	30%
Nelson Mandela	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	21	15%
Chris Hani	SACHED	20	14%
June 16 th	ELP	17	12%
Five great African leaders	SACHED	12	9%
Orlando Pirates	SACHED	5	3.6%
The Fortune snake Mamlambo	Viva	4	3%
Amadlozi	Kagiso	3	2%
Deep cuts	Storyteller Group	2	1.5%
The Gun smugglers	SACHED	2	1.5%
Check your payslip	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
Doctor	Viva	1	0.7%
I told myself I am going to learn.	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
Igam Valetu	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	1	0.7%
Isikathi sokuthandaza	ABE Development Services/Juta	1	0.7%
My father's paint drum	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
Petrus Tom	ELP	1	0.7%
Steve Tshwete	SACHED	1	0.7%
The Forgotten hero	SACHED	1	0.7%
The future is ours	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	1	0.7%
UNothembi	Viva	1	0.7%
We survived	Old Mutual/SACHED	1	0.7%
22 titles in total		140	100%

Titles sold in the ERA Book Spazas by book category			
Category and titles	Publisher	Number sold	As % of sales
<i>Biographies</i>		87	62%
Steve Biko	SACHED	42	30%
Nelson Mandela	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	21	15%
Chris Hani	SACHED	20	14%
Doctor	Viva	1	0.7%
The Forgotten hero	SACHED	1	0.7%
Steve Tshwete	SACHED	1	0.7%
UNothembi	Viva	1	0.7%
<i>History</i>		30	21.4%
June 16 th	ELP	17	12%
Five great African leaders	SACHED	12	9%
We survived	Old Mutual/SACHED	1	0.7%
<i>Fiction</i>		11	7.9%
The Fortune snake Mamlambo	Viva	4	3%
Deep cuts	Storyteller Group	2	1.5%
The Gun smugglers	SACHED	2	1.5%
My father's paint drum	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
Petrus Tom	ELP	1	0.7%
Igam Valetu	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	1	0.7%
<i>Sport</i>		5	3.6%
Orlando Pirates	SACHED	5	3.6%
<i>General</i>		4	3.0%
Amadlozi	Kagiso	3	2%
The future is ours	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	1	0.7%
<i>Educational/motivational</i>		1	0.7%
I told myself I am going to learn.	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
<i>Religion</i>		1	0.7%
Isikathi sokuthandaza	ABE Development Services Trust/Juta	1	0.7%
<i>Financial</i>		1	0.7%
Check your payslip	ELP/SACHED	1	0.7%
22 titles in total		140	100%

The biggest sellers were the biographies, topped by *Steve Biko*, which accounted for 30% of all sales. There are several reasons why this was the case. Firstly the distinctive covers of these books, usually in the form of a photograph (in the case of *Nelson Mandela*; *Steve Biko*; *Chris Hani*; and *Steve Tshwete*) or brightly illustrated portraits (as in the cases of *Doctor*; *The Forgotten Hero*; and *UNothombi*) of the individual, caught the attention of buyers. The second reason given by most buyers was the fact that these were well-known people or role models and consequently were highly respected by the buyers and browsers. *Steve Biko*'s cover was so effective that people said his name out loud on at least three occasions during any particular Book Spaza as they passed by. This may have been due to the build up to the Steve Biko day commemorated on the 12th of September, or from the attention received by liberation fighters in the past couple of years through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. More likely though, it is because Steve Biko is accepted as one of the greatest thinkers and leaders this country has produced.

The second big selling category was history books accounting for 21% of all sales. The *Five Great African Leaders* along with *June 16th*, are books that relate to historical events in various African countries. The covers used photographs and were very distinctive. *June 16th*'s cover was the most striking of all the covers as the photograph is that of Hector Petersen being carried away from one of the scenes of the brutal June 16th shootings. This picture is so well known that the book itself received a lot of attention from browsers and buyers, making it the fourth biggest selling individual title with 12% of total sales

The third highest sellers were the fiction titles that reflect nearly 8% of sales. This percentage does not reflect the interest shown by browsers, as these titles were generally ignored even though the majority of the titles chosen or donated to the ERA Book Spaza were fiction. The sporting books come fourth and interestingly enough they were one of the main choices for browsers, especially *Doctor* and *Orlando Pirates*.

The general titles of *The Future is Ours* and *Amadlozi* clinched fifth position. Browsers tended to be very interested in *Amadlozi* but seemed more inclined to discuss the notion of ancestors with other browsers and the booksellers rather than buy the book. The learning and religious books tie as the sixth seller, and concur with the level of attention paid by the browsers for these books.

Reasons for buying the books

When a person purchased a book the bookseller asked them why they had chosen that particular book to buy, and what was it that drew them to the book. This section looks at some of the reasons they gave. The way in which it will be discussed is under the headings of the types of books that were offered: biographies; history; fiction; learning; sport; general; religious; and financial.

Biographies

This section refers to the titles sold in the Book Spaza that specifically deal with a particular person that explains their life and their contributions to society. As the biggest seller, we will look first at the reasons people gave for buying Steve Biko.

I see Steve as a hero and a role model.

I want to learn more about his life.

He is the man who started the process of freedom, although he is somehow forgotten.

I am a politician too so I want to know about the great men.

I bought it so that my children can learn about the struggle and its leaders.

I am interested in him as I am a member of AZAPO.

I want to see if his contributions to black consciousness are being used today in South Africa's transformation ... are they sidelining his ideas?

All the reasons given imply a need to know more about the charismatic man who was at the forefront of the development of the black consciousness movement in South Africa.

The spreading of knowledge through reading happens when readers are interested in informing their children and others about what they learn. This is just one reason why this title is so successful. As an easy reader, the book on Biko's thinking is not read simply for pleasure by one individual, but is an opportunity to contribute towards the enlightenment of those people who are in close touch with the buyer.

I want to be able to teach my children about this great political leader (*Nelson Mandela*)

The opportunity to learn contained in the easy readers was directly acknowledged by some buyers in the following comments:

I am doing research on politics (*Steve Biko*)

I am a researcher and am interested in researching the sporting movement (*Steve Tshwete*)

I am a journalist and a Chiefs fan (*Doctor*)

I am interested in her and what she is doing regarding community development (*UNothembi*)

Similar reasons as given for *Steve Biko* were quoted for the popularity of the other biographies like *Chris Hani*, *Nelson Mandela*, *Doctor*, *UNothembi*, and *Steve Tshwete*. Buyers wanted to know more about the individual and expressed admiration if they considered the individual as a good role model for black people in South Africa.

Steve is a motivation for other blacks in this country (*Steve Biko*)

There is also an element of direct learning from the biographies as the buyers believe they can learn to become "better South Africans" by reading about their lives and the ways in which they bettered themselves and their communities.

I want to read more about the vision of the communist activist, and what he foresaw for South Africa (*Chris Hani*)

I am a communist and want to know about the life of being a communist (*Chris Hani*)

I want to find out the leadership skills he uses, also want to compare him as a leader with those in the Bible (*Nelson Mandela*)

I have always been interested in his life, now I can know the details for sure (*Nelson Mandela*)

Some buyers remarked on the commonness of their background with that of the celebrity as in the case of the man who bought the book on Steve Tshwete, the Minister of sports:

Steve is a homeboy like me.

For most, the fact that these heroes are all homegrown talents ensured that the readers could identify with them and this naturally led to their popularity.

History

The history books proved to be popular with both buyers and browsers. The books themselves deal with events in the history of South Africa (*June 16th*) and of the region (*Five great African leaders*). The interest in these books fell into the category of being able to grow in and perpetuate knowledge. Of key importance to the buyers was yet again the fact that they could inform their children of Southern African history and key events such as June 16th that shaped their identities when they were young. This was acknowledged to be important in that the youth can learn from the past and contribute to a better tomorrow in our region by aiding the African renaissance.

I want to find out about the leaders and compare situations in Africa ... the youth should also pay attention to the African renaissance

I want to be able to answer my children's questions on their history

I can relate to the book and know stories about these men and what they did (*Five great African leaders*)

I want to see if author has written what I know about that day

I want to learn more about that day

I was in Transkei with the South African exiles at the time ... I believe books should tell us about our history ... this book does (*June 16th*)

Fiction

The fiction bought was made up of four titles: *The Gun smugglers*; *Deep cuts*; *The Fortune snake Mamlambo*; and *My father's paint drum*. Interestingly enough, some buyers commented that they could gain information from the books, though whether this information will be of benefit to them is unclear. This might be gleaned from the reasons given for interest in *The Gun smugglers*:

I want to relate to what is happening in South Africa, and find out if criminals get their information from such books on how to steal, etc.

I want to know how to smuggle guns, maybe I will make some money!

Others expressed the intention of reading for pleasure and avoiding the task of increasing their knowledge through reading:

I wanted something different from the usual political books (*Deep cuts*)

The Fortune snake Mamlambo's cover was one of the few fiction titles that really caught the imagination of the buyers and browsers. The buyers were motivated to find out what the story was about, because the bright illustration on the cover shows a couple in their nightclothes jumping out of bed as it seems a huge snake has joined them.

The cover shows them very upset, I want to know what happens to them.

Other buyers acknowledged that they were currently enrolled in ABET classes and bought fiction titles to familiarise themselves with reading in that particular language and to practice their reading skills.

I am doing an ABET class at Spoornet so this book will help me (*My father's paint drum*)

It is interesting to note that this last reason, of using books in support of ABET courses, was only given with regard to the fiction titles and not the non-fiction titles. This may be due to the fact that reading for practice is easier when the subject matter is not so relevant to their lives as in the case of South African heroes or events. Also, perhaps learners feel they need to be more proficient in order to tackle such books with content that is totally unfamiliar.

Sport

The sport titles were generally of interest to male youths. As the books were out of their price range only one was bought, but that particular book about the popular Orlando Pirates soccer team proved very popular with the browsers. The only sport book bought was that book. The reason expressed was:

I am a fan, and want to know more about my favourite club

It should be noted here that a book on the Kaizer Chiefs team was demanded at the initial ERA Book Spaza pilot in March 1998.

General

Books of general interest were usually not acknowledged. The only one that was consistently picked up and discussed was *Amadlozi*. This is a book that deals with the traditional African belief that ancestors can aid their descendants in their

everyday life. Controversy broke out on several occasions in that Christians believed the subject matter to be heresy, while the traditional believers could not imagine not acknowledging their ancestors in their day to day lives.

I want to know more about these ancestors

I do not believe [in the ancestors] but I want to know what the author says about them

Educational/motivational

The one title bought that deals with the promotion of lifelong learning directly is the book *I told myself I am going to learn*. There was only one buyer and the reason was quite self explanatory:

I bought it because it has motivations towards education

Religion

The religious books proved interesting for the older generation especially men in their sixties. As this age group can be understood to be limited in terms of financial capacity, only one book, *Isikathi*, was sold. There was however much browsing by this group around these titles. The reason given for the purchase is self-explanatory:

I am a religious person and I want to know more about Christ.

The sales

The books sold on the different days of the eleven main ERA Book Spazas can be seen below:

The EBS sales		
Day	Month	Number of books sold
31	July	15
7	August	7
21	August	13
22	August	9
31	August	11
4	September	6
11	September (disrupted by TV crew)	2
18	September	13
19	September	13
25	September	13
26	September	11
Total		113

The last two weekends show that the Book Spaza sales were being maintained. This factor helped ERA to launch the permanent base for the ERA Book Spaza by distributing handbills directing people to Literacy House, 66 de Villiers Street from 1st October 1998. People seemed pleased to find out that we would still be around on a semi-permanent basis in De Villiers Street which is right next to the Station. However, even though it is being run by one of the book sellers involved in the initial research experiment, sales have dropped drastically since the move. What this city might need are many book hawkers at venues that are as convenient and busy as Park Station. And, of course, books at the right prices.

What the buyers want? Languages, prices, covers and comments

As seen from the sales figures above, buyers of adult readers wanted biographies of famous South Africans and books that carry information about the South African struggle for liberation. Requests were made for books on other key South African figures such as Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Desmond Tutu.

Nelson Mandela: born to lead was continually asked for in English although we only had Sotho and Zulu copies in stock. The preponderance of books in English was well received by the majority of browsers although some felt that there were too many books in Zulu. Despite this complaint, there was a request for more novels in Zulu. Many *Doctor* fans wondered why the book was written in Venda and not English, they found this unfair and less accessible to the majority of readers. There were suggestions from several browsers that the language of the book be displayed on all covers so that it would be easier to identify which book they would be able to read.

The covers of the Kagiso fiction books and the comics were considered too childish and did not look like books for adults. The covers that featured photographs were found to be preferable as they “looked like adult books”. The only time the comics were picked up was by two teenage girls and they looked at *Heart to Heart*, which shows a man and a woman in the illustration surrounded by hearts. Sached books with their political and historical themes complemented with clear photograph covers were the most successful books.

Although the educational-motivation books and guidance books did not sell well there were many requests for “how-to” books. The controversial nature of *Amadlozi* led to many arguments with one browser asking us how we can sell such a demonic unChristian book. Books were requested on various ways of living in South Africa, for example Rastafarianism – which has a growing following in South Africa. The fact that we only had an Orlando Pirates book upset some browsers who insisted that we should have books on other soccer teams such as Swallows and Sundowns. There were also requests for more religious books, generally from men in their sixties.

The costs

Although the ERA Book Spaza made sales of R869, it did not cover its own costs. Viva Books are to be paid for their books at the price we sold them at, and the book sellers were paid R200 a day each. In addition, books were purchased by ERA to replenish stock. Consequently, the ERA Book Spaza is not a profit generating experiment and outside funding is constantly needed to cover costs.

The EBS turnover		
Day	Month	Amount
31	July	R100
7	August	R 55
21	August	R106
22	August	R 69
31	August	R 89
4	September	R 48
11	September (disrupted by TV crew)	R 11
18	September	R 86
19	September	R106
25	September	R100
26	September	R 99
Total		R869

Recommendations and concluding thoughts

- This report on the ERA Book Spazas conducted at Park Station should be used as a model for groups interested in promoting easy reading for adults across the country, in that similar experiments should be set up in all the major train / bus depots. This is important to do not only in order to keep in contact with the buyers but also to recruit new learners and promote easy reading for adults. However, the funding for such a massive undertaking needs to be raised and the information generated from such work must be shared with like-minded institutions in order to benefit the field of adult literacy and those involved in it.
- The biographies and historical books are the books adults are interested in and seem most likely to buy. Consequently more attention should be paid to developing more of these books for courses. The prices of R7 and R10 were felt to be reasonable, although if books were sold for more than this, sales would probably have declined. The books sold by the book hawkers at the flea market were second hand books and were sold for R2 to R4. Their books are also bigger and have more information and thus more appealing to the easy reading audience. For the books to sell we must keep the prices as low as possible. Unfortunately this means our profits will be reduced and the publishers or organisations like ERA will run at a loss.

- In order for easy readers for adults to sell well they must look like they are targeting adults, thus the comic style should be used with discretion and covers should use photographs of events or persons, as this was found to be the most appealing to buyers and browsers.
- Although some topics interested browsers the fact that they were not in English frustrated some. Either all books should come in English and other languages, or the books themselves should be bilingual so they can be used as learning manuals. As the majority of books sold on the whole were those written in English, it seems that the buyers will buy texts in English over and above books written in African languages or Afrikaans.
- The research found that the structure, themes, covers, language and illustrations used in the Sached books were by far the most popular and most appealing to buyers and browsers. Publishers should take the Sached books commented on in this chapter as a model of the books that adults will buy and read.
- This research indicates that books are seen as important tools in improving the lives of readers. In addition, the fact that the books bought are generating knowledge for the individual buyers with the intention of keeping their children informed facilitates the development of a reading culture.

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Chapter 11

Using easy readers in some library reading circles

Introduction

Most adult learners are very busy in their private lives and are keen to become literate as soon as possible. What many do not realise is that by simply reading books, magazines and newspapers on a regular basis they can become more literate and confident in our print-dominated world much faster than if they only use course material. Books are often an under utilised resource for building vocabulary, developing reading speed and comprehension, and turning learners into confident, flexible readers. Those who read regularly and who have grown up with books take these things for granted. But for adult learners, books often seem inaccessible – for financial reasons or because they are only available in libraries (which are often perceived as the preserve of an educated elite) or because of the books themselves (which present new and often difficult tasks in terms of different kinds of printed text and typefaces, a new vocabulary, etc.). In addition, adult learners often have very practical reasons for wanting to become literate: reading letters, performing better at work, etc. and the prospect of reading a complete book might appear to be a daunting, demanding task which has little relevance to their daily needs.

The Component Life-Long Learning of the Gauteng Provincial Library and Information Services (GPLIS), which forms part of the province's Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture, believed that it might be possible to remove the more threatening aspects of "the book" and its associations in learner's minds with a strict learning process, by initiating reading circles in libraries where literacy work is undertaken. Books, especially fiction, evoke a myriad of responses in us, and regular readers and library users, have, for many years, met together in libraries on a regular basis to discuss books they enjoy (and dislike) and to meet with authors themselves. By interacting with books in this way, readers discover their own preferences, discover new authors and titles and, most importantly, are encouraged to read more and enjoy books more.

It was anticipated that, by adapting this concept to an adult education environment, we might introduce learners to the joys of reading in an informal setting where reading would not be a chore, but a way of discovering the world and how others think and feel. Equally importantly, learners would discover that books are not mountains to be climbed and bowed down to, but rather a pleasurable experience that they can take or leave, discuss or debate, form their own opinions on and discover what they prefer and dislike - in short, to make books and reading an integral part of their lives.

The first ERA Reading Circle was established at a literacy project at Babeljoentjie near Vanderbijlpark in August 1996, mainly at the instigation of the Vanderbijlpark librarian who was very actively involved from the start. A selection of books from the Vanderbijlpark Community Library was lent to the project in the form of a book box, and learners met once a week for several weeks in small groups at different levels to read and chat about the books they enjoyed. In one group an English facilitator was faced with a group of African mother-tongue learners and decided to use the book *I told myself I am going to learn* by Elizabeth Ndaba (English Literacy Project, 1990). At first the group felt unable to tackle the text, but as the concepts of title, author, and cover page were introduced, and the learners were encouraged to find words they could understand from the text and use illustrations to flesh out the story, they discovered that they were in fact “reading” the book, and the sense of achievement and confidence this gave to the learners was immeasurable.

The component Life-Long Learning of the Gauteng Provincial Library and Information Service now offers a two day workshop aimed at helping adult educators and librarians start their own reading circles as well as using ERA texts in the classroom as a tool to satisfy several Independent Examination Board outcomes and to supplement literacy course material which often does not provide enough reading experience for the learner.

Following the workshop an ERA Reading Circle will be set up, usually in an established literacy class where learners know each other and are comfortable with the class situation. The Reading Circle will take place during class time and tutors themselves will decide how often the group will meet (though it is recommended that the group meet at least once per month). Materials for these classes are chosen by the tutors and the Life-Long Learning component of GPLIS and are aimed at the specific needs of a group level. When choosing material it is important that the books be relevant to learner’s lives and have a strong adult content, so that learners are able to identify with the characters and situations. Non-fiction titles are included as well as multiple copies of some titles for group reading. The selectors may also decide to add some children’s books which parents can use to introduce their children to reading, thereby beginning to develop a reading culture in their families and simultaneously entrenching their own literacy.

At the first meeting learners are introduced to the concept of reading as an adventure: a fun enjoyable and dynamic experience in which everyone, regardless of their reading skill can participate. It is also explained to them that this is an informal exercise, outside the class situation which is not intended to test their memory or to learn new things, but rather to simply enjoy the reading experience - although of course learning is a hidden bonus.

Typically, tutors will take small groups of approximately eight learners and work through a specific title with them, introducing the various access points of the book - author, title, blurb etc, as preliminary ways of deciding if one will enjoy a book or not, and then reading through the text itself (later encouraging learners with a higher level of literacy and reading confidence to volunteer to read passages aloud), guessing at difficult words, encouraging prediction and anticipation of what is to come, using illustrations to help interpret the text, etc. In the early stages, learners

will simply be introduced to the mechanics of the text, while in later sessions they will be encouraged to respond along the lines of: Did you like the story?, What did you dislike? Do you feel this book is interesting for adults? How would you change the story? (allowing them to re-tell the story in their own words). Gradually learners will begin identifying with the characters from the story, forming and expressing their own opinions, answering questions about the text which in turn will lead to improved grammar and language usage. However, apart from the impact of their language usage on their language capabilities, there is also the dramatic psychological advantage of realising that they are in fact reading complete texts, and the sense of achievement that comes with that. As learners become more comfortable with text and begin to make their own selections from the book box, they will become ready to progress from the book box to the broader collection housed in the library itself.

A case study of reading circles in Soshanguve and Akasia

Reading circles were established in September 1998 with literacy groups based at the Soshanguve and Akasia community libraries of the Northern Pretoria Metropolitan Sub-Structure with the active involvement of librarians from these libraries.

Previously the seven tutors who were involved in the Reading Circles had undergone a two-day workshop which introduced them to the concept of the Reading Circle and how to establish one, as well as how to use easy readers for adults in the classroom as a tool to satisfy several national learning requirements and to supplement literacy course material which often does not provide enough reading experience for the learner.

Material for the ERA Book Boxes was compiled for each group from GPLIS stock by the Component Life-Long Learning with each reading level in mind, with a focus on adult material which is relevant to learner's lives. The books were mainly in English, with some mother-tongue titles as well.

The groups themselves, all studying English, were roughly composed as follows: at Soshanguve there were 12 learners at ABET sub-level 1 and 10 learners at sub-level 3; while at Akasia library there were 21 learners at sub-level 1 and 9 learners at sub-level 3. During the first few meetings, tutors mainly read to the learners and introduced the concepts of author and title. During later sessions, learners were encouraged to read passages on their own, while other learners would help with difficult words or concepts. Throughout the meetings there was a strong focus on creating an informal environment where learners, regardless of their level of literacy, would feel able to discuss what they had been reading in the group and form their own opinions about what they enjoyed and disliked.

In March 1999, the Component Life-Long Learning did a follow up visit to the Reading Circles where they handed out questionnaires which posed a range of questions to tutors and learners about the entire experience.

The findings

1. What do learners read and how has reading helped them?

It would appear that the act of reading fulfilled a multitude of functions for learners. One key one was to communicate in English-by learning English idioms and expressions such as the conventions of greeting. They were able to improve their English speaking skills.

Another important point was that “reading promotes reading”: reading longer pieces than they were accustomed to pushed learners into a new level of comprehension and understanding. Several learners felt that while previously words were just alphabet soup, the task of reading whole sentences and narrative – confronting books as a whole – had helped them break through the barrier of meaningless parts to comprehensive wholes.

Reading also helped with writing: learners could now write their name and short sentences. Furthermore reading had broadened learners’ general knowledge. One learner said, “I can see different things that I did not know before.”

Most importantly, reading built confidence. A word that several learners used was “trying”. Where previously learners believed they could only read what appeared in their course material, the achievement of having read a complete book spurred them on to now try out all sorts of other texts – posters, instructions, signs and so on. “I enjoy reading”, says one learner,” because when I am at town I can see many different shops.” Another learner put it like this: “Reading helped me to understand what I am reading about”.

2. How has reading helped learners study better?

Learners not only felt that their vocabulary had improved and broadened, but that they had discovered words for ideas they had struggled to name, like “budget”. “I know now that it means a plan of how am I going to spend my money” said one learner.

Several learners mentioned that they could now read faster, and therefore study with better comprehension, while for others there was the joy of associating words read on a page with signs and notices around town which in turn leads to further learning and understanding.

Tutors had also used books as a learning tool in the classroom to set comprehension tests and other exercises which had proved quite successful.

3. Which books were preferred and why?

A group of ABET sub-level 1 language learners had together read the book *The right change* (by Ina Lawson, Viva Books, 1997), which deals with addition and subtraction and the pitfalls of ignorance in this area. While some learners mentioned that they had shared the same experiences as the characters in the book, for others the value of the book lay in its educational aspects – learning about arrears, budgeting, adding and subtracting. For some the book contained practical lessons such as “no one can cheat me now”, while several saw how the book demonstrated the value of learning as such: “If I am not learned”, says one learner, “I won’t be able to know how to add and subtract.” They recognised the dangers of being ignorant like MaBetty (a character in the book) who is cheated because she confuses the value of a light R50 note with a heavy bag of coins which are in fact worth much less.

Some learners enjoyed the book *My name is Selina Mabiletsa* (by Chris van Wyk, Viva Books, 1996) because it showed them how writing can help them in a practical way in a situation they can understand where it is often difficult to prove ownership of something if you cannot read or write.

One learner enjoyed the book *uMkhize of Maritzburg* (by Sandra Land, Sached, 1995) because of the simultaneous translation into Zulu which meant that “I can understand it by reading alone without being helped.”

Several learners enjoyed *The Nkosi family* (by Elda Lyster, New Readers Project, 1991) not only because the pictures were clear and the sentences short and easy, but because of the family’s dreams and their hopes for the future.

ABET sub-level 3 language learners had read a greater variety of titles and had different responses to these books. For many there were practical lessons to be learnt, while others felt the books had broadened and sometimes changed their perspectives on life and the lives of others.

The Fortune snake Mamlambo (by Bheki Maseko, Viva Books, 1992) was an interesting case in point. While one learner felt that the book taught one not to trust traditional herbalists (izinyanga) and their medicines (umuthi), another felt that the book demonstrated that these older traditional means of manipulating a lover were rather ridiculous and outdated and that people should rather follow the example of the couple in *The Lovers* (by Bessie Head, Viva Books, 1994) who have deep feelings for each other which help them to defy convention and strike out on their own.

In terms of changed perceptions, a reader of *My cousin Thabo* (by Chris van Wyk, Viva Books, 1995) liked the book “because it tells us that is not good to think the farm people are stupid, we are the same”, while a reader of *Ma’am Fixit and the Skorokoro* (by Gabi Witthaus, Viva Books, 1995) mentioned that “that was a big surprise to me if I read about a woman who can fix a car.”

For other readers the value of the experience lay in identifying with the characters in a book such as *Sabi and Ndisa* (by Ernest Skosana, Biograph, 1973) where the

learner commented that “my aunt ... manage to break in between myself and my wife to be. The story of Sabi and Ndisa reminds me of the past.” In another case the book *Exiles and homecoming* (by Zonke Majodina, Heinemann, 1995) reminded a learner of the hardships he endured in obtaining voting registration papers.

For tutors the major reasons why learners liked certain books was that of common experience and that they were about practical or current issues. Categories mentioned were: adventure stories, romance, real-life stories and books on rights – labour relations, maintenance, etc. Some learners also appreciated collections of short stories which were less daunting than more lengthy texts.

Lastly, reading *Take a chance* (by Chris van Wyk, Viva Books, 1995) motivated a learner to decide that “When a man make you a fool you must go and enjoy yourself at the studios or at some places with your best friend”!

4. Which books were disliked and why?

For most ABET sub-level 1 language learners, the major barriers to enjoying certain books were the small print in titles such as *uMkhize of Maritzburg* and *Thula Baba* (Ravan Press, 1990), while others objected to the pictures in books such as *The 1987 floods* (by Thembakazi Mnisi, New Readers Project, 1991) and *Our past our pride* (by Jabu Ndlovu, Natal Worker History Project, 1994). No ABET sub-level 3 language learners mentioned titles they did not enjoy, possibly because they were skilled enough to select titles they knew they would enjoy and would not present problems in terms of typeface, length of sentences, subject matter, etc.

One tutor mentioned that his older learners were not interested in romance books because they “had no time for romance but were interested about learning for their future.”

5. Questions about the use of the Book Box

How did learners and tutors feel about the contents of the box and what problems did they have with it?

A box of books had been put together for each group, with a variety of materials aimed at each level. Learners and tutors were asked whether they liked the selection and whether they had any problems with the books.

A major issue that emerged was that learners at all levels generally preferred to read the same title in groups, rather than individual titles on their own. Shared reading made it easier to identify difficult words and pick up the story line (often with the tutor’s help) rather than struggling on one’s own. After reading together in class, learners then felt confident enough to take the book home and practice on their own. There was therefore general consensus that there should be fewer titles and more multiple copies of a book in the Book Boxes.

When asked about the contents of the bookbox, almost all the lower level learners felt that there were not enough titles in the box (perhaps they meant not enough multiple copies) and also that the books were not necessarily too difficult, but just required time (i.e., extra time which many might not have) to read through. Upper level learners also felt there were not enough books to read, but that the level was correct for them and that all the titles were suitable for adults, except one learner who felt that some of the books were physically too small for adults, that is, their small size appeared childish. Two learners mentioned that the print was often too small, especially for those with eye problems.

Tutors generally agreed with learners' perceptions and although some said the books in their book box were too difficult, most felt that given enough time and assistance, learners would be able to read most of the titles. They also found the book box easy to administer except when students moved away, taking books with them, although this did not seem to be a major problem .

What other books would learners and tutors like to see in the book box?

While most lower level learners requested extra books in Zulu or Northern Sotho, most upper level learners wanted only books in English. It would seem therefore that many beginners would like dual-language publications (such as *uMkhize of Maritzburg*) or translations of the English titles they are presently reading to bridge the gap to English material, which more advanced learners want exclusively.

Also, while both groups wanted more practical books on, for example, making money, getting one's pension, labour and other rights, upper level learners also requested more academic books such as English grammar, mathematics, computer science, biology and accounting. These readers are therefore clearly ready to begin using the formal library collection.

6. Reading circles: are they popular and do they work?

Tutors felt very positive about the Reading Circles and their impact on learners' reading and studying abilities. They indicated that learners met as a Reading Circle twice a month during class time, where they read together and discussed the books they had read. Some tutors also used part of their regular classes to allow learners to read and discuss books.

Most tutors felt that learners preferred reading as a group because it is was easier to solve reading/ vocabulary problems together, where the tutor can help, and, very importantly, they can "share exciting stories".

Tutors felt that the benefits for the learners, apart from improved reading, was improved communication skills and self-confidence in the group context where everyone was still learning, and even the shyest learners felt able to participate.

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Chapter 12

Easy readers in libraries and resource centres

Introduction

Libraries are key purchasers of books and providers of them to the reading public, particularly to people who can not easily afford to purchase texts for themselves. In Chapter 8 some information is provided from easy reader publishers about the sales made to libraries and resource centres and some additional data was collected in three small studies about the stocks of easy readers held by libraries and resource centres.

The first of these studies (details of which are found in Chapter 13) was a rapid telephonic survey of nine libraries in Gauteng to obtain information about their knowledge and use of the ERA African Languages Series. This survey did reveal that a few of the libraries had copies of some of the ERA titles while others indicated that the budgets did not permit purchases (or further purchases), especially when the demand was not there. There was little systematic record keeping of stocks or the issue of easy readers for adults.

The second study checked whether any of the 100 titles selected for the tracking study (already described in Chapter 8) were held by some of the provincial library services. Data was obtained about these holdings in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provincial library services as well as from the Johannesburg Public Library service. These findings are detailed below.

The third study also checked on holdings of the 100 titles in two large ABET resource centres in KwaZulu-Natal. Details of these are also found below.

Easy readers for adults stocked by library services

Data was obtained on the number of titles held by some library services of 100 books selected for the tracker study. The table on the following pages list the number of copies of each title listed in the databases of the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provincial library services as well as in the Johannesburg Public Library system. Note that because the Johannesburg Public Library System serves some provincial libraries there is some overlap and the figures in the column in brackets refers to copies of books in these provincial libraries that may duplicate copies listed in the Gauteng Provincial Library column.

#	WCPL	KZNPL	GPL	JPL	Book title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
1	58	58	3	2 (2)	'n Vinnige truuk	Dawn Garisch	Heinemann	Afrikaans
2			21		Amadlozi kamajola	Mtutuzeli Matshoba	Heinemann	Zulu
3		25	13	7 (5)	Before the rains come	Justice Malala	Heinemann	English
4					Boishoko	Damaria Senne	Heinemann	Sesotho
5					Diresepe tsa Mookadi	Nomvula Khalo & Lizeka Mda	Heinemann	Sesotho
6					Ho nyalana Aferika Borwa	Khensani Makhubela	Heinemann	Sesotho
7	126	37	2		Iqhinga Elikhawulezileyo	Dawn Garisch	Heinemann	Xhosa
8					Izindlela zokupheka zothingo Iwenkosazana Nomvula	Khalo & Lizeka Mda	Heinemann	Zulu
9					Love and Money	Joyce Kubayi	Heinemann	English
10	112	25	1	3 (3)	Maria	Chris Van Wyk	Heinemann	English
11		85			Ngaphambi kokufika kwezimvula	Justice Malala	Heinemann	Zulu
12	124	124			Phambi kokuba ine	Justice Malala	Heinemann	Xhosa
13			8	17 (2)	Sefuba se sebe sa Mbusi	Dawn Garisch & Lizza Littlewort	Heinemann	Sesotho
14	112	112		2 (2)	Stokvel stories: seksuele teistering by werk	Lizeka Mda	Heinemann	Afrikaans
15	120	120		1	Tuiskoms: uitgewekenes se onvertelde verhale	Zonke Majodina	Heinemann	Afrikaans
16	132	132			Ukubuyel'ekhaya kwababhaci	Zonke Majodina	Heinemann	Xhosa

#	WCPL	KZNPL	GPL	JPL	Book title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
17					Umkhuhlane Kambusi Omubi	Dawn Garisch & Lizza Littlewort	Heinemann	Zulu
18					Vukati Muni	Vonani Bila	Heinemann	Tsonga
19	120	120			Danisela udomo abadanisi baseMfuleni	Tracey Derrick & Magdalena Hermanus	Juta	Xhosa
20	79	79			Festivals and Celebrations	Janet Stonier <i>et al</i>	Juta	English
21	101	101	5		Ixesha Lokunqula	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Xhosa
22	133	133			Nelson Mandela: 'n Gebore Leier	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Afrikaans
23					Ngazitshela ukuthi ngizofunda	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Zulu
24			21	1 (1)	Sacred Places	Janet Stonier & Tracey Derrick	Juta	English
25					UNelson Mandela: iqhawe elizalelwe ubuholi	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Zulu
26					Ukuseleko emakhayeni	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	English
27	120	120			Vis en tjips	Dot Serfontein	Juta	Afrikaans
28	151	151		25	As julle maar weet	Rachel Balie	Kagiso	Kagiso
29	151	151		24	Dit maak die wet, my kind	Rachel Balie	Kagiso	Afrikaans
30	151	151		24	En daar was lig	Rachel Balie	Kagiso	Kagiso
31		295		5	Imfundo ephakeme	Sisana R. Dlamini & C.D. Ntuli	Kagiso	Zulu
32				5	Kutlwano	Velaphi W. Mlombo	Kagiso	Setswana
33			2		Mmatswale	Modupi Phalane		Sepedi
34		24	47	12	People call us Bosslaapers	Gaby Coetzee-Andrew	Kagiso	English
35		24		11	The building	Cathy Winter	Kagiso	English
36			49	13 (1)	The spaza	Ethelwyn Rebelo	Kagiso	English
37					Ugog ushintsha umqondo	Sisana R. Dlamini & C.D. Ntuli		Zulu
38	152	29	5	23 (7)	Dans van vreugde	Joseph William	Kwela	Afrikaans
39	110	26	12		Gesteelde Vakansie	?	?	Afrikaans

#	WCPL	KZNPL	GPL	JPL	Book title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
40	38	2		1	Safe in the storm - a story about getting a house	Cilla Lowen	Kwela	English
41	104	7	17	2	Tjeka, Tshipo, tjeka!	Marita van Aswegen	Kwela	Sesotho
42	142	20	3		Umz'obiweyo	?	?	Xhosa
43			13	13 (3)	Zachariah o ya Kapa	Ina Lawson	Kwela	Setswana
44	150	150			Dawid en die bul	Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	Afrikaans
45				22 (3)	Funda ngamalungelo akho-ukuxoshwa ngendela	Elda Lyster Richard Lyster & Mdu Mchunu	New Readers Project	Zulu
46	137	48			Huis toe met hoenders	Pauline Stanford	New Readers Project	Afrikaans
47		139		24 (7)	Inkositini	Khathazile Gasa	New Readers Project	Zulu
48	10	2	29	21	Ngingenzenjani uma kuyimi? Usizo nge-AIDS	Nozizwe Madlala & Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	Zulu
49	1	42	14	23 (3)	Sengikhulile	Nomadashi Memela	New Readers Project	English
50	168	112	12	26 (6)	The trick	Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	English
51	11	144	23	18 (2)	Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu	Nozizwe Madlala	New Readers Project	Zulu
52	418	24	4	42 (3)	What if it's me? Help with AIDS	Wendy Annecke & Nozizwe Madlala	New Readers Project	English
53			41		'N Bossie blomme vir die heer	Joy Dearling		Afrikaans
54			41		Die man met die rooi das	Maritha Snyman		Afrikaans
55					From the farm to the city	Pieter Hendricks		English
56	43	24	54	16 (4)	My father's paint drum	Jabu Radebe <i>et al</i>	SACHED Books	English
57	43	53	6	25 (3)	Steve Tshwete: "Mr Fix-it"	Rachidi Molapo	SACHED Books	English
58	44	26		14 (2)	The secret	Marilyn Braam	SACHED Books	English
59	122	56			Van Plaasjapie tot stadsjapie	Pieter Hendricks		Afrikaans
60					Listen to the heart beat of the nation	Lethabo La Nonceba	Soul City	Sesotho
61	144	144	3		Deep cuts	M Bahr, J Sieber, P Esterhuysen	Storyteller Group	English

#	WCPL	KZNPL	GPL	JPL	Book title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
62	2	33		6	The future is ours	Margaret Graham	Heinemann	English
63	42	27	7	13 (2)	Death of a son	Njabulo S Ndebele	Viva	English
64				1	Doctor Khumalo	Nelson Rashavha	Viva	Venda
65	72	70	5	18 (2)	Kippie Moeketsi - sad man of jazz	Peter Esterhuysen	Viva	English
66			14	1	Mudzimu u Fhira Vhaloi	Mbulungeni Madiba	Viva	Venda
67	89	76	10	29 (6)	Nightingales and night time girls	Minky Schlesinger	Viva	English
68	62	41	16	26 (2)	Take a chance	Chris van Wyk	Viva	English
69		24	11	19 (6)	The gift	Gabi Witthaus	Viva	English
70	101	66	10	24 (2)	The suit	Can Themba	Viva	English
71		14		6	Umam' uMkhandi ne skorokoro	Gabi Witthaus	Viva	Xhosa
72	176	31		30	Waag en wen	Chris van Wyk	TURP	Afrikaans
73	43	43			Reading the financial pages	TURP	TURP	English
74					Eating with hope	A. Croucamp	Gauteng Department of Health	English
75	103	103	16	11(11)	Love and AIDS	P. Esterhuysen & N. Napper	AIDS Centre	English
76			3		Red Cross: Helping people in need	P Esterhuysen & N Napper	International Committee of the Red Cross	English
77							African Languages Series	
78								
79								
80								
81								
82		46	5	2 (2)	Exiles and Homecoming	Zonke Majodina	Heinemann	English
83					Ha Heloo!	Virginia Maluleke	Heinemann	Tsonga
84	180	180	13		Izinyanya Zikamajola	Mtutuzeli Matshoba	Heinemann	Xhosa
85		36			Usilinga	Elvis Jack	Heinemann	Zulu
86					Die bustorie	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Afrikaans
87					Isikhathi sokuthandaza	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Zulu

#	WCPL	KZNPL	GPL	JPL	Book title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
88					Nokhaya saves someone from drowning	Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela	Juta	English
89			2	5	Dikeledi	Fred V. Bila	Kagiso	Sepedi
90				5	Bodila	Sekepe Matjila & Mogomotsi Mfikoe	Kagiso	Setswana
91	112	44	24	5 (1)	Die morester skyn helder	??	Kwela	Afrikaans
92			19		Mphatlalatsane e tjhabile e hlakile	??	Kwela	Sesotho
93	88	119	7	25 (6)	Going home with chickens	Pauline Stanford	New Readers Project	English
94		339			Indoda yezihlala Indaba	Robert Mazibuko	New Readers Project	Zulu
95	31	60		36	Five great African leaders	Liesa Jossel	SACHED Books	English
96	105	105	8	33 (3)	Life	Bessie Head	Viva	English
97			14	1	Mulovha na Namusi	Mbulungeni R. Madiba	Viva	Venda
98					Open talk	C. Rifkin & E. Ngalo	Old Mutual	English
99				2	The Johannesburg Stock Exchange	TURP	TURP	English
100					Breaking our silence	N. Napper & K. Segal	Women's National Coalition	English
	4833	4620	633	720 (102)				

From the above table it is abundantly clear that though a fair number of easy readers for adults are available through these library services, the numbers in each library are not particularly large (in the Gauteng provincial library service it works out at about 20 books per provincial library).

Easy readers for adults available in resource centres

Tembaletu Community Education Centre

The Tembaletu Community Education Centre in Pietermaritzburg runs both ABET and Further Education and Training classes and has a well run resource centre and library. ABET level readers selected for this resource centre are decided upon by the course teachers and the education officer in consultation with the librarian. They tend to hear about these books from training courses, workshops and conferences they

attend, as well as from publishers' representatives. Materials developers such as ASECA, ProLit and others also create some demand for particular books through their own promotions. The following books listed in the tracker sample of 100 titles were held by the resource centre and borrowed as indicated:

#	Stock	Borrowed	Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
2	1	4	Amadlozi kamajola	Mtutuzeli Matshoba	Heinemann	Zulu
3	1	5	Before the rains come	Justice Malala	Heinemann	English
11	1	4	Ngaphambi kokufika kwezimvula	Justice Malala	Heinemann	Zulu
17	2	5	Umkhuhlane Kambusi Omubi	Dawn Garisch & Lizza Littlewort	Heinemann	Zulu
31	9	5	Imfundo ephakeme	Sisana R. Dlamini & C.D. Ntuli	Kagiso	Zulu
36	12	9	The spaza	Ethelwyn Rebelo	Kagiso	English
37	5	9	Ugog ushintsha umqondo	Sisana R. Dlamini & C.D. Ntuli		Zulu
45	3	2	Funda Ngamalungelo akho-ukuxoshwa ngendela	Elda Lyster Richard Lyster & Mdu Mchunu	New Readers Project	Zulu
47	1	3	Inkositini	Khathazile Gasa	New Readers Project	Zulu
48	1	3	Ngingenzenjani uma kuyimi? Usizo nge-AIDS	Nozizwe Madlala & Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	Zulu
49	3	1	Sengikhulile	Nomadashi Memela	New Readers Project	English
50	1	13	The trick	Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	English
51	1	6	Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu	Nozizwe Madlala	New Readers Project	Zulu
61	3	4	Deep cuts	M Bahr, J Sieber, P Esterhuysen	Storyteller Group	English
82	1	8	Exiles and Homecoming	Zonke Majodina	Heinemann	English
88	1	4	Nokhaya saves someone from drowning	Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela	Juta	English
93	1	3	Going home with chickens	Pauline Stanford	New Readers Project	English
94	2	5	Indoda yezihlala Indaba	Robert Mazibuko	New Readers Project	Zulu
96	3	7	Life	Bessie Head	Viva	English

It is interesting that only 19 of the 100 titles were in stock (though partly explained by English and Zulu being the dominant regional languages) and what little use was made of them (given that ABET classes are run on site).

Natal ABE Support Agency

The Natal ABE Support Agency, one of the larger ABET NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal, runs a large resource centre including an ABE materials bookshop in Durban. In the *Annual report 1997/1998* NASA reported that “in the last eight months the bookshop has sold 11,965 books. Most buyers are organisations with very few individuals coming in of their own accord. Although we understand the reasons for this, the challenge is to establish a reading culture where buying an ABET book will become a priority for individuals.”

On 18 February 1999 the following data was obtained from the organisation about which of the 100 titles were in stock and how many had been sold. It was reported that the biggest buyers of these books had been business organisations such as ALUSAF (from Richard’s Bay) Nampak, Metro Rail, Toyota and others. These purchasers usually bought several copies of a book at a time to cover a whole year. Other purchasers were NGOs and CBOs such as SMILE, The Valley Trust, Nkonjane Trust, Imdaad and others.

#	Stock	Sold	Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
21	10	13	Ixesha lokunqula	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Xhosa
23	13	16	Ngazitshela ukuthi ngizofunda	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust.	Juta	Zulu
25	11		UNelson Mandela: iqhawe elizalelwe ubuholi	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	Zulu
26	31	33	Ukuseleko Emakhayeni	ABE Dev. Ser. Trust	Juta	English
34	7	19	People call us Bosslaapers	Gaby Coetzee-Andrew	Kagiso	English
35	18	19	The building	Cathy Winter	Kagiso	English
36	8	18	The spaza	Ethelwyn Rebelo	Kagiso	English
40	30	1	Safe in the storm - a story about getting a house	Cilla Lowen	Kwela	English
47	50		Inkositini	Khathazile Gasas	New Readers Project	Zulu
48	41	23	Ngingenzenjani uma kuyimi? Usizo nge-AIDS	Nozizwe Madlala & Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	Zulu
49	33	14	Sengikhulile	Nomadashi Memela	New Readers Project	English
50	13	1	The trick	Wendy Annecke	New Readers Project	English
51	50	19	Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu	Nozizwe Madlala	New Readers Project	Zulu
52	61	26	What if it's me? Help with AIDS	Wendy Annecke & Nozizwe Madlala	New Readers Project	English

#	Stock	Sold	Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Language
56	8	30	My father's paint drum	Jabu Radebe <i>et al</i>	SACHED Books	English
58	5	21	The secret	Marilyn Braam	SACHED Books	English
63	9	23	Death of a son	Njabulo S. Ndebele	Viva	English
65	23	34	Kippie Moeketsi - sad man of jazz	Peter Esterhuysen	Viva	English
67	11	16	Nightingales and night time girls	Minky Schlesinger	Viva	English
68	11	23	Take a chance	Chris van Wyk	Viva	English
69	7	28	The gift	Gabi Witthaus	Viva	English
70	31	11	The suit	Can Themba	Viva	English
87	10	13	Isikhathi sokuthandaza	ABE Dev Ser Trust	Juta	Zulu
88	9	3	Nokhaya saves someone from drowning	Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela	Juta	English
93	4	55	Going home with chickens	Pauline Stanford	New Readers Project	English
94	21	26	Indoda yezihlala Indaba	Robert Mazibuko	New Readers Project	Zulu
95	7	30	Five great African leaders	Liesa Jossel	SACHED Books	English
96	17	11	Life	Bessie Head	Viva	English

One notes that a large proportion of the books sold are English titles, a few Zulu (predictably for the province) and one Xhosa book.

Chapter 13

The ERA African Languages Series Easy adult readers in African languages – who wants them?

Introduction

The intent of this research study was to assess the use of the ERA African languages Series in the adult basic education and training sector, the contribution in terms of significant output and support by publishers, and broadly to contextualise the role of publishing in African languages at this moment in South Africa's chequered history.

The first step in the research was to contextualise the work of ERA against the backdrop of the socio-linguistic landscape of South Africa. Interviews were conducted with key figures in the linguistic arena like Professor Cynthia Marivate, Professor Rajend Mesthrie and other academics in departments of linguistics or applied linguistics. The main critical question directed at these linguists was assessment of the impact of South Africa's new constitution on African languages and how this impacted on the publishing industry. This question leads on naturally to examining the role of the ERA African Languages Series in actively sustaining, developing and maintaining the African languages. Theory and a survey of best practices of the world confirm that it is active intervention by governments or communities that can restore the status of a language.

There is ample evidence that despite the constitution's noble endeavours to establish and maintain the parity of the 11 official languages, the hegemony of English is uncontested. Indigenous languages are under pressure from the stronger and wider appeal of English. However, largely cosmetic changes serve to increase awareness at a subliminal level of African languages and sustain awareness of the multilingual nature of South African society. There was also an overwhelming consensus amongst language teachers and linguists that the new constitution's clauses on language had some impact on languages other than English and Afrikaans.

Linguists' views

The academics consulted felt that it is an unreal expectation that African languages would be able to challenge English in all domains of use. Though there is a definite shift in attitudes towards African languages and an increased awareness and symbolic use of the languages, this serves only to confirm the dynamic and multilingual state of the country. Other factors – fiscal restraints and other socio-political pressures – inhibit the development of the African languages, leading to a stalemate situation.

These comments have a direct bearing on any analysis of the impact of the ERA African Languages Series. If reading, literacy and language rights are national imperatives, support for initiatives that seek to preserve the languages need more than cosmetic makeovers. The ERA African Languages Series is a concrete manifestation of the rights enshrined in the constitution and is an attempt to make language equity and redress a concrete reality by providing books that promote literacy and languages.

Publishers of the African languages series

The publishing industry has given voice to mainly English and Afrikaans for obvious economic reasons. The marginalisation of the other languages is rooted in the past, and continues in the present for economic reasons. Books in African languages are almost totally unavailable except at certain outlets. The 'hiding' of books in African languages and the refusal to foreground them cannot be blamed on any one sector. The media promotes reading and books in the dominant languages, sales outlets are governed by supply and demand, readers make choices and publishers operate on a low profile marketing strategy. The communities that need books are economically disempowered and thus cut off from the decision-making process.

The ERA African Languages Series attempts to confront and change this situation through commissioning the publication of a series of books that reflect the multilingual status of the society.

For this study the following publishers were interviewed:

Heinemann
Juta
Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman
Stimela/Collegium
Viva
Witwatersrand University Press

A semi-structured interview schedule was used focussing on critical areas that could provide insights into the role of the publishing industry in relation to promotion of the African Languages Series and African languages as a whole. Questions asked included the following:

- What are your views on the state of publishing in African languages?
- What has been the impact of the constitution in terms of publishing and sales in African language books?
- What information do you have regarding sales trends in African language books?
- How successful is the ERA African Languages Series?
- What are the plus factors and impeding factors regarding sales of the Series?
- What strategies can be employed to promote reading of books in African languages?
- What strategies can be employed to promote sales?

It was evident that publishers had common perceptions of the industry and that for them publishing in the different languages was not economically attractive.

These are some of their comments:

- Heinemann: We need to inculcate a reading culture and encourage book-buying. ... PANSALB could develop ABET in African languages by subsidising the costs of books to reading clubs.
- Juta: The success of the ERA African Languages Series rests on the choice of materials. The reality is that people can't afford to buy books.
- Kagiso: There is the problem of insufficient access for readers in terms of price and outlets.
- Stimela/Collegium: ABET readers want literacy for personal enrichment.
- Viva: More money has to be made available to the ABET sector to ensure that the books can reach the learners.

There was wide concurrence that it was important, vital and politically correct to publish in African languages. Publishers noted the need for relevant and exciting material that was cheap, affordable and accessible. However, commitment to projects such as ERA stopped at the point of the books coming off the press. Despite having the inside track on the ABET sector, publishers opted for conventional sales and marketing strategies instead of responding to the targeted market.

Interviews with publishers yielded the following key observations.

- The ABET sector was not commercially viable.
- Large print runs are required to make good business sense.
- Alternate modes of sales and marketing are required in order to be effective.
- Skilful marketing as opposed to sentimental marketing is needed.

Ideas on more effective marketing included such ideas as:

- Dispatch of promotional copies to key decision-makers.
- Promotional visits to centres of learning.
- Identification of new and relevant points of sale.
- Direct marketing to individuals, institutions and Human Resource departments.
- The usage of celebrities to promote reading campaigns.

The two common themes evident in the observations of the publishers are an economic one and a sales and marketing strategies one. An interrogation of the publishers' comments reveals that there is an awareness of the need for different and appropriate strategies to be adopted to market books in African languages. The question that remains unanswered is whether the 'productivity paradox' that appears to paralyse the industry will be resolved in the interests of African languages. The main method used by publishers to promote books is akin to a kind of passive intervention where the outcome is predetermined. This passivity takes its cue from government in its lack of fiscal support to publishers and its inadequate promotion of the African languages.

It appears to be an untenable situation that, though publishers are aware of the diagnosis, understand the need for a remedy and know what the cure is, they have an aversion to using the cure. For example, one publisher referred to a book promotion of the African language series with a major chain store and observed that the books were badly positioned and not aggressively marketed.

Statistics were not forthcoming from most of the publishers. They said it was difficult to collate statistics and the market was too small to warrant major analyses. Trends in terms of provinces were broadly identified but could not be substantiated.

It was evident that a cohesive strategy was required to break this cycle of passivity. The basic tenet of business is to create a market, sustain it and actively promote the products within that market with a view to expanding it at every given opportunity. This is applicable to the publishing industry as well. But currently the link between creating a reading public and then promoting and maintaining it remains tenuous.

Publishers when interviewed specifically on the success of the ERA African Languages Series made very few substantive comments. It was evident that in order for the Series to make significant inroads into the reading lives of the public, a strategy had to be devised that would be high impact. Funding for the publishing of books in the African languages must encompass other aspects like distribution, sales and marketing and sustaining the reading culture. The past imbalances in society are still reflected in present day South Africa where access to reading is confined to the environs of the urban, economically sound sector. The new reader target group is not the recipient of proactive reading strategies. This needs systematic unfolding, as the premise underlying 'development of reading skills of a nation' is to increase the number of new readers while maintaining established readers.

The interviews with publishers

What are your views on the state of publishing in African Languages?

Heinemann thought it was in a transitional state. Heinemann had transformed its publishing strategy for African languages and was publishing not just for schools now, but also for adults. They want to broaden access to adult literacy. Their new

series, the Mamela Africa Series, is meant to encourage reading of African writers in African languages and will be printed in ten languages. There was a need to inculcate a reading culture and encourage book buying.

Juta thought publishing in African languages has improved over the past few years. There has been an increase in publishing and writing on new subjects in African languages. New voices are emerging, who are writing in both English and African languages. Publishing is no longer dominated by the language boards and this is encouraging more creative writing; writers are no longer only writing texts for schools. Further development needs to be encouraged and especially the creation of realistic retail outlets for writing in African languages.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman thought that publishing in African languages was not very commercially rewarding, and, like the ERA project, it requires subsidising, as the market is not literate enough at the moment. There is the problem of insufficient access for readers, in terms of price and outlets.

Stimela/ Collegium believed that it was really important to develop a reader public and this should be encouraged by publishing a greater variety of reading in African languages, including ABET reading.

What has been the impact of the constitution in terms of publishing and sales in African language books?

Heinemann said that sales had not changed. There had been the introduction of more progressive literature to schools, but no greater demand. Provinces are waiting for the finalisation of curriculum developments and changes before committing themselves to new buying. With regard to publishing, there is a privileging of the “big” languages, Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Pedi, and Tswana.

Juta felt the new constitution had made no impact on sales. There was an economic slump, which puts pressure on small publishers especially. However, apart from sales, there was an impact on publishing and new developments are noticeable. Before there were strong partnerships with government, but the new partnerships are between large and smaller publishers, both here and abroad. There is greater interest in publishing in the following areas: adult literacy, minority language publishing, multiple language texts, language teaching texts and educational debates.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman felt there was still a struggle to publish in African languages. This and illiteracy - inhibits the development of popular reading.

Stimela/Collegium thought that interest in ABET has increased. Before 1994, African languages were just viewed as vernacular, were patronised and not recognised as being important. There is a greater interest and investment in developing African language materials which are relevant to adult life.

What information do you have regarding sales trends in African language books?

Heinemann could only provide approximate figures. For example, in terms of sales, before 1994, a Zulu prescribed title would sell 120 000 copies per annum, a Sotho one 80 000 per annum, and a Tsonga one about 20 000 per annum. For now, provincial education departments are just giving top-up orders, and the market for books in African languages is not moving. The African languages market was still mainly with schools. There are not enough readers to make it worthwhile for commercial bookshops to stock large numbers of books in African languages. Since November 1998, Heinemann had engaged in a big push to reach these consumers more directly through its direct selling division.

Juta said it was difficult to collect statistics. They exist, but there is no centralised data base for publishers to draw upon. The information they had on provincial differences was as follows:

KwaZulu-Natal:	sales are largest in KwaZulu-Natal and this is linked to the dominance of Zulu.
Northern Province:	there is a large market in Pedi, which is the second biggest African language.
Eastern Cape:	there is a large Xhosa market and a literacy rooted in the mission schools history.
Northern Cape:	sales are very low, as most people are reading in English. The demand for books in Tswana, Xhosa, San and Khoi is not commercially viable, and so they are not catered for by the publishing industry.
Gauteng:	the hub of publishing and sales, this province sets sales trends for the rest of the country.

Generally Zulu enjoys dominance because it is promoted and privileged, at tertiary education level as well.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman said that in urban areas access to books and funding is better. The market is mainly schools and provincial government. Some books are sold to bookshops like the CNA, Exclusive Books and Facts & Fiction, but they don't really stock African language books. The leisure reading market in African languages is very small. There is a need to generate a reading culture and there is an obvious connection between literacy rates and book sales in African languages.

Stimela/Collegium said that sales were mainly to schools. In the past school sales were mainly of a restricted list of prescribed texts, but in large quantities. Now open lists make the school market less profitable for publishers. With regard to ABET, this is more of a service to the community as it is not profitable for publishers with low print runs of between 1000 to 1500 books in African languages. They sell to libraries, and the mines and other companies which offer ABET. Kwazulu-Natal is the most profitable. Northern Province may not even sell 1000 texts in ABET in a year. There is little market for ABET in African languages. The material is not interesting

enough. Books on skills (for example their *How to ... Series*) are popular. They are trying to offer popular romances in African languages for ABET readers and are exploring ways of offering new and stimulating materials. ABET readers want literacy for personal enrichment. After reaching ABET sub-level 4, adults begin reading for pleasure. Evening centres also use publications like *YOU* magazine, because of the interest in the stories, and the way they offer popular knowledge.

How successful is the ERA African Languages Series?

Heinemann did not think the series had really been successful. ABET and literacy programmes focus on English literacy. NGOs focus more on African languages but are under-funded. State night schools are also under-funded, therefore publishers have had to cover costs by concentrating on English literacy materials. Printing costs were subsidised by ERA, but the books have not sold. There are not many literacy programmes that could afford the ERA books.

Juta perceived The ERA Initiative to be an NGO set up by the white left in the 1980s that campaigned to assist in the development of ABET materials and which had an editorial quality control function. It provided a subsidy for development and distribution of readers and this made it possible to produce books for a market sector which is not commercially profitable. The African Languages Series was successful, because they were books which appealed to adult interests.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman felt that ERA's African Languages Series had achieved its objectives. African language books reached the market, though they were not sure if it increased interest in reading in African languages. It was a publicity exercise really. It was a short-term project and needs some follow up with buyers. More books, produced as cheaply as possible, were needed. The Series needs sustaining. Perhaps the private sector could be induced to help with publishing subsidies for further titles for ABET.

Stimela/Collegium thought the series was very popular. Distribution ideas had been original and there was innovative marketing. The series gave ABET a boost. Interesting material made them successful.

What are the plus factors and impeding factors regarding sales of the Series?

Heinemann thought that though the stories were interesting to adults they don't buy them. The Pan South African Language Board could develop ABET in African languages by subsidising the costs of books to reading clubs.

Juta saw the plus factor as the choice of the right kind of materials. But people cannot afford to buy books, even cheap ones, and they do not prioritise them in their budgets.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman said there was no book buying culture. Books were not bought even when they are interesting.

Stimela/Collegium said there was little buying power and there were distribution problems. Broadening of access is needed. They saw the ERA Book Spazas as a success.

What strategies can be employed to promote reading of books in African languages?

Heinemann said initial mother tongue literacy needs promoting in the political realm. Adult learner weeks were needed and key political figures need to support such campaigns. ABET education needs to be made part of mainstream education.

Juta believed that books should be published that stimulate adults' interests and people should be given easy access to them.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman said media campaigns and competitions need to stimulate public interest. Reading needs to be popularised, so it is not seen as something only for the intellectually gifted, and a reading culture developed. African language books need more exposure and to be sold at attractive prices (e.g. R10).

Stimela/Collegium said there should be weekend TV programmes on ABET, with book reviews. Newspapers should print extracts from stories in African languages.

Witwatersrand University Press believed that there was a need to encourage a reading culture and to promote literacy.

What strategies can be employed to promote sales?

Heinemann said that more popular outlets, for example, train stations, bus depots, etc. should be used and prices should be kept low.

Juta said that skilful marketing rather than 'sentimental' marketing was needed. ABET needs to become business based, as the NGO sector is not motivated enough.

Kagiso/ Maskew Miller Longman said that large print runs were needed. Purchases should be stimulated by promotional visits to schools and the use of promotional copies. Materials should be serialised in the mass media.

Stimela/Collegium said that publishers should use direct approaches to individuals, institutions and Human Resource departments. Direct marketing could be tried and TV celebrities should be used to promote books and reading.

Witwatersrand University Press argued that, as in other parts of Africa, cheap books should be offered for sale in all public places.

Librarians' views

A rapid telephonic survey of nine libraries in the Gauteng area revealed that there was little demand for books in African languages and not much was being done to reverse the status quo. Librarian's responses also reflect unsystematic record keeping with regard to book stock and books issued to the public. This is a pity, because they are well placed for indicating reading trends in African languages.

The librarians interviewed were asked for:

- The number of books in stock in African languages
- The frequency with which African language books had been issued in the months of November and December 1998
- Their assessment of the demand for books in African languages
- Whether the library had embarked on any reading awareness campaigns which focus on African languages
- Whether they had heard about the ERA African Languages Series and whether they had any of these Series titles in stock.

Whilst, as already indicated above, accurate records and statistical information from these libraries left much to be desired, a general impression can be drawn from this survey, except in the case of the question about actual ERA African Languages Series titles in stock. Though all except the Daveyton Library claimed to be aware of the Series, with several of the answers it was hard to determine whether the respondents were talking about books from the Series, any ERA books, any books in African languages, or any books suitable for new readers or ABET.

Number of books in stock in African Languages	
<i>Library</i>	<i>African languages books in stock</i>
Alexandra	1000. Bought more books during 1997 than in 1998 as funds are more restricted now
Chiawelo	500
Daveyton	1600 (not computerised)
Edenvale	547
Hillbrow	Very small, no figures
Johannesburg Public	15000 in reference. Many in lending, but no figures
Mafolo	500
Orlando	2507
Phiri	4000 (?)

Frequency of African language books issued in November-December 1998	
<i>Library</i>	<i>African language books issued</i>
Alexandra	4000
Chiawelo	200
Daveyton	63
Edenvale	81 (0.1% of total issue)
Hillbrow	50
Johannesburg public	894 (Zulu: 370; Xhosa: 159; Venda: 137; Tsonga: 55; Pedi: 48; Tswana: 47; S. Sotho: 39; Swati: 37; Ndebele: 2)
Mafolo	100
Orlando	102
Phiri	60

Librarians' perceptions of the demand for books in African languages	
<i>Library</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Alexandra	Young adults and students
Chiawelo	Growing numbers of older adults - many doing ABET studies
Daveyton	Adults doing literacy courses, and the unemployed
Edenvale	Mainly adults; newly literate in mother-tongue or studying literacy courses
Hillbrow	Adults, 22 years and older, mainly in Venda and Xhosa
Johannesburg Public	Adults with little English; often newly literate
Mafolo	Adults looking for certain stories, i.e., stories that are not for children
Orlando	Adults who are mother tongue literate
Phiri	Adults - mainly looking for Zulu books

Reading awareness campaigns which focus on African languages	
<i>Library</i>	<i>Details</i>
Alexandra	January 1998 with good response from community and schools
Chiawelo	March 1998 which led to an increased rate of borrowing
Daveyton	None – a newly established library
Edenvale	None
Hillbrow	None
Johannesburg Public	None specifically for African languages
Mafolo	Library week in June 1998 led to increased interest from teenagers and adults
Orlando	None
Phiri	None

ERA African Languages Series in stock	
<i>Library</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Alexandra	A few in Zulu. They would like more but there are financial restraints.
Chiawelo	Mainly Zulu, Xhosa and Venda. A few in Venda and Tsonga, but they are not all ABET books.
Daveyton	They had not heard about the ERA African Languages Series and did not know if there were any ERA books in stock. They had books in Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Swati, Tsonga, Venda, and Ndebele. Most books are in Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho.
Edenvale	ERA books had been sent by the provincial library services but they did not know which languages were in stock. The demand was very small.
Hillbrow	Though they claimed to know of the Series they only had ERA English titles in stock.
Johannesburg Public	They were not sure if they had any in stock, though they thought it was probable. They did have books from various publishers in Pedi, S. Sotho, Swazi, Ndebele, Tsonga, Tswana, Zulu, Xhosa and Venda.
Mafolo	They had titles in Zulu, Tswana, Tsonga, Ndebele, Swati, and Pedi. They bought some every month.
Orlando	They had a few titles in Zulu, Xhosa and S. Sotho and many in English. They were trying to build the collection monthly.
Phiri	They had books in Zulu and Xhosa and they were trying to buy more for ABET learners.

Conclusions

If any conclusion can be drawn from this study it is that there is a need for regular and reliable quantitative research on readership and the availability of easy reading materials. The success (or failure) of the African Languages Series is hard to determine in the context where the print runs of the Series are so small and the marketing of the texts less than adequate. It is this context that is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 14

The ERA African Languages Series in context

Introduction

The ERA (Easy Reading for Adults) Initiative was set up in 1989 to build a reading environment by supporting the publication and distribution of easy materials for adults. Over the years ERA has been involved in the campaign against adult illiteracy and has been one of the few organisations promoting reading within and outside of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) advocacy. With less than minimal staff support and huge financial constraints, ERA has been able to undertake bold steps in providing and creating a healthy environment for the production and distribution of good quality, easy to read materials for adults. One of these bold steps was a programme to provide reading materials for adults in ten African languages.

The history of ABET provision reveals that there has been a concentration on programmes and materials in English. Very little or no attempt at all was made to provide learning from an African language base. The reasons for this are easy to understand. Part of it has to do with the inadequate understanding well-intentioned providers had of language matters. Though their efforts were courageous, their agenda did not often extend to discussing “language policy” for ABET provision. The other factor had to do with the learners themselves. English, being the language of power, influence and perceived status, was seen by the learners as providing quick access to the world of employment. Thus, both the providers and the learners did not see fit to open up the language debate.

However, it has to be understood that there were no attempts by the previous regime to provide a usable framework and support for literacy or ABET. Being a “Black” problem, the National Party government did not provide funding, training or incentives for the broader provision of adult literacy and basic education. Where the state provided such (as in the Department of Education and Training adult schools and funding for specific non-governmental organisations) there were ulterior political motives. In brief, ABET was not seen as a serious state responsibility. Most NGOs that undertook to fight adult illiteracy volunteered their time and energy in this endeavour. With little success in accessing state funds, they relied heavily on international donor money. Therefore, another set of factors which diminished broadening the language base for ABET, was resources, the lack of adequate staff, and little or no state support.

Trade unions themselves were in no better position. Seen as a state enemy and foe to the economy, their focus was the broader platform of political action for change and discussion of the language base for ABET and ABET in general was far down on

their priority list. Though some trade unions encouraged ABET provision, they were under tremendous pressure to concentrate on “bigger issues” than the language debate on ABET. Education institutions themselves did not offer ABET as a key area for training and research. Where such training existed it was often inadequate and uncertificated. Those institutions which provided training and encouraged or provided space for research in ABET did it out of political conscience with little or no visible institutional support. In fact, ABET was not on the national agenda.

The new government coming to power in 1994 brought about certain changes. One of these was the drastic reduction of direct donations from international funding agencies to literacy and ABET NGOs. This was partly because donors now channelled monies through the new government and partly because attention moved from South Africa to elsewhere in the world. With the “solution” to the South African problem, priority funding went to Eastern Europe and other parts of Africa. South Africa, it was perceived, was now in a position to deal with its own problems. The drying up of international funds resulted in the closure and trimming down of operations of a number of ABET NGOs. This can be viewed as both good and bad. One of the consequences of these closures was that this separated charlatans from serious NGO providers and also allowed for a healthier environment within which to reconfigure ABET provision and create mechanisms for state support.

African languages and ABET

In order to understand the issues faced by ABET providers and materials producers in African languages we have to locate this problem beyond the immediate confines of ABET. German learners learn via the medium of German, Japanese learners in Japanese and English learners in English. In South Africa, and indeed in most parts of Africa, there is an anomaly. Black learners are forced to learn via the medium of a language foreign to them. Historically, and even today, the education system is biased towards English. Even though there are campaigns by the education authorities, such as the language-in-education policy, to redress the language imbalance, the reality on the ground has not changed.

Adults, and mainly Black adults, in South Africa face the same problem. For a variety of reasons, like having been denied educational opportunities in their childhood years, they are forced to function in a language they do not understand. Business functions in English and so does government. Training offered on site to workers is conducted mainly in English. This is clearly a problem. ABET can be seen as a way to change this. By providing sensible instruction in a language workers can understand it will become easier for workers to function productively in the work environment. However, the business sector does not readily accept this solution, pressed as it is by the immediate concerns for profit. The ultimate result for on site training is that workers continue to come out of the training with less than sufficient grasp of the outcomes of the training.

Unfortunately, we are not yet in a situation where business can be sympathetic to the plight of the uneducated adult. According to statistics in the national Department of Education’s *A National Multi-Year implementation plan for Adult Education and*

Training: Provision and Accreditation (1997, p. 84) there is 27% functional illiteracy amongst adults in South Africa. In further breaking down such statistics, the worst hit population groups are those categorised as “smaller language communities” (sometimes referred to as marginalised languages). These are mainly found in the Northern Province, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. Also, from a variety of sources, it is clear that less than a quarter of the South African population can function through English.

With the above realities, it is almost impossible to achieve desired education levels above ABET sub-levels 1 and 2 if the learners have no literacy skills in their own languages. The best way to provide literacy, at least marginally at sub-levels 1 and 2, is through the language of the learner. Evidence abounds that most successful economies recognise the importance of education in the language of the learner. Yet literacy in the language of most South African learners does not enable the learner to function within the desired expectation of business, if the insistence on English acquisition is persisted with.

Most ABET providers, and indeed business and government, are prepared to fund ABET programmes in the mother tongue up to ABET sub-level 2. Beyond that, the expectation is that the learner should be able to function in rudimentary English. That is not realistic. Unless learners are enabled to function with a more substantial degree of literacy at sub-level 4, desired productivity levels cannot be achieved.

African languages can add value to the economy only if there are proper development plans driven by the state. At present, other than the official status accorded them, there are no development plans for African languages. African languages cannot add value unless programmes are set and strategies are defined.

Language debates and The ERA Initiative

The last few years before the post-apartheid government came into being saw a lot of interest in the language situation in South Africa. Various organisations became interested in understanding the language situation and in shaping the language policy for the country. This culminated in the “**Languages for All**” Conference organised by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in 1995. Part of this debate was to discuss issues related to ABET. African languages featured prominently, with discussion around greater linguistic and language acquisition by learners on the one hand and the responsibility of the state, business and the providers on the other hand.

Not directly as a response to this, but surely influenced by these changes, ERA initiated a campaign to enable the provision and distribution of materials for adults in African languages. This ambitious project, the first on such a scale in this country, would provide quality materials for adults in a variety of African languages. Previously, most of the few materials available for adults in African languages were translations from English. This project became a vehicle for producing original materials in ten African languages. Though commercial publishers had recently become interested in producing ABET materials, hardly any attempt at all was made

to produce these in African languages. As Saul Molobi, Publishing Director at Heinemann and member of the ERA Advisory Committee, notes, the African Languages Series project “was to prove to commercial publishers, once and for all, whether there was a market for ABET materials in African languages or not”.

During 1995 and 1996 ERA undertook to assist in the production of 40 easy readers in 10 African languages in each of the four ABET sub-levels. Funding was obtained from the Kagiso Trust and publishers were approached to put in tenders to produce the easy readers. The publishers whose tenders were successful were:

Publisher	Languages
Heinemann	Sotho and Tsonga
Juta	Xhosa
Via Afrika (operating as Collegium using the Stimela imprint) and Viva Books	Afrikaans, Ndebele and Venda
Kagiso (recently taken over by Maskew Miller Longman)	Swati, Tswana, Pedi and Zulu

The publishers agreed upon a deadline of 6 September 1996 for delivery.

The funding raised by ERA was intended to subsidise the production costs of the publishers. ERA preferred that the writing and development of these materials be done jointly by the publishers and an active NGO in ABET. ERA envisioned the following outcomes:

- Adults learning to read and write would at least, or at last, have some materials in their own language.
- Royalties to ERA from the sale of these materials would demonstrate to funding agencies that ERA was making efforts at raising funds independently.
- Books would reach their target readers more efficiently through publishers’ distribution outlets than through ERA.
- Participating publishers would furnish ERA with useful market information on the sales of the books and the efficacy of the project.
- The project could therefore be used as a starting point and model for further innovative, developmental publishing projects in a variety of sectors.

There are a few things we can deduce from the initiation of this project. Firstly, it showed that commercial educational publishers were not prepared to invest in ABET materials and specifically, ABET materials in African languages. Secondly, publishers had not undertaken market research in order to understand the nature of the market and its potential. Thirdly, it is a sad indictment against commercial publishers that the production of such materials could only be undertaken once an independent production subsidy was available.

It is also important to realise that ABET, in market terms, is fragmented. There are no coordinated systems for ABET either emanating from providers or driven by the

state. There is also a continuing divide between education and training, in spite of policy statements about the need for their synergy and integration in Curriculum 2005 and the National Qualifications Framework. How one creates that synergy needs to be worked through among and by the stakeholders.

Post-publication

The next exercise was “what do we do with these books now?” As per agreement, ERA had provided funding for the production of these materials. The marketing, selling and storing of these materials would be done by each publisher. ERA could be approached for advice, but otherwise the responsibility lay with the publishers. Again, this was to test the seriousness of commercial publishers. Two years after these materials were published only slow progress has been made with regard to marketing and sales. As Beulah Thumbadoo of ERA notes, “this might be an indication that some publishers became involved in the project purely because of the subsidy or to be seen to be doing something progressive and not because they were committed to a development agenda”.

There was a lack of progress in both selling the existing materials and in gaining access to new avenues for the further development of such materials and increasing the production of such materials. Both publishers and ERA testify to the low sales of these books as contrasted to the enthusiasm about them and the quality and level of these books. People who have been shown these books suggest that they are good and the correct materials for adults. Unlike in the past where adults were made to use materials originally developed for children, these materials spoke to adults at the pitch and language specifically designed for them. Books reflect topical issues, public personalities, national figures and imaginative stories in the realm of the adult world. Indeed, this was what adults should read. But why are they not selling and used?

In trying to find answers to these and other questions, Dumisani Ntshangase, of Juta Educational Publishers, undertook to talk to all stakeholders, those who were involved with this project and those who were not. He spoke to publishers who were involved (at Heinemann, Juta, Kagiso, Via Afrika, and Viva). He also spoke to officials of the Gauteng Department of Education, COSATU, and the Department of Labour, as well as to the contracted ERA researcher and the person who ran the ERA Book Spaza at Park Station.

From the interviews with the publishers, it was clear that all of them welcomed the opportunity to develop such materials. This provided them with a real opportunity to start such an African language list and to test the waters, so to put it. Kagiso Publishers had been the only active sellers of these materials. Kobus Prinsloo of Kagiso suggests that ABET has a great potential but it is too slow to get off the mark. He said that the Northern Province has been the only province that has bought ABET materials in significant quantities (a trend confirmed by Saul Molobi of Heinemann). Why the Northern Province seemed to be the one province which is seen by publishers as having been active in requesting ABET materials in 1996 and 1997 is unclear. There are other provinces which have been ordering and buying materials

such as the Northwest and the Eastern Cape. Gauteng was singled out as the least interested.

Publisher employees interviewed made clear that there was little marketing support for ABET within the companies. Most of the publishers spoken to expressed their frustration with the inability and probably the lack of interest from their companies to provide sufficient marketing support for ABET. There is a lack of infrastructure in ABET and with no special marketing, there is very little success in turning things round in the sale of ABET materials. Though some publishers, such as Via Afrika (now working as Collegium) and Heinemann have special marketing and publishing organs for ABET, other publishers (often of excellent materials) have not. Viva books, for example, noted the lack of proper systems for provinces to call on materials, supply the materials and release information. Juta, (which according to recent surveys like the *Learning and Support Materials Audit* (ERA Initiative, 1998), contributes about 45% of the published ABET materials and about 14% of supplementary ABET materials, does not have dedicated marketing support. This lack of support from the organisation clearly weakens the ability of these and other materials from other companies reaching the user. The commitment of publishers to the marketing of ABET materials, and primarily those in African languages, lies in question. Unless commercial publishers reflect keen interest in ABET as a viable business operation, appropriate marketing strategies will not evolve.

David Diale of the Gauteng Department of Education stated that the Department had done little for ABET and even less for African languages in ABET. A reason why the department had not set up specific programmes for African languages in ABET was because of a lack of resources, with virtually all of the financial resources being spent on salaries. This seems to indicate a massive failure to engage in either rational budgeting or the control of how expenditure is aligned to the budget. It seemed as if the Department is incapacitated and that no one is driving the process. Though Diale referred to the new constitution and the language-in-education policy, it needs to be noted that in neither document is there a clear direction on the role of African languages in ABET.

Trade unions have a clear role to play. It is they who are supposed to provide support to ABET providers, if not in keeping ABET as part of their national programme, at least in a more visible advocacy role. Though the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has a policy discussion document on African languages, there are no specific trade union attempts to harness the role of African languages in ABET. Carmel Marock confirmed that “COSATU does not have a special policy on African languages”. Trade union support would beef up the efforts and the campaigns by providers and make both business and government more responsive. Independent providers on their own cannot expect to have a solid voice. Trade unions can provide the much-needed legitimacy to the call.

Another point to note is that when ERA undertook this project, it became clear that most publishers would be interested in the “big” African languages, Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Tswana and Pedi. Languages such as Swati, Ndebele, Venda and Afrikaans would have been bottom of the list. ERA made it possible for companies to provide materials even for the smaller languages. By combining big and small languages in

their tender system and offering a larger subsidy for smaller languages, they enabled these languages to be catered for. As Andre Gouws of Collegium notes, “we could not undertake to publish for small languages, even in the next foreseeable years”.

Some general observations

It is clear that ABET needs a lot of attention. The first real need is visible provincial support. Without the provinces buying materials there cannot be any increase in the development of ABET materials in African languages. One of the ways to make provinces responsive to this crisis is to create a lobby group with all stakeholders. Another observation is that the providers themselves are so scattered and the direction of ABET does not seem to take them along a similar route. ABET providers, materials developers and all affected and interested parties need to be grouped in order for them to create a reasonable voice. It may be possible that the Publishers’ Association of South Africa ABET interest group may be such a forum but it needs to be expanded in order to accommodate non-publishing interests.

It is obvious as well that without the state or key funders coming on board and making specific undertakings or conditions, the publication of ABET materials in African languages generally and specifically in smaller African languages cannot happen. All publishers are interested in English and the big African languages. There is no way publishers can publish for smaller languages. Therefore, unless the state and funders demand this it will not happen. The way in which ERA handled the African Languages Series project is a positive lesson on one way in which progress can be made.

Another striking observation was made by Saul Molobi of Heinemann who says publishers see ABET as a social responsibility programme rather than as serious publishing. This is indeed true, but it is not up to the shareholders to realise that ABET can be profitable but rather up to the people working on these materials to show that ABET can be profitable in order to cause shareholders to be convinced. Commissioning editors, ABET providers and the state need to take ABET seriously.

Big companies and industries themselves have to take responsibility. Unless they are convinced that ABET can lead to a more effective workforce, ABET materials will go nowhere. Companies can fund programmes and buy programmes for their workers but unless this adds value to the business and the industry, it is not likely to be seen as anything else but social responsibility. ABET should move from the NGO terrain to a business terrain. Moves such as the ones taken by Heinemann and Via Afrika / Collegium are attempts to make this a more serious business operation. There is space for NGOs and it is vital that they continue rendering this much needed service. However, ABET cannot continue to be an NGO agenda item only.

Add to this the clear ineptitude of the provincial departments of education and the lack of vision of big business in the purchasing materials for ABET and we have a dismal market for readers. We can safely say that there are materials for ABET in African languages, even if far from enough, but there certainly is a paralysis in further development of such materials, distribution and purchasing. Unless both

producers of these materials, ABET providers, business and government sort out the future of ABET and provide workable structures, such materials would go to waste, and that would be a great pity.

Possible solutions

When the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane, organised the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG), in its final report there were specific and bold recommendations made regarding ABET (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, 1996). Part of the recommendations looked at the specific role African languages can play in ABET and the general culture of learning. To provide support for multilingualism African languages should be enabled to play a significant role in ABET. These and other recommendations were to be discussed with the Department of Education together with a variety of stakeholders. As to what happened to the recommendations of LANGTAG after that, it is anyone's guess.

Currently there is a move to revisit the terms of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) and it is hoped that after this process PANSALB will begin to play a prominent role in ABET, in addition to other areas of operation.

These two initiatives are mentioned because on the one hand there is a clear indication on the side of government that the political will is there. What is missing is proper planning, enabling structures, coordination across departments, implementation and sensible management of ABET issues. There is hope that these issues would once again come to the fore and receive due attention.

ABET needs a strong non-sectorial lobby group. It is not enough that NGOs continue to make a noise about ABET. ABET is not the sole terrain of NGOs. A lobby group should involve all stakeholders and interested parties. In addition to providers and producers of materials, ABET needs the support of the media. Both television, radio and newspapers can play an active role in ABET. The current ABET programme on SABC, **Mochochonono** is welcome but again it further perpetuates the stereotype that English is the only medium for ABET. There is no provision for African languages in these programmes, except in passing and in snippets. Such noble initiatives should support a variety of issues and development in ABET and that certainly includes African languages. Community radio stations have expressed willingness to partake in attempts to promote ABET and specifically non-English-based programmes. This willingness should be harnessed as soon as possible.

ABET should not be seen as social responsibility but should be taken as serious business. More and more commercial publishers should be encouraged to be involved in ABET materials. However, commercial publishers, like all business, do not rely on philanthropy to survive. There must be reasonable chances for them either to recoup their expenditure on these materials or to make a reasonable profit. Unless ABET becomes profitable it would not make sense for commercial publishers to undertake to produce ABET materials, primarily in African languages. It is worth reiterating that the fragmentation of ABET, in pure market terms, is a hindrance. Publishing in South Africa responds to markets rather than creates markets. Given

the size of the South African book market it is not worth the risk to venture into the unknown. However, if the state and ABET providers were to create an environment where ABET can be a tangible market and place systems through which ABET can be further developed, more attention would be given to it.

Publishing ABET materials in African languages should be done carefully. While it is justifiable to publish these materials in all the African languages, emotional support for this is not enough. Common sense suggests that unless there are funds to supplement the production of these materials in all African languages, commercial companies should indeed start with the big African languages, that is, Zulu, Sotho, Pedi, Tswana and Xhosa. The small languages, Venda, Tsonga, Swati, Ndebele and Afrikaans could come later. Afrikaans is a dilemma because more than 90% of potential users are in the Western Cape and the size of that market is very small, it might not require such urgent attention, unless there are incentives to do so.

The issue of support is very important because unless the state creates an enabling environment for the development of smaller languages, there is no way that business can respond to them. One recommendation may be that the state, business and donors provide funds as incentives to publish ABET materials in the smaller African languages. These funds could be directed towards subsidising production and materials development costs as well as bulk buying. The use of these materials should be carefully monitored and it must be ensured that they reach the end-user and those alongside the end-user – children, siblings, family, friends and community.

Once such a support system is set, it will over time create a positive environment within which the subsidy and the sponsorship for these programmes can be slowly reduced. This will ensure that these communities will create a market driven culture which will be self-sustaining. However, it is an undisputable fact that the state, business and donors should intervene on behalf of primarily small African languages. These also include the Khoi, Nama and San communities as well as the Makua community (sometimes known as the Zanzibari) in Chatsworth, Durban.

It is an easier and cheaper option for publishers to develop materials in English and then translate to African languages. This can, and does, apply to both language instruction books and reading materials. While there are justifiable financial reasons to do so, it does not solve the problem. Most ABET materials which are translated from English to African languages are simply an insult to the users. The language is not suitable, the concepts not well adapted and the stories too convoluted. The implication is even more serious. It presents an assumption that there are no good stories from an African language, that Black people have no stories to tell. This is simply not acceptable. There is nothing better than original stories. Translations are fine, as long as they do not become the norm. The same goes for adaptations of English stories, written by both Black and White writers. There is a good deal of adaptations and some of them pretty good. However, adaptations themselves should also not become the norm.

A final conclusion that can be made is that more needs to be done to ascertain the value African languages can add to ABET and to business and the economy. Presently, there is anecdotal evidence. However, this needs to be quantified.

Thorough studies need to be conducted to analyse the role African languages can play in economic development (see some of the existing Language Planning Reports produced by the Department of Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology such as Bianco (1996) and Strauss *et al* (1996) as well as important Australian and Indian studies). But unless such research is authoritative, it will not be taken seriously and can always be dismissed. It is simply not enough to rave about the value African languages can add to the economy. Unless concrete evidence is supplied these calls will be in vain. As far as is known there is not a single South African study that has been able to provide substantial evidence on the relationship between language and the economy. While this relationship is indisputable, it has to be backed up by facts and figures. ABET should become one area of such an investigation. People will not be convinced of the importance of African languages to the economy unless we can point this out with a degree of confidence and reliability.

References

Bianco, J.L. 1996. *Language as an economic resource*. Language Planning Report, No. 5.1, 1996. Pretoria: Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. 1996. *Towards a national language plan for South Africa*. Final report of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG). Pretoria: Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

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Part 6

Conclusions

Chapter

15 *Making sense of the investigation: reflections from the team*

Chapter 15

Making sense of the investigation: reflections from the team

An adequate supply of texts for adults to read, use and enjoy has generally been regarded as the hallmark of any serious effort to promote adult literacy. As far back as the 1930s, efforts were made in South Africa to produce reading matter that would encourage adults to read and benefit from published text. Over the last decade a number of focussed efforts have been made to foster the production, publication and dissemination of easy texts of various kinds for adult learners, new readers and others. These efforts have included advocacy and facilitation, concentrated development, marketing, training, and the creation of portable libraries. The efforts have undoubtedly left South Africa with an unusually rich resource of books, booklets, stories, popular education newspapers, guides and collections.

But what are the results of the efforts? This investigation set out to throw light on the matter: What is happening to the texts that have been produced? How are they being used? The questions needed to be set against the broader contexts of adult education and publishing in South Africa. Guided by an opening conference of interested stakeholders and specialists, a number of approaches were adopted to understanding the usage of easy reading for adults.

Short reviews of the general context were commissioned. A stall on the concourse of Johannesburg's Park Station was used as a laboratory for gathering the opinions and preferences of actual browsers and buyers. A sample of easy readers was tracked through publishers, booksellers and libraries, with a special focus being given to African language readers. Reports were obtained from reading circles in library centres. A small number of titles was followed more closely. Previous buyers of the portable ERA Book Box libraries were asked where the books were now, and how the resource had been put to use. And the winning adult literacy organisations and centres in a national competition for the best adult literacy providers were approached and asked whether they used easy texts for adults, and if so, how.

The inquiry faced many obstacles, from the frustrations of making contact with users, thin records of many agencies, the disintegration of a number of literacy agencies, the reluctance of publishers to make their records available, and the difficulty at certain stages of finding experienced researchers, given the limited time and resources of the programme. Nonetheless the investigation has produced interesting data, and has confirmed a range of suspicions about the situation.

Various interesting details are provided in this report: the highly individual views of actual buyers of materials, the preferences of public library buyers and users, the sometimes curiously contradictory views of publishers about the subject. Much of the interest of the report will lie in the detail of preferred titles and their reception. The

trend seems to be against fiction, but for biography – especially of a political or nation-building nature – and for texts which promise some self-improvement (a trend supported by other national media research). On the whole the texts come off creditably. There is a pleasing lack of emphasis on perceptions that the texts available are dull, culturally inappropriate, patronising, insultingly “cheap”, or excessively didactic – all common criticisms directed at bridge literature produced by literacy programmes.

But the broader observations are less sanguine. Compared with the virtual desert of quality easy adult texts ten years ago, there is now a full and fine crop, a number of experienced small institutions and many more individuals dedicated to the mission. But, sadly, the crop is scarcely being consumed. Numbers of books purchased by major users are relatively small, numbers actually used (for teaching, or borrowing) seem to be even smaller, and numbers actually purchased by ordinary people virtually non-existent. Reasons for this emerge from all parts of the investigation.

Many factors have worked against the uptake of the easy adult reading innovations and resources produced over the last decade. There are the pervasive influences of poverty, the demands of basic survival and the felt need for extremely functional forms of education. Many aspects of current policy and practice are working against the effective dissemination and use of easy texts for adults. The browsers and buyers at the bookstall make it clear that even pricing well below cost does not lead to “affordability”. Decline and crisis in adult basic education, especially in the non-government sector, impact negatively on the purchase and use of easy texts for adults. In addition, government centres – in spite of good intentions and plans – often do not have basic course material and have neither a tradition of using a range of texts nor the budgets for buying them. The relatively flourishing provision in industry focuses on linkages to training and makes scant use of reading matter.

Meanwhile, a financial crisis of considerable depth in South African educational publishing has cut virtually all capacity to indulge in marginal ventures like easy reading for adults even after being enticed into the field by subsidies. Potentially fruitful national interventions which would have supported this venture have been decidedly disappointing: the Book Development Council failed to take off, and the Pan South African Language Board has not proved itself in action. Furthermore, the highly questionable matter of the price of paper in South Africa turns almost any text other than newspapers and magazines full of advertisements into luxuries. And the virtual monopoly in book selling in South Africa continues to act as a gatekeeper against developmental and indigenous approaches to texts that do not have an assured commercial market – in spite of numbers of appeals to its better nature.

Perhaps the most troubling observation, picked up a number of times in the investigation, is the assumed demands of the national qualifications framework (NQF), the move to “critical outcomes” and a linkage to “competence” rather than academic learning – all formalised in the influence of examinations in adult basic education. This appears to have reinforced a tendency to work through workbooks or examination guides and to leave no time in most practitioners’ programmes for the general development of reading.

The neglect of general reading in the name of narrower skills actually goes against the whole thrust and intent of the national qualifications framework, outcomes-based education, and new assessment systems. A rich engagement in reading and the access to knowledge and skills which it facilitates should be encouraged when education and training practitioners come to realise the deeper demands of new policy. The National Skills Act is certainly going to stimulate greater investments in education and training in industry. Plans for adult education could bear fruit and lead to greater demand for easy texts for adults. There will inevitably be a hiatus before this happens. The investigation therefore closes by arguing for maintenance of the capacity developed in the various adult reader programmes, and for immediate extension of propaganda against the folly of neglecting reading at all levels of education and training.

Part 7

Appendixes

- 1 *The ERA African Languages Series*
- 2 *An annotated select reading list*

Appendix 1

The ERA African Languages Series

<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Language</i>
Rirhandzu na mali	Heinemann	Tsonga
Ha heloo!	Heinemann	Tsonga
I vukati muni?	Heinemann	Tsonga
Mali ya mudende	Heinemann	Tsonga
Bathetsi	Heinemann	Sotho
Boikemisetso	Heinemann	Sotho
Lekgoba la maikutlo	Heinemann	Sotho
Boiphethetso bo monate	Heinemann	Sotho
Ikamva lelethu	Juta	Xhosa
Amayeza amandulo nawanamhla	Juta	Xhosa
Danisela udumo	Juta	Xhosa
Sizuza lukhulu ngamabali	Juta	Xhosa
Doctor (Khumalo)	Viva/ Via Afrika	Venda
Vho-Thathani na Ramalata	Viva/ Via Afrika	Venda
Mudzimu u fhira vhaloi	Viva/ Via Afrika	Venda
Mulovha na Namusi	Viva/ Via Afrika	Venda
UMtshurhwana webukhosini	Viva/ Via Afrika	Ndebele
UNothembi	Viva/ Via Afrika	Ndebele
Asikhulumisane	Viva/ Via Afrika	Ndebele
UNomrhaso	Viva/ Via Afrika	Ndebele
Paul Adams	Viva/ Via Afrika	Afrikaans
Lang pad na die hart	Viva/ Via Afrika	Afrikaans
Die Home Girls van Hartveld	Viva/ Via Afrika	Afrikaans
Die Ysterman	Viva/ Via Afrika	Afrikaans
Lengwalo la Mahlodi	Kagiso	Pedi
Manto	Kagiso	Pedi
Dikeledi	Kagiso	Pedi
Mmatswale	Kagiso	Pedi
Kutlwano	Kagiso	Tswana
“Tsoga”	Kagiso	Tswana
Bodila	Kagiso	Tswana
Go jela botlhoko teng	Kagiso	Tswana
Luhambo lwagogo Motsa	Kagiso	Swati
Sibangani	Kagiso	Swati
Inkhukhu yababe	Kagiso	Swati
Emlindzelweni	Kagiso	Swati
Ugogo ushintsha umnqondo	Kagiso	Zulu
Epulazini	Kagiso	Zulu
Imfundo ephakeme	Kagiso	Zulu
Imihlangano	Kagiso	Zulu

Appendix 2

An annotated select reading list

The following are a selection from the number of books, journal articles and unpublished reports and theses that were consulted during the research. Annotations include abstracts and reviews provided by some of the resource databases such as ERIC.

Abadzi, H. 1994. *What We Know about Acquisition of Adult Literacy. Is There Hope?* Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Literacy education experience shows that literacy is not easily disseminated to adults and that the skills of newly literate people are notable. Dropout, mastery, and retention rates are about 50 percent at each stage, so the effectiveness rate of some projects may only be 12-15 percent. To find causes for the low effectiveness of literacy programmes and possible methodological improvements that can increase the effectiveness, two literature reviews were conducted on the topic of literacy in general and on cognitive correlates of age and performance. Some of the findings were as follows: (1) illiterate adults face a combination of social, motivational, instructional, and cognitive obstacles that have not yet been researched adequately; (2) smaller-scale programmes are more likely to be successful than larger programmes; (3) adults can acquire basic literacy at any age, but functional literacy may become increasingly difficult to acquire with age; (4) if it is indeed harder for adults to acquire functional literacy, large programmes should target out-of-school children and adolescents; and (5) methodological improvements can increase the effectiveness of literacy programmes. The following improvements were recommended: increasing motivation, positive reinforcement early in the process, discussion of expectations with adults, development of in-class groups of different performance levels, application of reading and writing in context, increasing awareness of phonology, investment in teacher training, and division of tasks into manageable units. Contains 176 references.

Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO. 1993. Planning meeting on Asian/Pacific Joint Production Programme of Materials for Neo-Literates in Rural Areas. Report. Tokyo, Japan:

Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO.

This publication provides the final report of a planning meeting to discuss literacy programmes of the Asia/Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO (ACCU) to be carried out under regional cooperation and other materials from the meeting. The final report describes the purpose of the meeting and summarizes these presentations: opening addresses, reports, presentation and evaluation of newly produced Asian/Pacific Joint Production (AJP) Program of Materials for Neo-Literates in Rural Areas materials, suggestions for improvements and adoption of new draft AJP materials, draft plans for personnel training programmes, other programmes, future plans of ACCU's literacy programmes, and closing addresses. An appendix contains the text of these presentations: "Learning Society: A Myth or a Reality" (Sakya); "ACCU's Regional Cooperative Literacy Programs in Asia and the Pacific: Literacy Materials Development and Personnel Training" (Miyamoto); "Bhutan" (country report by Wangdi); "Thailand" (country report by Kaewsaiha); "Vietnam" (country report by Thang); New Drafts for AJP Materials; Draft Plan of 11th Regional Workshop on the Preparation of Literacy Follow-up Materials in Rural Areas; Draft Plan on the Ninth Sending of an International Mobile Team of Experts on Neo-Literate Materials to the National Workshop in Bhutan; Draft Plan on the Second Sub-Regional Workshop on the Development of Basic Literacy Reading Materials for Adults in Asia and the Pacific; and Draft Prospectus of 1993 Dissemination Scheme of National Versions of AJP Materials; Draft Prospectus of Fourth ACCU Prizes for Fully Illustrated Literacy Follow-up Materials. Appendixes include the schedule, list of participants, agenda, general information, and opening speeches by Sakya and Misumi.

Bloem, P.L. and Padak, N.D. 1996. *Picture books, young adult books, and adult literacy learners. Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 40 No 1, September 1996, pp. 48-53.

Answers teachers' questions about using children's literature and young adult literature with adult students. Offers suggestions for using these books in the classrooms, and for selecting such books. Offers a list of 24 picture books and young adult books useful for adult learners.

Bhola, H.S. 1989. *Reading materials for post-literacy: the development and testing of a model of social writing. International Review of Education*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 463-478.

Describes a model of social writing, for use in writing socially relevant, easy-to-read books for new adult readers, which incorporates expressive, cognitive, and social aspects. Elaborates the process from topic selection through manuscript printing, compares the model to other types, and touches upon its transfer to other settings and other types of educational materials.

Bloem, P.L. 1995. *Bringing books to adult literacy classrooms. Research to practice*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University, Ohio Literacy Resource Center.

This publication attempts to answer some common questions from adult basic education and General Educational Development teachers about the practice of using children's literature in the adult literacy classroom. Answers include the following: some books in the children's literature market are meant to be read and enjoyed by a wide diversity of ages; adults are not offended if children's literature is used as long as appropriate titles are chosen and they are presented carefully; benefits are expanded opportunities for student comprehension and enjoyment, suitability of picture books to short periods of instruction, and wide availability of books; and since books are available in the science, social studies, reading, and writing skills, children's informational books are a wonderful way to introduce concepts, demonstrate a point, or provide information to supplement textbooks. Suggested uses for children's books include reading aloud at the beginning of each class, projection onto an overhead screen so that students can read together, offered as writing prompts, offered as good writing models, and expansion of interdisciplinary units. The publication proposes that the practice of using children's literature rests on the whole language approach. It concludes by listing these programmes that currently use children's literature: family literacy programmes; Beginning with Books program, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh; library discussion groups; and an adult basic education class of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center. Contains 27 references.

Bolli, M. 1983. *The Victor Hugos in Dan Country – developing a mother-tongue body of literature in a neoliterate society. Journal of Reading*, Vol. 27 No. 1, October 1983, pp.16-21.

Describes a literacy programme in Africa that trains new writers to produce a written literature for their new readers.

Brewis, W.L-E. 1993. The policy of South African public libraries regarding the provision of fiction for adult readers. Unpublished M. Bibl. thesis, University of South Africa, Department of Library and Information Science

This dissertation researches whether the policy and practices of South African public libraries meet adult users' fiction needs and preferences, with emphasis on light and medium-level fiction. A literature study examines fiction as cultural and literary phenomenon, reader motives and user fiction preferences. An empirical study (mail questionnaire) examined policy and practices of main metropolitan and provincial services achieving a high response rate (86,7%). It was found that library services adequately meet user needs and preferences. Positive institutional attitudes towards light/medium-level fiction were found, although only one-third of respondents have formal, written policies. Recommendations are made regarding this and other shortcomings concerning inter alia selection criteria, the provision of user guidance techniques and services to users, and the training of librarians in popular fiction.

Brewis, W.L-E. 1994. *Reading needs and motives of adult users of fiction*. *Mousaion*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 3-18.

Investigates psychological and social needs that motivate people in reading fiction.

Cole L.M. 1992. An examination of the suitability of some contemporary South African fiction for readers in the post-developmental reading stage. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Rhodes University, Department of Education

This study critically examines some prizewinning works of fantasy and contemporary realism, in an effort to gauge their literary worth within the context of accepted criteria for judging children's literature. Accolades from adults are not however a guarantee that the prizewinning books will be received with equal acclaim by the children for whom they are written. For this reason, five children in the post-developmental reading stage were asked to pass their opinions and non-literary judgements on the books. Although the critical evaluation of the indigenous works proves them to be eminently worthy of the prizes which they received on publication, the children did not rate them as highly as certain imported works. The works of fantasy by Marguerite Poland rated poorly in terms of their popularity despite the fact that the children said that in a non-circumscribed context, they choose fantasy in preference to contemporary realism. Within the context of the indigenous literature which they read for this study though, they preferred the works of contemporary realism as they were able to identify with particular aspects of the novels. Indigenous literature for children in the post-developmental reading stage is a comparatively new phenomenon which needs to be nurtured if it is to attain any lasting status. The onus rests upon the teachers of literature and librarians to introduce the literature and make the books more accessible to young readers. Publishers need perhaps to engage the views and opinions of the audience for whom the books are written in an effort to publish books which, without in any way detracting from their literary worth, will deal with subjects favoured by young readers.

Cox, C. 1995. *Twenty ways to use your readers*. *Basic skills*, Winter 1995, pp. 6-9.

Lists suggestions for selecting easy reading books for adult new readers, ways to make reading easier, reading aloud and active reading, and follow-up activities after a book is finished.

Doctor, E.A. 1975. The effect on comprehension of different modes of presenting material to subjects of different ages. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, School of Psychology

Investigates two types of comprehension (factual and interpretative) and their dependence on the age of the subjects and the method of presenting a passage (silent reading, oral reading, listening and acting). Factual comprehension was tested by open-ended questions, and the interpretive comprehension by multiple-choice questions. Results show a significant difference between the two age groups, and a significant difference between factual and interpretative comprehension. Presentation is found not to have a statistically significant effect on comprehension, but the type of comprehension is found to depend on the method of presentation. As predicted by psycholinguistic theory, differences are found between reading and listening comprehension. Children's comprehension is facilitated by listening and adults comprehension by reading. In addition, support is found for the theory that reading and listening comprehension involve similar processes.

Dumont, B. 1990. *Post-Literacy: a pre-requisite for literacy*. Literacy Lessons. Geneva: International Bureau of Education.

Post-literacy is all the means and activities that allow persons who have recently become literate to make use of their skills and to increase and deepen the knowledge acquired. There are many kinds of literacy. What they all have in common is the merciless test of the durability of literacy's effect: After 1, 2, or 5 years, what will the beneficiaries have retained and what uses will they be making of their literacy? Relapse to illiteracy is one of the most serious threats to literacy because it is very widespread and because it leaves its victims, who sacrificed to become literate, more destitute and less motivated. The remedy is post-literacy. The three aspects that are involved in providing post-literacy are the production of materials to which the knowledge acquired can be applied; the creation of a literacy environment; and the possibility of access to higher levels of responsibility for newly literate people. Reading materials for new readers include general interest books, short, easy-to-read popular

works that provide practical information; periodicals; publications of a less didactic, more entertaining nature, such as comic strips; calendars, posters, leaflets, and booklets; and audiovisual media. Because most of the world's illiterate people live in an environment virtually bereft of written material of any kind, the cooperation must be sought of all decision-makers in those areas who are in a position to contribute to the multiplication of public, written information. No literacy project can be effective without attending to post-literacy.

Fouche, B. 1974. Die vryetydse leesgedrag van volwasse Afrikaanssprekendes in Johannesburg. Unpublished Doctor of Literature and Philosophy, Rand Afrikaans University, Department of Library and Information Science

Fred, M.R. 1995. Can Literacy Lead To Transformation? Unpublished Master of Education thesis, University of the Western Cape, Department of Educational Psychology

Aims to equip a target group with reading, writing and basic numeracy skills, and to take literacy beyond reading, writing and numeracy to empower the learners to become involved in community affairs that influence their lives. Since the students were totally illiterate, reading and writing was a tedious process. At the end of the two year programme learners were able to write their most basic details. It seems that for the working adults and those who were strongly motivated to learn to read for personal reasons, the rate of progress was much quicker. It was in empowerment that most growth occurred. Some of the learners are now able to speak their minds on community issues without fear of being shouted down. Some of them have become involved in community issues such as the ongoing anti-crime campaign and the "scrap the arrears campaign". Two of them even serve on community committees.

French, E. 1988. The reading world of Black workers. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Education

An understanding of the identity of reading and its social meanings should contribute to the quality of adult literacy work. This study is an inquiry into ways of understanding reading, and specifically into its meaning and role in the lives of black workers in South Africa. The understanding of reading has been dominated by positivism, but increasing interest has been shown in the relationship of literacy and society. However, even these approaches remain largely objectivist. Alternatives to objectivism are presented in some detail. This provides the background and rationale for a broad account of the social history and contexts of reading in black society in South Africa and for a study of what reading means to eighteen leading black employees at two East Rand factories. The reading world of black workers is characterised by various deprivations and disadvantages. The printed word is owned and controlled by white government and capital in a contradictory and contested hegemony, yet it is perceived positively as an aspect of our society in which black people participate fully, and from which they benefit unequivocally. Reading is understood in terms of aspirations to modernity and to being at home in a national and cosmopolitan community. The experience of reading is felt to be vitally important, although it is not a major feature in the daily lives of most of the participants in this study. Newspapers occupy a dominant position in the reading world of black workers, but the level of critical awareness of the media would appear to be low. The study as a whole works against reductionism; the tendency for literacy to be claimed in the name of instrumental purposes is contested. Implications of the study for adult education and research are briefly considered.

French, E. 1989. *Book review of Learning from a literacy project by L. Wedepohl. Perspectives in education*, Vol. 11 No. 1, Spring, pp. 89-92.

French states that Wedepohl offers a contextualized story of a literacy project set in a Western Cape rural co-operative. The book offers insights into questions of needs, learning theatres, the development and management of training programmes for group leaders, the creation of appropriate reading matter, and the anticipation of problems.

- French, E. 1990. *Read and write, 1990. Prisma*, Vol. 5 No. 4, July 1990, pp.13-16.
Outlines what has been done towards the promotion of adult literacy in South Africa. Critically looks at the present situation and spells out some of the constraints on development.
- Fourie, C. 1997. *Viva the reading culture. Vuka SA*, Vol. 2 No. 3, June 1997, pp. 12-13.
Reports on the literacy mission of the Siyafunda Foundation who launched 34 book clubs at schools in Atteridgeville recently.
- Gallagher, J. 1997. The relevance of popular English language fiction to Black adult readers in libraries affiliated to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library Services. Unpublished Masters in Information Studies thesis, University of Natal, Dept of Information Studies.
- Hogge, Q. 1991. *A sneak attack on the unwary, or an approach to reading for English Second Language. Crux*, Vol. 25 No. 1, February 1991, pp. 30-32.
Highlights the length of English literary works as a crucial factor in promoting reading for English Second Language students. Lists a number of short and longer novels which have proved popular.
- Honeycutt, R.L. 1995. *A study of inmates' perceptions of an effective reading program. Journal of Correctional Education*, Vol. 46 No. 1, March 1995, pp. 6-9.
Surveys, interviews, and group discussions with 18 inmates enrolled in adult basic education elicited the inmates' perceptions of important factors in effective literacy classes: teacher behaviour (explaining, giving examples); instructional environment (informal but well organized); and type of text (short stories and novels rather than textbooks).
- Hough, B. 1996. *Functional literacy, adult education and technology. Human resource forum*, 1996), pp. 21-27.
Focuses on Bellamy and Hough (Pty) Ltd's range of reading products which includes communication skills for special education, formal schooling from the first year to tertiary level, and adult basic education.
- Kesting, J.G. 1985. Literacy promotion, formal education and adult public library use: a macro-study with specific reference to implications for public library planning in South Africa. Unpublished study. University of Cape Town, School of Librarianship
- Koenderman, T. 1997. *Reading habit is on the decline: media research; Close to where the market is: property services: advertising & marketing Financial Mail*, Vol. 146 No. 2, 8 August 1997, p. 63.
Reports on the following in the fields of advertising and marketing: the decline in the total readership of daily and weekly newspapers, stable television viewership and the rise in magazine readership; Sanlam Properties' new advertising campaign. Illustrated with graphs and photographs.
- Koenderman, T. 1998. *Reading makes a competitive SA: print media: advertising and marketing. Financial Mail*, Vol. 147 No. 12, 23 January 1998, pp. 65-66.
Reports on the Print Media Association's campaign to breed a reading culture in South Africa. Illustrates with a photograph and tables.
- Leach, A. 1990. *Indaba on the neo-literate reader. Innovation*, No. 1, December 1990, p. 43

Leach, A.B. 1991. The Reading interests of the newly literate urban Black Adult. Unpublished Master of Information Science thesis. University of Natal, Department of Information Studies.

This study investigated the reading interests of a sample of 75 newly literate urban black adults. In order to place the study in a broader (reading) context various issues were examined. Firstly, an overview of the situation concerning, reading material for newly literate adults was provided. This was followed by an historical and contemporary examination of reading amongst black adults in general in both sub-Saharan and South Africa. The factors identified as limiting reading in these regions were then listed and discussed. Finally, the reading interests of the black adult in general and those of the newly literate adult in particular, as reflected in the literature, were described. The reading interests of the newly literate adult were investigated by means of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, respondents were asked to grade their interest in a selection of material suitable for newly literates shown, and the content briefly described, to them. Secondly, two open questions on their reading interests were asked. Thirdly, closed questions on the subjects covered in the first approach were asked. Finally, respondents were questioned on their motivation for reading and their attitude to the material shown and described to them. The analysis of the results show that the newly literate respondents were primarily interested in reading about subjects which improved their knowledge and personal situation - those of a utilitarian nature. However, certain fiction genre were also found to be of interest.

Leach, A. 1992. *Reading interests of newly literate black adults within the Durban metropolitan region. South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 47-52.

Reports results of an investigation of the reading interests of a sample of 75 newly literate black adults by means of semi-structured interviews.

Le Roux, E.H. 1993. Die samestelling en evaluering van huishoudkunde-verwante oorbruggingsleesstof vir nuutgeletterde plaaswerkervroue. Unpublished Master in Home Economics thesis. University of Stellenbosch, Department of Home Economics

In the study, reading material with a home economic content is developed for neo-literates in the farm workers' community. The study is from a home economics perspective and specifically aimed at women in the farm workers' community. Reading materials are aimed at the improvement of the quality of life, by enabling people to make a difference in their daily existence. The empirical research for the study was done with neo-literate female farm workers in the Klein Karoo. A needs assessment study was executed in order to compile the contents of the reading material. Other aspects of the material, such as format, level of difficulty, use of language, printing type, layout and illustrations, were researched. On the basis of these, four booklets were compiled and evaluated by the respondents to establish the success thereof. Aspects taken into account were contents, general acceptability and the need for similar reading material. Appropriate instruments were developed for evaluation as practically no prior research in this regard could be found. Results show that reading materials were well received and positively perceived by respondents. Respondents were eager to acquire more reading materials of the same sort. Home economists can play a unique role in literacy actions of this kind, and are well equipped to reach and support women either limited literacy skills or exposure to organized actions of community development.

Levitz, E. 1994. *Libraries for literacy. Publico*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 20-21.

In 1994 the Transvaal Provincial Library Service appointed Lorinda Roets in charge of literacy development. She will train librarians as literacy facilitators, with the aim of implementing literacy projects in the communities. The nature of projects, the supportive role of public libraries and difficulties are described.

Loho, S. 1991. *A Readership promotion campaign for Nigerian youth*. **Journal of Youth Services in Libraries**, Vol. 4 No. 2, Winter 1991, pp. 141-148.

This discussion of the importance of library-administered readership promotion campaigns in the traditionally oral societies of Nigeria discusses influential familial, social, cultural, and economic factors that need to be considered in establishing reading programmes for rural communities. The role of state library boards, staffing and financial needs, and aspects of communication are also considered. (15 references)

Lucas, C.J. 1982. *Mass mobilization for illiteracy eradication in Iraq*. **Convergence: An International Journal of Adult Education**, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 19-27.

This article was based on the author's field study of the Iraqi Literacy campaign in late 1979 and on his follow-up work in 1981. The author spent several weeks interviewing campaign officials, administrators, teachers, and students throughout the country. The article presents the campaign's political philosophy, design, and strategies.

Makhubela, L. 1995. *The Book Development Council of South Africa: making a difference in building an information literate South Africa*. **Innovation**, No. 10, June 1995, pp. 41-44.

Identifies the aims and objectives of the Book Development Council of South Africa.

Meyer, V. and Keefe, D. 1988. *The Laubach Way to Reading: a review*. **Lifelong Learning**, Vol. 12 No. 1, September 1988, pp. 8-10.

This article provides a critical review of the instructional materials provided to volunteers by Laubach Literacy Action, titled The Laubach Way to Reading. A history of Laubach Literacy International (LLI) is followed by a description of materials. The LLI philosophy of reading is discussed, and comments on the value of the materials are offered.

Miller, R. 1985. *Mexican literacy education today*. **Journal of Reading**, Vol. 29 No. 2, November 1985, pp. 132-134.

Explains how the Mexican government is seeking to eradicate illiteracy through two programmes--one focused on bilingual education and the other on adult literacy, using residential and day school, radio, TV, and correspondence programmes.

Mitchell, C. 1996. *More than just a love story: investigating the literary and social significance of the young adult novel in South Africa*. **Alternation**, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 173-183.

Mitchell and Smith investigate contemporary South African fiction written specifically for the young adult market. Their focus is on the literary, social and political significance of these texts, the unique role they play in both the South African literary arena and their impact on social change in the country. They 'render visible' a literary genre which, like its readership, is interrogative in nature, previously marginalised by academics.

Mulder, J. 1971. 'n Leserkundige ondersoek in Pretoria-Noord. Unpublished M. Bibl. Thesis, University of South Africa, Department of Library and Information Science Investigates reading habits and reading interests to determine the influence of the written word on Afrikaans speaking people in Pretoria North. A representative sample of people in the region was selected to participate in the study. It is found that approximately half of the Afrikaans people regularly read Afrikaans daily newspapers, while only 15% read English newspapers. This compares unfavourably with the European percentage of 80-90% who read a newspaper regularly, and the bias in favour of Afrikaans only is seen as a symptom of imbalance. Afrikaans magazines are read sufficiently, but this is not the case for journals. Books are read on a reasonably regular basis, with only 8% indicating that they never read a book. However, the quality of the reading matter leaves much to be desired, possibly because respondents read almost entirely for relaxation only. Women are found to read more than men do. Statistics are also provided of the frequency of book buying and borrowing from public libraries. In terms of leisure time utilisation, it is found that reading takes

second place only to listening to the radio. It is recommended that more English books and magazines be read, as well as other languages where possible. Enriching reading matter should also receive more attention. An education programme should be planned to raise the level of reading habits and interests among adults. The youth should also be encouraged to get more out of the written word.

Neuman, S.B. 1985. *Families reading together: adult education students and their preschool children*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press.

Through a participatory approach to adult basic education, a project was conducted to break the debilitating cycle of illiteracy that passes from low-income parents to their children. The approach included a family literacy book club designed to encourage parents and children to read together and to improve parents' literacy skills, interests, and confidence to serve as educators of their children. Training and guided reading experiences were provided to parents, and workshops were provided to the school faculty to develop appropriate literacy understanding and teaching skills. The programme was highly successful in creating a participatory model of adult basic education. A progress checklist showed changes in students' writing activities, reading abilities, and their uses of strategies in task applications. An analysis of interactional strategies indicated that parents became more responsive to their children in reading and provided information on labeling, scaffolding, and extending learning beyond the printed page. The programme also introduced parents to children's literature and facilitated discussion and values clarification among the parents. Video segments demonstrating the parents' work with children's literature and sample workbook materials were developed. (Contains 72 references, and an annotated list of 12 children's books is appended.)

Nweke, K.M.C. 1987. *Promoting the reading habit among the literate in Nigeria* *Reading Teacher*, Vol. 40 No. 7, March 1987, pp. 632-638.

Describes efforts to promote the desire to read and the availability of materials for Nigerians who have already been introduced to reading.

Parish, C.A. 1989. *Learning to Read, Reading to Learn*. *Humanities*, Vol. 10 No. 5, September-October 1989, p. 31.

Discusses Kentucky's efforts to increase adult literacy through the New Books for New Readers programme in which scholars were asked to write books emphasizing adult topics with a reading level of third to fifth grade. Describes the process through which the target audience is involved in the creation of books for the programme.

Paul, C. and Paul, P. 1985. *The case for specially created materials for learners of English as a Second Language*. *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. 25 No. 3, November 1985, pp. 4-8.

A shortage of materials with wide appeal that are suited to the needs of immigrant learners of English as a second language exists. Language teachers are best equipped not only to select, but also to author such materials.

Paul, M. 1986. *Reading after Survival Literacy: Language Immersion and an idea from Confucius*. *Journal of Reading*, Vol. 29 No. 5, February 1986, pp. 423-427.

Notes that appropriate materials are hard to find for refugees of marginal reading ability in English as a second language programmes and describes teacher-made exercises that use the students' prior knowledge and experience.

Quigley, B.A. and Holsinger, E. 1993. "Happy Consciousness": ideology and hidden curricula in literacy education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 44 No.1, Fall 1993, pp. 17-33.

Using categories of racism, sexism, and socioeconomic stereotypes, 37 stories from adult reading series were analyzed. Compared to a 1977 study, texts have improved only slightly. Reproduction of the cultural and political status quo remains the hidden curriculum of literacy education.

Robb W.M. 1989. A fundamental agogic analysis of the role of the newspaper in education. Unpublished Master of Education, University of South Africa, Department of Fundamental Pedagogics

This study examines the role of the newspaper in education from the perspectives of fundamental agogics and education as agein, and finds that the journalist as a human being, a fellow-man and an agogue, with his potential to accompany the newspaper reader to more adequate responsible adulthood, provides the newspaper with the potential to be an educative medium. To fulfil his potential as an authentic agogue and accordingly to implement the potential of the newspaper to be an educative medium, the journalist must meet the requirements of authentic agogic journalism. Sixteen universal criteria (norms) for evaluating the authenticity of journalistic agogic activity are designed and recommendations offered to the newspaper editor and to the teacher and lecture on how to assist the journalist to improve the quality of the newspaper's educative activity. In concluding, the author offers a post-scientific view of what essentially agogic orientated journalism is.

Robinson, C.D.W. 1990. *Literacy in Minority Languages: What Hope?* Literacy Lessons. Geneva: International Bureau of Education.

Many minority languages are unwritten, undocumented, and thus considered unsuitable for institutional communication and for inclusion in national literacy campaigns. Literacy should be set in a context that puts the local people at the centre of the process, respects their cultural identity, and enables them to set their own agenda for socioeconomic and cultural development. Within such an orientation, literacy in minority languages finds its justification, since it will enable genuine two-way communication in which local self-expression is at least as important as the transmission of information and messages to the local community. Issues related to minority language literacy include the following: (1) many languages have only hundreds of speakers; (2) many of these languages are marginal to the mainstream of national life; (3) some people think minority language literacy impedes national unity; (4) some people favour a national language; and (5) resources for developing minority language literacy are limited. Minority language use is inappropriate as preparation for higher education, national-level administration, and employment in national institutions. The process of introducing literacy into a community whose language is an unwritten minority language involves a basic research phase, a student motivational phase, the phase during which the programme is implemented, and a phase in which local trained personnel provide materials for newly literate people.

Rogers, J.J. 1987. *Readability as a source of perceived failure in adult literacy instruction.* *Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 10 No. 4, January 1987, pp. 26-29.

Argues that the nature and the readability of instructional materials may be an unsuspected barrier to progress for adult illiterates who receive instruction from volunteer literacy organizations. Considers the reading series of several national organizations.

Rustam, R. 1990. *Promoting literacy and reading in Malaysia: the role of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.* *Information Development*, Vol. 6 No. 3, July 1990, pp. 150-153.

The National Language and Literature Development Agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) in Malaysia promotes literacy and reading through publishing, book promotion, book distribution, extension programmes, writing incentives, and maintenance of a special library. Rustam argues the need for understanding the reasons why interest in reading has not developed as it should in Malaysia.

Sasaoka, T. 1990. *How to prepare materials for neo-literates.* Literacy Lessons. Geneva, Switzerland: International Bureau of Education.

Literacy materials are either for illiterate people or for neoliterate people (those who have attained limited literacy but might easily relapse if they do not practice reading with appropriate materials). Thirty-five kinds of prototype materials for neoliterate persons have been developed by the Asian/Pacific Joint Production Programme of Materials for Neo-Literates (AJP), and 27 of them have been translated into 16 vernacular languages in 10 countries. The majority of neoliterate people in developing countries live in the rural areas and in city slums, where access to written language is limited. According to an investigation in Malaysia, 3 years' absence of reading materials causes a lapse into illiteracy. Materials for neoliterate readers should improve their quality of life; be in their mother tongue; be simple, attractive, and interesting; include visual aids; suggest how to use different

materials in combination; and allow readers to progress at their own rates. The steps in producing materials for newly literate persons are: (1) identify the needs of the target group through a field survey; (2) select a theme; (3) select the format, based on the literacy level of the target group, how and where the materials will be used, and the production costs; (4) prepare the script and illustrations; (5) edit; (6) finalize the captions and title; (7) field test; (8) revise; and (9) mass produce the materials. Distribution of materials for neoliterate people is the weakest link in the chain in development.

Scales, A.M. and Zikri, L.B. 1986. *Reading habits of adults in Egypt*. Paper presented at the Meeting of the World Congress on Reading of the International Reading Association (11th, London, England, July 28-31, 1986).

Investigating the reading habits of adults in Egypt, East Africa, a study examined 294 Egyptians (233 males and 61 females) in post-secondary education in Cairo, and in the industrial cities of Shopra El-Khema, and Impapa, El-Giza. Marital status, sex, and occupation were used to group the subjects. Subjects completed a 29-item questionnaire covering five reading habits categories – satisfaction with reading, types of material read, reading efficiency, ease and availability of obtaining reading materials, and impact of environment on reading. Results indicated that more married than single, and more males than females, read religious materials. Significant differences were also reported between males and females, and between white collar and professional subjects, regarding their reading habits. Findings from this study were compared with a reading habits study of 59 adult subjects in Senegal, West Africa. Comparison showed that both Senegalese and Egyptian subjects would like to read better, liked to read, read newspapers often, enjoyed reading fiction, would like to take a course to improve their reading, and retained most of what they read for a reasonable period of time. (Ten tables of data are included, and a reading habits questionnaire and 11 references are appended.)

Screen, D. 1990. *Not just reading and writing: a focus on literacy in South Africa* ***Education Journal***, Vol. 100 No. 1, pp. 20-21.

Stresses the need for adult literacy work in South Africa, for more and relevant research as well as for a redefinition of literacy to include not only the mere ability to read and write but also to see literacy as enabling and functional.

Semali, L. M. 1993. *The communication media in post literacy education: new dimensions of literacy*. ***International Review of Education***, Vol. 39 No. 3, May 1993. pp. 193-206.

Examines adults in postliteracy programmes in Northern Tanzania, focusing on reading and writing abilities after five years of training; the role of radio, rural newspapers, and libraries in literacy; and adults' interest in postliteracy materials. Points to the continuing importance of the oral tradition and lack of adequate reading material as major obstacles to literacy development. (12 references).

Sharp, P.A. 1991. *Picture books in the adult literacy curriculum*. ***Journal of Reading***, Vol. 35 No. 3, November 1991, pp. 216-219.

Advocates using children's picture books as quality instructional material for adult literacy programmes and as a motivational tool for new readers who want to share their skills with children in their own families. Notes instructional strategies for parents, and lists some recommended books.

Staiger, R.C. and Casey, C. 1983. ***Planning and organizing reading campaigns: a guide for developing countries***. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Thistlethwaite, L. 1995. *Literature for all ages in the Adult Education Program*. ***Reading Research and Instruction***, Vol. 34 No. 2, Winter 1995, pp.136-148.

Suggests that children's literature, adolescent literature, and holdings in the adult section of the library are valuable resources for beginning and intermediate adult readers. Discusses selecting and enjoying children's literature, relevancy issues, real life reading, key to success, cultural sensitivity, and using children's literature with adults.

Thumbadoo B.D., Nong B.M., and Moeketse, M. 1993. *A Catalogue of easy readers for adults*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, Centre for Continuing Education

Thumbadoo, B.D. 1993. *A new ERA. Bua*, Vol. 8 No. 2 , pp. 14-15.

Asks what can be done to promote a reading culture in South Africa. Provides some answers in this update on ERA (Easy Reading Materials for Adults) activities over the past year. Discusses inter alia a short story competition; spreading the word; publishers; big business; and, neglected corner.

Valdehuesa, M.E. 1985. *Publishing for new literates in Asia. Journal of Reading*, Vol. 28 No. 7, April 1985, pp. 632-634.

Explores the reasons why publishing for new literates in Asia poses problems. Clarifies the concepts and roles involved in the development, production, and dissemination of reading materials and points out the resources that can be enlisted in a literacy mobilization effort.

Venema, M.S. 1995. *Help (not-so-good materials for learning to read). Women's Education/Education des femmes*, Vol. 11 No. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 11-14.

Many primary adult reading materials used in literacy education reinforce the marginalization of the efforts and intelligence of women. Such representations undermine both female learners and tutors in a field heavily populated by women.

Easy readers for adults in South Africa: an investigation into their use

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