

DISCUSSION PAPER 5:

LANGUAGES AND PUBLISHING SECTOR (BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, OTHER PRINTED AND ELECTRONIC MATERIAL, LIBRARY, BOOK FAIRS AND BOOK CLUBS, ARCHIVES, HERALDRY, LANGUAGES)

In their profile of the publishing sub-sector, Kristafor and Budhram state that the annual turnover for South African produced books and magazines – excluding exports – is R2,7 billion, of which the Western Cape accounts for R1,7 billion. They state further that the printing, packaging and newspaper sector – excluding book publishing – has a workforce of 90 000. The Western Cape plays home to 45 of the country's total 146 publishing companies (31%), including some of the larger educational publishing companies. According to Kristafor and Budhram, over 60% of the country's revenue from publishing is generated in the Western Cape, although Gauteng is the dominant market for both legs of the publishing industry i.e. books and magazines.

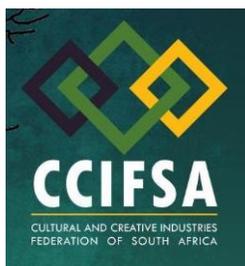
The Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA), the representative body for publishers, estimates that the local industry supports about 9 000 South African authors who earn approximately R150 million in royalties annually.

The publishing industry, is primarily concerned with the publication, marketing and distribution of books and journals in print, audio and digital format. There is comprehensive information on the state of the industry, including key industry statistics, the effect of digital disruption, bestsellers and industry awards and the factors influencing the sector. A great concern however, is the limited books published in indigenous languages such as isiZulu here in KZN. Creatives are contributing towards the enrichment of English language at the expense of IsiZulu and other indigenous languages!

SA has profiles of about 29 companies, including major publishers such as Pearson South Africa which is the largest player in the local educational publishing segment, Shuter and Shooter, Adams & Grigs, and Media24, whose book publishing subsidiary NB Publishers is the market leader in the general books segment. Other profiles include Jacana Media, in which a consortium led by two publishers bought an 82% stake and Struik Christian Media, which publishes religious books.

Publishing of Books & Other Publications

South Africa has an established book publishing industry centred on educational content. The market for general trade books is small, and unlike in developed markets, where general books are sold in much larger volumes, local sales of 5,000 copies make a title a bestseller. South Africa's weak reading culture is attributed to poverty, illiteracy, inadequate library services, inadequate distribution of books in rural and



township areas and the scarcity of titles in indigenous languages. Research indicates that the majority of South African residents are not interested in reading and South Africa ranks extremely poorly on literacy rankings. Is the continent encouraging a reading culture? How can a culture of reading grow with Exclusive Bookshops having monopoly on books distribution and mainly located in malls – none in townships and rural towns?

E-Publishing Growth

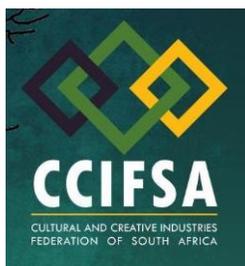
Schools, universities and colleges are steadily transitioning to publications in electronic format, and digital publications are estimated to account for more than 50% of revenue derived from the sale of imported professional books. While the distribution of books in electronic format is a growth area, the distribution of printed books is in decline and many publishers have diversified their revenue streams. Local authors in growing numbers are using self-publishing and direct publishing platforms.

It is claimed there is a small demand for books in alternative or other South African languages. The reason is that the common mode of language has been English and a lot of young people now have grown up with English. It's basically a second language, but they use it as their first language and the African languages have kind of become a second language, and if they need to read they can't even read in that "second language", they read in English, mostly. And for that reason the demand for vernacular books in South Africa is very small.

And due to the demand's being small, it creates a knock-on effect: the bookshops don't order books because they see there is such a niche industry that they are not going to stock books in the vernacular languages. Unless you're a very well-known author they don't even ... if you go there with an emerging author's book they won't stock it, because there's just no market.

The other problem is accessibility and the price of books. The price of books is very high especially in terms of the publishing process. If you publish a book you have to get someone to translate, or edit.

Is a problem of a "not a standard Zulu"? The KwaZulu-Natal Zulu is different from the Johannesburg Zulu. The dialects are completely different. Say for instance you have a writer in KZN ... there are close to 80 Zulu dialects ... so many dialects in one language, which means that writing a book in KZN Zulu might not be the right Zulu for someone that sits in Pretoria or someone that sits in Limpopo, because it's not the dialect used in that specific location or area. Is that a problem or important to further enrich this indigenous language?



Major publishers in many parts of Africa are conspicuous by their reluctance to publish in indigenous African languages. Many of these publishers cite lack of readership in indigenous languages as a reason for this move which is frustrating efforts at indigenisation and domestication and increase dependency on foreign languages, notably English.

A major hurdle for book publishing in indigenous languages in any part of Africa remains the limited market due to poor readership and limited buying power of potential readers.

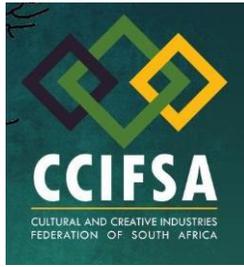
South Africa became a democratic country when Nelson Mandela was voted president in 1994, after many years of apartheid which exploited and persecuted blacks and denied them basic human rights, subjecting them to abstract poverty, illiteracy and discrimination. On his arrival in office, Mandela introduced numerous progressive reforms which included transformation of the media industry which was mainly intended to ensure that the media become pluralist in order to cater for all sectors of the South African communities. Although a primary focus was more on the mainstream newspaper, radio and television industry, the requirements were equally compelling for the book industry. At that stage many local communities had already been penetrated by foreign cultures and this had weakened cultural institutions particularly the language which is now being replaced to a large extent by foreign languages that are inevitably regarded as being more prestigious and competitive in the job market, business and politics while local languages are mainly perceived as being backward, unsophisticated and useless.

The role of book publishing in indigenous languages cannot be over emphasized, especially in a country such as South Africa, given the ethnical composition and languages.

Books disseminate ideas, educate and entertain. Indigenous publishing in particular has an important role: it is the transmitter of knowledge, without which we will be lost as a nation, as the late Seretse Khama once said: the nation without a history is a lost nation. We need to revitalise them, some of the problems that we grapple with can be addressed by our elders whose imposed limitation is the language, they do not need the language, and it is for our own good. As the saying goes, *“until lions learn to tell their stories, their stories will continue to be told by the hunters”*.

Former Tanzanian president Benjamin Nkapa (1997: 11) told a seminar on ‘The Future of Indigenous Publishing in Africa’ that *“Books will, in Africa, continue to take over the role of the parents, grandparents or village elders as repositories of knowledge, value systems, and skills needed to perpetuate life and the way of life”*.

This illustrates the importance of book publishing in indigenous languages.

**Size of the industry:**

The domestic publishing industry is worth in the region of R6 billion and employs between 60 to 80 000 people. It has recently grown at a rate of 17% although this has been unevenly felt across the industry. The global industry in 1995 was worth approximately \$30 billion. The industry generates jobs for writers, editors, photographers, journalists, printers, booksellers, web site designers and marketers amongst others.

DISCUSSION:

Historically most of the publishing companies were based in Cape Town as the printing presses were originally unloaded at the port. The bulk of the reading market is, however, situated in Gauteng where a number of publishing houses are located.

What are the viable prospects and opportunities for KZN?