

Participatory community learning for community empowerment: a case study in Maputaland

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ABSTRACT

Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks such as andragogy, experiential learning and transformative learning. These are informed by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning, shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. Such theories and frameworks are then imposed on African 'territories' of learning, much like a colonial template for carving up the continent, for and under Western eyes. This research project challenges the appropriateness of these theories and frameworks. Informed by the wisdom of the isiZulu saying, *yakhela ngamaqubu enye* (birds build their nests from other birds' feathers), this PHD thesis by publication drew from existing theories and frameworks in defining adult learning in the continent.

The research site, *Ebunzimeni* village (not the real name), is located in Maputaland, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The village is geographically at the margins at all levels: nationally, provincially as well as at traditional level and consequently it is ravaged by poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy and underdevelopment.

The research project adopted Afrocentrism as a theoretical framework, which guided and informed the study. Afrocentrism argues that Africans have for a long time come to understand themselves through a borrowed lens. This approach is fine if Africans can at the same time use their own lens to look at themselves. Afrocentric research is a collective and collaborative humanising project; it is a contextually sensitive and culturally informed inquiry. An Afrocentric Participatory Research design was adopted, using participatory learning action and photo voice as data collection techniques. This process took place over a period of six months.

The community-negotiated purpose of this project was to understand the kinds of community learning that take place in this community and to investigate whether, how and to what extent these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development. This was necessitated by years of conservation encroachment on their ancestral land. Most recently, their land was proclaimed as a community conservation area, resulting in forced removals and major implications for their livelihoods.

Data collection and community-based data analysis came to be called triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. The second level data analysis adopted an inductive approach, informed by categorisation and thematization. The study found learning to be complex, embedded in informal and non-formal learning places, such as participation in traditional cultural ceremonies, home activities and community projects. Learning is an embodied, embedded, co-emergent and spiritual process of meaning making. It is a process of becoming *umuntu* (human person), and identifying with shared *ubuntu* values means that one belongs to the community through the practice of these shared values. These values are upheld through participation in village life. Participation in the village is participation in the process of learning, which is often cyclical and *therefore often repetitive in nature; it is a life-long, life-wide and life-deep* activity for the collective or individual. It is a continuous movement from socialisation (incidental learning), self-directed learning, and back to socialisation. It is characterised by a shift from unconscious to conscious learning, unintended to intended, lack of intentionality to intentionality. It is a continuous process of role interchange with implications for learning through participation. It is embedded in the social context and belief systems. It is place-based learning based on people's full participation in the activities in the village.

These learning processes, values and knowledge are under major threat from within and outside of the villages. There is a desperate need to recognise these threats and to consciously intervene in the protection and revival of these knowledge systems. This is a call to action to African scholars.

Declaration

I, Augustine Zamokwakho Nhlanhla Hlela, declare that;

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2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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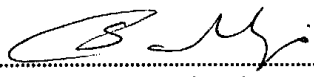
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Yours faithfully


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Madlula, Mphumela, Maqeda Malakubusa, Hangala.....

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Abbreviations

AIL	African indigenous learning
CCA	Community conservation area
CoP	Communities of Practice
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
EKZNW	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
ICSPA	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
<i>KTC</i>	<i>Kudele</i> Traditional Council
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LSDI	Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative
MDG	Millennium development goals
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PLA	Participatory learning action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RFG	Reflective focus group
RT	Research team
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TFCA	Usuthu-Tembe-Futi Transfrontier Conservation Area

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Prologue

According to Reviere (2001), Afrocentric research requires that the researcher takes and shares his/her position upfront. It rejects value-free research. This canon she calls *Kujitoa*; it

puts the onus on the researcher to place his or her working assumptions in the foreground of the research activity and to validate these assumptions by engaging in continuous self-reflection and self-criticism (Reviere, 2001, p. 713).

This prologue seeks to present my positionality as a researcher. In 2001 I was reemployed as a permanent member of staff at the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) at the University of Natal (UN), later to be called University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Before my second stint at CAE I had spent a year working at the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service as a social scientist. My job entailed developing policy around issues of community involvement in biodiversity conservation and, at a practical level, dealing with the issue of land claims by local communities that had been forcibly removed from their ancestral land. I was personally involved in the negotiation and settlement of the second land claim in KwaZulu-Natal in protected areas, which was at Nduma Game Reserve and involved the Mbangweni people. I personally witnessed how local people were manipulated through food parcels to commit to an agreement they did not agree to. This experience led to my quick exit, but with lots of experience.

Re-joining the CAE was going back home where my ideology was nurtured in the first place. My ideology is succinctly summarized in the CAE mission statement:

The Centre for Adult Education supports the right to knowledge of adult members of society. It seeks to respond imaginatively to policy shifts and social and economic developments that affect the lives of ordinary people. In doing this the Centre endeavours to make its contributions relevant, critical, liberating, and reflective of commitment to serve those who have yet to benefit under South Africa's democratic dispensation (Centre for Adult Education, 2007-2008, p. 2).

In the year I re-joined CAE, due to my conservation experience and knowledge of the area I was approached by *Emahlanzeni* NGO (not the real name) to conduct a contextual analysis using action research with the intention of reintroducing the idea of a community conservation area (CCA) in two traditional councils in the Mkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. This was a project that eventually proved to be contrary to my and CAE's ideology. To achieve the purpose of the project, I was required to 'dangle a carrot' of a R50 000 budget for a community project, should the community agree to the establishment of the CCA. For a rural community, this was a huge budget. Through participatory learning processes, both the community and I came to realise just how much the community stood to lose in terms of their livelihoods should they go ahead and let the NGO establish the CCA. The ultimate report produced showed clearly that the community was against the reintroduction of the establishment of the Community Conservation Area (CCA). The action research experience undertaken then resulted in a collaborative paper written and presented at the Kenton Conference in 2002 called *Elephant and people: conducting research and community education for empowerment in Maputaland* (Hlela and John, 2002). Five years later, in 2007 I went back to Maputaland. This reflective experience prompted me to critically reflect on my initial intervention and a paper titled: *How not to: Conducting action research for empowerment in Maputaland* (Hlela, 2007) was the result. This paper was presented at the 4th World Environment Education Congress: 'Learning in a changing world 2007'. Both these papers point to the contradictions and tensions between community and conservation imperatives, forcing me to put myself into the shoes of this community and the need for action on my part.

As a researcher, I believed then (2001) when I first went to this community, and now, that a successfully implemented and community-managed CCA could be a game changer in the *Kudele* Traditional Council (KTC) by enhancing community livelihood and minimising community vulnerabilities. However, for this to happen the local community must believe that as a community they are capable, and have vast experiences that they can draw from, in the management and running of this project. Hence, in my view, there was a need for an educational-cum-research process that would get the community into a space where they could believe in themselves.

For this research project, there was an “inseparability of research and researcher” (Reviere, 2001, p. 713). I as the researcher was fully embedded, given the amount of involvement in the community (Owusu-Ansah and Mji, 2012). As a researcher, I was fully aware of what I wanted to initiate and achieve through the research project, which was the transferability of skills, knowledge and attitudes gained in the analysis of different community learning places through their transformation from dehumanising to humanising places. And so, the project on which this thesis is based was born.

Chapter 1: Defining a Rural African place and participants

When human beings are treated inhumanly they deteriorate, but treated humanely, they flourish. (Prof Lewis Gordon)

1. Introduction

The research project documents and presents community learning ‘places’ through a rich, thick description of *Ebunzimeni* village (not the real name) which is part of the fifteen villages that form *Kudele* traditional council (not the real name) located in Maputaland, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The *Kudele* traditional council (KTC) is geographically on the margins of South Africa, infrastructurally least developed, ravaged by poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy and underdevelopment.

The community-negotiated purpose of this Afrocentric participatory research project is to understand the kinds of community learning that take place in this community and to investigate whether, how and to what extent these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development. This was necessitated by years of conservation encroachment, most recently through their ancestral land being proclaimed as a community conservation area (CCA), resulting in forced removals. The CCA concept was ‘sold’ to the community based on many unfulfilled promises, such as community benefits arising from tourism and infrastructure development, but mainly on the understanding that the CCA was to be community managed. The community wanted the research project to help them take ownership of the CCA from the *Emanhlanzeni* Non-government organisation (NGO) which, from inception, had managed and owned the project.

Once the purpose was negotiated, the researcher developed a research design that was firmly rooted in Afrocentric ideology (reasons to be presented in Chapter 2). The design avoided the

temptation of action research, opting instead for participatory design as this approach would be more likely to promote continuous community learning and reflection. Action learning, on the other hand, might have increased opportunities for confrontation between the community and the NGO.

The research project was an exploration of learning 'places' in the village with the intention of learning through the action of research for all involved. The purpose of this exploration was to give the community an opportunity to reflect on as many existing community learning places as is possible and to make comparisons between these places on the bases of whether, in their view, they were empowering or disempowering. To facilitate this, data collection techniques were people-centred, and included participatory learning action (PLA) and photovoice.

The critical learning process included the involvement of the entire village at certain stages of the research, using PLA. A six-member reflective focus group (RFG) was selected by the villagers to participate in photo-voice. For peer debriefing purposes, the researcher had a research team (RT) that also participated at different stages. Participation in the research became a critical learning process for all involved – the researcher himself; the researcher together with the research team (RT); the researcher and the research participants; the researcher, the Research Team (RT) and Reflective Focus Group (RFG) and finally learning for change among the research participants.

This chapter introduces the research study and the research site, and presents the aim and the rationale of this research study project. Finally, it presents the structure or the framework of this PhD research study by publication. Briefly, the thesis is made up of fully fledged chapters, chapter 1,2,5,6 and 9 while the four papers become chapter 3, 4, 7 and 8. The relationship and coherence between chapters and papers is further developed in this chapter under the heading 'The structure of the thesis'. I begin by presenting background information that provides key assumptions that informed this study and the presentation thereof. In doing so, key concepts are introduced and briefly explained because these will be dealt with in depth in the next chapter.

2. The ideology behind the research project

This PhD thesis by research papers is based on, and informed fundamentally by hopes and dreams for a better life for rural indigenous African people, whose lives remain largely unchanged post colonialism and post-apartheid. I borrow Freire's words:

We are surrounded by a pragmatic discourse that would have us adapt to the facts of reality. Dreams and utopia are called not only useless, but positively impeding. (Freire, 2004)

This is the consequence of a long history of Colonialism, Neo-colonialism, Globalisation and Neo liberalism, with it dystopia of legitimising social divisions, marginalisation of nations, and promotion of global capitalism, which fundamentally involve the dehumanisation of African people. In the South African context, this took the form of the apartheid system of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party, declared a crime against humanity by the United Nations General Assembly through the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (ICSPA) (UN, 1973). This system institutionalised racism and oppression of Black African people. Black African people, then referred to as Bantus, were deemed to be sub-humans, further setting up the white race and black race against each other, but also black populations against each other through ethnicity. Chapter 4 documents and presents these forces/shapers and the impact thereof on the research site.

The understanding of the effect and impacts of these forces/shapers located this study within the ideology of Afrocentrism. This research study contributes to strategies of dealing with the legacies of both Colonialism and apartheid, based firmly on the belief that if people are given the opportunity to believe in themselves, they stand a chance of learning more about themselves, and can develop their abilities to shape their own lives and destiny. Furthermore, people can 'dream' their own localised 'dreams' informed by their social-cultural-contextual factors, cultural heritage and, most importantly, by their desire to live life as human beings.

In addition, the intention of the research project is to contribute to a process of *humanisation* of African people, as opposed to *dehumanising* them through redevelopment of their African identity and fostering of African values. Tolliver (2015) lists the purpose of Africentrism as follows:

- It is a response to the need for agency and self-determination among people of African descent;
- Reaffirms the positive aspects of indigenous African cultural values and ways of being, positioning us to use the best from the past;
- Promotes resistance against violence of hegemonic philosophies and global racist structures, ideologies, and attitudes;
- Purposefully supports the development of positive self-perceptions that can benefit from and be motivated by the strengths and beauty of the traditions and cultures of people of African ascent;
- Enables people of African ascent to become warriors, healers, and builders in their lives and in their communities (Tolliver, 2015, p. 63).

For the purposes of clarity –

Afrocentric, Africentric, or African-centred are interchangeable terms representing the concept which categorises a quality of thought and practice which is rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people and which represents and reflects the life experiences, history and traditions of African people as the centre of analyses (Hill, 1995, p. 4).

The project therefore is a social, cognitive and cultural justice project that seeks to facilitate and restore humanisation to the African person from an African perspective. The position is echoed by Allman from a radical position, highlighting the significance of learning in attainment of freedom: “...for Marx, to be fully human meant that people would be continuously engaged in a process of becoming, a process of developing all of their potential.” (Allman, 2007, p. 31). This is what the research design of this project continuously seeks to achieve and therefore deliberately opens itself to charges of being unscientific, biased and political. This research study draw heavily from other related studies, particularly the seminal work by Lather (1986) titled *Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place* to ensure that the rigour of research was maintained. In this work, Lather argues profusely for the fundamental role of validity issues in guiding social research, particularly because it is more often ideologically driven than science driven. Lather argues

that ideology based research must strong on catalytic validity which can be process, product or both. Herr and Anderson (2005) expatiate the idea by including: dialogic validity, that is the extent at which the research design is subjected to peer review or research participants; democratic validity referring to the extent to which participants are continuously involved in the conception, implementation and post research and are part of a process of research; and finally outcome validity referring to the extent at which each cycle in problem-based research yields results in the resolution of the problem.

The association between research and ideology is further highlighted by Prah (cited in Chilisa and Preece) in that:

We cannot in all seriousness study ourselves through other people's assumptions. We do, of course, use concepts and conceptual frameworks developed by other people to analyse ourselves and what we do: it would be impossible not to. I am not saying we must not know what others know or think about us. I am saying that we must think for ourselves like others do for themselves. (Chilisa and Preece, 2005, p. 48)

The views presented above on Afrocentrism and research highlights the position and orientation of the research project towards Afrocentrism as foundational to the entire design. It further highlights the challenge faced by research, which is openly ideologically aligned. This research project makes a critical contribution on issues of validity on research projects of this nature, while at the same time demonstrating commitment to the humanisation of the African person.

Adherence to the issues of validity is not incommensurable with adherence to ideology: on the contrary, it points to the hybridity of knowledge. Hybridity is defined as 'a third space' where different meaning-making processes and knowledges meet and are accorded equal status (Kanu, 2009). The significance of hybridisation is reflected in, for example, the overlap and complementarity between Western and African humanism in the context of major differences (Pietersen, 2005). African humanism is based on and informed by values of *Ubuntu* (African humanism): collectivism rather than individualism (Lekoko and Modise, 2011), sacred rather than secular (Chile and Simpson, 2004), interconnectedness rather than disconnectedness (Ntseane, 2007) and Afrocentric rather than Eurocentric. The paradoxes or

tensions between Western centrism and Afrocentrism are acknowledged and hence the need for the 'third space' instead of one hegemonic view and practice. This is the position of this project. These ideological positions, such as counter-hegemony, the 'third position' and adherence to hegemonic research processes will be dealt with and clarified in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the study adopts a flexible Afrocentric position which, while affirming the centrality and value of African ideas and experiences, does not automatically reject those of other traditions.

I have introduced key components of this research project without explaining them in detail. These details will be provided and explained in Chapter 2. The purpose of this chapter is to present background to the research project. It does this by presenting the research site, the research project and the rationale of the research project.

3. The research site

In 2001 President Mbeki, announced areas in South Africa (SA) which were to be known as presidential poverty nodes. These areas were characterised by underdevelopment, poverty, poor health infrastructure as well as being isolated from the rest of the country. The *Kudele* TC is located within this node and represents the most affected communities in the region simply because of its geographical location. Spotlighting these areas as presidential poverty nodes was a positive strategy by the then SA government to facilitate all eight millennium development goals (MDGs) in this region.

The purpose of the presidential poverty nodes strategy was to build productive and sustainable economies in these nodes. In this region conservation was to be the vehicle to facilitate development. There is no doubt that due to the natural environment in which it is geographically located, *Kudele* TC can play a major role and its residents be true beneficiaries of these initiatives through pro-poor tourism. It is my view that facing up to the challenges in this community can go a long way in making the lives of rural people be more bearable.

The NGO sector has a major role to play in partnering government in the actual implementation of projects. The *Emahlanzeni* NGO came into this area to facilitate the process of implementing the Community Conservation Area. The NGO, a small organisation,

then sourced funding from conservation-interested funders and government through the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). In 2004 it received funding of 6,5 million rands from DEA through the expanded public works programme, but never involved the community (Shaw, *The Natal Witness*, 2010).

One of the grand plans, Vision 2030, implemented by the National Planning Commission in South Africa on rural economy, states that “the National Development Plan plans to ensure that rural communities enjoy better opportunities to participate fully in economic, social and political life of the country. And that those citizens who work and live in these areas are included in South Africa’s future development” (2030 Vision).

The Kudele Traditional Council (KTC) is in the far North of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. This community shares its borders with two countries, Swaziland and Mozambique. The KTC land is approximately 547 square kilometers in extent, made up of about 33 000 households and 15 *izigodi* (wards) (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010). It is a beautiful piece of land on the Ubombo mountain range. It is home to many types of vegetation such as bushveld, *Acacia*, *Combretum* trees, *Aloe marlothii* and many more. Local people claim that there are still wild animals roaming in the gorge area. The area is infested with malaria. 19% of the KTC land falls under the provincial nature conservation service and 6.4% under the Community Conservation Area (Dosso, Nakaggwa & Philippon, 2010).

Due to the remoteness of the KTC geographical location, this community finds itself marginalized, with encroachment of nature conservation imperatives under the guise of community development and the South African government's desperation to control borders. The community is geographically located at the margins of the province of KwaZulu-Natal as well as of the country of South Africa. The study site, Ebunzimeni *isigodi* (village), is one of the fifteen villages that make up the KTC and is the most marginalized village with the least infrastructural development amongst all the villages.

3.1 Defining an African village place

The three photographs Figure 1.1 were taken in early December 2014. The first photograph presents the homestead of the village headman (*nduna*). The second and third present the source of water for the village 21 years after the liberation of South Africa. These are major

places for participation and therefore ‘spaces’ for learning in this village. December month is generally the rainy season in this part of the world, yet these photographs show indications of severe drought in a very dry and rocky village.



Figure 1.1: The village scenes

Hlela and John (2001) described the research site as generally rugged and inaccessible, with poor soil and unavailability of water. The area is characterised as a dry area. Soil is shallow and not good for ploughing, but most people grow maize. The only reliable source of water is the ever-flowing river, which is now inaccessible to the community due to the development of a Community Conservation Area (CCA). There is a high rate of unemployment in the area as well as a high rate of illiteracy. Most families depend on government social grants (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010).

The *Ebunzimeni* village (*isigodi*) is part of the *Kudele Traditional Council* (KTC) which falls under uMkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in South Africa (SA). The *Kudele* Traditional Council is located at the extreme North of the province of KZN. The total population for the Local Municipality, as per 2011 SA statistical figures, is 625 846. Black Africans constitute 618 130 (97.77%) of the total population, Coloureds 1 153 (0.18%), Indians/Asian 1 390 (0.22%) and Whites 4 189 (0.67%) (Census SA, 2011), making this Local Municipality an African dominated region (uMkhanyakude District Municipality, 2014). At provincial level, the 2016 Situational Analysis Report states “for all of KZN, 58% of Africans live in poverty. Again, this percentage is highest in uMkhanyakude where 72% of the population live in poverty where the poverty line is defined as ZAR 51.25 per day by the World Bank.” (Situational Analysis Report, 2016, p. 40). Because of these factors alone, the figures suggest isolation and marginalization in the South African context because every area deemed pristine, fertile, or of any used would be dominated by white people, even if the area in the past fell under the National Party apartheid government-created bantu homeland system.

Africans suffered the most humiliating oppression by fellow South Africans, and rural Africans perhaps suffered the most.

The geographical location of the *Kudele* TC is in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality, which is classified as malaria endemic. Malaria has major implications economically, socially and politically for the area. Economically it has negative implications for tourism, which is a huge potential. Tourists have tended to shy away from the area and therefore any eco-tourism projects have been affected (LSDIM Annual Report, 2009). Socially it results in productive persons leaving the area to pursue better lives in cities, and politically, the South African government must continuously seek cooperation with neighbouring countries to combat this threat.

Ten per cent of the KTC population is considered employed while 75% is unemployed and economically inactive. The other 15% is not accounted for. Two major sources of income are government social grants and farm sales. 53% of the population receive income from the sale of natural resources such as marula beer, fuel (wood), thatching grass and handcraft. 48% have never attended school (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010; and uMkhanyakude District Municipality, 2014).

The land belongs to iNgonyama Trust and is therefore communal land. The *Kudele* Traditional Council is divided into 15 different villages with 15 *izinduna* (headmen). The *izinduna* form a traditional council that sees to the day-to-day affairs of the people. The iNgonyama Trust (RSA Act No 3 of 1994, p. 3) is chaired by the Zulu king. The Trust is an institution that administers *Ingonyama* Land for the “benefit, material welfare and social well-being of the members of the tribes and communities” living in that traditional area of KwaZulu-Natal. Under this Act the land is owned by the *Ingonyama* (King) and therefore cannot be sold (RSA Act No 3 of 1994). The Local Municipality Integrated Development Programme (IDP) lists this traditional land ownership (which aims to keep land in the ownership of African people) as one of the stumbling blocks in economic development in the area (uMkhanyakude District Municipality, 2014).

Traditionally and historically, the KTC is ruled by the local chief (*inkosi*) on behalf of the Zulu king. The king and the chief are not democratically elected but God-ordained. Similarly, at

village level the chief is represented by a local headman, while at homestead level the head of the household is the representative. This protocol is respected and cherished as part of the value system. However, with the dawn of democracy in South Africa, this indigenous system has been redeveloped. Traditional councils are a new formation instituted post 1994. They are governed by the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (No. 5 of 2005) which stipulates who shall serve in the Traditional Council (TC) as well as its functions. The leader of this institution is the *Inkosi* (chief) and in *Kudele* TC the chief is a woman appointed by *izinduna* (headmen) together with democratically elected council members.

Nduna (headman) *Ndlovu* (not his real name) is currently *induna* (headman) of Ebunzimeni village, the research site. This is a close-knit village which pays allegiance to the chief (*Inkosi*) through *Nduna*. *Nduna Ndlovu* was born and grew up in this village. Like most members of his age group, he never went to school, but has taught himself to read and write. Most of his working life was spent in Durban working for different firms as a driver. He is a well-known traditional healer (*inyanga*) and he has accumulated lots of cattle and goats as this is how people pay him for his services. He runs a shop and has a car. *Nduna Ndlovu* has three wives and 37 children and many grandchildren. *Nduna Ndlovu*, like many villagers, does not believe in buying what he can produce in his own garden.

The *Ebunzimeni* Village is located at the margins of the KTC, situated on the North-eastern side. There are currently 114 households in *Ebunzimeni* Village. This ward shares the poorly manned border with Mozambique in the form of a river, making this area an access point between the two countries via a boat trip. For *Ekunzimeni* village, this ever-flowing river is the only reliable source of water and other natural resources, such as fish and thatching grass (*ncema*) that grows on its banks of the river. With the establishment of the community conservation area, for the villagers this has meant forced removals from the river bank to dry and rocky land. Access to these natural resources is highly controlled and, with the possibility of the area being converted into a protected area, further control measures are to be introduced.

There is a lack of infrastructural development in the area. Local representation in the municipality is through the ward councillor and the *Kudele* Traditional Council, yet this village is the most deprived. As indicated above, access to water is one of the major problems in the

village because of the forced removals and the establishment of the CCA. Currently waterholes are the only sources of water. The waterholes are places where the community and livestock can draw water in summer and winter, yet the same critical resource is liable to be the source of disease and death through malaria.

Religion is very important in this small village, reflected by the presence of several churches. The first church to arrive in the area was the Dutch Reformed Church, followed by the Roman Catholic Church. However, the African Zion churches – *izayoni zakwaMbuyisa* and Khumalo church – seem to be dominating, and KwaShembe (another indigenous African church which draws on Christian and indigenous traditional elements) is also growing.



Figure 1.2: The first African Zion church in the village, still standing

The closest town is about 17 kilometres away and includes a Spar supermarket, a bottle store, a clinic and several small spaza shops (informal shops people run in their homes). There are no kombis (local taxis) or buses running between this town and Ebunzimeni, but open vans (which in 2012 charged R25 per trip), provide public transport. As a result, there are many small shops (spazas) and people selling goods in the village. These are areas where people will often come together, particularly young people. For example, *Nduna Ndlovu's* shop is located close to the road and is the last shop before you get to the border and the first for people coming into South Africa. There is barely any infrastructure in the village: there is no piped water, no sanitation, no electricity, no roads and no clinic, but there are two community-built schools.

In conclusion, the *Ebunzimeni* village is truly on the margins of the country, the province and the *Kudele* traditional council.

4. The research project

My hope for, belief in, and love for the way of life of rural indigenous African people does not suggest in any way that hope on its own can transform current oppressive realities in the village; rather “my hope is necessary but it is not enough ... We need critical hope, the way the fish need unpolluted water”. (Freire, 1994, Opening Words). This research project for us (the researcher, the Research Team (RT), Reflective Focussed Group (RFG) and the villagers) became a ‘place’ for critical hope in practice.

For the village community of *Ebunzimeni* the process of becoming is rooted in their communal participation in daily activities to meet their daily needs and in making plans for future realities, but moreover in fundamentally recognising themselves as a people with the same rights that all South Africans enjoy. It is this understanding that informed the research design for this research project. The research process was to become a learning place for all participants, including myself as researcher.

This participatory research project was a journey of community self-reflection on their own community learning ‘places’ through a research design that facilitated learning amongst and between community members in the exploration of their own participatory learning places. This participatory process is documented and presented through a rich, thick description in chapters five and six. The two chapters present the kinds of community learning places in the *Ebunzimeni* village (*isigodi*) and investigate how these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development. The research design as ‘place’ for learning for all is presented in Chapter 3 and 4, and termed triangulation through progressive expansion of a photo discussion model.

The key question for this study is: What is the nature of participatory community learning in Ebunzimeni community?

The Sub-questions are:

- How does this community participate in community activities?
- What learning occurs for adults within the community as a result of this participation?
- What other forces influence this adult learning?

- How does this learning inform community empowerment within this community?

The community based research approach took a period of a year. This process was facilitated through village members becoming co-researchers and collecting data from within their village and analysing that data within the village, a process which ensured that co-researchers were valued and were aware of their value. A year later this community-valuing and community-engaged process contributed to answering the key research question (What is the nature of participatory community learning in *Ebunzimeni* community?). But over and above this, the community began to dictate, analyse, critique, and challenge their own community learning places, deciding which kinds of learning facilitate humanisation processes and which are less useful.

The 'journey' was not only a community process of change, but also a researcher and research process change. Between when the research was conceptualised and the completion of its implementation, many changes had happened. For example, the paradigm that the research design was initially conceptualised in was a critical paradigm (see Chapter Three). The research style moved from ethnographic research to critical case study to ultimately Afrocentric, participatory research (see Chapter Four). Again, these shifts are indicative of the researcher's internal 'journey' and the difficult process the researcher has in finding the appropriate lenses. Through introduction to literature on Afrocentrism as a researcher, I found a new 'voice' and new 'language' to articulate that which I was doing. In retrospect, this research design was, in fact, originally conceptualised and implemented within Afrocentrism. There were never actually any changes – I simply didn't initially have the 'language' and the 'voice' to articulate what I was thinking. Once Afrocentrism found me I was able to report honestly about the research process and challenges that otherwise would not have been highlighted, as these are not traditionally part of research.

5. The Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study, particularly the practice of the research project, is the practice of critical hope. It "unveils opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on..." (Freire, 2004). It is

in hope and dreams that opportunities of growth and change are located. However, hope and dreams in poverty-stricken communities often arise out of lived experiences. One part of the rationale relates to my personal interest and long-term involvement at the research site. The second part concerns the context of rural (under)development, as has already been alluded to. The third aspect links to the state of scholarship on this crucial topic area and the fourth concerns a participatory methodological approach.

My interest in this area of study and in the research site is informed firstly by my long association and involvement with this community, which spans over 15 years in the context of community development. I have a keen interest in seeking ways to combat vulnerability and poverty within rural indigenous communities and in bridging the gap by contributing to the limited existing literature on community learning and localised community intervention models that derive meaning in the African socio-cultural context. It is my view that better understanding and application of African indigenous learning in community development programming will go a long way in addressing the challenges of neo-colonialism and apartheid legacies for rural African persons. This history was presented in the prologue.

The second focus of this rationale is the context of rural (under)development. Recent studies conducted in South Africa such as *Review of the KwaZulu-Natal Human Resource Development Strategy & The Development on an Implementation framework (2016-2030) (KZN Human Resource Development Council, 2016)*, and statements by prominent figures on critical issues affecting poor and marginalized communities indicate that there has been no significant improvement in people's lives (Landman, 2003; Mbeki, 2004; Human Rights Commission Report, 2003; Hlela and Land, 2006). Furthermore, some studies indicate that in some instances the situation is getting worse. For example, according to Statistics South Africa (2014), 21.7% of South Africans live in extreme poverty and 25% are unemployed. The 2014 Oxfam report states that inequalities in South Africa are greater today than they were at the end of apartheid. Yet this has sparked limited or no community action against these continuing injustices. Government funded projects such as the one mentioned above fail because of poor implementation and non-existent follow up through monitoring and evaluation of affected communities.

The third aspect of the rationale links to the state of scholarship and dependability of this scholarship on this crucial topic area. The academic contribution in this area of work within the research site's geographical area is vast, but skewed, and raises dependability issues. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), dependability issue is the extent in which research in a critical paradigm can demonstrate the shortcomings of studies located in other paradigms. In this instance, because of the location of this study within Afrocentrism, I will add culture related issues. I have come across many South African empirical studies that use the research site as case study in the context of conservation, such as Meer (2010), Ashley and Wolmer (2003), Jones and Naguran (2002), Jones (2006), and Potgieter (2008) to name but a few.

Meer (2010), for example, makes a significant conclusion in her study titled *Finding the community in community-based natural resource management: The case of Ndumo game reserve, South Africa*. She concludes, "Ndumo highlights importance of the historical legacies of colonisation and apartheid in the Maputaland area. Collective historical experiences of colonial and apartheid race and land policy, and related environmental racialisation have resulted in the local inhabitants developing and maintaining a primary negative view of conservation, as externally imposed, exclusionary, racist and often traumatic" (Meer, 2010, p. 117). In short, Meer did not find the community supportive of the current conservation approach to biodiversity conservation in the area. However, while the findings are critical, they are not new; the same findings are made by the rest of the studies. This therefore raises the question: Who benefitted from the research studies? By her own submission, she states that interviews and focus groups were conducted in English with the help of research assistants "as virtually no community members were conversant in English" (Meer, 2010, p. 56). As a researcher from Dalhousie University, Meer came into the community to extract the required information and departed, and the research participants' conditions remained the same.

Torquebiau, Dosso, Nakaggwa and Philippon (2010) in their study titled *How do farmers shape their landscape: A case-study in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*, state that the area

has recently been classified as part of a biodiversity hotspot and belongs to a transfrontier conservation area where human activities and nature conservation can

be combined. We specifically investigated how this situation can be turned into an advantage for the local residents who are small scale farmers often below the poverty line.” (Torquebiau et al., 2010, p. 2)

Again, a relevant study similar to that of Meer (2010) above, yet the same challenges present themselves: a short-term approach, lack of understanding of the socio-cultural context and the language barrier. Both of these studies highlight the fact that the area is now part of a biodiversity hotspot and transfrontier conservation area, suggesting lack of community participation and the need to help communities cope with this imposed reality. The purpose of the study seems to be an intervention to help communities explore alternatives to that which they have experienced all their lives. The reality is that local communities cannot be defined as farmers, as farming has always been an integral part of who they are. Farming describes only one aspect of their lives. The studies fail to highlight the fact that forced removals of the local community from the Osuthu flood plain impacted on key indigenous economic activities for this community – farming and rearing of livestock.

In short, studies in this area tend to focus on themes such as: (1) conservation and people, with a special focus on understanding the conflicts without necessarily resolving them; (2) conservation and development, focussing on possibilities and alternatives that conservation provides; and (3) key participants in all these studies being local communities, suggesting or creating a perception of a problem community. However, what is problematic with these studies from an Afrocentric point of view is the poor understanding of the socio-cultural context. This is demonstrated by a ‘shotgun’ approach – the use of interpreters resulting in compromised communication. Listed names of those conducting these studies indicate people who are likely to have white pigmentation, which, in the South African context (and particularly in the rural context), clouds the interaction, the relationship and therefore the data that can be drawn from participants. Over and above research design issues is the significance and the contribution of these studies to the affected communities. In the context of all these studies for example, relevant and critical finding such as Chitakira and Torquebiau (cited in Torquebiau, Dosso, Nakaggwa and Philippon, 2010, p. 14) state that “ongoing studies in the area reveal that people’s perception of the fencing off of the CCA is not always positive”. Yet the CCA continued without addressing these issues. This raises questions about the role

and significance of research, but furthermore, it questions the purpose of facilitating the CCA project against all odds.

The fourth and final aspect of the rationale concerns a participatory methodological approach. The need for this study arose from a community need. From the community's point of view the research was meant to have been an action research project whose focus was a total takeover of the CCA from *Emahlanzeni* NGO due to bad experiences and unmet promises. However, as indicated in the introduction, the compromise was an Afrocentric, participatory research project, as negotiated with the community. There were many political, economic and academic reasons for the compromise. Politically, the implementation of a trans-frontier project incorporating the research site was far more important to government than small dissenting communities. Academically, I would have had to deal with far more research issues, such as my positionality, validity and trustworthiness issues. Additionally, the research study is located in uncharted territory in our SA context by openly associating itself with Afrocentric ideology. I felt I had gone far enough in testing new ground, being mindful of an isiZulu warning, *idlozi liyabhekelwa* – even though we trust in the protection of our ancestors, one cannot be reckless; one still has to take some responsibility. Economically, it was going to be a challenge. Action research is about long term face-to-face interaction, but because of work commitments and the distance between where I live and the research site, this was not to be.

The research project focussed on facilitating a process of exploring the kinds of community learning that take place in the village and to investigate whether, how, and to what extent these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development. These places would include the CCA. Based on this understanding, my view was that through the research process and through reflecting on existing community activities, opportunities were created for the local community to (1) reflect on their daily activities, i.e. scrutinising daily community activities for learning purposes; (2) create a place for the local community to make judgements on what they learnt in each activity; (3) facilitate development of critical participants; (4) develop agency to bring about change and (5) encourage possibilities of knowledge transfer to challenge and change other places. In my view, understanding learning, learning processes and facilitation of learning in this community would not only help the

community understand themselves better as a learning community, but would also facilitate a true community owned, community benefiting and biodiversity sustained community conservation project in the area. Furthermore, participatory research as opposed to action research would be less confrontational with more opportunities for collective learning. This study seeks to understand participatory community learning in the *Ebunzimeni* village (*isigodi*) in relation to community participation. None of the studies have looked at this particular area. The previous studies have tended to be located within an interpretivist's paradigm, have resulted in minimal community benefit, but concluded with justifications for the existing development interventions.

I am particularly interested in the concept of learning as it is my belief that any intervention or participation facilitates learning through different learning 'spaces'. The most obvious is the formal space, which provides teaching and learning of what is planned or intended. The slippery and often hidden space of informal learning becomes a hidden curriculum for the participants. Foley (1993) views informal learning as a neglected area within the research on adult education. Livingstone (2001, p. 4) in agreement, states that "It is clear that both adults' informal education/training and their self-directed informal learning have been relatively little explored to date and warrant much fuller attention from those interested in comprehending the nature and extent of adult learning." This research project intends to contribute to scholarship through provision of an African perspective in the area of informal learning. There is a growing body of literature focussing on non-Western ways of meaning making, which will be presented in the next chapter, and this study seeks to explore this area of work.

Furthermore the research study seeks to contribute to programming in community intervention initiatives. Programming in community intervention programmes in Africa often draws uncritically on Western theoretical and programming (curriculum) frameworks, such as andragogy, constructivism, self-directed learning, experiential learning and many more. All of them are characterised by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning, informed by market imperatives, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. These theoretical and programming frameworks are then imposed on African 'places' of learning, in very much the same way as Colonialism and apartheid were imposed on Africa by Westerners and now

by Africans on Africa. Hence, in African contexts there is too often disjuncture between community development interventions that aim to promote independence and self-reliance, and the reality of community experiences and responses to these external interventions.

6. The structure of the thesis

Ordinarily the PhD thesis by publication is often made up of the first chapter which contains the introduction, rationale and literature review and the last chapter that seek to provide cohesion to the different papers sandwiched in between. This PhD by publication presents a slightly different case – it is made up of five full chapters and four papers; Chapter 1 (introduction), Chapter 2 (literature review and theoretical framework), Chapter 5 and 6 (rich, thick description), and Chapter 9 (discussion and conclusions) are all fully fledged traditional chapters while Chapter 3, 4, 7 and 8 are papers published or still to be published in accredited journals.

One major requirement of a PhD by research papers is that it must be a coherent thesis in content and format. This PhD endeavours to achieve this coherence using diverse devices. Firstly, all the chapters and papers in this thesis are based on a single research methodology covered in Chapter 3 and 4. Secondly, all chapters and papers are based on and use the same theoretical framework and literature review, as well as the rich thick description. Practically this means that in each paper methodology, literature review and the theoretical framework is further developed.

Chapter 1: Defining the rural African place and participants

The chapter presents a broad introduction to the study, thereby introducing key concepts that this study is based on, concepts such as place and space, the Afrocentric paradigm and the purpose of the research project. These concepts are further developed in Chapter 2. The chapter further presents the research site and the rationale of the study.

Chapter 2: I am an African

This chapter defines terms and concepts introduced in Chapter 1. This is a literature review chapter. The chapter becomes a place for the contribution to the Afrocentric depository of knowledge, as it reviews in the main an Afrocentric dominated literature. Furthermore, it is a

review that goes beyond just the African view of knowledge, meaning making or learning. Finally, the chapter unapologetically makes claims and position in the academic space for an Afrocentric perspective.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Paper 1 (a practice-oriented paper)

Participatory community learning approach: myth or reality?

Abstract:

Participatory community learning and/or research is a worldwide phenomenon which poses particular challenges in theory and in practice. Understanding this concept and how it is being facilitated in the rural African context could make a huge contribution to community facilitation, community learning and community project design within the African context. This paper is based on a research project into community learning in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Its purpose is to interrogate participatory learning as an approach to research in rural contexts.

Many authors from the Africanist tradition have argued that research agendas need to be “de-colonised”; the choice of data collection techniques should ensure respect of community values, indigenous knowledge systems and inclusivity; data-gathering and data analysis processes should go together as praxis, that is, community learning for action should be part of the process. This paper reflects the participatory data collection (PRA and Photo voice) and participatory data analysis methods (reflective focus group and community reflections) within the context of a qualitative research project located within an Africanist paradigm, which seeks to contribute to the development of an African scholarship discourse.

Positioning myself as a middle-class researcher and co-researcher in a community case study, I assess and critique the application of a participatory research approach within the context of rural illiteracy and poverty.

Key terms: Participatory community learning, indigenous knowledge systems, critical paradigm, research design and research techniques.

Chapter 4: Methodology: Paper 2 (a practice-oriented paper)

Learning through the action of research: The evaluation of a research design

Abstract:

Learning is a process of conscious or unconscious becoming, individually and/or collectively. The more conscious I am/we are of the process, the higher the possibilities of learning for action/reaction and change. This is consistent with an Afrocentric view of learning. In the research context, the researcher creates a conscious learning 'place' through research design. Key to this paper is a research design that created multiple humanisation learning 'places' for all participants including the researcher. Juxtaposed to these learning 'places' in an Afrocentric research design are traditional and hegemonic validity or trustworthiness issues.

Based on an empirical study this paper presents and reflects on an Afrocentric research design. It asks the question: To what extent did the research design facilitate Afrocentric values through or the researcher within himself, between the researcher and the research participants as well as among the research participants, while at the same time remaining true to the rigour of traditional research protocols. The paper concludes firstly that like any qualitative research the choice of an Afrocentric research paradigm and approach/method has a direct impact on research design, the nature of engagement and the consequences thereof, and that Afrocentrism still has major contributions to make particularly in the context of marginalisation and exclusion. Secondly that observation of trustworthiness protocols by an Afrocentric research design does not mean compromising foundational values but rather enhances the quality of scholarship.

Key terms: Afrocentric research design, trustworthiness, humanization, learning places and spaces.

Chapter 5: Rich Thick Description: Telling the truth and shaming the devil

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to make presentations of the historical and current contextual factors as possible pull and push factors in participation, and to participatory learning places in the village. Chapter 5 focuses on the presentation on the nature of learning in the village.

Chapter 6: Presentation of findings: Participation is a process of becoming umuntu

This chapter presents findings on the nature of learning in the village in the different individual and communal activities. Data were collected and analysed with the community by participating in PLA and the triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions.

Chapter 7: Paper 3 (adult learning arising from project case):

'We are born like that': Unpacking an indigenous African cultural practice as a community learning place.

Abstract:

Using the Afrocentric discourse this research project analysed and critiqued an African cultural practice as a learning place using photo voice in participatory research. The paper seeks to contribute to the discussion on community learning from an African perspective because often current dominant discussions are Eurocentric. Furthermore, it contributes to the re-adaptation and use of photo voice as a consciousness-raising participatory tool. The research project found the cultural practice to be empowering, a multiple site of indigenous learning and a place for new possibilities. Most importantly, the cultural practice sustains the sense of community, community identity and spirituality. We conclude that there is a need to build more organically on community-based knowledge and learning if community indigenous learning places are to be affirmed, redeveloped and recreated for the purposes of social inclusion in the globalising world.

Chapter 8: Paper 4 (Defining community learning from an African perspective)

Gaps and cracks: Redefining adult learning in the African context

Abstract:

Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks such as andragogy, experiential learning and transformative learning. These are informed by individualistic conceptions of learners, and learning shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. Such frameworks are then imposed on African "territories" of learning, much like a colonial template for carving up the continent, for and under Western eyes. This chapter challenges the appropriateness of these frameworks. It adopts an Afrocentric research paradigm which draws on Reviere's five canons of African inquiry. This

paradigm understands research as a collective and collaborative humanising project which is contextually sensitive and culturally informed. The chapter presents a participatory inquiry into community learning in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal. Its analysis of the communal practice of *Ukuhlanza amageke* (cleansing the yard) reveals learning as an informal, collective, holistic and intergenerational process that is strongly informed by cultural norms regarding age, gender, place and propriety. The chapter concludes by exploring the wider implications for adult learning studies in Africa.

Chapter 9: Discussions and conclusions

This chapter in a PHD through publication traditionally has one main purpose: to pull together all the chapters and papers in this thesis through general discussions and conclusions. This chapter also seeks to make an Afrocentric scholarly contribution in three areas: Afrocentric research methodology; theorisation of community learning; and development of an Afrocentric model of community education.

7. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter briefly presented contextual factors about the research site, and in the main, the rationale of this research project. It is my view that many rural communities in South Africa post-independence continue to be treated inhumanely by the new elite, and social, cultural and cognitive injustices are now naturalised and 'normalised'. For many this is how God made things to be. As Nyerere correctly points out, this cannot be true, and it is in learning that human beings come to change their lives.

Chapter 2: I am because you are

“African people for over 300 years have lived on the intellectual terms of Europeans. The African perspective has finally come to dinner.” (Asante, 1991, p. 42)

1. Introduction

Attempts to define adult learning from an African perspective have been made, but are still very limited. This is particularly so because innovation and creativity are stifled by the dominant hegemonic theorisation of adult learning that indirectly channels and influences how learning is understood and defined. This is based on the false view that knowledge can be free of its epistemic origins and therefore generalizable. Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks informed by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. It is for this reason that Afrocentrism will be explored.

Two types of approaches to theorization about adult learning emerge from within the continent, that which tests Westerns theories (outside-in) as well as that which seeks to develop theory from within (inside-out). The testing and exploration of transformative learning or communities of practice are good examples of Western theory-testing exemplified by the work of Merriam and Ntseane (2008), Ntseane (2011, 2012), Cox and John (2015) and many others. Theory generated from within the continent, such as Ntseane (2007), Modise (2011), Lekoko and Modise (2011), Pitokoe and Preece (2016), will be used in this chapter as it reflects the view of Asante’s quotation as an introduction for this chapter. However, to fully comprehend the epistemological and ontological matters, this chapter first presents Afrocentrism as an African lens to adult learning processes.

Afrocentrism as an ideological orientation for this research project is a result of an assumption that African people are who they are today in terms of how they perceive themselves as people, how they relate to others and to their context due to their histories and current realities. Important about this assumption is the significant role of learning in shaping the end result that is the African person today. From an Afrocentric view, dehumanisation of the African is a result of learning experiences (formal, informal and non-formal) that taught Africans that they were sub-human or 'problem people'. For this reason, defining and understanding learning and learning places is critical for the journey toward liberation and humanisation of human beings, not just for Africans. Consequently, Afrocentrism as a discourse was deemed relevant and appropriate to guide the study and this chapter.

Secondly, based on the assumption of the hybridity of knowledge, a 'third space' approach is adopted in the exploration of adult learning. Hybridity refers to a space where different meaning-making processes and knowledges meet and are accorded equal status (Kanu, 2009). This chapter seeks to contribute to the Afrocentric depository of knowledge through a review of literature particularly focusing on learning and learning processes from an Afrocentric point of view. It must therefore unapologetically be stated up front that literature reviewed here goes beyond just the African perspectives of knowledge, meaning making or learning, yet make claims for Afrocentrism in understanding the world we live in today. This view is based on the isiZulu saying: *yakhela ngamaqubu enye* (birds build their nest from other birds' feathers). Thirdly, and critical to state up-front, is that Afrocentrism does not argue for a return to the 'old' Africa; on the contrary, it embraces globalisation, but seeks a contribution from an African point of view. Afrocentrism therefore is not fundamentally opposed to globalisation, but rather to the dominance of some cultures and knowledges, and it is within this context that Afrocentrists and post-colonial discourse proponents unite on matters such as social, cognitive and cultural injustices.

Traditionally, in a PhD thesis by publication, literature review and the theoretical framework form part of Chapter 1. This is because the theoretical framework and literature review are often located in the individual component papers. For this research project the theoretical framework and literature review are the foundations from which each component paper

builds from. This chapter makes a presentation on Afrocentrism and predominantly African perspectives on learning.

2. Afrocentrism

This section ushers in Afrocentrism to the 'dinner table' by tracing its historical origins, philosophical underpinnings and finally highlighting the nuances of what constitutes Afrocentrism, its assumptions about human nature as well as human society.

2.1 The Pan African movement

Pan-Africanism briefly as a movement "was both an intellectual, social and political resistance against enslavement of the African person" (Oloruntoba, 2015, p. 10). The aim was to promote unity and solidarity amongst Africans within the continent, as well as those in diaspora, through political and cultural means and thus to advance the project of African liberation. Politically, Africans gave African perspectives to the colonial experience and its impacts on the continent and people. Colonialism was a "tragic encounter with the European world, from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into the first half of the twentieth" (Eze, 1998, p. 213). This indeed was a protracted period. The African take on the meaning and experience of colonialism gave a different picture from the dominant definitions, which were often inclined to focus on economic and political matters, by spotlighting the immeasurable impact colonialism had and continues to have on African people today. For example, Ngugi draws attention to the cultural aspects of domination:

Colonialism imposed its control of social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important domination was mental domination of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self- definition in relation to others. (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986, p. 16)

Eze of Nigeria describes Colonialism as

an indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples ... This is a period marked by the horror and violence of the transatlantic slave trade, the imperial occupation of most parts of Africa and the forced administrations of its peoples and the resilient and enduring ideologies and practices of European cultural superiority and racial supremacy. (Eze, 1998, p. 213)

Nandy comments that:

This colonialism colonizes the minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps to generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds. (Nandy, 1983, p. xi)

There are three critical reasons for the presentation of this commentary on colonialism from the Pan-African point of view: one, to show the variety of interpretations and impact on the African person; two, to show how colonialism has developed commonness amongst Africans in terms of dehumanisation; and three, it highlights the role of learning consciously and unconsciously in the entire process.

Furthermore Pan-Africanism argued for the commonness of culture amongst all Africans. Makgoba et al. (1999) argue for the uniqueness of the African people, their culture, their system of thought, belief system, technology, civilisation and science. As indicated the goal was therefore African liberation. Oloruntoba (2015) argues that the goal of Pan-Africanism was achieved through the attainment of African political liberation. However, Legun (1990) bemoans the fact that, in the post-colonial era, only three countries within the continent, that is, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Ethiopia, seriously attempted to make significant structural changes and developed new institutions with different political and economic programmes from those of the colonialists. However, leaders of these countries were either assassinated or become favourites of the International Monetary Fund. South Africa, the last country to gain independence in 1994, was no different: the first government policy that was socialist

inspired, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, was abandoned within two years for a more neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (Hlela and Land, 2003; Baatjes, 2003 and Bond, 2002). The realisation of continued colonial principles, values and cultures in all spheres of life post-independence under African leadership prompted the need for the generation of African knowledge. Such knowledge that seeks to attain African intellectual independence within a globalising world gave rise to Afrocentrism.

Post colonialism or neo-colonialism means

ongoing, controlling behaviours by former colonizing countries and other superpowers that include monetary controls, influences over educational institutions, conditional aid and the spread of global capitalist economies (Preece, 2009, p. 20)

Similarly, for Altbach (1995) neo-colonialism is about the continuation of the old, the retention of dependency and Western hegemony. The Afrocentric project indicated in Chapter 1 is the generation of African knowledge for the purposes of the attainment of real freedom for Africa, as well as providing an African contribution in the globalising world.

2.2 Defining Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse ... If we are adequately Afrocentric, the international implications will not be lost on us (Mafege, 2000, cited in Oloruntoba, 2015, p. 17).

From an Afrocentrist's point of view, this is a scholarship that implores African scholars to study their society as insiders with a view to challenge the dominant hegemonic practices as well as make an African contribution based on African epistemologies. It is about Africans naming their experience, defining it and deriving existence from that perspective (Oloruntoba, 2015; Tolliver, 2015; Hlela, 2016). Afrocentrism is a process of learning about the impacts of colonization on the African person, de-learning the psychological, cultural and social implications thereof and re-learning what it means to be fully human, embracing the significant values of the past and infusing relearned identity into all aspects of life. This process

of learning is about confronting liminality or conceptual otherness, that is, the view that the western person is human and the African person is less human (Gordon, 2011). This confrontation is referred to as black consciousness (Biko, 2004); self-consciousness, liberatory *praxis* or freedom (Fanon, 1968), or decolonising the mind (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2000). These processes suggest self-confrontation, introspection or intrapersonal dialogue that involves wrestling with the self. Consequently, Fanon (1968) views decolonisation (humanisation) as a violent process and Asante (1998), a revolutionary process.

Self-confrontation leads to critical consciousness, that is, a process of reclaiming identity, the self and the agency of representing the self or what Chilisa and Preece (2005) refer to as “a search for identity, a redefinition, and re-evaluation of the self and of Africa in the context of a globalising world” (Chilisa and Preece, 2004, p. 47). Fanon refers to critical consciousness as maturity of the human person, freedom which comes with responsibility, or being *actional* towards non-freedom, that is, taking responsibility to seek to change that which is unjust. Afrocentrism is therefore the most revolutionary and violent challenge to the African people themselves to date, in that: (1) it questions the imposition and retainment of the Eurocentric values on how Africans come to understand who they are in the world; (2) it creates places and spaces for an African paradigm of knowing; (3) it creates unfamiliar opportunities for an African ‘voice’ and therefore contributes to diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism; and (4) it articulates Afrocentricity as a valid, non-hegemonic perspective and so locates itself within the realm of cognitive, social and cultural justice, while protecting humanistic and pluralistic viewpoints (Dube, 2000; Makgoba, Shope and Mazwai, 1999; Asante, 1987, 1990; and Tolliver, 2015). Hence Asante, quoted in Williams (2005, p. 36), states that Afrocentrism –

poses as a revolutionary scheme because it challenges the fundamental taboo of a patriarchal, hierarchical, racialized society: the accepted dominance of one gender over the another, or one race over others. Thus, in its most authentic presentation, the Afrocentric idea is antisexist, anti-classist, antiracist.

The main project of Afrocentrism is humanisation of the African person, as well as generating and sharing African knowledge. Humanisation is the unpacking of the African journey from freedom to non-freedom and back to freedom in formal and non-formal education places

through critical engagement. The sharing and the development of African knowledge can be achieved through socio-culturally based research processes embedded in African epistemology, ontology and axiology (Reviere, 2001; Mkabela, 2005; Tolliver, 2015; Hlela, 2016).

Afrocentrism, which means African centred-ness, does not violently confront any person or people, but is a resolute attempt to put the records right. It is about placing African people within their own historical framework. It is a demand that the contributions of Africans in all areas of civilization be reflected in world history. (Onyewuenyi, 1993, p. 21)

Onyewuenyi's explanation of Afrocentrism above was made in defence of the ideology on claims that it was anti-West and anti-white. This approach to the definition and development of Afrocentrism has become a common trend amongst some Afrocentrists and as a result there are disparities within the ideology.

In short Afrocentrism, basically is against and committed to eradication of all forms of domination. In the main it questions Eurocentric epistemological and ontological considerations based on a generalisation of the Western or European context and culture, and which make claims for knowledge of the world through Western science alone (Asante, 1998). The non-hegemonic stance for some Afrocentrists positions the ideology in opposition to many established ideologies, but importantly, the disparities amongst Afrocentrists themselves – an area to be dealt with later.

2.3 The assumptions of Afrocentrism

Here a presentation of assumptions of the nature of the African person and society from an Afrocentric perspective is shared. These include values shared with other discourses such as lived experiences, humanisation and *Ubuntu*, which is uniquely Afrocentric. These shared and common experiences emanate from lived experiences and the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Hence the need to develop places, spaces, language and opportunities for Africans to be affirmed within a culturally diverse context that links broader structural and

cultural processes with the lived lives of local communities seeking explanations and answers from an oppressed point of view (Dube, 2000).

2.3.1 Shared values of social justice

In terms of values there is a close association between critical discourses and post-colonial discourses, mainly because they all engage with the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism, freedom and unfreedom, agency and change, consciousness and false consciousness, being and becoming. They share key common views on issues such as power, teaching and learning, concepts of a socially just world, cognitive justice, cultural justice and the possibility for change (Freire, 1975; McLaren, 1999; O'Sullivan, 2003; Allman, 2007; Giroux, 2010). There is an even closer relationship between Afrocentrism and post-colonial discourse because the latter emerged from Third World countries (Young 2001), it presents non-Western perspectives (Merriam and Kim, 2008) and is a tri-continental approach (Rukudwa and van Aarde (2007). According to Young (2003, p. 7), "post-colonialism seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between different peoples of the world." It is therefore about the effects and impacts of colonialism on local people as an ongoing experience during the post-colonial era in every aspect of life. It is about people seeking their identities and places to articulate their true freedoms. For Afrocentrism, this is a humanisation project.

The attainment of humanisation might lead to the articulation of utterance such as, "my life is worth as much as the settlers, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence, in fact, I don't give a damn for him" (Fanon, 1990, p. 35) or when Biko says, "when you say 'black is beautiful' what in fact you are saying to him is: man, you are okay as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being." (Biko, 2009, p. 115). Humanisation is not just about the African person or an African project, but an African contribution in all spheres of life. The next section focusses on *ubuntu* as critical contribution from Africa to the world.

2.3.2 Ubuntu values as common amongst Africans

Ubuntu is about valuing interdependence, interconnectedness of all things and spirituality as critical common values. This is the view of authors such as Dei (1994), Mji (2009), Smith

(1999), Chilisa and Preece (2005), Ngara (2007), Asante (1987, 1990), Reviere (2001), Lekoko and Modise, (2011), Preece, (2009), Pietersen (2005), Dei (2002), Mangaliso and Damane (2001), Mbigu and Maree, (1995), (1998), Nzelibi, (1986). *Ubuntu* states that a person is a person through others or 'I am because we are' expressed as *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* in Nguni languages, *buthu* in Pedi, *muntu* in Malawi or *Harrambee* in Kiswahili, *ujaama* in Tanzania (Ntuli, 2002; Preece, 2009; Ntseane, 2011). It is sometimes referred to as the African philosophy of humanism.

Umuntu, a human person according to Ramose (2002), is the maker of knowledge and truth passed on intra- and inter-generationally. The process of learning is about the attainment of two critical aspects of life: to be a member (*umuntu*) and living together (*ubuntu*). The ultimate goal and test is to do that which was meant to be – a member (*umuntu*) and living together in the context of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*, for Ramose (2002), Ngara, (2007) and Dei (1994) is *the* central ontological and epistemological category in African thought. Ontology refers to a way of viewing reality as a holistic view of life, the interconnectedness of all things (the living, the dead and the yet to be born) and spirituality. Articulated by Dei as –

informed by a holistic view of society, the significance of the individual in relation to the collective, the relationship between the yet to be born, the living and the dead and connection between the physical and metaphysical world. (Dei, 1994, p. 7)

In short, ontology is informed by context and culture. For Ramose (2002), epistemology, or ways of acquiring knowledge, is the interplay of the body, mind and spirituality in meaning making referred to as diunitism or diunital logic (Karanja, 2010; Ngara, 2007; Myers, 1988; Nobles, 1980). This also includes the use of symbols, song and storytelling to convey and pass on messages (Ngara, 2007; Bakari, 1997).

The underpinning principles of *Ubuntu* can be categorised into three sub themes as:

- Collective identity and the collective nature (ontology)
- The value of interdependence of all things (ontology)
- Oneness of mind, body, and spirit in meaning making (Epistemology)

The collective identity and the collective nature

In the African view the collective unity is indeed of benefit to the individual – what is good for the group is, or will eventually be, good for the individual (Nzelibi, 1986; Mbigu and Maree 1995; Mangaliso and Damane 2001; Hlela, 2014). The individual benefits from the safety of the group, provided through common values, customs, cultures and norms. In short, “the human person does not choose to enter into human community. That is, community life is not optional for any individual person; the human person is at once a cultural being...” (Gyekye, 1997, p. 320). This view is reflected through many African sayings such as ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. The responsibility of raising a child extends beyond the individual to the community. In Shona wisdom, *Kakova kanozara nemadirano* (the river is flooded by tributaries) – to get a more complete and realistic understanding of the world we need each other (Ngara, 2007). In isiZulu wisdom, *izandla ziyagezana* (hands wash each other) – we need to cooperate with each other to achieve more.

The value of interdependence of all things

Interdependence is defined beyond the view of human interconnectedness and includes “peaceful co-existence with nature and among groups” (Sefa Dei, 2002, p. 2). This is the same view expressed by Asante (1990, p. 83): “I am river, I am mountain, I am tree, I am emotion, I am beauty, I am lake, I am cloud, I am sun, I am sky, I am mind, I am one with one.” This is echoed by Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa in his ‘I am an African’ speech: “I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land.” (Mbeki, 1996. p. 1) and Nelson Mandela when he said, “Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld” (Mandela, 1996). This is the natural connection between human beings and nature, signifying the interdependence of all species. However, critical in this relationship is the role and responsibility human beings have in maintaining the balance and protection of other species, which is a prerequisite of being *umuntu* (human).

The spiritual nature of human beings

In Chile and Simpson’s (2004) view, spirituality echoes those values and beliefs that shape the meanings we make of our being and our purpose. It places humankind in a paradigm of time

that is larger than life at present; it connects the past, present and future, makes connections between individuals within the collective and human interdependence with nature. Spirituality dictates the interconnectedness between the yet to be born, the living, the natural environment and the dead (Dei, 2002; Chile and Simpson, 2004; Ngara, 2007; Preece, 2009; Ntseane, 2011; Lekoko and Modise, 2011 and Hlela, 2016).

The interplay between human beings and nature makes strong links between human beings and spirituality. In Eastern Africa for example, for the *Maasai* the most dominant spirit, *Lengai*, dwells in grass; for the Khoisan people in the South, spiritual power is located in the Shamans of rain and the eland, resulting in interconnectedness between man and his environment (Byers, 2012). For the Zulu nation, the origin of humanity is in grass (*umhlanga* means reed). Kings who are God-ordained are guardians of the nation and are not referred to by name, but instead by names of animals perceived to be powerful *Isilo* (leopard), *ngonyama* (lion) *Ndlovu* (elephant). For Africans, spirituality provides a way to value and make sense of the world.

The three assumptions above are foundational and have major implications for the African person in meaning making. This will be further developed later under the topic 'Diunital logic as a learning perspective'. What follows is a critique of Afrocentrism from within and outside of the ideology.

3. The dissenting voices

In this section, I acknowledge and engage opposing views to Afrocentric discourses and dilemmas within the discourses. Perhaps the harshest critique to Afrocentrism comes from within, for example Agada (2013), in his paper titled 'Is African philosophy progressing?', asserts that stagnation in the development and progress of African philosophy set in while it was at its development stage of ethnophilosophy, defining it as focussing on traditional world views of traditional African tribes. He lambastes African philosophers for depending on Western philosophers to produce knowledge. It is my view that the trajectory of African philosophy might have started with ethnophilosophy, but it has moved far beyond that. For example, Kaphagawani (2000) and Chilisa and Preece (2005) identify and highlight progress

in this area by presenting four emerging African categories of African philosophies. These are ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. These are presented in the table 2.1.

	Ethnophilosophy	Philosophic sagacity	Nationalistic-ideological philosophy	Professional philosophy
What is knowledge?	It is people's lived experiences based on their culture. Deposited and programmed in participatory activities such as language, culture, song, etc.	It is the formation and development of sages from long-lived experiences.	It concerns the humanisation of Africans (Aryanization and African renaissance).	It is the investigation and understanding of reality.
Who creates knowledge?	It is co-created through participation between people.	Sages – both men and women, based on their lived experiences; often God ordained and usually have no formal education.	Highly educated sages create knowledge.	African intelligence creates knowledge that must meet Eurocentric standards.
How is it created?	Through participation and facing up to daily challenges.	Lived experiences refer to observations, reflections, generalisations and diunitism.	African viewpoints are foregrounded. Hybridity and a 'third space' for non-Africans' perspectives.	Highly educated scholars through empirical studies.
Who owns it?	Collectively owned.	Owned by the sage.	Community and those who espouse the values reflected in that knowledge.	Highly educated scholars.

Table 2.1: Progress in African philosophy

As indicated above by Agada (2013), robust debates within and amongst Afrocentrists exist in terms of progress, the trajectory of that progress and strategies for the attainment of progress. However, Table 1 is fundamental in understanding these disparities. So, when Agada (2013, p. 242) makes the call that “we must be creative and original” in developing African philosophy, he locates himself within a particular philosophical orientation and his call is understood as such. As Table 1 and the rest of this chapter through literature review indicates, there has been a steady growth and development of this scholarship.

The second criticism is in regard to naming the philosophy. In Njeza's view, Afrocentrism is a "highly contested term understood differently by different people. It is used with many subtleties and nuances determined by each socio-cultural context" (Njeza, 1997, p. 47). Njeza's argument about different names was presented in Chapter 1, where Hill (1995) states that "Afrocentric, Africentric, or African-centred are interchangeable terms" (Hill, 1995, p. 4). However, Hill argues that commonness is derived from embeddedness in Africanness or shared culture. Furthermore, Njeza queries the assumption that culture is common amongst all Africans. This assumption is challenged by many; Eze (2014), for example, asserts that different people have different cultures everywhere, including Africans. In his view the African identity is a concept yet to be developed; hence the notion of 'Afropolitan' (Eze, 2014, p. 240). Afropolitan for me, as defined by Eze, defines African middle class, successful African individuals in diaspora and does not seek to unify but instead to divide.

The third and popular criticism is that it often locates itself in a 'write back' discourse and is therefore reactionary, often unclear and based on rhetoric (Appiah, 1997; Gandhi, 1998; Eze, 2014). To a large extent, the discourse does remain in the 'write back' discourse, repeatedly trying to prove how Africa and Africans have what it takes to match Western development. In Eze's view, the 'write back' thinking has led to two flawed generalisations: culture as a unifying factor and the presentation of Egypt as the flagship of African civilisation. Indeed, I concur that writing back stifles creativity and innovation. In trying to develop Afrocentrism, African writers continuously try to defend their contribution using the dominant hegemony. There is a need for a uniquely Afrocentric discourse. There is, however, inconsistency in my argument because in Chapter 1 I projected hybridity or the 'third space'. All the same, I do agitate for a diverse approach towards development of African philosophy and theorisation based on the isiZulu saying *yakhela ngamaqubu enye* (birds build their nest from other birds' feathers). For me, the best approach in moving scholarship forward is in finding cracks and gaps in the dominant discourses and creating place and space for an Afrocentric discourse.

The fourth criticism that needs attention (and builds from the third one) is that of presenting Egypt as the flagship of African civilisation. In Appiah's (1997) view, the attempt by many Afrocentric authors to present Egypt as the flagship of African civilisation is an attempt to meet Eurocentric hegemonic standards. This approach has created spaces for criticism of the

discourse, for example Mary Lefkowitz (1979) in her book *Not out of Africa: Afrocentrism an excuse to teach myth as history*, presents how misinformation and incorrect information are passed on as facts in the quest for Africans to own civilisation and thereby be comparable with Eurocentric hegemonic standards. In Lefkowitz' view, Afrocentrism has created spaces for incorrect history to be taught, where Afrocentric professors overseas make claims over certain events or people as being African, when there is no evidence for such claims. In Appiah's (1997) view, projecting Egypt as the flagship of African civilisation is acknowledgment of the hegemonic standard that defines civilisation, where many African countries do not meet these Egyptian standards and can therefore never serve as show pieces. For him, Afrocentrism must seek to challenge the Eurocentric model of world history. In my view, Afrocentric discourse has a special and specific task and that is for Africans to find themselves as persons of African descent, deal with the effects of colonialism and find a space in the global context to thrive, thereby informing and shaping the world and moving forward as equals.

The fifth, and perhaps the biggest, critique of the Afrocentric paradigm is that it is a theory of oppositionality, a theory that embraces victimhood and racist theory that seeks to apportion blame to Europeans for the failures of Africa and African people (Onyewuenyi, 1993). Lefkowitz (1979) claims that her book was written as a consequence of incorrect facts and myths that were being perpetuated. Perhaps more important is the fact that the Afrocentrists involved were not prepared to engage in debates to defend their views, responding only by branding opposing views as racist. Many authors, as already presented, argue profusely that Afrocentrism is not based on racism, but rather on cultural, cognitive, environmental and social injustices originating from colonial experiences and continued through neo-colonialism. This view is challenged by others such as Ahmad, who argues that "we should speak not so much of colonialism or post-colonialism, but of capitalist modernity, which takes the colonial form in particular places and at particular times" (Ahmad, 1995, p. 7). This view negates "the 'rape' of Africa and denial of African identity and the foisting of western thought and cultural realities and perspectives on Africans" (Chukwuokolo, 2009, p. 34). It is my view, and that of most Afrocentrists, that history informs who we are today. Therefore, engaging in the Ahmad debate is a futile exercise which, if entertained, evokes emotional responses which then spotlight issues of race and oppositionality.

Finally, there seems to be an obsession with the need for everyone to think alike and embrace the same Western value systems, raising the question: why can't people be left to be? Afrocentrism is about unity in diversity (Goduka, 1999; Ngara, 2007). In my view, Afrocentric discourse is a theory that acknowledges the legacy of colonial history in Africa and it provides a 'window' to imagine Africa in the absence of this colonial experience. It is a theory that continues to be developed and redeveloped, shaped and informed by other theories. The African reality of wars, famine, child trafficking, ill health, poverty, cannibalism, illiteracy, underdevelopment and instability continues to inform this theory. It refuses to accept the view that Africans were born this way, but instead that these problems were created by a process that can be reversed.

In conclusion, Afrocentrism implores African scholars to conduct research as insiders because for a long time African people have been studied from an outside-in position, both by Westerners as well as African scholars. Consequently 'Africa' or 'African' became defined as primitive and barbaric, for example in Ong's (1977) book, *Transformations of the World*, the 'dark continent' or 'terra incognita' (land without culture or mind) or the 'pure savage/noble savage' view (Ngara, 2007). This resulted in false dichotomies developed and maintained such as "intellectual versus emotional, rational versus mystical, reality-oriented versus fantasy-oriented, casually oriented versus supernaturally oriented, empirical versus non-empirical, abstract versus concrete, analytical versus non-analytical (Horton, 1969, p. 50-71). It is these false perceptions and dichotomies that have informed curriculum and programming for Africa, converting African scholars to being outsiders in their own socio-cultural context and therefore accomplices to the false perceptions and dichotomies.

Afrocentrism is about learning to be human again. It acknowledges how, through learning and participation, hegemonic practices are ingrained, facilitated and maintained and how past experiences, the impacts of colonialism and the education systems we went through were critical in shaping who we are today.

4. Perspectives on adult learning

As indicated, studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks informed by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning, shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. The second approach is to build theory from within. This section seeks to present a review of the second approach to theorisation of learning by highlighting the different epistemologies and ontologies.

In my view, Fenwick and Tennant (2004) provide summation of the existing and dominant learning theories which provide cracks and gaps for Afrocentric discourses. The summation is as follows:

- A. learning as acquisition lens, “understands knowledge as a substantive thing ... that an individual obtains through learning experiences”;
- B. learning as reflection lens focuses “on learners as active constructors of knowledge, creating new meanings and realities, rather than ingesting pre-existing knowledge”;
- C. the practice-based community lens “focuses more on people’s ability to participate meaningfully in everyday activities within community of practice than their mental meanings”;
- D. and lastly, learning as an embodied co-emergent process “challenges people-centred notions to portray learning as emerging in the relationships that develop among all people and everything in a particular situation – people, spatial arrangements and movements, tools and objects” (Fenwick and Tennant, 2004, p. 56).

The intention here is not to make a claim for one or the other theory, but to highlight how outside-in adult learning theorisation has found cracks of opportunities to test these theories within the continent and thereby contribute to the development of African perspectives to adult learning. Many authors from within Western perspectives such as Brookfield (1995) and Fenwick and Tennant (2004) have questioned learning as a cognitive, internal and

individualistic process. Within the continent there is a gap in literature and empirical studies focussing on the A lens.

The B lens, as reflected by the seminal work of Jack Mezirow's transformative learning, continues to influence theorisation of adult learning and education internationally amidst heavy criticism, particularly on the basis that it is an individualist, internalised process (Merriam and Ntseane, 2008; Taylor, 2007). However, research in different contexts has further contributed to redeveloping transformative learning to be applicable and relevant in different socio-cultural contexts. For example, Taylor's (2007) work titled, *An update of transformative learning theory: a critical review of the empirical research (1999-2005)* is a demonstration of how this theory, through testing in different contexts, has developed and moved beyond the limits of A and B lenses to include C and D. This development has created opportunities for diverse empirical studies in diverse contexts.

Transformative learning as located within A and B lenses, according to Taylor (2007), is referred to as psycho-analytic or neurobiological, that is, an individualised, lifelong journey of learning, one's coming to understand oneself, or changing of brain structures. C and D lenses, on the other hand, are referred to as cultural-spiritual, race-centric and planetary- focused transformative learning, suggesting a holistic approach, recognition of socio-cultural context and power relations in learning. This analysis of transformative learning has created opportunities for empirical studies and theorisation within the continent, for example, Merriam and Ntseane's (2008) study of the Batswana people in Southern Africa. The study, located in an Afrocentric paradigm, found that disorienting dilemmas triggered transformative learning, a common factor in all other studies. However, their study highlighted the connection between culture and spirituality as shapers of meaning making. This is a fundamental acknowledgement of a key process in African indigenous learning (AIL). This will be dealt with later.

Cox and John (2015) in their study used transformative learning as a theoretical lens to understand learning in a non-formal education programme. Contrary to the Merriam and Ntseane (2008) study, they concluded that in an abnormal context such as in South Africa where African people's lives are continuously disrupted by apartheid and the consequences thereof, including physical violence and structural violence such as poverty, disruptions are

normalised rather than catalytic. They conclude that transformative learning does take place, but suggest that traumatic experiences might not be the only triggers to transformative learning. Cox and John's (2015) study indirectly highlights the commonness of continued dehumanisation of African people. Significantly though, it indicates that socio-political and cultural contexts play a critical role in meaning making. Similarly, Ntseane (2011) through her study of the Batswana people argues that transformative learning can be a collective process that incorporates African indigenous learning characteristics. Critically, she draws on the African ontology which she refers to as I/we notion of meaning making. The empirical studies presented demonstrate a symbiotic relationship in the development of transformative learning theory as well as African indigenous learning (AIL).

The C lens is reflected by the work of Lave and Wenger (1999) on situated cognition and communities of practice (CoP). In the main, the CoP is a collective process of people sharing common concerns and interests in doing something; they meet regularly to deepen their understanding and improve their practice (Wenger, 1999, 2006). Learning in the CoP relies on the partnership, structures and processes external to the individual context (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). Learning is a process of movement of the CoP participant from the periphery to the centre (John, 2006). Learning in the CoP is often described as physical participation in a group. Preece (2012) argues that in the highly advanced and technological world in which we live, CoP participants might not meet face to face.

At lot of empirical CoP studies have been conducted on the continent. Unlike transformative learning, empirical studies on CoP seem to have been imposed on the African context as practical solutions. There has almost been a 'policing' approach to what CoP is or is not, as reflected in John's (2004) article titled 'Community development research: merging (or submerging) communities of practice? A response to Van Vlaenderen'.

The same approach presented itself in Ghana. Anyidoho (2010), while critiquing the homogeneous approach in defining community, presented CoP as model of development. Conversely, in the application of the theory, Islam (2012) in the South African context found that the context within the CoP is also shaped by other dynamics such as race, culture and social class. His study suggested that the movement from the periphery is not standardised for everyone. In the SA context, a shift in the application of CoP studies is emerging. Studies

using CoP are demonstrating a class character, for example teachers, academics and other professions are reflected in studies by Leshem (2007), Cuddapah (2011), Cowan (2012), Jita & Mohlele (2013), Preece (2014) and many more. Preece (2014) and Jita & Mohlele (2013) provide a useful literature review of these studies.

The point I make here is that participation in the CoP is increasingly characterised particularly as the pursuit of knowledge, as reflected in Jita & Mohlele (2013), driven by individualistic goals as well as power, status and economic factors. Secondly, studies of CoPs seem to take a deductive approach and therefore do not seem to contribute much towards the development of AIL, as opposed to the transformative learning studies which seem to take a grounded approach towards theorisation.

This section therefore does not question the relevance of transformative learning or CoP within the continent; on the contrary it highlights how, for example, transformative learning through empirical studies has contributed from an outside-in perspective. This is less so in the case of CoP empirical studies. Advancement of adult learning theorisation through empirical studies, based on theories developed from outside the content, should adopt an approach grounded in the African context, testing and challenging African ontology and epistemology for the development of that theory as well as AIL. This argument is developed in the next section by reviewing literature that demonstrates the essence of the different perspectives.

4.1 Towards defining African indigenous learning: Working towards the D lens

This section seeks to highlight values that characterise African Indigenous Learning (AIL) in the table 2.2. The table does not seek to create a dichotomy, but rather summarises and highlights the underlying philosophical underpinnings.

Eurocentric	Afrocentric
Focus	
Individualistic: Freedom and autonomy.	Grounded in communal values informed by human interaction. Interdependency, group solidarity or participation is often localised. (Lekoko & Modise,2011; Pietersen, 2005; Mangaliso & Damane, 2001; Mbigu & Maree, 1995)

What is good for the individual growth and development is or will eventually be good for the organisation and society (Pietersen, 2005).	What is good for the group is or will eventually be good for the individual (Pietersen, 2005). “The human person does not choose to enter into human community, that is, community life is not optional for any individual person; the human person is at once a cultural being ...” (Gyekye, 1997, p. 320)
Major influence	
Lens A – Kolb (1984) Lens B – Mezirow (1994) Lens C – Social learning theory (social cognitive theory) – Bandura (1986); Person-centred approach – Rogers (1979, p 1). Situated Cognition – Emphasises participation, doing or human activity – Lave and Wenger (1991); Brown, Collins and Duguid, (1989)	Indigenous African Knowledge (IAK) does not derive its origins or standing from the individual, but from the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of community (Zulu, 2006; Semali, 1999 and Telda, 1995). Community centred approach – Influenced by Nyerere (Tanzania) through the initiation of <i>ujaama</i> , Nkrumah (Ghana) expressed through Nkrumaism or African Socialism, Fanon (Algeria), Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Kenya)
Purpose of learning	
Serves the economy (Bhola, 2002; Meriam & Kim, 2008) Secular society (Chile & Simpson, 2004)	One cannot be human alone (Nzelibi, 1986; Mbigu & Maree 1995, Mangaliso & Damane 2001). Sacred society (Chile & Simpson, 2004) <i>Ubuntu/buthu</i> (Preece, 2009; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000) Dinuitism (Karanja 2010; Ngara, 2007) – Spirituality in the meaning making process (Pitikoe & Preece, 2016; Ntseane, 2011; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008)
The role of the elders	
Elders not valued (Jarvis, 1995; Pietersen, 2005)	Elders are valued for their wisdom, experience, teaching and leadership (Preece, 2009; Diouf, Sheckley & Kehrhahn, 2000) ‘respecting and reviving the wisdom of elders’ (Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000, p. 6)
Character – community learning	
“just having a little chat.” (Falk & Harrison, 2006) “individual acting in the world” (Maynard, 2001, p.41). action-reflection-action (Freire, 1975) Consciousness of learning (Mezirow (1994; Freire, 1975) Newtonian logic (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Karanja, 2010)	‘sitting next to Nellie” (Lekoko & Modise, 2011) “the learning taken for granted” (Odora Hoppers, 2009) Communal (values, culture, customs, and traditions), lifelong and informal, holistic or spiritual collectivism (Merriam & Kim, 2008; Ntseane, 2007). Embedded in real life, holistic. Conscious and unconscious (Pitikoe & Preece, 2016; Hlela, 2014) Diunital logic (Karanja, 2010; Ngara, 2007)

Table 2.2: Contrasting Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives on learning

The inside-in approach to theory development is informed by the view that there is so much that we still do not know and understand about adult learning. In Brookfield's (1995) and Fenwick and Tennant's (2004) view, there is so much written on adult learning, yet we are far from a collective understanding of adult learning. Secondly, there is no one best theory that explains learning (Brookfield, 1995; Fenwick and Tennant, 2004; Foley, 2004; Merriam and Kim, 2008). The tensions between Eurocentric and Afrocentric views of learning can be seen in relation to the current concept of lifelong learning. The North/Western or Eurocentric perspectives reflected in the table 2.2 define what lifelong learning (LLL) is. Youngman (2006) argues that the concept of LLL arose in the North due to economic and technological changes demanding training and retraining. Again, Duke and Hinzen (2008) lament the fact that neo-liberal individualism propels LLL and that LLL has been relegated to slogans and rhetoric in the South. Similarly, Preece (2009) argues that the South has its own context-specific purpose and origin of LLL. This view is elucidated by Lekoko and Modise (2011), when they argue for African indigenous learning's (AIL) inclusion into how LLL is conceived and implemented through programmes within the continent. Most recently Pitikoe and Preece (2016) also make recommendation for AIL inclusion in programming for learner retention purposes.

Many authors such as John (2015), Hlela (2014), Lekoko and Modise (2011), Preece (2009), Ntseane (2007), Semali (1999) and Telda (1995) have made significant contributions in this area and identified key characteristics through their conclusions such as (1) that AIL derives its geneses from the collective ontological understanding and explanation of community; (2) the value of interdependence of all things and the oneness of the mind, body and spirit inform epistemology; (3) AIL is about what indigenous people know and do and what indigenous communities have known and done for generations in and through indigenous knowledge systems; (4) the ability to use community knowledge produced from local history forms important learning skills critical to subsistence in an African context; (5) what indigenous people know about their milieu must be included in the planning and implementation process of education and community intervention programmes and (6) this knowledge is passed on "tacitly, inter-generationally, and intra-generationally" (Bhola, 2002, p. 8).

Despite all these studies, AIL continues to be categorised as socialisation, suggesting that it is not formal or is non-formal learning. The argument here however is that AIL goes beyond the

realm of informal learning to formal and non-formal learning. This position is supported by Zulu (2006), Teffo (2000) and Ki-Zerbo (1990). In their view, knowledge in Africa existed long before the Islamic and Christian conquests. In his paper titled *Critical Indigenous African Education and knowledge*, Zulu (2006) demonstrates how African indigenous knowledge and African adult learning are old, scientific and technologically complex. For him it is a myth that there were no scripts in Africa, that there was no science or technology before Islamic or Western influence. It is well documented that there were many written scripts and civilizations in Africa (as described in *The African Origin of Civilization* by Cheikh Anta Diop, 1974). In fact, Ki-Zerbi argues that it is from within the continent that the first literacy and schooling emerged. What was learned transcended local knowledge through scripts and institutions of learning. For example, in the Western Sahara scripts were used to “1) meet the demands for long distance trade, (2) allow merchants a way to keep records of their business transactions, (3) preserve religious doctrine, and serve as (4) a method to record obituaries” (Winter, 1991, cited in Zulu, 2006, p. 39). This implies portability of knowledge, shared interests in what was to be learned for shared use and consumption, and forms of organised learning.

The assertion is therefore that AIL is formal, informal and non-formal learning. Its ultimate purpose is the facilitation of *ubuntu* values, or cooperation, social cohesion, conformation to societal order, respect and skill development or “to produce useful members of society – educating for good character, health and good knowledge about the community’s history and beliefs (Preece, 2009, p. 39). The purpose was therefore the production of *umuntu* (human person) who is able to live *ubuntu* (African humanism) (Hlela, 2015; Lekoko and Modise, 2011; Pietersen, 2005; Mangaliso and Damane, 2001; Mbigu and Maree, 1995; Gyekye, 1997; Nzelibi, 1986; Fafunwa, 1974).

The next discussion area of AIL focuses on its epistemology, related to the oneness of the mind, body and spirit, and informed by spirituality in meaning making, which is often overlooked. Song, totems, cultural ceremonies, myths and poetry are important vehicles for transmission and storage of knowledge (Zulu, 2006). Ngara (2007) argues that these are created from a spiritual relationship with knowledge. This relationship is often misunderstood. For example, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define myth as “stories or

beliefs that are passed down through generations – for instance the belief that frogs make lightning ... Myths are generally not true” (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014, p. 7). However, understood from an Afrocentric outlook, myths are an important source of knowledge by drawing on spirituality and ‘practical science’ located in the value of interdependence and interconnectedness of all things. Africans know that frogs can never make lightning, the myth is to instil fear in those who might seek to kill a frog. The myth reflects a deep understanding that God created frogs for a particular purpose in the universe and thus there is an understanding of the need for the protection and conservation of frogs and the recognition of their significance in the ecological system. The logic is both scientific as well as spiritually based and an important component of life in making sense within that context. This is the union of opposites, or diunitism, and our challenge is to bring them into relationship. This view does not in any way suggest a harmonious relationship between the two.

Diunital logic is an African system of thought that is in stark contradiction to Newtonian logic, otherwise known as cause and effect logic or the use of one’s mind in reasoning out a problem, as it incorporates and recognises the role of a higher being in our lives – spirituality. Diunitism embraces Newtonian logic (Karanja, 2010; Ngara, 2007; Myers, 1988; Nobles, 1980). As indicated above, diunital is ‘both ... and’ rather than ‘either ... or’ and all-inclusive, it is “something apart and united at the same time” (Karanja, 2008, p. 13). Horton (1967), cited in Ngara (2007), refers to diunital logic as the personal idiom of spiritual wisdom, while Ngara (2007) refers to spirituality-centred wisdom. He makes strong connections between African spirituality and extra-cognitive phenomena. Extra-cognitive refers to “a particular cognitive mode of human thinking that appears in advance of any logical, conscious account of any individual’s intelligence” (Shavinina & Seeratan, 2004, p. 93). In their view, extra cognitive phenomena are characterized by a mixture of feeling, preferences, beliefs as well as intuitive processes. From an Afrocentric point of view this is the dialogue with spirituality – a dialogue between the individual, a collective belief system and God.

An example comes from a study by Merriam and Ntseane (2008) in Botswana. They record one devoted Christian participant’s processing and making sense of her husband’s suicide:

She not only examined her assumptions that there had to be a reason that he did it; she struggled with what she called ‘African things’ as the cause: “... because where he

was working, a co-worker went into her husband's office and called in witchdoctors." She went on to say, "Why did this (suicide) happen? My husband was a very strong believer. Why did this happen?" (Merriam and Ntseane, 2008, p. 190)

The work of Gambu (2000), studying ethical decision-making amongst nurses within the South African context, is another example of this diunital logic. Here Gambu was interested in the traditional African worldview and how it continues to impose itself in the nursing practice. The nurse in question had examined a 50-year-old patient and could not see anything medically wrong with the patient. The nurse reflects:

Nurse: The conflict was also the fact we as black people have our own beliefs and customs while at the same time in our training we are taught what to do, which is different to our beliefs. But we at the same time know that there are customs which we should follow, so the (ethical dilemma) for me was not knowing what to do.

Gambu: What did you eventually do?

Nurse: I secretly told her to consult a traditional healer ... I consoled myself that I had done the right thing ... I know that there are things that cannot be cured at the hospital...

In both examples the protagonists were trained, enculturated and assimilated into the Newtonian logic of their practices or beliefs, but when it mattered most they diverted to diunital logic spaces and seemed to derive meaning out of that engagement. Diunital logic for most present-day Africans is an uncomfortable, contradictory, confrontational and contested space between the 'western' person and the African person. To a non-African this is the most illogical space of meaning, yet very important in acknowledging spirituality or powers beyond our human limits.

4.2 Defining concepts that inform learning

This section seeks to define relevant concepts that help give voice to the process of learning such as place, space, participation, formal, informal and non-formal learning. In defining these concepts, it is important to see the interconnectedness as well as the boundaries between them for one to fully understand them.

As indicated, theorisation of adult learning and/or community learning often prioritises consciousness of learning and therefore is biased towards only two of the three conceptions of learning, that is, formal and non-formal learning. Below is a short presentation on the three conceptions with specific focus on informal learning, which is often poorly defined. However, this conception of learning is particularly relevant for this study.

I draw from the work of Alan Rogers (1992 & 2014) and The European Commission (2001, cited in UNESCO, 2009):

Formal learning: Formal learning occurs as a result of experiences in an education or training institution with structured learning objectives, learning time and support which leads to certification. Formal learning is intentional from [both] the learner's [and the institution's] perspective[s].

Non-formal learning: Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning: Informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It may be intentional, but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or incidental/random) [and frequently unconscious] (UNESCO, 2009, p. 27). See also Schugurensky's typology of informal learning (Rogers, 2014, p. 8)

For the purposes of this chapter I pay particular attention to the informal conception of learning. The typology of informal learning as self-directed learning, incidental learning and socialisation presented here are drawn from the work of Rogers (2014), Schugurensky (2000), Livingstone (2001), Marsick & Watkins (1990) and Foley (1993).

Self-directed learning, according to Brookfield (1985), is not highly structured, but is intentional (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Rogers (2014, p. 8) calls it 'task-conscious learning'. It suggests intentionality, consciousness and willingness towards learning on the part of the learner. Incidental learning is incidental through participation in different activities. Schugurensky (2000) defines this learning as learning that the learner did not have any

previous intention of learning, but learning does nevertheless take place. It is unintentional but conscious. Marsick and Watkins (2001, p. 15) define incidental learning as learning “taken for granted, tacit, or unconscious”. Finally, socialization is very similar to incidental learning; it is tacit learning, but significantly, it entails the internalization of values, attitudes, and behaviours in a particular community.

A distinction between place and space is made in learning whether it is formal, non-formal or informal. Learning or meaning making is place bound. Tuana, cited in Rule (2004, p. 325) makes a useful distinction between place and space: “space is the more abstract concept that implies movement and freedom; place, on the other hand, implies ‘pause’ rather than movement, and is a concrete objective ‘in which one can dwell’” or a ‘site’ (Rigney in Erll, Nunning et al., 2008). Place therefore is a physical site or a geographical place where participation, learning or meaning making takes place. For the purposes of this section a very close association is made between learning and participation. For that reason, place is where participation happens. Place in formal and non-formal learning is often clearly distinguishable from other places and therefore the different roles of learner and teacher are defined.

Meaning making in participation places is processed and facilitated in different spaces of learning individually or collectively through conscious or unconscious processes, or what Rule (2004 & 2015) refers to as ‘dialogic learning spaces’ that is inter-personal space and intra-personal space. In Rule’s view the inter-personal learning ‘space’ is created as people engage with each other; ‘intra-personal’, is the ability to engage with oneself in dialogue. Importantly, these spaces facilitate learning in formal, non-formal and informal learning and these processes can be conscious or unconscious to the learner, within the individual as well as amongst individuals in the group.

Participation as a concept is a key theme of this thesis. Participation is presented as fundamental to learning, relearning and de-learning; it is a critical process of becoming *umuntu* (a human person) and at the same time it is a process for liberation or oppression. Conceptualisation of learning as participation is well documented and argued from the perspectives of social learning theorists, situated cognition theorists, critical discourse theorists and Afrocentric theorists. From a situated cognitive perspective, participation is viewed as learning (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1990, 1991; Brill,

2001; Maynard, 2001). From a critical pedagogy theorist's point of view, participation is a contested space of learning (Freire, 1975; Gadotti, 1996; McLaren, 1999; Williams, 2001; Rule, 2004; and many others) and from an Afrocentric perspective, participation is the practice of *ubuntu* (African Humanism) which reflects the values of collectivism, interconnectedness of things and spirituality (Hlela, 2014; Lekoko and Modise, 2011; Pietersen, 2005; Mangaliso and Damane, 2001; Mbigu and Maree, 1995; Gyekye, 1997).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented Afrocentrism as a lens which this research project will utilise, further discussing its epistemological and ontological foundations. On this basis, African perspectives to adult learning were discussed. Finally, key concepts in defining learning were presented. As Asante (1991, p. 21) states, Afrocentrism has “finally come to dinner”. This chapter attempted to locate Afrocentrism as a space on the theorisation dinner table of adult learning. The literature reviewed indicates a desperate need for contributions to develop an Afrocentric conception of learning. I end with the words of Steven Bantu Biko uttered in the context of a dream for the African person to be free in South Africa. I use his words to evoke the spirit of hope –

We believe that in the long run, the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face. (Biko, 1978, p. 51)

Chapter 3: Methodology: Paper 1 (a practice-oriented paper)

*Participatory community learning approach:
myth or reality?*

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Abstract:

Participatory community learning in research is a worldwide phenomenon which poses particular challenges in theory and in practice. Understanding this concept and how it is being facilitated in the rural African context could make a huge contribution to community facilitation, community learning and community project design within the African context. This paper is based on a research project into community learning in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Its purpose is to interrogate participatory learning as an approach to research in rural contexts.

Many authors from the Africanist tradition have argued that research agendas need to be “de-colonised”: the choice of data collection techniques should ensure respect of community values, indigenous knowledge systems and inclusivity; data-gathering and data analysis processes should go together as praxis, that is, community learning for action should be part of the process. This paper reflects of the participatory data collection (PRA and Photo voice) and participatory data analysis methods (reflective focus group and community reflections) within the context of a qualitative research project located within an Africanist paradigm, which seeks to contribute to the development of an African scholarship discourse.

Positioning myself as a middle class researcher and co-researcher in a community case study, I assess and critique the application of a participatory research approach within the context of rural illiteracy and poverty.

Key terms: Participatory community learning, indigenous knowledge systems, critical paradigm, research design and research techniques.

Introduction

Participatory community learning in research are a worldwide phenomenon which poses particular challenges in theory and in practice. Understanding this concept and how it is being facilitated in the rural African context could make a huge contribution to community facilitation, community learning and community project design within the African context.

Although this paper is not a research study, it is a reflection on real research experience and draws on empirical data for its analysis. The paper is based on a doctoral study, which started off as a critical case study of community learning in *Ebunzimeni* village (*isigodi*) one of the fifteen villages within the Kudele Traditional Council (KTC) located in *uMkhanyakude* District Municipality in *Maputaland*, Northern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) South Africa. The purpose of the paper was to explore whether or not participation in a research process was a myth. The paper positions the research site, the researcher and the researched as variables within a social context, participating in a continuous participatory learning process. Using the critical paradigm the paper presents and explores a participatory research design fraught with ambiguities, challenges of what participatory community research mean in practice in a rural African context and the assumptions the academia make of rural people. We are reminded of Fraser's (1996) book titled 'learning from experience: Empowerment or Incorporation? In this instance we ask - participatory community research: Empowerment or incorporation? Conversely, participatory community research; myth or reality? The paper begins by giving a brief context of the study, the critical paradigm, discussions and concludes that participation in and through research process is possible.

Context

The Kudele Traditional Council (KTC) has a strong traditional council and is one of the most infrastructural disadvantaged areas in the Maputaland region. This area is characterised by underdevelopment, poverty, high illiteracy levels, and lack of infrastructure, ill-health and unemployment as well as being isolated from the rest of the country. The *Ebunzimeni* village, the research site is the most affected of all the fifteen villages. The greatest strength and opportunity for the area is the proximity to two major wildlife reserves (*Ndumo* Game Reserve, *Tembe* Elephant Park and a Transfrontier park) (Hlela, 2007).

The purpose of the PHD research project was to understand the kinds of community learning that took place in this community and to investigate whether, how and the extent to which these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development. The intention was to raise awareness among the community to different types of community learning places particularly those that contribute positively to community development, empowerment and coherence. The intent being that the community will transfer lessons learnt in these learning places to those that they feel do not contribute positively to community development.

Data collection and analysis as a practice of community learning took place over a period of a year. Data was collected and analysed in and with the community by the researcher with the assistance of a research team at different times of the year to determine changes in the character and factors within each unit of analysis using different techniques and indigenous language.

The critical paradigm as foundation for critical participatory learning

For the purposes of this paper the three fundamental concepts of the critical paradigm were used to critique participatory learning approach of the study. The three being the analysis of oppression and power, development of critical consciousness and lastly the development of agency, the belief to change.

The critical paradigm firstly implores us to undertake an analysis of oppression and power imbalances in community and society, particularly between people from different backgrounds, the relationship between the researcher and the researched, issues of power, gender and inclusion (Freire, 1975; McLaren, 1999; O'Sullivan, 2003; Allman, 2007; Giroux, 2010). Secondly, the process of development of a critical consciousness is the development of agency for constructive action. It's a process of beneath surface meaning making process for the attainment of "the deepening of freedom and social justice" (Giroux, 2010: 337)? Thirdly, the establishment of the connection and belief in a world of possibilities and a commitment to social justice and environmental justice, the belief that individuals could be agents of change, if they were helped to reflect on their lives and problems and work out

possible solutions. Freire (1975) called this learning process *praxis* (action and reflection for change).

Critical participation therefore is “a process which takes the experiences of both the learner (“least knowledgeable,”) and the teacher (“most knowledgeable”) and, through dialogue and negotiation, recognises them both as problematic... [It] allows, indeed encourages, students (“least knowledgeable, inferior people”) and teachers (“most knowledgeable, superior people”) together to confront the real problems of their existence and relationships. When students (“least knowledgeable inferior people”) confront the real problems of their existence they will soon also be faced with their own oppression. This is what praxis means and how it is made practical” (Grundy, 1987:105). Critical participants are aware of the “most knowledgeable” and the “least knowledgeable” actors (Diouf, Shekely & Kehrhahn, 2000: 38) or those who have ‘slave-morality and master morality’ or the ‘inferior people and superior people’.

Participation in research as place for learning

The argument that knowledge is located in human participation and therefore a social construction has long been argued. For example social learning emphasizes the several steps of the modelling process that includes attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (Bandura, 1986). While situated cognition theorists such as Lave and Wenger (1991); Brown, Collins and Duguid, (1989) emphasises participation, doing or human activity, which is seen as key for learning. From an African point of view learning through participation is holistic and often unconscious or informal (Lekoko and Modise, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2009; Merriam and Kim, 2008 and Ntseane, 2011). Baud (1991) assert that how we learn through participation and how much we learn is dependent on the manner in which we prepare for an experience; the seeing (noticing) and action (intervening) of our participation in the learning place is about how we recall and re-evaluate that experience and how we attend to feelings which the experience provoked, and on re-evaluating the experience. Table A is evidence of how this research design through participation created consciences of learning place for all

Research design for a participatory community learning place

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) distinguishes participatory research from other forms of qualitative research by two characteristics - that is the relationship between research participants and the researcher and the use of research as base for social action or social change. Critical paradigm like all other paradigms informing any research study also profess “to producing valid, reliable, trustworthy and dependable knowledge” (Chilisa and Preece, 2005:21). However, fundamental to this research project was the recognition and value placed on axiology assumptions or a theory of value according to Gough (2000). Chilisa and Preece (2005: 19) refer to axiology as “the nature of values and their role in the construction of knowledge.” (Chilisa and Preece, 2005: 19). The axiology assumptions compels research process to be informed and shaped by multiple realities including the past, current and future shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, race, ethnic, and gender and disability values.

Major players in data collection and analysis practice were *Ebunzimeni* community members, the six member Reflective focus group (RFG), the researcher and the four member research team. The RFG was made up three males and three females of different age groups purposefully selected by the village community. On the other hand, the research team (RT) was made up of two women and a man selected by the researcher (R) from outside the community based on their experience in community development, adult learning, Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Government for peer debriefing purposes. The research team was to assist with the facilitation of the Participatory Learning Action (PLA) community workshop to ensure maximum participation and reflection through the use of smaller groups. Furthermore the research team had a major role asking critical questions that as a researcher I might have over looked during process but also during peer debriefing.

Stage one was about community consent. In the traditional context the traditional leadership’s consent supersedes individual consent. This leadership consultation resulted in two key outcomes for this research project, a collectively developed research purpose and questions as well as group consent.

Stage two of data collection and analysis involved participation by all available village members in a three day PLA workshop (see Table A). Seventy available community members

participated - old and young, men and women, boys and girls. The seventy represented the whole community of about 100 homesteads. As indicated, the RFG was to be part of data collection using photo voice, representing the rest of the community in data collection and data analysis stages (stage 4 and 5 see Table A).

Gough (2000) provides a useful distinction between two types of data collection techniques; those used to produce data and those used to produce and analyse data. This project utilised Freirean-based techniques PLA, photo voice, and participant observation. PLA is fast and effective approach into getting relevant information from the local community and getting the community to understand their situation and come up with concrete plans into dealing with their situation (Chambers, 1995 and Mascarenhas, 1991). Similarly photo-voice is

“a powerful photographic technique that enables people to assess the strengths and concerns of their community and communicate their views to policy makers. By providing people in the community with cameras, photo voice makes it possible for them to (1) record and reflect their community’s assets and concerns, (2) discuss issues of importance to the community in large and small groups to promote critical dialogue and produce shared knowledge, and (3) reach policy makers.” (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001: 560)

Lastly, through the use of creative journal keeping participant observation provided the researcher and the team an ideal opportunity to be participant as observers, allowing them to be immersed in the experience of the community, gain a perspective from within and from outside and, also be able to distances themselves from the participants at appropriate times (Delbridge and Kirkpatrick, 1994).

The table A presents a six staged interactive, community managed participatory research process where community members played a role in the entire research process from gaining consent, sampling, data collection, data analysis and findings dissemination.

Stage	Dates	Number of days	Technique	Participant	Outcome
Stage one (community consent)	Jan 2011	4	One on one meeting	Inkosi	Consent
			Presentation	Traditional council	
			Community meeting	The ward community	
Stage two (Community participation)	May 2011	3	Participatory Learning Action	Whole community	Documentation of the background and evolution of the village in relation to project
					Identify community learning places
					Reflective focus group is selected by community
Stage three (Community data collection)	Nov 2011	4	Photo voice training	Reflective focus group	Reflective focus group is training on the use of camera.
					Reflective focus group is aware of the nature of the questions to be asked on photos taken
			Observations of community learning places	Community	4 community learning places are observed
Stage four (Community data collection & analysis)	Nov 2011 – Jan 2012	6 months	Data capturing using digital cameras	Reflective focus group	Community learning photos
				Community	Participation on their daily activities
Stage five (Community analysis)	Jan 2012	4	Photo voice & analysis	Reflective focus group	Individual photo voice analysis
					Reflective focus group photo voice analysis
			Observations of community learning places	Community	4 community learning places observed
Stage six (Data dissemination)	Jun 2012	4	Community photo voice exhibition & observations	Reflective focus group, community & TA	Photo voice analysis

Table A: Participatory community data collection and analysis process

Discussions

Table A present a participatory six staged research design implemented over a period of time. Here below under two headings a discussion of the implications and learning derived from research design as a place of learning for all involved are presented unpacking the process of collective re-presenting, re-telling and inter-viewing data, tracking data to see what was emerging from all involved. This section explores this tension with the focus on the role and the discussions any researcher makes and the extent to which any paradigm can be pursued and the consequence on the local settings.

Towards de-colonising methodology

Community mobilisation and informed consent for community participation in this research project did not start with community members who were to be participants but with a local *induna* and *Inkosi* who lives more than 60 km away from this community. Indeed this was a conscious choice taken by the researcher as good practice.

From an Afrocentric point of view *induna* and *Inkosi* consultation was not about acknowledgement of power differentials in the community but an affirmation of the indigenous institutional arrangements, the belief that “the human person does not choose to enter into human community, that is, community life is not optional for any individual person; the human person is at once a cultural being...” Gyekye (1997: 320). *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* is an African philosophy of humanism a person is a person through others in participation (Preece, 2009). This philosophy is grounded on the term *Ubuntu* amongst the Nguni languages, *buthu* in Pedi or *Harrabee* in Kiswahili reflecting participation and in union with the other.

For example, in this context the role of the *inkosi* supersedes that of an individual and similarly the collective supersedes the individual

“*Inkosi* is the people and people are *iNkosi*”.

This view was further supported by one community member who said

“Zamo others say that their Lord (*inkosi*) is in heaven and they have never seen him. Mine resides here.”.

On the role of *induna*, the *Nduna*'s response was;

“Zamo I am the leader here. Here I represent the KTC but I also represent the community of *Ebunzimeni*.”

These views reflect the key values of collective worldview, spirituality and shared values (Ntseane, 2011) or “connectedness, belongingness, identifications, well-being, love, compassion, peaceful co-existence...” (Sefa Dei, 2002:2). *Ubuntu* become the centre for participation within the African context.

Further to the researcher dilemma in practice of *ukukhonza* (the gifts expected each time one as an outsider is to see *inkosi and or induna*). As commoner (*njengomuntukazana*) regardless of my status of being a researcher when I pay a visit to *iNkosi, Ndunankulu or iNduna* indeed I know that I have to show respect and appreciation of *ubukhosi* (chieftainship) through provision of gifts. The challenge with the gifts is that unlike in the western tradition where a gift often are presented for a good service rendered, a symbol of appreciation, in this context gifts epitomises your understanding and appreciation of indigenous institution and observation of protocol, it is respect for the local culture.

Fraser (1996: i) asks the question “is it possible that we practitioners may also be unwitting agents of the very oppression or limitations we seek to transcend by our good practice?” This indeed is a sobering question particularly for any reflective practitioner located within critical paradigm. In the South African context the historical exclusion of local communities led to an apathetic attitude towards participation or decision-making within communities, which is as a result of powerlessness in the political and decision-making sphere in general. For critical theorist such as Freire (1975), McLaren (1999), and Allman (2007), participation (learning) can only serve one of two ends in a society: either the agenda of liberation or the agenda of domestication or false consciousness.

Importantly, did this researcher decision regenerate oppressive cultural agents and retained hegemony or did acknowledgement of indigenous institutional arrangements create authentic community learning place and humanisation spaces of learning?

Data as crystal's diverse realities

Using one set of photographs showing one community learning place in two different seasons the photograph emulates different “prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves...What we see depends on our angle of repose.” (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 126). In this instance the different ‘prisms’ being: What is (Current reality)? Why is? (Critical reflection) How is? (Root cause) and but missing in the discussion is Where to (action)?



Figure 1: The water hole in rainy and dry seasons.

The three different photographs portray the same scenario the waterhole from which this community collects water. The first photograph shows the same place in summer and the last two in winter. The last picture is the same as the second showing the same woman in the hole collecting water. This process can take one person over 30 minutes to fill up a twenty five litres container in winter. In summer it is the source of disease.

For the critical theorists' such as Freire (1975), McLaren (1999), and Allman (2007) the water hole becomes a social context, a contested place which is a product of participation in that place. McLaren (1999) calls this social context a cultural pedagogy, referring to the manner in which cultural agents generate and produce certain hegemonic ways of viewing and understanding the world. This is achieved mostly informally becoming a site for the struggle where dominance is fought and won.

The water hole as a learning place was identified by the whole community in stage two (table A) as women place because they spend lot of time here. Different groups occupy this place at different times of the day.

On the surface the water hole place reflects a harmonious community and might be seen to be occupied by uncritical participant, persons with no hope and ambition. However it is in participation in that place actors become alive, engaging and being critical of the situation. Suddenly there is hope and desire for better life, tensions, hidden dissent from and among different sectors of this community emerge towards those who should bring about change. A practical example is the role of induna, according to the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act , 2005 (NO. 5 of 2005) the role of a traditional council in which *Inkosi and iziNduna* sit in is to work together with local municipalities in the identification of community needs, amongst others. From the community there is acknowledgement and respect for *Nduna's* position as a traditional leader yet a strong sense of despair of the functions of his office and the exclusion from the rest of the KTC because as a ward geographically they are at the margins is expressed in this place.

“*Bab' Nduna* is old. We do not want old people in this forum. It's only us the youth that sits in the development committee together with the local (municipal) counsellor.” (Young women)

The local municipal counsellor referred to above comes from outside this ward. This was a response from young member of the community asked about the role of *Nduna* in bringing water in the community.

“In these (upcoming local) elections I think we should elect a new counsellor that is from within this ward but from a different (political) party. But who can we really elect in this ward? We have been voting for this one party since and they have not helped us. Our current counsellor does not care about us. His ward has everything why should he care about us?” (Woman)

This was a comment made by a women talking amongst themselves while waiting to collect water from a waterhole. The comment does not reflect any role that *induna or inkosi* can play

in this matter. However and importantly are the different views, strategies and tensions that exist within this community learning place.

This therefore raises the question: how was this community learning place with seemingly docile participants created? Through PLA technique, timeline the community showed how with the proclamation of the world renowned Ndumo game reserve in 1950 and later in the eighties with the establishment of the so called Community Conservation Area for which they were forcibly removed from their land and the ever running river.

Finally, the purpose of this paper was to critical reflect on the research design for the critical research project at three levels (1) was to undertake an analysis of oppression and power imbalances in community through the “documentation, description and analysis of the experiences of the colonized and their resistance to colonial rule” (Chilisa and Preece 2005: 43). (2) Developing a critical consciousness as agency for constructive action, giving voice to those at the margins in the community ensuring respect for community values, indigenous knowledge systems and inclusivity thereby locating Africans as agents of history and masters of their destiny (Makgoba, Shope and Mazwai, 1999). (3) The belief in a world of possibilities and a commitment to social justice and environmental justice. Indeed, as demonstrated by the participants at the waterhole learning place, participants are already engaged at the different levels raising a question about our role as outsiders and consequences for our actions and interventions in such communities. Participatory community research concluded, the youth collaborating with local municipality while women were thinking of a new local representative within the municipality all the same the community continue not to have reliable and clean water today.

In conclusion therefore one can make claims that indeed participation in a research process is indeed not a myth. That participation in a research process for research participants is not defined by class, race, language, location rather it is defined by the researcher through research design which can inclusive or exclusive.

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Chapter 4: Methodology: Paper 2 (a practice-oriented paper)

Learning through the action of research: The evaluation of a research design

Learning through the action of research: reflections on an Afrocentric research design

Zamokwakho Hlela*

Abstract Learning is a process of conscious or unconscious becoming, individually and/or collectively. The more conscious I am/we are of the process, the higher the possibilities of learning for action/reaction and change. This is consistent with an Afrocentric view of learning. In the research context, the researcher creates a conscious learning 'space' through research design. Key to this paper is a research design that created multiple humanization learning 'spaces' for all participants including the researcher. Juxtaposed to these learning 'places' in an Afrocentric research design (ARD) are traditional and hegemonic validity or trustworthiness issues. Based on an empirical study, this paper presents and reflects on an ARD. It asks the question: To what extent did the research design facilitate Afrocentric values through the action of research – for the researcher within himself, between the researcher and the research participants as well as among the research participants, while at the same time remaining true to the rigour of traditional research protocols. This paper concludes firstly that like any qualitative research, the choice of an Afrocentric research paradigm and approach/method has a direct impact on research design, the nature of engagement and the consequences thereof and that Afrocentrism still has major contributions to make particularly in the context of marginalization and exclusion. Secondly, that observation of trustworthiness protocols by an ARD does not mean compromising foundational values but rather enhances the quality of scholarship.

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Introduction

This paper reports on the learning(s) derived from the action of planning and participating in a research process based on an empirical doctoral study, which used an Afrocentric research design (ARD) approach, participatory learning action (PLA) and photovoice as data collection techniques to study the nature of community learning. Twine and John (2015) made a case for photovoice as a facilitative tool for greater reflection on lived experience. This paper is an expansion and practical contribution to the use of photovoice in marginalized communities. The setting of the research was the rural village of *Ebunzimeni* (not its real name), which is one of the fifteen villages that make up the traditional council of *Kudele* Traditional Council in Northern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) South Africa.

Learning is a process of conscious or unconscious becoming, individually and/or collectively. The more conscious I am/we are of the process, the higher the possibilities of learning for humanization. This is consistent with an Afrocentric view of learning; in such a research context, conscious learning 'spaces' (actions) are a creation of a 'native' or an insider researcher through research design. Key to this paper is a 'native' position of the researcher and research design that created multiple learning 'places' for all participants for a particular purpose. Juxtaposed to these learning 'places' in research design are trustworthiness issues that raise the question: how far can a research design stretch to be a multiple action of learning, yet remain loyal to indigenous knowledge systems and to rigour of research?

Some introductory explanation of the research setting and approach follows. *Ebunzimeni* village geographically and literally is located at the margins of the country, the province and the traditional council. The researcher has worked professionally with this community in different capacities over the last 15 years. The researcher and the participants share the common isiZulu culture, value systems and language. *Ebunzimeni* shares international borders with two other countries. Colonially imposed international borders had major implications for this traditional council in terms of which king they pay allegiance to – the Swazi or the Zulu kingdom (Bennett and Peart, 1986). The South African apartheid government's fear of insurgents in the 1960s due to the winds of change in Africa, meant that this area saw minimum or no infrastructure development. Under the new democratic dispensation since 1994, this village continues to lack basic infrastructure, water, electricity, roads, etc. Similarly within the *Kudele* Traditional Council, they also are at the margins of any development projects. The area is ravaged by unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, diseases and hopelessness (Hlela and John, 2002). The major threat to this

traditional council is the encroachment of fenced (protected) areas characterized by gun toting game rangers or cunning conservation NGO's promising a boom in pro poor tourism in exchange for land. Consequently, the community has experienced recurrent dislocations. Their first experience with forced removal took place in the 1950s to make way for a national game reserve, and the most recent experience in 1988, to make way for the Community Conservation Area (CCA) described by law as a community-defined, community-governed initiative. The latter, however, was driven and led by outsiders (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010).

The communally negotiated purpose of the study was to help the community regain control of the CCA through critical exploration of their participatory learning spaces. This was to be the ultimate catalytic validity for this study. To achieve this purpose the research design, through the use of photovoice, created different participation spaces, collectively created reflective and engagement spaces for each identified participation and collectively evaluated whether that participation was empowering; that is, did this participation recognize and affirm human dignity, enhance human agency and affirm African values, structures, and practices or was the process ultimately disempowering or dehumanizing for the community. This approach meant that villagers were reflecting on their own every day, taken-for-granted living experiences.

This paper therefore asks – how far did this research design facilitate Afrocentric values? Put differently, to what extent did the research design remain true to what it was designed for, that is, humanization, at the same time adhering to the rigour of traditional research methods? The paper unashamedly takes an eclectic Afrocentric approach to research design and is a contribution to the depository of empirical studies located in the paradigm. Sadly, Mkabela (2005) claims that this kind of research is yet to be realized in South Africa and, in the context of neoliberalism, I suspect internationally, too.

I never will take the stand that the Old [Eurocentrism] must win or that the New [Afrocentrism] must win. The point is that no single truth satisfied me – No single man [or woman] can be correct all the time, no single idea can be totally correct (Chinua Achebe, 1972).

This paper draws solace from Chinua Achebe's poem Beware Soul brother:

The character and purpose of an ARD

As previously explained, ARD is a humanization project; put differently, a quest for social justice and harmony (*Ma'at*) based on the African ways of meaning making and generation of knowledge (*Nommo*) (Asante, 1987,

1990). Ramose (2002) states that *Ubuntu* in Nguni languages (humanness) is a central ontological and epistemological category in African thought, which is based on a holistic view of life, the interconnectedness of all things and spirituality (ontology), and the interplay between the body, mind and spirituality in meaning making (epistemology). This train of thought is reflected in the presentation of seven key characters of an Afrocentric research by Mazama (1998):

- (1) The African experience must guide and inform all inquiry;
- (2) the spirituality is important and must be given its due action;
- (3) immersion in the subject is necessary;
- (4) holism is a must;
- (5) intuition is a valid source of information;
- (6) not everything that matters is measurable; and
- (7) knowledge generated must be liberating (Mazama, 1998, p. 27).

These guidelines are elaborated on in five canons (*kujitoo, utulivo, ujamma, ukweli and uhaki*) that make up a useful research guide in harmonizing an African enquiry. The *kujitoo* canon is about the researcher's positionality requiring that the researcher takes to the people and shares his/her position upfront. It rejects the notion of value-free research. The second canon is *Utulivu* which holds that 'the researcher [must] actively avoid creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities but rather strive to create harmonious relationships between and within these groups' (Reviere, 2001, p. 71). The third canon is *Ujamaa* which demands the acknowledgement and upkeep of community; in the same vein it rejects the separation, the division between the researcher, the researched and the space. The fourth canon, *Ukweli* is about groundedness of research in the African place. The final canon is *uhaki* which is about being cognizant of the value of harmony, fairness and maintenance thereof within a research process, particularly regarding those that are researched. In assessing the ARD of this study below, I draw on some of these canons.

Briefly then ARD is a conscious plan of 'learning to become', a humanization scholarly research project guided by Africa values and an African assertion of African scholarly values in a globalizing world. Humanization as the base is a collective process of unpacking the African journey from freedom to non-freedom and back to freedom. This is drawing from the past but certainly not reliving the past. It embodies self-consciousness, liberatory *praxis* or freedom (Fanon, 1968; Biko, 1970), or decolonizing the mind (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1993).

These are the foundations of an Afrocentric research project. ARD is therefore a conscious movement of participants from the zone of non-being to being – fully human (Fanon, 1968). ARD must seek to develop critical consciousness within an indigenous context through mutual dialogue, with emphasis on discovery and rediscovery of the value of *Ubuntu*. Its agenda

is not just about justification of the rejection and transformation of the dominant traditional research methods but also about ‘recovering and renewing traditional, non-commodified (African) cultural patterns (rehabilitation)’ (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 319); above all, ‘it’s about Africans being agents of history and master of our destiny’ (Makgoba *et al.*, 1999, p. x11).

Clearly from a dominant Eurocentric research perspective, the ARD presents a challenge in relation to validity issues (Cohen and Manion, 1980), ‘trust value’ (Chilisa and Preece, 2005) or trustworthiness (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). Qualitative research study, regardless of its paradigm location, must prove and demonstrate credibility or trustworthiness, transferability and dependability. Credibility in qualitative research refers to the accurate representation of multiple realities of the phenomenon by the participants. Transferability is the applicability of the study in different but similar contexts and therefore relates to selection of participants as well as the depth of the description of the study, in this case a rich thick description, while dependability is the consistency between the results and data collected. Mertens (cited in Chilisa and Preece, 2005) cites prolonged and sustained engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, member checks and triangulation as key strategies to enhance credibility or trustworthiness, transferability and dependability in a research project. Finally and critical is the recognition and application of ontologically relevant ethical issues (non-maleficence, autonomy and beneficence).

The central purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how an ARD met the above-mentioned strategies despite the fact that validity is a contested and slippery concept within the dominant hegemonic research tradition (Creswell and Mille, 2000). This is highlighted by Richardson (cited in Creswell and Mille, 2000) who uses a metaphor of a crystal in describing validity in qualitative research: ‘Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves. What we see depends on our angle of repose’ (Creswell and Mille, 2000, p. 126). The ARD repose therefore is a process of learning to become and the humanizing process of engagement.

The plan and execution of the research

The community-negotiated research question for this research project was: What is the nature of learning in the *Ebunzimeni* village? Through a structured ARD, the researcher created multiple spaces of ‘learning to become’ and humanization. These spaces allowed for critiquing and analysing different but familiar participatory spaces in the village. In other words, turning the ‘taken for granted’ to ‘not taken for granted’ the outcomes of

learning would therefore be demonstrated by villagers through knowledge transfer – that is learning methods of reflection and critiquing – and using them for community empowerment in dealing with any other participatory actions in the village – whether these actions are community initiated or outside led.

The research project was a prolonged and sustained engagement conducted over a period of a year. The key role players in the execution of the research design were the local *Nkosi* (chief), *Nduna* (village headman) and *Kudele* Traditional Council (KTC) as gatekeepers; the village of *Ebunzimeni* as research site, and three males and three females of different age groups purposefully selected by the village community to be members of the reflective focus group (RFG). The purpose of the RFG was to ensure community ownership and accountability and to develop a cohort of co-researchers, community change agents and community activists. On the contrary, the research team (RT) was made up of two women and a man selected by the researcher (R) from outside the community based on their experience in community development, adult learning, Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Government for peer debriefing purposes. Furthermore, the inclusion of both a community-based RFG and an expertize-based RT allowed for both an emic (internally perceived) and etic (externally perceived) perspective, and the interplay between these perspectives, in the research design (Krathwohl, 2009). These researcher choices grounded the study in collective and collaborative ARD principles; the interplay between internal and external perspectives; the acknowledgment and affirmation of indigenous institutional arrangements; and the recognition of local language, value systems and culture. The table below summarizes the research design.

PLA and photovoice were deemed the most relevant data collection and analysis methods for this research project primarily because both place the research participants at the centre of the enquiry, creating authentic community checks and triangulation opportunities. Both techniques are *action*-based and consciously create *learning* spaces that facilitate active participation through *dialogues* in indigenous language and culture. PLA uses different action-based techniques as a collective enquiry to collect and analyse data such as timeline, mapping, Venn diagrams, transect walks, storytelling, song and totem. PLA is often referred to as a fast and effective approach for obtaining relevant information from the local community and getting the community to understand their past and present situation (Chambers, 1995).

The entire village participated in a three-day PLA workshop. Seventy community members participated – old and young, men and women, boys and girls. They participated in different PLA activities, for example in a timeline. Here villagers, in marshalling a sequence of events, recollected

and recreated their history through storytelling and reflecting on totems. The timeline was corroborated through the development of social mapping, that is the community constructed maps of the village living area, including past and present maps. Transect walks entailed physically walking through the village to observe and verify what was emerging through the timeline and maps. Through document analysis, the researcher filled the gaps of the emergent story of the village to craft an anonymous rich thick description.

Photovoice as a data collection and analysis technique requires handing over cameras to the co-researchers for them to identify and visually document a phenomenon, communally engage and share about the phenomenon and present this shared knowledge to policymakers (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001; Twine and John, 2015). The RFG and RT members were trained in the ARD values, photovoice philosophy, ethics and digital camera techniques over four days. RFG members were given a digital camera and a number of batteries to capture 20 photographs of what they individually perceived as participatory community learning spaces in the village over a period of six months in different seasons of the year. For this research project, the adapted photovoice method came to contribute to a process of triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. The engagement process focused on learning that happens through critical reflection at an individual intrapersonal level (the photographer), at a collective interpersonal level (between the photographer and researcher), at a collective interpersonal level (between the photographers and the RFG) and at a second collective interpersonal level (between the RFG, researcher and villagers) (see Figure 1).

The quality of scholarship

There were two major sources of validity or trustworthiness concerns for this study. The first was located in the slipperiness of preparation for the multiple insider (as an African of the same tribe, culture and language) and outsider (educated research, urbanized and middle class African) roles involved at negotiating access stage. The second concern was at research facilitation stage, the facilitation for humanization. Both these issues were linked to the overall concern with trustworthiness, involving credibility, transferability and dependability of the study. The section below briefly presents examples of how ARD informed process while at the same time enhancing the quality of scholarship.

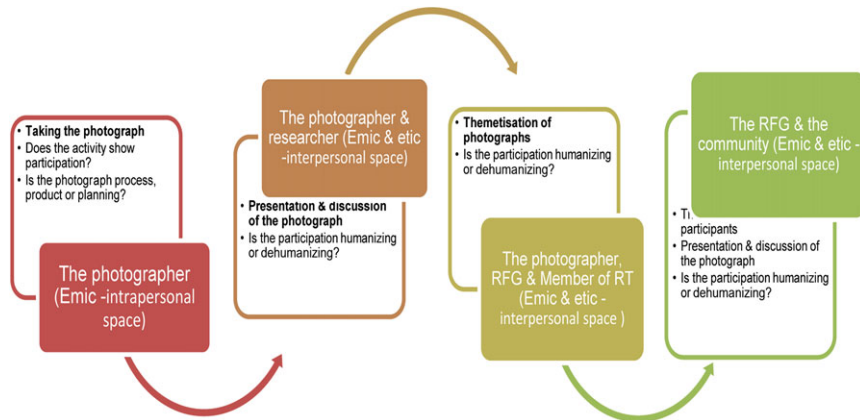


Figure 1 Triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions.

Negotiating access based on indigenous protocols

This was an opportunity to create an environment conducive for the village lived experience to guide and inform the action of research, which can be broadly referred to as negotiating access (Action 1 and 2 – refer Table 1 above), without which an ARD would have been compromised.

Ukweli canon: groundedness of research in African indigenous knowledge systems. Traditionally and culturally, recognition of and respect for indigenous institutions is not just through consultation but significantly through the practice of *ukukhonza* (giving gifts). That is, regardless of one’s status as researcher, when one pays a visit to *iNkosi* (chief), *Ndunankulu* (chief headman) or *iNduna* (headman), one is expected to show respect, acknowledgement and appreciation of *ubukhosi* (chieftainship) through provision of some kind of gift(s). This practice was performed by the researcher each time he paid visit to the research site. The challenge with *ukukhonza* (giving gifts) is that, unlike in the western tradition where gifts are often presented as form of appreciation of good service rendered, with *ukukhonza* the gift comes first.

In dominant traditional research, *ukukhonza* raises trustworthiness issues. This is the concern that giving a gift might interfere with the quality and veracity of data (e.g. the giving of the gift may result in the gift giver being told what the receiver thinks the giver wants to hear). However, recognition of *ukukhonza* as an authentic cultural practice set the research practice up on a positive trajectory. The acceptance of the gifts signals the willingness of the community, sanctioned by the chief, to participate wholeheartedly in this prolonged and sustained process. *Ukukhonza* thus signalled my respect for the community and reciprocally opened the way for an effective

Table 1 The Afrocentric research design

Action	Number of days	Facilitator	Technique	Participants	Purpose
Action 1 (Consent)	4	R ^a	One on one meeting Presentation	Village headman Chief Kudele Traditional Council	Informed consent
Action 2 (Community participation)	2	R	Community meeting	Village	Shared methodology Collective history
	3	RT	Participatory workshop PLA	RT Whole Village	
Action 3 (Training photovoice)	4	R and RT	Meeting	RT and R	Ethical consideration and Collective enquiry
		R	Photovoice training	RFG	
Action 4 (Community data collection & analysis)	6 months	RFG	Photovoice	Village	Mutual dialogue
		R	Observations of community learning spaces	Village	
Action 5 (RFG analysis)	4	RFG	Digital cameras: 20 photographs per RFG member	Village	Mutual dialogue
		R	Photovoice analysis	RFG	
		RT member	Observations of community learning spaces	RFG and R	
Action 6 (Deepening the thought & Data dissemination)	4	R and RT member	Debriefing	Village	Community conscientization
		R, RT and RFG	Community photovoice exhibition & observations	Village	
Action 7 (second-level analysis)		RT member	Meeting	R, RT and RFG	Academic Present second-level analysis results
Action 8 (catalytic validity phase)	3	R	Data analysis	R	
		R	Community workshop	Induna Inkosi (traditional council) Village	

^aR, researcher.

prolonged participatory research process that located me as an insider. Contrary to the suspicion of the western view, *ukukhonza* becomes the solid base for credibility of this research project as possibilities of multiple realities and truths are created by the researcher positionality.

Ujamaa canon: acknowledgement and upkeep of community. Credibility was further sourced through communal informed consent, which was solicited at four critical indigenous institutional levels: firstly, at local traditional leadership level (*Inkosi* (chief) in this instance was a woman); secondly, at *Kudele* Traditional Council; thirdly, at *Ebunzimeni* village headman; and finally, at the village level in a form of workshop and meetings resulting in a negotiated purpose for the research project and communal consent instead of individual informed consent. Recognition of indigenous institutional levels in a rural setting is recognition of, respect for and acknowledgement of tradition and therefore a community upkeep exercise.

Zamo, others say that their Lord is in heaven and they have never seen Him. Mine resides here *eKuhlehleni*. Once she has agreed, who am I to say no? (*EKuhlehleni* is a place where *inkosi* resides, the palace).

The significance and recognition of the indigenous protocol and indigenous culture by the researcher was succinctly summarized by a man in a community meeting while the researcher was negotiating individual personal consent at village level:

The chief in this instance is associated with God. She is the representative of God in the village; hence, the chief is never elected through ballot. The collective identification and representation is summarized as '*Inkosi ingeyabantu abantu ngabenkosi*' (the chief is the people and people are the chief). Guided by the view that what is good for the group is or will eventually be good for the individual (Pietersen, 2005), suggesting a close partnership between ARD and participant's system of thought (ontology), which is the holistic view of life, interconnectedness of all things and spirituality (Ramose, 2002).

Furthermore, ARD was epistemologically appropriate. For example, the use of photovoice traditionally demands that the photographer carries with him/her consent forms to be handed out and signed just before taking a photograph (Martin *et al* 2010; Eglinton, 2013). The opposite for this research project is true. A different but contextually appropriate ethical protocol operated. For example, photographers had to take photographs based on and reflecting 'humanness' for which they had received training (see Action 3 in Table 1). The significance of a collective consent in the use of photovoice was in the collection of authentic photographs versus 'staged' photographs, at the same time ensuring that appropriate ethical principles were adhered to.

The kujitoo canon: the researcher's positionality. The process of renegotiating access and the significance of collective consent signify recognition of the shared Nguni cultural practice, the shared isiZulu language and researcher's long association with the research site. This long association with the research site was alluded to by the *Inkosi* during the first visit: 'Hey Zamo what brings you back here? I tell you – you are God sent. We have major problems here. We hope you can help us out'. From the traditional dominant research perspectives, this association affects the 'trust value of the research process because *Inkosi* immediately locates 'the researcher as an insider'. *Inkosi's* utterances are based on the researcher's more than ten year's association with this community.

On the issue of positionality, Merriam *et al* (2001, p. 411) raises the question 'what is it that an insider is an insider of?' From an Afrocentric point of view, one is an insider because of the shared lost African culture based on *ubuntu*, the shared history of dehumanization through colonialism, imperialism and apartheid, and the commitment to the humanization of the African person in the globalizing world. Afrocentric research implores researchers to make certain decisions upfront such as embracing indigenous institutional arrangements, indigenous knowledge systems and commitment to the humanization (Asante, 1987, 1990; Mazama, 1998 and Reviere, 2001). This researcher positionality ultimately defines the relationship between the research question(s) and research, research design and researcher; the nature of engagement between the research participants and the researcher and ultimately as researcher reflexivity that contributes to the validity of the study (Creswell and Mille, 2000).

In Reviere's (2001) view, it is this positionality that puts one at the centre of the enquiry – facilitating a more accurate analysis of lived lives of the locals (dependability). From this viewpoint, I would argue for the significant role of local language and culture in the engagement. In Chilisa and Preece's (2005, p. 55) view, 'language stores, upholds and legitimizes the value systems of society'. Without this language connection to the village, possibilities for true dialogue are minimized and therefore accurate analysis and explanations of the phenomenon are compromised. Indigenous language became the window through which lived experiences could be mediated and scrutinized. For example, the exploration of *ukuhlanza amagceke* as a cultural practice in the village does not only pose a problem with direct translation which is 'cleansing the yard' but also dislocates the cultural practice from the interplay between the body, mind and spirituality in meaning making (ontology), the connection of the living, the dead and the yet to be born. I suggest that without access to and respect for culture and language, this study would have been greatly compromised.

In summary, these are examples of how observing local traditions helped the researcher gain insider status that enhanced community participation which, in turn, meant more accurate data and analysis.

The humanization project: the action of research. This section looks at the research process in relation to humanizing action. As stated above, this involves recognition and affirmation of human dignity; human agency and taking control over circumstances; and affirming African values, structures and practices. I will argue that the research process brought together emic and etic perspectives, and this facilitated a humanizing process. The action of research was fundamentally a collective learning process (mutual dialogue) starting in A3 to Action 8 in Table 1 above. For the purpose of this paper, we focus on Action 4 and 5 that is six months of data collection and four days of RFG data analysis.

Action 4 and 5 came to be called triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. Figure 1 summarizes the interplay between individual and collective learning processes, and the critiquing of familiar into unfamiliar places. Here, again due to space limitation we focus on A and B.

Taking the photograph phase (emic): Each RGF member was expected to take 20 photographs that show participation within the village guided by questions such as the following:

- Actions where participation is happening (action). Explain the what, how, when, why and by whom of the action/s.
- What is the purpose of the action?
- Is the action a humanization action?

You could not just take a photograph. You think first about whether there is participation, you think about the three categories (product, process or preparatory participation) – sometime you not sure where it belongs and you think about all the questions that you gave us. You run through the answers in your head first. If you cannot answer some questions you think again does this show participation (GK).

GK, a member of the RFG, reflects on the decision to take a photograph, the process of analysis at data collection stage as well as learning as an individual process:

The act of taking a photograph was a physical (data collection) and intellectual (data analysis) process of engagement by the photographer of a community participatory place in the village. The thinking process was not guided by the absent researcher through set questions but as indicated above by GK, he had to engage with a familiar place in an unfamiliar manner. Furthermore, he had to make an ethical decision as to the type of



Figure 2 At the waterhole in dry and wet seasons

photograph to take. The three categories created options for GK to take the most appropriate and humane photograph which meant his narrative became more important than just the photograph. GK gets to develop and articulate his emic perspective of this familiar place to be presented at the mini photo exhibition.

Mini photo exhibition cum workshop (emic + etic): Thoko (pseudonym) presented the photograph at the waterhole below to the RFG (Figure 2). In her view, the photograph presented a humanizing place for women as women get to be alone. We worked out that the process of collecting water in dry season can take one person over 30 minutes to fill up a 25-l container. At least two 25-l containers belong to one person. For a group of women, this gives them a much valued communal space and time away from home. However, this humanization perspective is challenged by GK.

GK, a man and member of the RFG, presented a photograph showing livestock drinking water from the same waterhole and then he asks: 'We share water with animals – are we animals. How can that be humanizing?' The facilitator (a member of the RT) asks: 'Are you animals?' GK then makes an association between the waterhole and forced removal. 'We were moved from where we lived. There we had an ever flowing river and now we live like animals'. Further discussion about forced removals to make way for the CCA ensued. This history had been solicited through PLA (see Action 2 of Table 1 above). TM, a women member of the RFG, also presents a photograph showing the same waterhole but during the wet season (see above third photograph). For her, participation of women at the waterhole is humanizing but the action is dehumanizing as she points out that this place is a major threat to the village as it is a source of disease such as malaria. [Chilisa and Preece \(2005\)](#) refer to this process as triangulation of investigators through interrogation of different narratives. This allowed little or no space for inauthentic data.

Ultimately by the end of four days of mini photo exhibition cum workshop, 40 photographs replicating village participatory places were analysed as presented above. Four thematic categories for the analysis of data

emerged: household activities such as collecting water at the waterhole; cultural activities such the cleansing the yard ceremony; the village-initiated activities such as building of schools and finally the outsider-initiated activities such as running of the CCA. This in-depth collective analysis made it possible for RFG members to identify what they thought were humanizing and dehumanizing criteria and therefore were able to make judgements about each place.

Discussions

Below the researcher summarizes the findings and responds to the question: To what extent did the research design facilitate Afrocentric values through the action of research while retaining the rigour demanded by traditional research practice.

Negotiating access and purpose

Negotiating access was *Ma'at* – that is a quest for social justice and harmony – in that it recognized and affirmed indigenous knowledge systems and protocols, thus granting the researcher (an outsider) insider status in the research site. The outside status was maintained through peer debriefing through the RT as well as reporting back to the indigenous structures. Furthermore, recognition and respect for local protocols ensured maximum and sustained participation by all because of their ultimate belief in their indigenous systems, as well as the fact that the purpose and process of research was to be of significant benefit to them. Critically, the action research process created the foundation for participants to explore the multiple realities of the phenomenon.

The action of research

Humanization in this ARD was based on the recognition and affirmation of human dignity, human agency and taking control over circumstances, and affirming African values, structures and practices. Significant for this ARD was the creation of humanizing spaces for the individual and collective critical reflection for action. Furthermore, the action of research was based on different forms of triangulation protocols, for example the use of different data collection techniques – photovoice and PLA (methodological triangulation), triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions (triangulation of investigators) and data collection targeting different seasons (triangulation of data sources) (Chilisa and Preece, 2005 and Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

The in-depth data collection and collective analysis based on collective enquiry and mutual dialogues informed by researcher reflexivity meant prolonged periods of learning from the action of research. Collective enquiries in this instance refers to the maximization of equal participation from all participants while facilitating the outsider(s) (etic) and locals (emic) perspectives. For example, the RFG decided that the waterhole as a place was dehumanizing because as full citizens of the Republic of South Africa they have a right to safe, running water. However, the waterhole as a special place for women to interact and share was deemed a humanizing place. This was a collective enquiry based on mutual dialogue for the purposes of humanization.

The ARD seeks to bring about change in how participants perceive themselves in relation to others; it seeks to develop a language that enables people to speak about and analyse their context; it seeks to enable the realization that their context is a human creation and therefore can be changed by them for themselves. Catalytic validity is about the change brought about by participation in the action of research by participants and consequently the change brought about by participants in their lived lives. Six months post-research, the researcher was summoned by the *Kudele* Traditional Council to a stakeholders meeting where every role player in the CCA was made to account to the traditional council for their roles and their plans moving forward. Because of structural challenges, the community were likely not be able to immediately take over the CCA, but the meeting was a symbolic action towards assuming ownership of the CCA, which resonated with the overall purpose of the research.

In-depth documentation

In-depth documentation is a critical validity issue. For Denzin (1989) cited in [Mouton \(2001\)](#), the rich thick description

presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relations that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voice, feelings, actions, and meaning of interacting individuals are heard.

Rich thick descriptions are the opposite of thin descriptions which lack depth. It is in the in-depth rich thick description that high possibilities of generalizability are located. Furthermore, it met one of the key ethical principles of beneficence ([Bertram and Christiansen, 2014](#)). Out of the process of documentation, other projects emerged such as the production of a community isiZulu reader called *Siphox' usathane: Umlando wabakwaMathenjwa*

1800–2011. Roughly translated, Together we disappoint the devil: the history of the Mathenjwa people from 1800–2011. A second project was a series of stories based on the thick description published in the local newspaper supplement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, three places of learning were presented and discussed as actions of research: learning for the researcher within himself, between the researcher and the research participants and among research participants. Critical learning for the researcher was in the enabling spaces or humanizing spaces for all involved. The research design made it possible for the researcher to remain true to the village community and to himself. The research design placed the researcher within the sociocultural context of the research site, turning villagers into being co-researchers and the researcher into indigenous village insiders.

Secondly, the choice of PLA and progressive expansion of photo discussions as a collaborative data collection and analysis transformed familiar places into unfamiliar places for research participants. It was also collective enquiry and a mutual dialogue space for intrapersonal and interpersonal confrontation within a local context. Despite its Ubuntu foundations, the space created was confrontational in that it set up tensions between colonial and decolonizing, and between humanizing and dehumanizing perspectives. This was a humanization process for all.

Thirdly and finally, learning among research participants in this research design was demonstrated through catalytic validity, that is ‘the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants’ (Chilisa and Preece, 2005, p. 236). The meeting initiated by the community post-research of all stakeholders in the CCA – presented above as catalytic validity – was proof that research participants had, through participating in this research, grasped, shared and collectively internalized the key purpose of such research. It demonstrated a process through which participants began to take charge of constructing their own identity and formulating their own agency.

Some Afrocentrists such as Appiah (1997), claim that meeting Eurocentric hegemonic standards in research such as this one is a weakness in itself. This research design in our view remained true to Afrocentric values and protocols at the same time met the hegemonic standards. This stance did not in any way compromise the ARD and research process but on the opposite provided credibility of Afrocentric research beyond just Afrocentrists researchers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Chieftainship and traditional council of *Kudele* and the village people of *Ebunzimeni* who undertook this very long journey with me. I am also very grateful to the research team that showed so much interest in this research project. I would like to specifically thank Prof Julia Preece for introducing me into an Afrocentric discourse, Dr Peter Rule for guidance and to David Knox as a critical reader. *Siyabonga kakhulu* (Thank you very much).

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Chapter 5: Telling the truth and shaming the devil

A rich thick description “presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relations that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voice, feelings, actions, and meaning of interacting individuals are heard.” (Denzin, 1989, cited in Mouton, 2001)

This rich thick description chapter “is written in rage and love, without which there is no hope. It is meant as a defence of tolerance – not to be confused with connivance – and radicalness. It is meant as a criticism of sectarianism. It attempts to explain and defend [Afrocentrism] progressive postmodernity and reject conservative, neoliberal postmodernity.” (Freire, 1994). This intent reflects the sentiments of one village man who said, “Zamo, let us now tell the truth and shame the devil.” one summer afternoon in one of the households in the *Ebunzimeni* village, whilst enjoying the traditional amarula beer. His utterances capture the spirit and the commitment of every village member each time they participated in this research project. This chapter presents the findings of this Afrocentric research project, which sought to define the nature of participatory community learning in *Ebunzimeni* community.

In this chapter, the title is elaborated to embrace the concept of collective critical memory. It focuses on the socio-cultural conditions and shapers or forces, both positive and negative, that influence participation in the village. The presentation is a collective effort of the research participants, the research team and the researcher through participating in the process of research.

As we begin 'telling the truth and shaming the devil', we are mindful of the fact that this is now a story. The process of developing the story, through Participatory Learning Action (PLA) and triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions, was part of a collective critical memory. This suggests a common point of reference (or a 'site' or a place) for the villagers and the researcher (Rigney in Erll, Nunning et al., 2008). And so, the story begins.

1. Collective critical memory: Forces that influence participation in the village

Using Participatory Learning Action (PLA) techniques, the research reported in this section created places for developing collective critical and collective memory among the local people, the researcher and the research team, which took place at intrapersonal, interpersonal and village sociocultural levels. Collective critical memory allowed for both an emic (internally perceived) and etic (externally perceived) perspective, and the interplay between these perspectives (Krathwohl, 2009).

The social cultural conditions at Ebunzimeni village

This section presents the social and cultural conditions at *Ebunzimeni* historically and currently. This section was derived from community participatory workshops using Participatory Learning Action (PLA) and is therefore a collective critical memory process.

The indigenous social systems of the 'Kudele' people

In this study, we have used the word Kudele is a pseudonym for a place, a traditional council, as well as the surname of the chieftainship of that place. *Izithakazelo* (clan names, praise names or totems) are very important in terms self-identity: they locate one within a particular context that connects the here and now and the past; importantly they connect the living and the dead. Totems are an oral history which every family respects and values. These are referred to as a source of information, but not dealt with because of anonymity issues.

Bennett and Peart (1986) suggest that by the 17th century the *Kudele* people had settled in the area they currently live in today. To date, oral history records just over fifteen *Kudele amakhosi* (chiefs) that have ruled the *Kudele* people, sharing the same surname, *Kudele*. Their

territory extended up to East Swaziland and South Mozambique long before international borders were imposed. They paid allegiance to the kingdom of Swaziland. Gumbi (2005) and Meer (2010) claim that the *Kudele* people are siSwati speakers and they are proud of being Swazis. If indeed they are, this raises a question – why do they have an isiZulu dialect of totems?

Traditionally there are 15 villages that make up the *Kudele* under the leadership of a local *induna* (headman) elected by the *inkosi* (chief). However, through the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (NO. 5 of 2005), they are currently referred to as *Kudele* Traditional Council (KTC), their roles and responsibilities reflect the democratic principles of the South Africa constitution, but they retain chieftainship of the indigenous *Kudele*.

The *Kudele inkosi* plays a critical role in maintaining social cohesion, morality, culture and the well-being of everyone. S/he commands total respect from everyone. S/he represents God as reflected in this quotation from a local man:

Many people speak about an *inkosi* that lives in heaven. A person they have never even met. Mine lives here.

S/he is ever present in every village through the representation of the local *induna*.

When the previous *induna* was unable to fulfil his role due to ill health and age, he asked the *inkosi* to relieve him of his duties. I was invited by the *inkosi* to represent the *isigodi* (village) and eventually I was asked to be an *induna*. The people of the *isigodi* asked if they could elect their *induna* and the *inkosi* told them that it was only he who decided who was to be *induna*.

This representation is further devolved in the village to a man in the village who becomes the 'eye' of the *induna* and who reports to him/her. Within each household this responsibility lies with the head, which is often a man or an older woman, in the absence of a man. Once a week, all 15 headmen/women meet with the *inkosi*. The man within a household is the leader and provider; for example, the *induna* of *Ebunzimeni* has three wives and 37 children and

many grandchildren. Like many men in the village, he does not believe in buying what he can produce in his own garden. Important is the omnipresence of *inkosi* in every place and space all the times. Like the chief within the entire KTC area or like the headman within the village, the head of the household has similar power within his household. However, he/she is expected to report every activity or incident within the household, whether bad or good, to the headman who then reports it to the chief.

Ubuntu, culture and belief system

The *inkosi* is not elected, s/he is bestowed on humanity by *Umvelinqangi* (He who came first, God, the creator of all things or 'the First Cause' (Krige, 1936)). *Umvelinqangi* is feared, revered and respected so that living people cannot approach Him. He can only be approached through *Amadlozi* or *Amathonga* (ancestors), the mediators and interceders between the living and God. The dead are believed to be living in the land beyond, which is often referred to as *kwelabaphansi*, literally meaning 'the land underground'. Hence there is total respect for what lies under the ground that the clan occupies, which is associated with the afterlife. In most households in the village there is a hut or particular place in the hut dedicated to the ancestors. The preservation and practice of this and many other belief systems are the responsibility of the chief.

The purpose of the human being is to be fully human and to be part of this belief system. *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (I am because you are) reflects the interconnectedness and interdependence of people, as reflected in cultural practices within the village such as *ukuvusela* (social visits) and *isipheko* (community contributions), as described below. The significant role of *inkosi* was described by the village headman as *Inkosi ingabantu abantu bayinkosi* (the chief is the people and the people are the chief). It is within this understanding that *inkosi* (chief) can punish those who fail to meet expected standards of conduct, which often means payment through livestock. When a person fails to meet these standards, misfortunes can be expected. However, acknowledgement by the transgressor and the offering of a livestock sacrifice, such as a goat, to the ancestors can render forgiveness from God. Keeping livestock is thus integral to being human.

Tradition and cultural practices are critical in maintaining the practice of interconnectedness and interdependency. *Ukuvusela* (social visits), for example, is a cultural activity where the

locals, neighbours, or families decide to visit each other. The size of the gathering differs in size from just a few family members, to a group of neighbours, or to the entire village coming together.

Mr Ngubane, an old man, had been very sick for a long time. As neighbours we decided that we were going to visit the Ngubane homestead. Ngubane is an old person so when he is sick we are worried that anything can happen to him. We sat with him, spoke to members of the family; then there was food and traditional beer. At the end, there was a loud sound from the radio and we were dancing and everyone was happy. (RFG member).

One day I just saw members of my family arriving from all over the place. I had not seen them in a while. They decided that they were going to come and be with me as their granny. They brought with them food and drinks. It was so nice. I got to spend time with my grandchildren. I taught them so many things that we do here because they now live in urban areas. They ask, *Gogo* what is this? I tell them this is a machine to grind mealie meal. I show them this finger: "You see, I got hurt because I stuck it in here and I was hurt." They laugh at me and think I am funny (RFG member).

These visits can be planned and arranged, but are mostly spontaneous. No invitations are sent out; community members are welcome to be part of the gathering. The host does not always have to know about the gathering, as this can be initiated without his/her knowledge. Visitors bring food and drinks with them to be enjoyed by everyone. Sometimes the host will have prepared traditional beer, or will slaughter a beast or a chicken to cater for the unexpected visitors, depending on the number of people involved. These gatherings are defined by lots of drinking of alcohol, eating and dancing.

In the village, the tradition of *isipheko* underpins all other cultural practices in the village. This is a practice whereby all villagers make a contribution or cooperate in some way towards a cultural practice or ceremony hosted by any household in the village. *Isipheko* can be practiced in different ways, for example one can make a cash contribution, buy certain grocery items and help collect water and wood for fuel for the hosting family. It is a practice of communalism (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed section on cultural practices.)

Caring and interdependence is not limited within and amongst villagers, but also applies to every human being. This was demonstrated while I was collecting data one very hot day in December. A corpse of someone who had died while working in South Africa was being transported in a coffin by boat from the village into Mozambique. The time was nine o'clock in the morning. While on the Mozambique side of the border, the Mozambican soldiers demanded R200 to let the coffin through. The bereaved family did not have that kind of money. They were forced to return to South Africa. The coffin was left under a tree and the family went back to *Ebunzimeni* village to seek help. By four o'clock in the afternoon R200 had been collected from within the village and the family could take their deceased family member across into Mozambique.

Indigenous economy

Economic activities in *Kudele* are traditionally located within each village, between villages and sometimes between kingdoms. The two tables on the village weekly activities (see Tables 6.2 and 6.5), as compiled by both men and women in the village through PRA, indicate or imply some of the indigenous economic activities and divisions of labour.

Daily activities for women	
Monday	Tend to home gardens; home yard; community project (garden); make grass mats; prepare dinner; collect water
Tuesday	Look for water, collect water; collect wood; prepare dinner
Wednesday	Collect wood for fencing; maintain our source of water (<i>umthombo</i>); collect water; prepare dinner
Thursday	Look for water; clean yard; collect water; attend Thursday church meetings; prepare dinner
Friday	Grind mealies; do washing; prepare dinner
Saturday	House cleaning; do washing; collect water; prepare dinner
Sunday	House cleaning; attend church; collect water; prepare dinner

Table 5.1: Daily activities for women



Figure 5.1: Women at work: 1. Grass making; 2. Collecting indigenous seeds; 3. Group of women after a day's work on the gardens on the river bank; 4. Women working on their garden on dry land; 5. Women at the waterhole.

The housework is generally done by women. Their activities include rearing of children, water collection, washing clothes, grass mat making, cooking, collecting wood for fuel and collecting seed for planting, amongst many other activities. Women in this village are always engaged in some activity, accompanied by conversation, laughter or singing. In the words of one of the village women, Mrs Ngubane –

You see me now, I am from my garden on the river banks. I woke up early this morning with some of the other women. We have to walk together because it's still dark then. We work on our garden, we eat together, some people do fishing at the same time. On our way back, I have to pick up wood because when I get home I have to cook for your father. I still have a grass mat to finish so that I can sell it on pension day.

The other main characteristic of women's activities is the fact that no one activity is done in isolation from other activities. For example, some women in the village wake up early in the morning to work on their gardens and on their way to or from the gardens, other activities ensue, such as collection of wood for fuel.

Daily activities for men	
Monday	Take live stock for dip; fishing & hunting; afternoon milking of cows
Tuesday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows
Wednesday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows; tribal authority meeting; afternoon soccer practice sessions
Thursday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows; work in the gardens with the women
Friday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows; seek odd jobs
Saturday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows; Sabbath day; soccer
Sunday	Cattle driven out to the veld; afternoon milking of cows; church; soccer

Table 5.2: Daily activities for men



Figure 5.2: Men at work: 1. Ploughing with cattle; 2. Ploughing with tractor; 3. Dip for livestock; 4. Building and maintenance of home dwellings.

Economic activities are integrated into everyday life in the village, carried out in relation to gender. The men's activities highlight the economic value of livestock and livestock rearing particularly cattle and goats. Cattle provide meat and milk, are used for ploughing and are viewed as 'money in the bank' as they can be sold in a time of need. Goats, on the other hand, play a major part in connecting with the ancestors, but they are also viewed as 'money in the bank' as they too can be sold in a time of need. In the words of Mr Ndlela, one of the men of the village –

We do not have money so we do not have banks here. Our banks are our cattle but our banks are under threat – we have no water.

In this village, craft making means the creation of household implements such as the meat tray (*isithebe*) and is mainly the task of men. Baba Ngubane works on a meat tray while his wives are busy with their household tasks. He continues to work on his craft while he is with his friends, enjoying traditional amarula beer (*utshala bamaganu*). The stump of the tree he

is working on was cut illegally by his son from within the CCA project area as, because he is old, he would have easily been caught by game rangers. Hunting is another men's activity that is never mentioned because it is now illegal to do so due to the CCA.

The indigenous economy is localised and traditionally not cash dependent. 'Payments' traditionally were made, and in very limited cases still are made, through the bartering system. For example, if one person needs to plough, the village will come together to help out. If a person needs to consult the traditional healer, their 'payment' is through livestock. The local economy is dependent heavily on livestock. It is the basis for spirituality and livelihood. However, as can be seen in the photographs above, the availability of tractors now means that one can hire a tractor or cattle to plough. Because most men are migrant labourers and are not available, in some cases the villagers have to buy these services. This is one example of the erosion of the indigenous economy.

The endemic threat of malaria

Through the use of PLA Venn diagrams, the community identified the organisation that helps with the eradication of mosquitos as the most important external organisation. This indicates the level of the threat posed by malaria in the area, particularly during the wet, rainy season. The community is vulnerable to disease and depends on local traditional healers and the mobile clinic which visits the area only once a week. The geographical location of the Kudele TC is in the Lubombo region, which is classified as 'malaria endemic'. This is a major threat to the local community. Malaria has major implications economically for the research site. Economically, this has negative implications for tourism, which is a huge potential source of income. Tourists have tended to shy away from the area and therefore eco-tourism projects have been affected (LSDIM Annual Report, 2009). Malaria, drought and an isolated geographical location are examples of the vulnerabilities that locate the village firmly within the poverty and deprivation trap.

Education and learning

Education and learning are key in the reproduction of tradition and culture. The places of learning are often not clearly defined. Very few places formally present themselves or are recognised as educational places. However, one such is the village traditional healer's homestead, which is abuzz with trainee healers and patients from the village and beyond. The

schools, religious places, tribal court, traditional ceremonies and the tree where villagers meet are amongst such places for education to take place.



Figure 5.3: The village meeting place

Formal schooling is valued in the village. There are two schools, a primary and a secondary school, both of which are community initiatives and projects (this is to be elaborated on in the second part of this thick description). Three members of the Reflective Focus Group had matriculated, but could not further their studies and were therefore unemployed, while the other three had received primary education. Non-formal education, or informal learning also plays a significant role in the life of every villager. There are places that facilitate being together and facing the challenges of living within the village.

The photographs Figure 5.4 show the results of learning through participation in the village. For example, fencing is a sophisticated process; while utilising natural resources, knowledge and skill is evident.



Figure 5.4: Indigenous and sophisticated forms of fencing, a key activity of men in the village

The skill of fencing is mastered through participating in the fencing activities of the village. Many other products of learning, such as demonstrated in the photographs figure 5.5, are facilitated within each homestead. Ploughing and tending fields are joint activities, done by both men and women and cooking, which is usually a woman's activity, is passed on from

mother to child by observing and participating. Hut building and making housing implements such as clay pots and handcraft are men's activities, similarly passed on from father to son.



Figure 5.5: Different learning products or activities in the village: 1. ploughing on the river banks; 2. preparation of food; 3. maize grinding implement and 4. Hut made of local natural resources.

In conclusion, the traditional social and cultural conditions at *Ebunzimeni*, as presented in Figure 5.5, demonstrate a close link and dependency between humans and their natural environment, a relationship developed over centuries. These relationships of interconnectedness and interdependency determine the survival of everyone. They are facilitated and preserved through the significant role and omnipresence of the chieftainship. It is these and many other contextual factors that have important impacts on learning and learning places in the village. Learning and education often happen through socialisation and these processes are referred to by locals as 'we are born like that', demonstrating the almost invisible nature and often unstated purpose of learning, due to the total connection between village life and learning. However, there are clear signs of how this traditional social and cultural context is being manipulated and impacted upon by other conditions that are contrary to the interests of the people in their local context. The next section presents the historical and current shapers as critical to the nature of learning in the village.

2. Historical and current shapers

This section further explores the factors that impact on the village participation places. Positive and negative shapers, or humanising or dehumanising forces (as referred to in Chapter 2), seem to influence and inform participation and therefore learning in the village – economically, ecologically, socially, and culturally. These are very much integrated and have

been naturalised, becoming a way of life in the village. For the purposes of this research project, an attempt was made to separate/differentiate these positive and negative shapers for local analysis and understanding through an Afrocentric research design, as presented in the paper: *Learning through the action of research: reflections on an Afrocentric research design* (Chapter 3).

Historically these shapers are often a manifestation of the dehumanising processes of colonialism and apartheid, and currently through neo-colonialism. These shapers have located the research participants (indigenous people) in the zone of non-beings, problem persons and the recipients of well-entrenched and internalised oppression. Presently, ecological and political forces continue with these dehumanising practices. At a national level nature conservation imperatives are propelled by political imperatives for the development of secure international borders through conservation. Other shapers have a positive role and draw on indigenous social and cultural resources and identities, such as *ubuntu* and African renaissance.

An overview and summary of the findings of different contextual factors impacting on participatory places in the village is presented and discussed below.

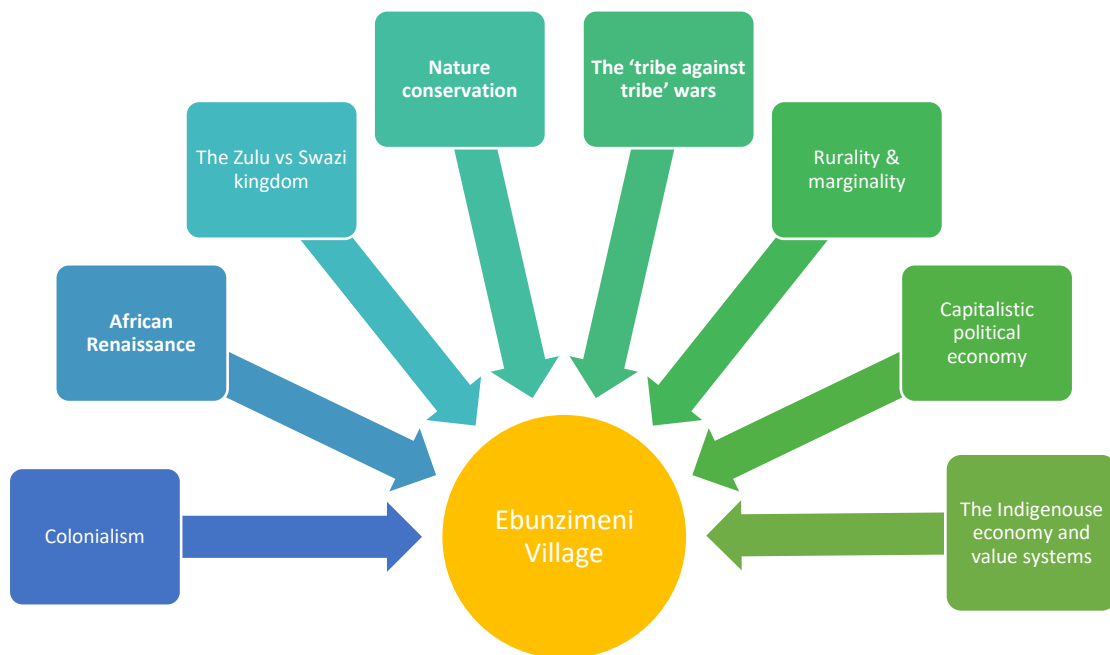


Figure 5.6: The contextual shapers that influence participatory learning places at the village

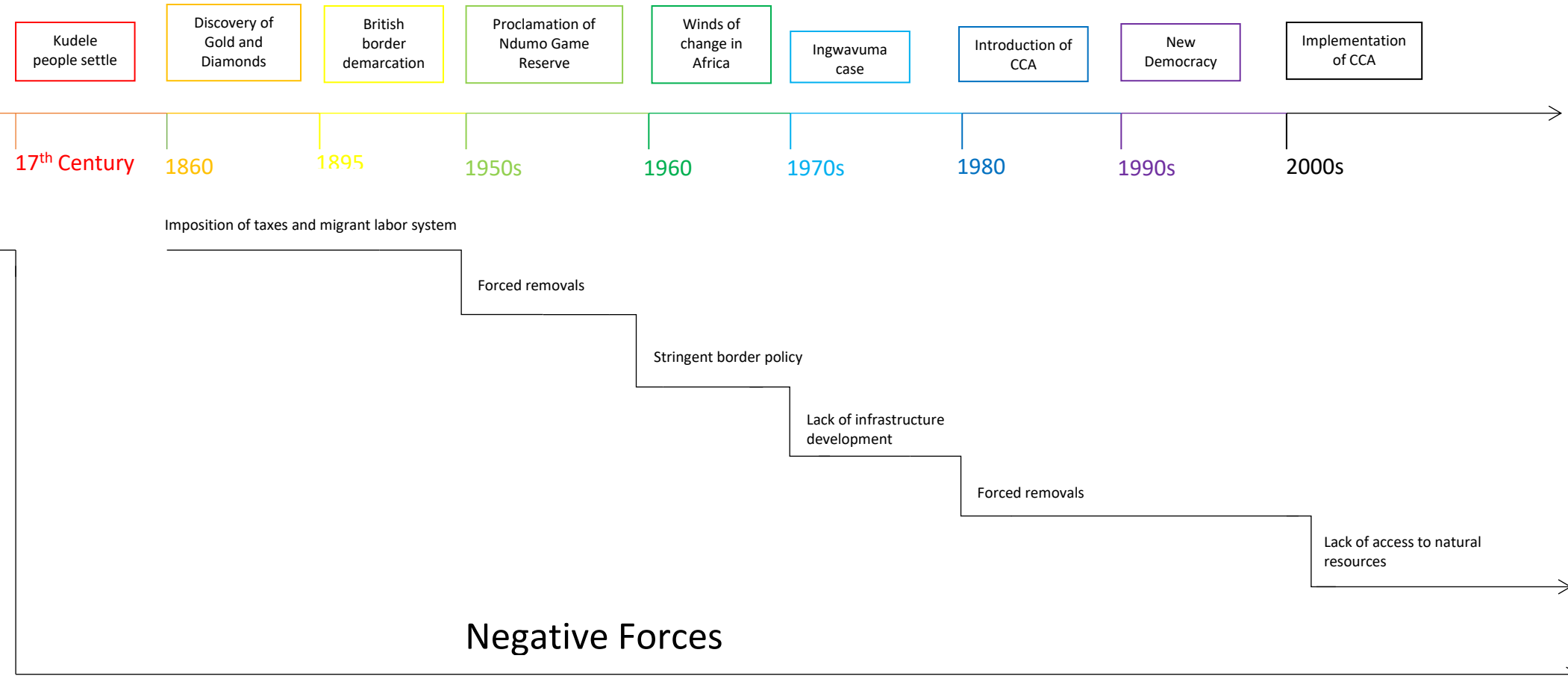


Figure 5.7: The historical progression of the village

2.1 The colonial shaper

The so called 'discovery' of gold and diamonds by the imperialists and colonisers in the Northern Cape (1860s) and the Transvaal (Gauteng province) (1880s), sparked intense conflict between the Afrikaner and English people. One manifestation of this was conflict over how and by whom lands en route to the closest sea ports to export their plunder were to be managed. The delimiting of the Swaziland Southern border was informed by these dynamics and consequently shaped the destiny and the history of the *Kudele* Traditional Authority (Meer, 2010).

Laurenco Marques, the former Portuguese colonial capital in Mozambique, was already under the Portuguese and the next available bay, Kosi Bay, was in KwaZulu-Natal. The question was, who was going to get control over that piece of land first? The significant underlying assumption behind these endeavours was the total insignificance of the indigenous people and their own indigenous governance structures and institutions. In 1895, Britain annexed Thongaland, what is today known as the Ingwavuma area, which includes the *Kudele*, *Nyawo* and *Mngomezulu* people. In the same year, Britain unilaterally proclaimed the Ingwavuma area to be part of Zululand and therefore placed it under the colonial Natal administration. Consequently, the *Kudele*, who paid allegiance to the Swazi king, were now unilaterally told they had to pay allegiance to the Zulu king (Gumbi, 2005 and Meer, 2010). This colonial interference demonstrates the total disregard for the African person – the assumption by the white authorities that the views and priorities of Africans did not matter.

2.2 The African Renaissance shaper

In the 1960s the 'winds of change' were blowing in Africa and most countries were regaining their independence; similarly, the South African Afrikaner government was concerned about changes and wars of independence taking place in the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and many others. True to the African spirit, each independent country sought to help and support countries that were still under oppression. For South Africa, the pressure was mounting from all sides (Meer, 2010). This period is reflected in the then contemporary popular song by Merriam Makeba, 'A luta Continua'. The song, amongst other things, celebrates the liberation of

Mozambique through the liberation movement, Frelimo, it mourns the death of Eduardo Mondlane, the first president of Frelimo, it is a call for other Africans and African countries to rise up and it is a call for a united Africa. This song reflects the rise of African consciousness, the realisation that it matters to be African.

The *Ebunzimeni* village is strategically positioned and was used for the insurgents to exit and re-enter South Africa. The area is mostly inaccessible and rugged and therefore very difficult to control militarily. Mozambique was most sympathetic to the South African struggle for freedom. The local community members tell many heroic stories of the roles they played in helping insurgents in and out of the country. They show forests where many were killed and possibly buried by the apartheid government soldiers. Due to this geographical location, the village continues to attract national interest with regards to border policing and control.

2.3 The Zulu kingdom against the Swazi kingdom

With mounting threats of insurgence, the South African government tried to give away the whole area of Ingwavuma (*Kudele, Nyawo and Mngomezulu*), which includes *Kudele*, to Swaziland in 1983 to enable better border control. Before the colonially imposed national border, the Kudele people had been geographically located within the kingdom of Swaziland. They were then forcibly incorporated into South Africa, under the KwaZulu Bantustan government. Now the SA apartheid government intended taking land away from Zululand and giving it to the Swaziland government. This was part of the apartheid government's divide and rule policy, and caused conflict between Swaziland and the Zulu kingdom. The Swazi kingdom and the Zulu kingdom were being set up against each other through a local proxy conflict. This proposal was contested in court by the KwaZulu homeland government, which won the court case, resulting in this area remaining part of the KwaZulu homeland. The popular view was that people in the area would have preferred to be incorporated into Swaziland and were very unhappy with the KwaZulu homeland's decision to represent them in court. The KwaZulu homeland, however, was not happy with dissenting voices. The popular view is that this dissent was punished by the KwaZulu homeland government by providing minimal to no infrastructural development in Ingwavuma (Meer, 2010).

2.4 The indigenous traditional economy and capitalistic economy

The imposition of hut tax and poll tax on Africans was a sophisticated strategy that created social conditions for a successful and forced migrant labour system and the introduction of a capitalistic economy (Bennett & Peart, 1986; Guy, 1979). The so-called 'discovery' of gold and diamonds had major implications for indigenous livelihoods, family structures and value systems, as it required a large pool of cheap labour which was drawn mainly from African men. Firstly, as previously indicated, men and women play a significant role in the village, but men's role is associated more with the maintenance of local economy and value systems. Secondly, given the traditional attitude of reverence for the earth, working underground is in total contradiction to the local value systems; underground is a place for the departed, a place for the ancestors. For the *Ebunzumeni* people, underground is a respected place; working underground is undertaken only if it is absolutely necessary. Thirdly, the indigenous economy and value systems were based on a close family unit, the ethos of communalism and a strong interdependency among village people. So, gold and diamond mining forced men to leave their villages and families, and to work underground. This was a total disregard of indigenous culture. It forced key players in community education and learning out of that place, thereby crippling the local community education and learning systems. The migrant labour system resulted in significant changes to gender roles and activities in the local community.

Traditionally the economic life in the village depended on and revolved around cattle, agriculture, hunting, weaving, pottery, woodwork, amongst other activities. The most important economic activities were cattle rearing and agriculture. Cattle produce and provide meat, milk and hides. Furthermore, ownership of cattle is associated with worth, power and status. Agricultural activities such as crop sowing, and weeding was mainly undertaken by women in the village on the fertile banks of the Usuthu River. Hunting, as a male activity, was communal under the control of the chief and monitored by village headman. Weaving, pottery and woodwork were shared activities, totally dependent on natural resources. In other words, the village was self-sufficient: the villagers traded between and among themselves and there was no need for cash, as transactions took place through a bartering system. Forced removals to make way for

conservation projects, coupled with the cumulative effects of colonialism, capitalism and migrant labour, have negatively impacted on this indigenous local economic system.

In this community livestock is defined as 'money in the bank'; it defines the status, power and influence that each has within the village. Material ownership of cattle, for example, also means the ability to plough fields and help others do the same. On the other hand, strategically moving the community away from fertile land, away from access to the ever-flowing river to dry, infertile land with less grazing land means less cattle for the village; it moves them away from accessing natural resources and directly impacts on their livelihoods and identity. The conservation push continuously shifts the community into being dependent on cash, in a context where opportunities for employment are non-existent.

Many men in the village are migrant labourers who are often custodians of culture within each household, prompting one woman at the waterhole to ask:

Where are men in this village? Do we have men?

The question was asked in the context of local government elections and the women were thinking about electing someone from within the village. What is important is how the indigenous way of living is being impacted on by other factors that local communities have no means of controlling, as described earlier. The system that depended on the 'ever present' chief is losing its grip. In other words, the capitalistic economy has not only disrupted family life, but the whole social system of the village. This disruption was not only caused by colonialism, but also manifested at a tribe-against-tribe level.

2.5 The tribe against tribe shaper

Through this imposed delimitation process, the *Kudele* people, who now had to pay allegiance to the Zulu kingdom, were within that kingdom seen as outsiders and encroaching on other tribes' land. The neighbouring tribe of the Mngomezulu had always felt that the Kudele tribe was encroaching on their land. Given this history and the relationship with the Mngomezulu, it was

inevitable that the two would experience confrontation at some stage. Finally, in 1970 the chief of the *Kudele* people fought a military battle and lost to the Mngomezulus over land and boundary-related disputes, resulting in death and some of the *Kudele* people moving across to Swaziland. The reason given for the Mngomezulu victory was that they were helped and supported by the amaZulu warriors, further suggesting tensions with and between the *Kudele* and the amaZulu nation (Meer, 2010). This period during the 1970s became very important in the development of the KTC with regard to the encroachment of conservation in the KTC, for example. It was during this period that the conservation service of the time managed to get the *inkosi* to ban the slash and burn practice and started negotiations for the extension of a protected area. These matters are further developed (see 1.2.6). The point here is how the weakness of the *Kudele* during this period become an entry point for many other factors, which might not otherwise have taken place.

2.6 The conservation shaper

Ndumo game reserve was proclaimed in 1950 and Tembe Elephant Park in 1980 as protected areas. As indicated in Chapter 1, 19% of KTC currently falls under conservation, but ultimately 33.6% of the KTC will be under the provincial nature conservation service (Dosso, Nakaggwa & Philippon, 2010), a situation achieved through violence and forced removals and with total disregard for livelihoods and life of the indigenous people. According to Xingwana (2008), the first wave of forced removals affected the Tembe and Kudele people, who lived within the reserve area. It took place in the 1940s and 1950s. This was the era of the Afrikaner National Party. The inhumanity of this process and period is reflected by the old headman in another village. He relates how the establishment of Ndumo game reserve affected his family:

It was early in the morning, as a child, when we were at home. We were woken up by a large noise of game rangers and soldiers, who broke into our home, accusing my father of hunting. They were carrying evidence of horn that was supposedly found in our yard. That day we were kicked out of our house and spent the night in the open. (Hlela, 2003, p. 6)

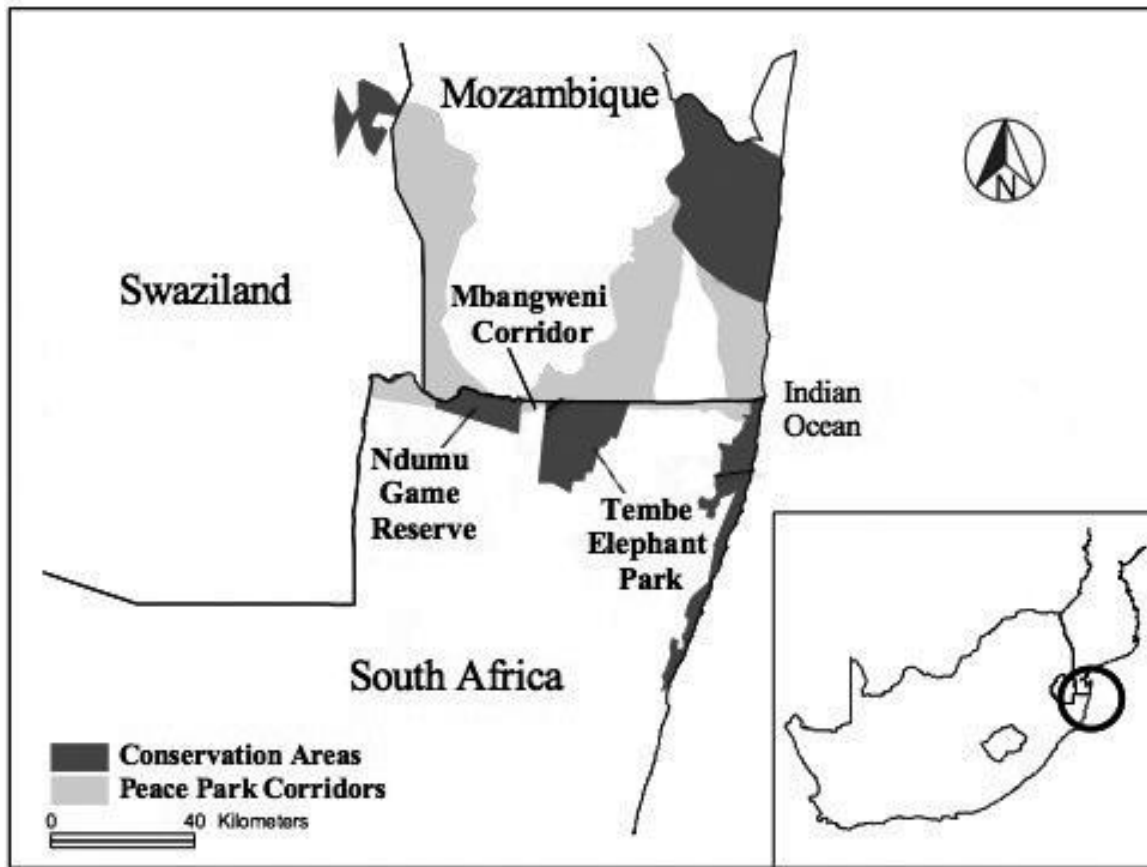


Figure 5.8: The gaps on the South African border and the possibilities of sealing them off

In Figure 5.8, the KTC and Ebunzimeni village are located within one of the shaded areas (for ethical reasons I cannot be more specific), an area earmarked by conservationists (not politicians) as a corridor for biodiversity, facilitated through collaborations at international, regional and national level. At the international level, there is the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany biodiversity hotspot. At the regional level of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), there is the Usuthu-Tembe-Futi Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA). At national level, there is the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI). These are all the external forces that support the development of a corridor for biodiversity, but which are often not aware or mindful of the implications the initiative has on the livelihood of the local people and the schism it creates between the locals and their immediate environment.

Protected areas, particularly in this region, serve an even more important role in border control. Looking at Figure 5.8, the proximity of the Ndumo Game reserve (dark shaded) and Tembe Elephant Park (dark shaded) and the proposed peace park corridors suggest better border control than is currently the case. The light shaded areas (peace park corridors) strategically seal off the whole area through the use of community conservation areas, purported as economic springboards for local economic development. The attainment of this goal or strategy is made possible through incentivised participation. By highlighting the tourism potential of the game parks and promotion of 'pro-poor' tourism, local communities are given (what in the past has proved to be) false hope, and are often willing to give their land to conservation.

2.7 Rurality and marginality

The rural location and character of the area is a key shaper, given the general marginalization of the rural in the broader urbanizing and industrializing context of South Africa. Rurality in the South African context is defined as any place that is under the governance of traditional leadership, according to the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework of Act of 2003 and the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional leadership and Governance Act No.5 of 2005 (KZN Legislature, 2005). The land belongs to iNgonyama Trust and is therefore communal land. The iNgonyama Trust (RSA Act No 3 of 1994, p. 3) is chaired by the Zulu king. The Trust is an institution that administers iNgonyama Land for the "benefit, material welfare and social well-being of the members of the tribes and communities" (RSA Act No 3 of 1994) living in that traditional area of KwaZulu-Natal. Under this Act, the land is owned by the *iNgonyama* (King) and therefore cannot be sold. While the fact that the village is located on communal land is an indicator of rurality, it is critical to realize that it is within this context that rural villagers are protected and given dignity as a people within their own land. This land will not and cannot be sold; however, the use thereof can only be negotiated with local communities.

As indicated, *Ebunzimeni* village is part of the *Kudele Traditional Council* (KTC) located at the extreme North of the province of KZN in South Africa (SA). The village is further located on the margins, on the north-eastern side of the KTC. Only ten per cent of the KTC population is considered employed, while 75% is unemployed and economically inactive and the rest are

migrant labourers or seeking employment in cities. 53% of the population receive income from the sale of natural resources such as marula beer, wood for fuel, thatching grass and handcraft. 48% of the population has never attended school (Chitakira & Torquebiau, 2010; uMkhanyakude District Municipality, 2014).



Figure 5.9: A typical village household and basic way of life is based on natural resources: 1. A typical village hut; 2. Cooking on an open fire; 3. Implements to grind corn; 4. Making grass mats; 5. A model corn grinding implement

Rural areas in SA are characterised by underdevelopment, such as no electricity or roads, poverty, poor health infrastructure such as running water, sanitation and clinics, and isolation from the rest of the country. These factors define the dehumanising character of rurality and marginalisation.

In summary, the chapter presented the village as a place in which the villagers live and interact. However, how they live and interact in that place is informed by the social conditions presented through the horizontal line (see Figure 5.10). The vertical shaper presents some of the historical shapers that also impact and shape the place.

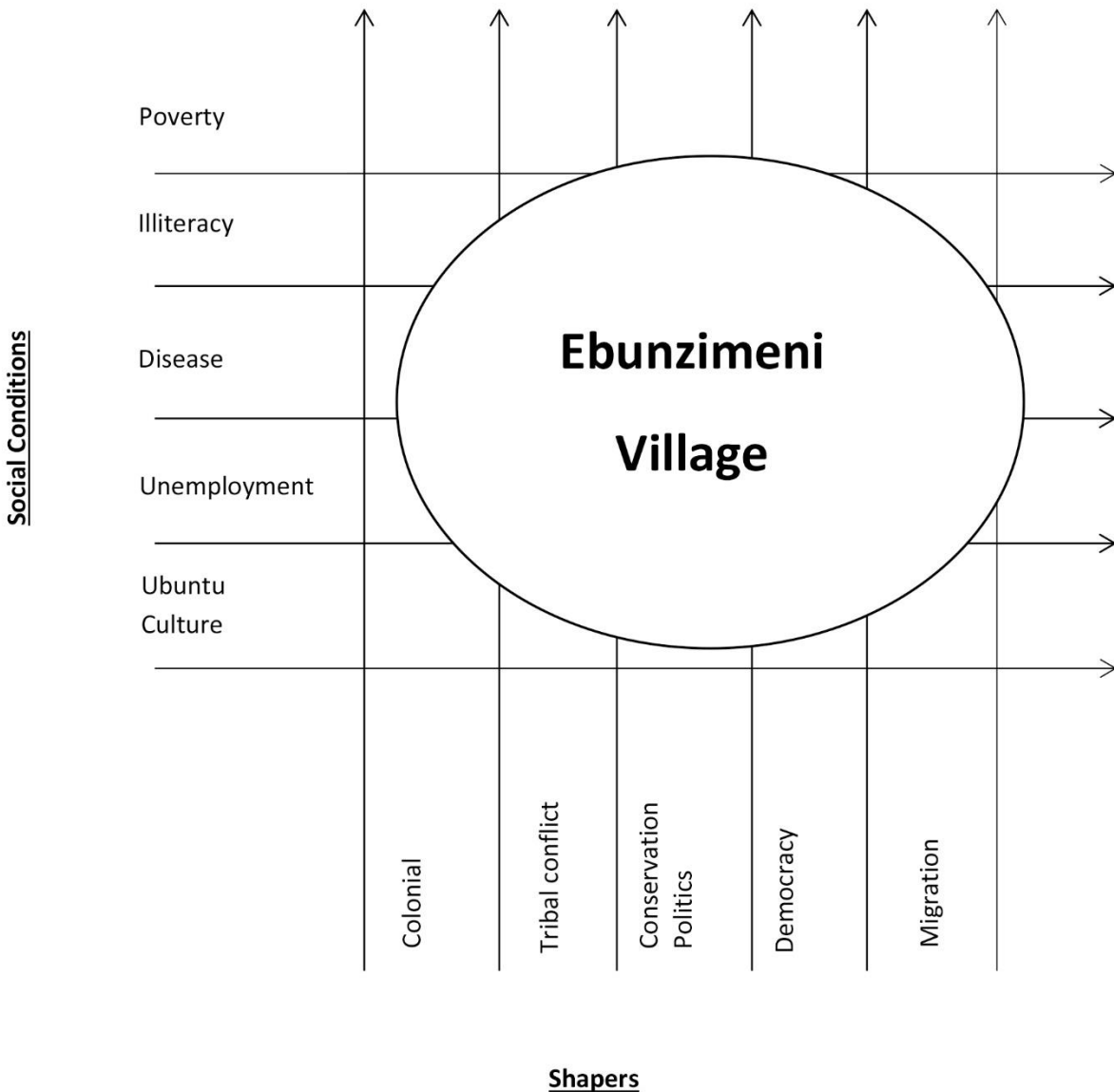


Figure 5.10: The social conditions and shapers in the village

Social conditions, together with shapers, presented both dehumanising and humanising conditions in the sociocultural context of the village. Together, these continue to inform and shape how members individually and collectively come to understand who they are, their identity and their culture. This presents the village as a contested place and the villagers as participants in multiple places and associated places. The 'place' (village) is at the crossroads of traditional and modern ways of life, suggesting that the traditional and familiar meaning making processes are also changing and are being redeveloped as they should. This is presented in the next chapter.

In conclusion, as per the summary of this chapter presented Figure 5.10, the interplay and contestation in the village is given meaning by Freire: “people as beings ‘in a situation,’ (place) find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions (informed by shapers) which mark them and which they also mark (social conditions). They will tend to reflect on their own ‘situationality’ to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be more, the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence, but critically act upon it.” (Freire, 1995, p. 90) The research design for this research project therefore, the results of which are presented in detail in the next chapter, created opportunities where villagers could, through critical memory, reflect on their own situationality, including the past and present, for them to be critical participants in the different village learning sub-places.

Chapter 6: Participation as a process of becoming *umuntu*

Legitimacy also for the 'outsider' to move freely about in the village (of course respectfully and sensitively) and investigate/interview/observe ...
In most villages, where the exercise was properly explained, the degree of participation was much higher – either in the freedom with which we were able to approach villagers, or the freedom with which they approached and spoke to us. (Outreach, unpublished notes on Enhancing participation in PRA).

This chapter presents findings on the nature of learning in the village in the different individual and communal activities. Data were collected and analysed with the community by participating in PLA, and data were triangulated through progressive expansion of photo discussions (refer to the paper: *Learning through the action of research: reflections on an Afrocentric research design*). High levels of participation were achieved in this project and consequently far too much data was collected. Hard decisions had to be made about what was to be presented and what was to be left out. This chapter is divided into four categories: cultural practices, homestead activities, insider-initiated projects and outsider-initiated projects. For each category, a table summarises the different activities explored and analysed. However, only one activity is presented in detail and analysed in relation to the purpose of the activity, the nature of participation, the character of learning in that activity and whether the community felt that participation in that activity was empowering or disempowering.

1. The nature of community participation in community activities

This section presents the nature of participation in the different community activities or projects in the village. It is cognisant that to be human in an Afrocentric sense is to be in relation to the other, the recognition that individually one cannot ever be fully human, as demonstrated in the previous chapter (Chapter 5). This is captured in the phrase *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (refer to Chapter 2). This goes beyond just the action of participation, as reflected by social learning and critical theorists, but is also fundamental to the African value system of *ubuntu*.

At the first and second data analysis stage, four categories emerged: the practice of various cultural activities, the many different homestead activities, community-initiated projects and outsider-initiated projects. These are presented in the table 6.1 and then further discussed.

QUESTION	What is the nature of learning in the village?											
CATEGORY	Household activities				Cultural Activities			Community – initiated projects		Externally-initiated projects		
ACTIVITIES	Men: livestock rearing	Women: collecting water	Young men – tending livestock	Young women	Cleansing the yard (ukuhlanz' amageke)	Community visits (Ukuvusela)	Assistance (isipheko)	Primary school building	High School building	Poultry	CCA	Zibambeleni
ACTIVITY ANALYSED	Water collection				Cleansing the yard			High School building		Community conservation project		

Table 6.1: The categories of different activities in the village

In each category, various activities are presented and summarised in Table 6.1 demonstrate the depth and width of the category presented, and how it was analysed by triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. Only one activity or project is explored and analysed in-depth in relation to the purpose and nature of that activity, the character of learning in that activity, and whether participation in that activity is empowering or disempowering. Each activity or project discussed is understood and engaged with, based on the product of first level analysis through Participatory Learning Action as summarised in Figure 6.1.

2. The findings

Figure 6.1 presents the identified activities or projects as *ukuhlanza amagceke* ('cleansing the yard' cultural ceremony), activities at the waterhole, the school building project and the community conservation project. Each activity or project was selected for presentation based on what the community deemed important and relevant to them (as discussed in Chapter 1), but also through the emerging distinct and nuanced character of each activity.

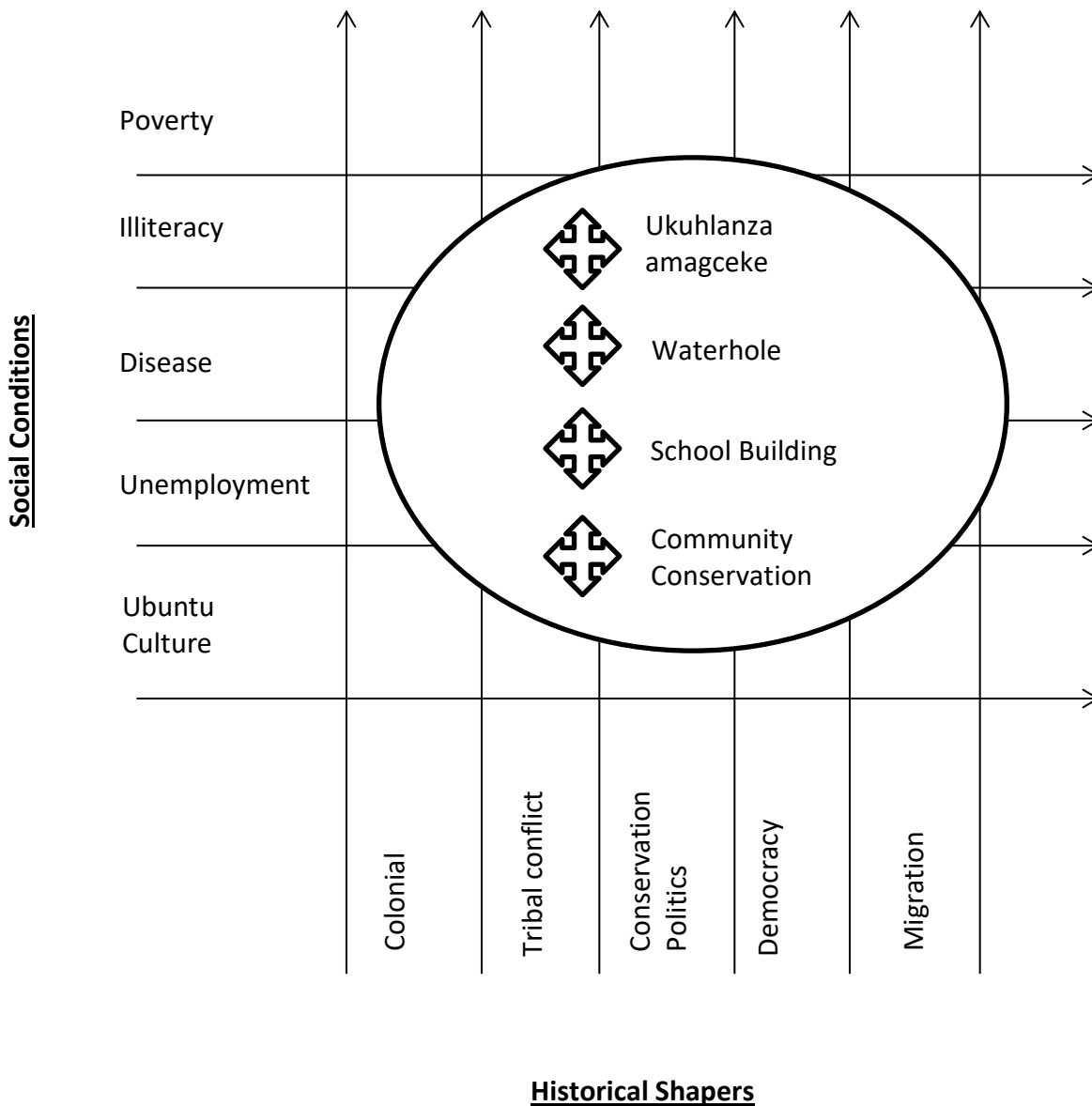


Figure 6.1: Identified and analysed activities or projects in the village

Participation in cultural practices is discussed briefly, as a more detailed discussion on this cultural practice (*Ukuhlanza amagceke*/cleansing the yard) is presented in the paper titled: *We are born like that: Unpacking an indigenous African cultural practice as a community learning place*, which is part of this thesis.

2.1 Participation in cultural ceremonies

Three cultural ceremonies *Ukuhlanza amagceke* (cleansing the yard), *ukuvusela* (unannounced social visits) and *umkhosi womhlanga* (the reed dance) are summarised in the table 6.2. The three are amongst many that are part of the life of this village. *Isipheko* (community contributions) is not a ceremony, but a tradition that underpins all other cultural practices in the village. This is the practice whereby all villagers make some kind of contribution, or cooperate towards any cultural practice hosted in the village. *Umkhosi womhlanga* (the reed dance) is an annual ceremony hosted by the King to celebrate virginity. Maidens from all the villages attend this ceremony hosted by the King at his palace. The reed dance demonstrates symbolically the king's responsibility for the morality of his subjects. *Ukuhlanza amagceke* (cleansing the yard by the one who dirtied it), is a public and communal acknowledgement of the breach of morality, symbolised through the reed dance. Impregnating a woman out of wedlock is shameful and requires a formal cleansing process. This is punitive (payment is made in the form of a beast), but is also celebratory, as it connects the living, the dead and the yet to be born. *Ukuvusela* (unannounced social visits) is a cultural activity that takes place particularly in December, when migrant workers are back home and there is plenty to eat. A direct translation of *ukuvusela* mean rebuilding relationships. It involves neighbours and friends hosting each other for a day. The hosting family are often not prepared. If possible, they might prepare traditional beer and food, but visitors will also contribute food and drink. The purpose is for the community to come together. For a deeper reflection on participation in cultural practices, a detailed presentation on *ukuhlanza amangceke* (cleansing the yard) is presented in Chapter 7.

TYPE OF CEREMONY & PRACTICE	PURPOSE OF CEREMONY	NATURE OF PARTICIPATION	CHARACTER OF LEARNING	POSSIBLE LEARNING THAT OCCURS
<i>Isipheko/</i> community contributions	Local community helping each other in the time of need	Embedded in the activity, Common practice, Socialisation, Voluntary but expected	Traditional, repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Communal values, interdependence, humanness
<i>Ukuhlanza amagceke/</i> cleansing the yard	Appeasing God for a wrong deed			Spirituality: the connection between the dead, the living & yet to be born, Moral regeneration, Communal values, interdependence, humanness
<i>Ukuvusela/</i> unannounced social visits	Celebrating humanness			Communal values, interdependence, humanness
<i>Umkhosi wonhlanga/</i> the reed dance	Celebrating virginity			Abstinence, virginity, Moral regeneration, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, submission to the King

Table 6.2: The cultural activities category

Table 6.2 shows consistency in terms of the purpose (serving *uMvelinqangi*/God), nature of participation (socialisation), the character of learning (practical and repetitive) as well as possible learning derived (communal values) in each cultural activity.

The broad analysis presents these cultural ceremonies not only as significant places of learning, but fundamental to the existence of each individual in the village. Through these cultural activities, the villagers define their place (village) but shapers also define them and their place. For example, each cultural practice is dependent on villagers having and keeping animals such as goats and cattle. Forced removals, limited grazing land and inaccessibility of water has major implications for the livelihoods, spirituality and the practice of these cultural activities. The impact of capitalism and the migrant labour system are continuously turning this community into a cash dependent community. The nature of learning in these cultural activities is characterised by embeddedness, communal activity, socialisation and expected voluntarism. It is characterised by embeddedness in cultural practice, which in turn becomes a multiple site of individual and collective learning for the village people. Learning is a seamless process, punctuated and defined

by particular stages of becoming an elder in the village, which in turn contributes to the maintenance and upkeep of the practice. However, current shapers eliminate key elements, such as the keeping of livestock and through the migrant labour system, vital characters such as adult men are removed from the learning and teaching context.

2.2 Participation in homestead activities

This category includes some of the activities that were homestead-based and undertaken by different members of the homestead for its upkeep. Some of these activities are summarised in the table 6.3:

	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY	NATURE OF PARTICIPATION	CHARACTER OF LEARNING	POSSIBLE LEARNING THAT OCCURS
Men	Livestock rearing	Survival & protection of assets	Socialisation/ interactive/ functional participation and communal activity	Hands-on, practical and experiential	Significance of keeping healthy livestock, communal values
	Fencing	Defines one's ownplace, protection of gardens			Fencing skills, passing on of family values and traditions
	Cultivation	Survival			Cultivation skills, valuing of nature, understanding the different seasons
Women	Child rearing	Maintenance of a family tree			Communal & family values, life skills, awareness
	Collecting water	Survival			Communal values, life skills, awareness
	Cultivation	Survival			Communal values, life skills, awareness
	Cooking	Survival			Cooking skills, passing on of family values and traditions
Young men	Looking after cattle	Livestock rearing & form of entertainment for youth			Communal values, life skills
	Cultivation	Survival			Cultivation skills, passing on of family values and traditions.
Young women	House cleaning	Survival/ 'Maintenance'			Cleaning skills, passing on of family values and traditions.

	Cooking	Survival			Cooking skills, passing on of family values and traditions.
	Washing clothes/collecting water	Washing clothes – Maintenance; Collecting water – survival.			Team and Communal values, life skills

Table 6.3: The various homestead activities

Table 6.3 shows that there is consistency in terms of the purpose (survival), nature of participation (socialisation), the character of learning (experiential and repetitive) as well as possible learning derived (survival skills) in the various homestead activities. For purposes of a deeper analysis and an elaboration on these points, a detailed description on collecting water at the waterhole follows.

2.2.1 The purpose of collecting water at the waterhole

The waterholes are critical places in the village, given the fact that there is no piped water and there is generally a severe scarcity of water. The only source of running water is the ever-flowing Usuthu river, from which the Ebunzimeni people were forcibly removed to make way for the CCA. This place (the waterhole) thus naturally locates itself within politics.



Figure 6.2: The waterhole during the rainy season

Waterholes are the only places where the community and livestock can access water in summer and winter, yet the same critical resource can be the source of disease and death through malaria. In the dry season, the waterhole becomes a central place when the scarcity of water

makes the process of collecting water take longer. The waterhole is often occupied at mid-morning by married women and the younger women in the afternoon.

The purpose of collection and use of water is varied. Due to the long distance to the waterhole, certain activities, such as washing clothes, take place at the waterhole. Each household uses water for many different purposes, such as cooking, washing, drinking, and watering gardens. While collection of water is largely a women's activity, the waterhole is also frequented by young men in pursuit of young women. The purpose of collecting water goes far beyond the activity itself – it is a practice of collective participation.



Figure 6.3: The same waterhole in the dry season: 1. A group sitting around the waterhole; 2. A woman in the hole; 3. A woman collects water from the woman in the hole, then pours into a 25-litre container; 4. Empty containers

2.2.2 The nature of participation at the waterhole

The process of collecting water

Due to the amount of time spent collecting water, the waterhole is usually a vibrant place in the village. The four different photographs in Figure 6.3 portray the same scene at the waterhole. The first photograph shows women sitting around and chatting. In the second photograph, a woman is in a waterhole with a small basin in hand, collecting water and pouring it into a black bucket. In winter, when there is no surface water at all, women have to dig to find water and only one person can fit into the hole. In the third photograph, another woman stands outside the hole. The woman in the hole passes the smaller container of water to her and she pours that into the large 25-litre container. The fourth photograph shows the number of containers waiting to be filled. In winter it takes longer to collect water and therefore even more time is spent at the waterhole. At least two 25-litre containers belong to one person. In the dry season, it can take

one person over 30 minutes to fill up a 25-litre container. Waterholes are a distance away from the households, so women walk with a 25-litre container balanced on their heads.

Different participants at different times

The waterhole is dominated by different groups of women at different times. Between morning and midday, the waterhole is a place for older married women to congregate. It is characterised by different groups sitting and talking amongst one another. In the afternoon to early evening, the waterhole becomes a place for school-going girls and young women to gather. This attracts boys and young men to this place. Many young children also accompany their mothers. There is usually the blaring sound of music or some recorded radio drama being played on cellular phones.

The character of learning at the waterhole

Learning at the waterhole is a collective response, based on local context. Learning takes place by participating in discussions suggested and controlled by participants.

There is nothing else we do, think or talk about but our children. We look at the time when it is 12 o'clock and we have not cooked for the children and we think what they will eat. We know it's time to go. (Woman B)

We talk about everything. (Woman A)

We talk about the water and that the children will come back from school and we have not even cooked. (Woman B)

This is a clear indicator of voluntary participation; the individual chooses which group to go with and therefore participate with at the waterhole. Learning is a personal and collective interaction and exploration of real possibilities for life in the village. This is the fostering of the values of interdependence that hold the village together. In the practice of participation members consciously or unconsciously learn the necessary behaviours, knowledge and attitudes to be a member of the village – *umuntu*.

Learning at the waterhole may also be problem-based for the women. This is a group of friends or peers participating and interacting with each other. It is reactive learning to a particular

challenge for the individual or the group of friends concerned. Unlike in cultural ceremonies, the waterhole as a place has no significant relationship with learning from the villagers point of view. However, participants unconsciously bring with them different types of content, based on their daily needs and challenges to be dealt with. Participants are conscious of the latter:

It's not easy sometimes – you need someone to talk too. I do not come from this village. I came here to be married and I had to get to know other women as I only live with my in-laws and my husband is away. The group helps me to go back home and be a better 'bride' to the household. (Woman D)

Besides 'problem-based' learning suggested above, the comment indicates intentionality, consciousness and willingness to participate or learn, suggesting that the waterhole is a place of self-directed and context-based learning. Woman D's comment also summarises the function and role played by this group of friends. Furthermore, it demonstrates an intrapersonal process of thinking about the group and therefore making links between intrapersonal and interpersonal learning processes. The group provides support, guidance and leadership for the women. In the context of poverty, disease, death, vulnerability and absent husbands, this is an important place for women. In a context perceived from an outsider's perspective as hopeless, it is a process of finding oneself within a collective; it is meaningful and 'home' to the insider:

It helps take your mind off things. Here you can relax. Her problem becomes my problem because when we help her resolve her problem, I also learn from it. (Woman B)

Again, necessary local village values, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes are facilitated and passed on in this place.

However, learning through participating at the waterhole transcends local boundaries and can therefore be informed by both local and regional issues. Observation at the waterhole coincided with local municipal elections:

Sometimes we talk about our (municipality) councillor; ever since we have had an Inkatha Freedom Party IFP councillor, we ask each other, “How about this year we vote for another party, would it not be better? Maybe they would improve our water situation.” Those are some of things we talk about. (Woman C)

The waterhole as a place of learning is at the crossroads of internal versus external prerogatives, and traditional versus modern, as indicated by young women and their use of cellular phone technology. This raises questions about the long-term impact of ever-changing technology on such places in the village, and the role they play as social cohesion devices.

Learning at the waterhole is an internalized, cognitive process, separate from a dehumanizing place (this point is developed on the section on empowerment below). It is communicative learning, significant for the sustenance and maintenance of local values. It is a place of learning and building resilience. Unlike participation in cultural activities, where elders play a significant role in the maintenance of these practices for learning purposes, collection of water becomes an activity undertaken in a particular place, which provides time and place for different participants to engage at different times of the day on varied topics. Different participants become learners or teachers in that place, according to their familiarity with the subject under discussion. There is no clear distinction of roles and responsibilities; anyone can assume the role of the teacher or the learner. Participation at this place presents opportunities for the upkeep of subgroup/s that make up the village. These subgroups have different interests, ambitions, needs and vulnerabilities, yet make up the whole. However, this does not suggest that one can generalise across all homestead activities, as illustrated by a father and son mending a fence:

Often, I work on the fence with my son. I do not like it when livestock eat my vegetables in the garden. My wife works in that garden ... My son must learn these skills. I want him to know these skills so that he can one day pass them on to his son ... I don't know what we talk about really. We talk about anything ... for example the other day I was telling him our family tree. No, no, I do not talk about such things to my daughter, my wife will do

that. But also, these young boys are not interested anymore. You see where he is now, he has disappeared ...

The father clearly perceives himself as a teacher in this activity, which, as mentioned in Chapter 5, is a very important and skilled activity. Significant in his comments is the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in bringing up children and how belief systems and values are passed on, for example, how he refers to the yet to be born (“... pass them on to his son ...”) and the departed (his reference to his family tree).

This category of learning is fundamentally communicative, based on understanding and facing village challenges through participating with the self, the other and the context. Communicative learning, as defined by Mezirow (2007) and Habermans (1972), is learning with the intention to understand or meaningfully learn, versus instrumental learning which is focused on how to do with minimum relation to mean attachment. Communicative learning incorporates learning about social, political, economic, educational, cultural and local values and belief systems. In instrumental learning, goals of participation are often stated upfront or defined. However, given the natural response of ‘we are born like that’ instrumental learning appears to be predominant in the village and is derived mainly through socialization. This view is certainly superficial and sections of this chapter will demonstrate that socialization can lead to both instrumental and communicative learning.

Participation at the waterhole as empowering or disempowering

Having looked at the character and nature of learning in this place, I turn to the participants’ evaluation of the kind of participation that takes place. GK, a Reflective Focus Group (RFG) member, is a 43-year-old man. He was born and grew up where the CCA is now located. He only attended early primary school and has been unemployed ever since. He consequently lives off his elderly mother’s social grant. For him the waterhole is a disempowering place.

GK: We share water with animals, are we animals?

Facilitator: Are you animals?

NT: We are not animals. It is only that development here (in this village) is slow. The local government councillor for this area does not live in this village so he does not care. He is only interested in us when it's elections.

GK: We drank water from the river. They moved us from where we never had to struggle for water like we do now. Now look at this ...

GK associates the community's forced removal with the waterhole and thus to difficulties in accessing water. He therefore concludes that it is disempowering. On the other hand, TM and NT think it is an empowering place for women:

It is a place where women can meet and be alone (TM)

It's a sharing place – we talk there. (NT)

We have come to learn how to take care of the waterhole. When the waterhole runs dry we know where to dig next, we have found ways of protecting the hole from animals (TM)

Exactly, and when you do that, then what happens to livestock? (GK)

Ultimately a distinction between the place and activities in that place was made, as the RFG tried to decide whether the waterhole was an empowering or disempowering learning place for the village. The RFG agreed that the place (waterhole) was disempowering, but that **participation** in that place is empowering, particularly for women. The ability to make this distinction demonstrates that agency is developed. The ability to be a critical participant in a dehumanising place creates opportunities for changing a disempowering place into an empowering place. The place is not viewed by these participants as God-ordained, but a place created by people.

In conclusion, participation in homestead activities is made up of diverse activities undertaken by different members of each household. Divisions of labour in the homestead activities is historically based upon sex and age. In Krige's view, "the rougher tasks requiring strength are done by men, while to the women falls the work that requires more continuous attention." (Krige, 1936, p. 184). However, the migrant labour system has had major implications for these traditional divisions of labour, resulting in women having to perform most of the tasks.

Homestead activities, such as collection of water, play a significant role in the creation and development of sub groups in the village. However, sub groups seem to be yet another vehicle in the facilitation and maintenance of *ubuntu* in the village through communicative, cognitive and/or social learning taking place at the interpersonal and intrapersonal level, or within a particular context. The content is decided and directed by participants in that place. For the men mending the fence, on the other hand, the teacher and learner roles are fixed. Critical in household activities is the combination of work and leisure.

2.3 Participation in community-initiated community projects

“Our livelihood cannot depend on shops and buying. There are no places of employment in the area.” (Community member)

Community-initiated projects are by definition projects that seek to bring about change and benefit the community as a collective. The projects are initiated within and by the community, and are community owned, managed and driven. For example, religious activities and the building of local schools are presented as community-initiated projects.

TYPE OF PROJECT	PURPOSE OF PROJECT	NATURE OF PARTICIPATION	CHARACTER OF LEARNING	POSSIBLE LEARNING THAT OCCURS
African Zion church	Spirituality	Socialisation/interactive/functional participation and communal activity	Traditional, repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Communal values, interdependence, humanness
KwaShembe				
Primary School (School governing body learning)	Education	Representative/interactive/functional participation	Working with text, numbers, reading and writing, cooperation, leadership skills	Working with text, numbers, reading and writing, cooperation, leadership skills
High school building project		Self-mobilisation/interactive/functional participation & communal activity	Traditional, repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Communal values, interdependence, humanness, building skills, budgeting, buying

Table 6.4: Community initiated projects

Some inconsistencies are evident in the table 6.4 in terms of the purpose (spirituality and education), nature of participation (socialisation, representative and self-mobilisation), the

character of learning (practical, repetitive, literacy) as well as possible learning derived (spirituality – communal values for each sub group and education). Of note is the reintroduction of spirituality in the village in the form of church groups competing with the existing communal spirituality. The inconsistencies are largely due to the eclectic mixture of insider and outsider influences and the different nature of projects undertaken. Important however, is the development of sub groups in relation to religious activities.

KwaShembe is an African Christian church that incorporates African traditions such as singing and dance in a similar way to the African Zion church. However, it has its own African-based doctrines. Participation is interactive in a very similar way to participation in cultural practices. Both churches were initiated within the village and are led from within the village. For this reason, the Roman Catholic and Dutch Reformed churches are excluded. However, what is critical to Christian activities in the village is the development of sub groups within particular identities and sub cultures, unified in the promotion of *ubuntu* values. The two school building projects are referred to as community initiated projects because both projects were initiated, and the building process funded by the villagers themselves. A description and analysis of the high school building project is presented below, mainly because it is the most recent community project. It demonstrates how this community has, over time, been able to draw from its indigenous knowledge and apply this to community development projects. Furthermore, in both schools' building projects, the character of community ownership is obvious. Probably the most important aspect of project learning is transferability of knowledge from one project to the next.

The first school building project – that of the local primary school – came about during the era of the Nationalist Government in South Africa through the notorious Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. Schools for black Africans were built on a rand-for-rand basis, as this was the National Party approach to infrastructure development. The current existing primary school was built by the community in collaboration with government. The experience of this collaboration influenced the community to build their own high school in the village. The self-funded high school building project is a post-1994 project, facilitated and implemented by the community under the

leadership of the headman. It was completed in 2012 and the community had hoped that it would be functional by 2013.

2.3.1 The purpose of the community-initiated school building project

Education in the village is held in high regard. It is an opportunity for one to turn around his/her life. The two projects reflect the realisation and hope that being educated will change people's lives, yet for many of them this is still a distant dream, even after successfully completing grade 12.

When I completed my matric I was hoping to go on and become a teacher. (TG)

I wanted to be a tour guide, but unfortunately there are no funds. (DM)

The purpose of building a high school was to create a place where generations of children could be educated within the village, so that the children could effect change in their own lives. These sentiments were articulated by the village headman:

This is for our children and their children's children, with the hope that through education they can change their lives. You see, I never went to school. I had to teach myself to read and to write because I left and worked in Durban for a long time.

A functional high school in the village had major implications for the community. High school-going children in the village had to walk for 10 kilometres to the closest high school, or they had to pay for transport. The alternative was to rent a place for the child in the village where the high school was located. The last two options were very expensive and consequently, most children only completed primary education as walking often led to children dropping out. Renting a place to live in a different village meant no supervision and family support, and often lead to an increase in the teenage pregnancy rate.

"Our children end up walking because most of us cannot afford to pay for transport."

(Community member)



Figure 6.4: The community-built three-classroom high school

The decision to build the high school was informed by these above-mentioned factors.

2.3.2 The nature of participation in the high school building project

A critical aspect of the building of the high school is that this was a totally community based project. Participation was 'voluntary' just like in the practice of the *isipheko* tradition, cultural practices or homestead activities. However, non-participation in any of these activities would be deemed disrespectful and contradictory to the collective need to participate.

We asked the community to pay. It never was too much, as we do not have money here, but those who were able to pay were asked to pay. Remember it was not going to be a once-off payment. This was a long process. (Headman)

Paying means that some members of the village cannot [or] could not afford [it]. Not because they do not want to, but because there is no money. (TG)

No outside agency facilitated the project. It was internally conceptualised, planned and executed, and therefore demonstrated self-mobilisation under local leadership. The project was overseen by the *induna* (headman). While participation was voluntary, because the project had been

handed over to the *induna* it meant that the power for individuals to participate now rested with the *induna* (headman). The day-to-day running of the project was led by a teacher from the primary school. He reported to the *induna*. Thus, it was a locally generated process of facilitating and owning this community project.

Primary participants in the project were men from the village. However, local builders played a critical role in the actual building and passing on of skills to other locals. They were paid for their skills and the rest of the men provided labour.

Local builders were hired and paid by the community. This was yet another opportunity for some of us to work closer with the builders and to learn building skills from them. (GK)

The implementation of the project was not an easy process, particularly because not everyone could afford to make monetary contributions, yet men were expected to contribute labour.

The community understands that. Those who can afford [it] will always make a contribution, but that does not mean that they are exempted from the actual work, nor does it mean that those who cannot make monetary contributions must work more. We all are expected to work and that is the way it always has been. (Teacher)

The culture of giving within and among villagers is well established. In an example given in Chapter 5, villagers came together to help a family transporting a corpse across the border to Mozambique. Another example of this giving occurs during the December holidays, when those working as migrants return and they come together to fund a football tournament in the village. Even within this individual project, the role of traditional leadership is apparent and influences participation. TG's utterances demonstrate the significant role of the *induna*, and reflects the notion that what is good for the group will eventually be good for the individual, but it demands self-sacrifice on the part of the individual.

We got up early in the morning to go dig the toilets. We got there and had to wait for the building materials. I knew somehow that the building materials were not going to be

delivered that day and therefore there would be no digging, but I was not going to stay away because that would have been deemed disrespectful. We waited for the material until Nduna told us that there will be no digging, as there was no building material. In the village, you cannot dig a hole and just leave it like that. What if a cow or a person walked in there by mistake? (TG)

The comment above indicates recognition and respect by the locals for indigenous knowledge and traditional leadership. Even though TG, an RFG member, indicated that he somehow knew that digging was not to take place because building material would not be delivered that day, he still had to present himself. Secondly, logic dictates (for most of us outsiders) that digging should have continued so that when the material was eventually delivered, building could commence immediately. However, local knowledge dictates that open trenches and holes cannot be left overnight. TG's reasons make sense in the absence of electricity in the area. What is not so obvious is the respect for the underground as the place of the ancestors, which must be respected at all times. TG's comment demonstrates that the locus of power to participate in this instance is beyond the individual. The collective is far more important than the individual and the *induna* is there to ensure that this value is upheld and practised. For example, if TG had not reported on site on that particular day, he and his father would have been publicly reprimanded by the *induna*. If the behaviour was persistent, they would both have been summoned to the tribal court, where they would have been publicly reprimanded and possibly made to pay in kind in the form of a goat or a cow.

2.3.3 The character of learning in the high school building project

The character of learning in this building project was located at conceptualisation and implementation level as communicative (learning for understanding) and instrumental learning (learning to do). At conceptualisation level, as indicated in the purpose of the project above, it is clear that what led to the initiation of the project was the past experiences (or learning) of the community regarding the consequences of not having a high school within the village. This is communicative learning – understanding the moral value, a political or holistic understanding of

the project is for now (the living) and the future (yet to be born). Based on their experiences of the hardships of life, the community believe in the possibilities that education creates, which they have never experienced. The *induna*, for example, while being proud for teaching himself to read and write, does not want his children and the other children in the village to go through the same experience.

Past experiences have brought about a strong belief in the village that education can bring about change in their children's lives. An additional motivation comes from the need for men from the village to seek employment in towns and cities. This exposes them to different places and better-off persons. Locally, teachers and their households demonstrate this fact through their lifestyles and the houses in which they live. The character of learning that initiated this school project was in the villagers observing their own lived lives compared to other people's lives, realising and accepting that exposure to education creates opportunities for a better life.

This character of learning is reflected in the *induna's* life story. He was born and grew up in the village, but never attended school. As a young man, he moved to Durban where he worked as a labourer. Through observing a tractor driver, he was soon able to drive, which meant a better job and wages. His leadership skills within the church saw him becoming a well-known prophet. He is now a well-known traditional healer. He lives off his land, livestock and a tuck-shop. He has five wives and over thirty children and is well-respected in the KTC. He has been a student of life, a life-wide and lifelong learner.

Again, the character of learning through experience is evident in the villagers' ability to reflect on the consequences of the high school children having to walk 10 km to and from school, or alternatively for these students to have to live away from home. It is this community's ability to learn from experience that propelled them into initiating a school project, even though they could not easily afford it.

At implementation level, the example of TG showing up on site, regardless of whether he knew that building would commence for the day or not, demonstrates internalised learning of respect for traditional authority. The absence of this internalised learning could dismantle the social

cohesion of the village. This internalised learning occurs in many different places and activities in the village. When further questioned regarding this internalised character of learning, the response of villagers was unanimous: “We are born like that”.

The process of building created opportunities for learning for many of the men in the village. Often housing structures are built out of stones and mud, but building blocks were used to build the school, a process very different from using stones and mud. Again, the character of learning in this context reflects characteristics of experiential and social learning, as reflected in the following comment by one of the builders:

I was very happy to find work in the village. I learnt to build [while] working for contractors in town. I was a *daka boy* (mixer of mortar) and I lost the job and I came back home ... I wanted the job so I had to learn by doing from others who knew the job. Now here at home I can teach others, but we have always built our own houses so it was nothing new really. (Local builder)

Some of us learnt something about brick making and laying. These were the skills that we learned by doing the project. (TG)

Key elements of self-directed learning are evident in the builder’s comment. He needed the job and therefore had to be a conscious learner if learning was to take place. Importantly, the school building project was for him a place to demonstrate what he had learned and also teach others.

2.3.4 Participation in the school building project – empowering or disempowering?

TG showed the school building photograph to the RFG. To him, the photograph reflected participatory places created by the building process. All members had a photograph of the high school or primary school buildings. Unlike discussions under any other category, there was a consensus around community-initiated projects on whether the project was empowering or disempowering.

The project was empowering because it is a community-based project. It is our project. (TG)

Okay, so what was empowering about this? (Researcher (R))

The project is about what we as a community needed and wanted. It is our children who suffer. We have to pay so much money for transport or rent and children end up being pregnant. (NT)

This was a community project. It brought all of us together. Even if the household did not have a school-going child, they were still expected to contribute. (DM)

A critical aspect of this reflective process is that the RFG was beginning to identify critical elements of an effective community project. Through the process came the realisation that, as a community, they had started and finished a project on their own.

So, what could be disempowering about the project? (R)

The RFG could not find anything disempowering about the project. However, the researcher pointed out that the school building stands empty and there is no schooling taking place. The response was that the school is not functional because the Department of Education is taking a long time to recognise the school and to provide the necessary infrastructure. So, the school building project was seen as an empowering project for the community because the project was conceptualised and implemented by the community. This was despite the fact that the building was not yet functional, which could be seen as disempowering. The conclusion was that the school building project was empowering yet the non-functionality of the building constituted yet another community project to be undertaken.

In conclusion, community initiated projects varied within the village. However, what emerges as common is in the purpose – seeking the betterment of life for the villagers by the villagers themselves. It is a collaborative process of promoting that which they believe to be for their collective well-being through united action. Participation in these projects is located within *ubuntu* values and indigenous protocols. It is in the collective that change is realised. However, it

is the internal systems that determine the roles of who is a teacher, who is a learner and what is to be learned. Internally initiated projects therefore are not what the community think they want; on the contrary, community initiated projects are what community members know they want through their lived experiences. The school building is an example. However, the empty school and no teaching taking place is an indicator of a need for symbiosis between internal and external authorities. This suggests the significant influence and impact the external now has over internal and indigenous factors. Coetzee (1989) and Carmen (1996) refer to this development phenomenon as the Trojan horse of a hidden development agenda. The hidden external influences on community projects comprise globalization, homogeneity, industrialization, Western-centrism, neoliberalism and free markets (Mendes, 2005; Ledwith, 2001; Mayo, 1990). This project is an example of the vulnerabilities of insider-initiated community development projects and the lessons derived by locals from their implementation. This tension will be elucidated by the next section.

2.4 Participation in externally initiated community projects

The major characteristic of externally initiated community projects is that conceptualisation of the projects is externally initiated; it can be implemented in collaboration with the locals, but it is driven by external drivers and it is also often externally managed. Three government funded projects, amongst many others, are presented in the table 6.5. The women's chicken-rearing project is a municipality-funded project. Start-up capital and capacity building were provided and the project is generating income for the eight members. The *Zibambele* road maintenance project is a provincial road and transport department project that provides employment for women in rural areas through maintenance of roads. The Community Conservation Area (CCA) is a conservationist NGO-initiated and -managed project, initially funded by national government, but subsequently sourcing funding from international conservation donors. Common to all of these externally initiated projects is that the purpose seems to be to fast-track this community into becoming a cash-dependent community through job creation, in a context where there is very limited cash. The three projects turn normal homestead activities or community activities

into paid jobs. By providing monetary incentives for these community activities, the concept of work is being redefined in this community. Paid work was something undertaken in towns or cities, but now it also happens in their own community.

PARTICIPANTS	PROVIDER: SA GOVERNMENT	TYPE OF PROJECT	PURPOSE OF PROJECT	NATURE OF PARTICIPATION	CHARACTER OF LEARNING	POSSIBLE LEARNING THAT OCCURS
Group of 8 women	Local municipality	Chicken rearing project	Income generation	Participation for incentives interactive/functional participation	Newtonian, repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Income generating projects/market-relevant value systems based on market-driven criteria
Women	Provincial government	Zimbabwe road maintenance project	Provision of paid work/employment	Passive participation/participation for incentives	Traditional, repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Employer and employee relationships, Role of government
The KTC	NGO	The CCA	Nature conservation/employment	Passive participation/participation for incentives and participation by consultation	Repetitive, hands-on, practical and experiential	Oppression/racism, Employer and employee relationships

Table 6.5: The externally-initiated community projects category

The CCA project, described below, demonstrates aptly the character and the implications of externally-initiated community projects on local livelihoods, culture and indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, this project was of particular interest to the local traditional leadership and the community as a whole. The community wanted to reclaim and own the project from *Amahlanze* NGO (not the real name). The CCA as a conservation model was ‘sold’ to the community as an economic springboard for the community by *Amahlanze* NGO. For the community, the project had failed to meet their expectations of job creation and flourishing tourism; 250 sporadic jobs were created for the community during the fencing phase, only a very limited number of tourists visit the area, and the professional hunting project has not taken off.

The CCA project is continuously seen by community as disempowering because of the forced removals it brought about and the consequences thereof on their lives.

2.4.1 The purpose of participation in the CCA

There are different aspects of community participation in the CCA, facilitated by different factors as alluded to in Chapter 6 – the National government interest, the conservation *Amahlanze* NGO; and the externally facilitated potential benefits of ecotourism.

- The national interest concerns better national border control through conservation. For example, an article in the *Weekend Witness* (13 June, 2015) titled ‘SA ‘awash’ with illegal arms’ points to the research area of this study as being part of the 210-km border that was used prior to 1994, and is still used to smuggle weapons in and out of SA. Also included in this smuggling is cars and human beings. The implication is that local communities will have to move to ensure better border control. The post-apartheid democratic government has spent about R8 million (according to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Trade (DEA)) through the expanded public works programme on the project (Shaw, 2010). The second stated purpose from the conservation point of view is the creation of one mega conservation corridor that includes Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa, referred to as the Usuthu-Temba-Futi Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA), which will be for the benefit of both conservation and local people (this is the stated purpose of the Peace Park Foundation). The same corridor referred to as ‘conservation without borders’ includes the same porous 210-km border already mentioned. Consequently, the conservation *Amahlanze* NGO has solicited international conservation funding and support from conservation bodies such as the RAMSAR site convention which controls wetlands. International agreements and conventions such as these will often supersede national rules.
- Secondly, and supposedly from the local community’s point of view, the community is meant to derive tangible benefits from the project, often referred to as ecotourism or pro-poor tourism, that is:
 1. Economic gain through employment and micro-enterprise;

2. Infrastructure: roads, water, electricity, telecommunication, waste treatment;
3. Empowerment through engagement in decision making.

(Goodwin, 2004, p. 3)

Participation of different stakeholders implies different strategies for community involvement. This has major implications on the nature of participation by the local community. For example, tangible community benefits are yet to be realised, but what is continuously touted are the benefits to individuals. Given the diverse interests of the different stakeholders, the purpose/s of the CCA project cannot be based on common shared goals.

2.4.2 The nature of participation in the CCA

The nature of participation in the CCA is dictated to by the three different purposes described above. Participation by the local community is in the first place historically located (forced removals). High expectations of ecotourism benefits, based on insufficient information given to the community for informed decision-making implies that participation in the project involved participation purely for material incentives for the individuals in the community.

In 1975 it is alleged that the *inkosi* (chief) was bribed into convincing the villagers to move to make way for the CCA (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010). This allegation was supported by a local man from the village, Mr Ndlovu, who worked closely with the *inkosi* to convince the villagers:

I feel I have been forgotten (in the CCA project). I was asked to support the project and make others understand as such ... I am not employed [as] I was promised. I risked my life convincing people to move. Today this white boy is running away from me. (Ndlovu)

A despondent and emotional Mr Ndlovu volunteered this interview. The statement above makes important points:

- Employment promises were made to him, but once the CCA was implemented there was no job for him; this implies participation for material incentives;
- Mr Ndlovu's statement implies that the community was dead against the project;

- His statement supports the claim made by Chitakira and Torquebiau (2010) that the chief reigning at the time was bribed and colluded with outsiders to facilitate the implementation of the CCA;
- He clearly states that he took the decision to support the chief based on false promises, and he risked his life to be in support of the CCA.
- The “white boy” refers here to the *Emahlanzeni* NGO Chief Executive Officer, who paid special visits to him and his homestead on many occasions during the period of negotiation with the community. This has stopped.

Important to note is that Mr. Ndlovu made comments that equate the chief to God. In his view the chief is the most important and respected person in the village.

In an *Amahlanze* NGO commissioned report, I supported Mr Ndlovu’s view that the community was divided about the CCA as community project:

The affected wards are concerned with being able to retain their ability to harvest and make use of natural resources for their own benefit. It is known that the creation of conservation areas would require that some activities will have to be regulated and monitored. However, it would seem that affected communities are for now prepared to pretend future restrictions do not concern them greatly. Those who do express their concerns in public are reprimanded by community elders. (Hlela, 2002, p. 15)

The nature of participation created in the past has continued to inform the current nature of participation in the project. The intervention, while recognising the significant role of the indigenous institution of chieftainship, seeks to use it for its own gains. Local community participation in the project has always been about material incentives and the locals becoming employees in their community project:

500 hectares of land is fenced – 250 community members employed and some employed in the building of a camp site. In total [R]3.5 million being paid in wages. (Shaw, 2010)

Participation of the community is based on the deficit approach:

Women are trained on permaculture.

Trained to undertake fencing.

Few trained as field rangers. (Shaw, 2010)

The common character of all training provided is that participation was clearly for the material gain of individuals. The permaculture project did not take off, field rangers were in place, but they were not paid for months. The fences remain.

The nature of participation in the CCA project has major implications for an indigenous institution like the chieftainship. The significance of this institution was presented in Chapter 5. As reflected in Mr. Ndlovu's comment, participation has been divisive in the community, creating enemies in a context where every place seeks to create cohesion and communality.

2.4.3 The character of learning in the CCA

The character of learning was informed and shaped by the deficit approach, based on the assumption that 'we know, they do not know'. This was translated into a clearly defined learning place and defined learning content, giving it a formal character. For example, the villagers had to be trained to undertake fencing of the CCA, women had to be trained in horticulture and some were trained to be game ranges. All of these activities were mentioned as part of local history and culture in Chapter 5, or part of homestead activities in this chapter. This suggests the assumption that local knowledge is either inferior or inadequate. It presents an instrumental character of learning (or learning to do), without in-depth knowledge of the reasons for learning.

The second character of learning is its non-formal character. For example, Thoko (not her real name) is a 35-year old female member of the RFG. She is a single mother of nine children and has a grade 12 certificate. She is employed by the *Emahlanzeni* conservation NGO as a community facilitator and caretaker for the camp site – in essence a general worker. She is always neatly presented in her NGO uniform. Amongst many of her duties, she motivates women to be

physically involved on a daily basis in the women’s garden project: “If I am not there, or if they do not see me in the garden, nothing really happens.” Learning in this context is informal, unstructured and unconscious, while the main activity is a conscious activity.

Thoko, at the time of data collection, was spearheading a community project through the conservation NGO, where community members were encouraged to find the seeds of local trees, grow them to a particular size and then sell the seedlings to the NGO in exchange for a voucher that the grower could use for his/her needs. The aim of the project was to create practical financial benefits for the local community through conservation. Through Thoko’s education intervention, the community came to learn about planting indigenous trees as well as the significance of local trees in the broader context. The character of this non-formal education is that it is structured, organized and practical learning that is again motivated by participation for material gain.



Figure 6.5: Learning to plant seeds: 1. A group of women learn through practical demonstration; 2. Two women put their learned skills into practice; 3. The results: germinated seeds

Learning through demonstration was fundamental to the learning process. This demonstration included practical examples of other communities who had also done the project, and what they gained from it. The individual women then had to find 2-litre plastic containers to use as pots, find suitable seeds, prepare soil, plant and look after their seedlings.

The third character of learning is that of informal learning, particularly unconscious and tacit learning. For example, while the indigenous seed planting project took off very well, with local

women implementing their learnt knowledge and skills, none of them received any benefit for their efforts as what was promised didn't materialise.

Engagement between the community, the NGO and the implementation of the CCA is characterised by unkept promises, minimal to no participation by community members in major decisions. Below is a chronological summary of some of the events:

2008 – Negotiations started for proclamation as a nature reserve by EKZNW Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. The community were unaware of this.

2010 – The proclamation of CCA as a nature reserve. Reports stated that negotiations were finalized with KTC in February 2010 by EKZNW Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. Again, the community were unaware of this, and this has major implications for the governance of the CCA moving forward.

2011 – A professional hunter was granted rights by the conservation NGO to conduct hunting trips for generating income. The community was not aware of the venture and they could not understand why this was allowed, as they are referred to as poachers when they hunt.

2010-2012 – Non-payment of staff field rangers was a major blow for the KTC because this was the only form of sustained work resulting from the project.

The engagement with the NGO has provided different types of learning, ranging from non-formal to informal learning processes. Predominantly, from the community perspective, it is characterised by embeddedness learning, unconsciousness of learning and tacit learning.

2.4.4 Participation in the CCA as disempowering

Villagers' perceptions of participation in the CCA project present all the learning characteristics of planned disempowerment and dehumanisation. It is learning devoid of local imperatives, recognition of local contextual issues and occurs mainly through passive participation. This disempowerment was summarized by a field ranger and the headman in chief as follows:

The *Emahlanzeni* NGO has been oppressing us for so long. I wish we had nothing to do with them. (Field ranger)

I ask you to calm down. We need the *Emahlanzeni* NGO for now. I ask you to persevere just one more time. We need to have options moving forward and we do not have them for now ... (Headman in chief)

This perception was presented through the NT's photograph Figure 6.6 at the RFG workshop.



Figure 6.6: The CCA meeting

This photograph shows a meeting between the seven field rangers and the CCA local committee. In the photograph, there is no representation from the KTC or the NGO. The meeting is held inside the CCA. I chose this photograph because I think it shows how people participate. Their heads are down – there is no life in this meeting. (NT)

Why are the heads down? (R)

It is because there is no point in the meeting. This is a group of locals dealing with non-payment of rangers. What decisions or change can they bring about? It's the *Amahlanze* NGO that is the employer. (GK)

How come is the *Amahlanze* NGO the employer? (R)

They pay salaries, they are in charge of the project. (TG)

Indeed, these perceptions were made stronger by the fact that the then employed rangers were not being paid their expected salaries by the *Amahlanze* NGO for almost two years. However, as highlighted earlier, a history of deceit, unmet community expectations and passive participation are key factors that inform their perception.

2.5 Summary of the nature of learning in the village

The table 6.6 is based on the four analysed activities: *ukuhlanza amagceke*, water collection at the waterhole, the high school building project and the CCA project.

Nature of learning in the village				
	Cultural activities	Homestead activity	Community initiated projects	Externally initiated projects
The purpose	Communal <i>ubuntu</i> values	Communal family sustenance	Communal values	Income generation and individualism
Nature of participation	Self-mobilisation, Interactive participation, Holistic participation	Self-mobilisation, Interactive participation, Holistic participation, Functional participation	Self-mobilisation, Interactive participation, Functional participation	Manipulative participation, Passive participation, Participation by material incentives, Individualistic
Character of learning	Embedded and experiential, Context based and communicative, Non-formal and informal, Life-long and life wide	Embedded and experiential, Context based and problem based, Communicative and instrumental, Non-formal and informal, Life-long and life-wide	Embedded and experiential, Context based and problem based, Non-formal and informal, Life-long and life-wide, Communicative and instrumental	Embedded and experiential, Context based and problem based, Non-formal and informal, Instrumental
Mode of transmission	Orally and through imitation, demonstration and participation	Orally and through imitation and participation	Orally and through imitation, demonstration and participation	Orally and through imitation, demonstration and participation
Empowering/ disempowering	Empowering	Empowering	Empowering	Disempowering

Table 6.6: Summary of the nature of learning in the village

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of learning in the village is traditionally not defined nor articulated. This learning happens in learning places that are characterised by socialisation, embeddedness and incidental learning. Participation in the village is a community- and village-wide process of belonging; identifying with, and fully and actively participating in passing on of *ubuntu* values. The learning places are not called learning places, nor are participants defined as learners or facilitators of learning. The places, participants and spaces in which learning takes place are a seamless human interaction which demonstrates interdependence and interconnectedness. On the other hand, community projects, while they draw and share some factors from the traditional learning places, have clear, well-defined roles of teacher and learner, characterised by Newtonian logic.

Meaning-making in the village is traditionally both diunital and Newtonian. Diunital logic, or the ability to hold true and make sense of two opposing views at the same time, was demonstrated in the three categories of cultural, household and internally initiated projects, e.g., the ability and capacity to understand a cultural practice as both a punishment and a celebration; or the union of the yet to be born, the living and the departed, locating it in a broader cultural tradition. Important to note is the threat to the village learning places due to many factors. This fact will be elaborated on in the final chapter.

Chapter 7: Paper 2 (adult learning arising from project case):

'We are born like that': Unpacking an indigenous African cultural practice as a community learning place

We Are Born Like That': Unpacking an Indigenous African Cultural Practice as a Community Learning place

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KEYWORDS: participation, culture, informal learning, learning place and space.

ABSTRACT: Using the Afrocentric discourse this doctoral study analysed and critiqued an African cultural practice called *Ukuhlanza amagceke* (cleansing the yard) as learning place through the use of participatory learning action and photo voice in participatory research. The research found the practice to be a multiple site of indigenous African learning for the local community at individual and collective levels facilitated consciously and unconsciously through non-formal and informal learning processes. Through a carefully crafted research design the research found the cultural practice to be an empowering a site of learning that promotes indigenous knowledge systems and *Ubuntu*. However, this place of learning is under threat from internal and external factors. The paper makes recommendations with regards to a critical evolution of cultural practice because there is a need to build more organically on community-based knowledge and learning processes if community development or research interventions are to bring about authentic change in rural African context.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This paper positions the research site, the researcher and the researched as evolving variables within a social and cultural context, continuously contributing to the development and redevelopment of the socio-cultural context. At the same time it recognizes the role that other factors and/or shapers such as the colonial and apartheid experiences play in this development. It reflects on the finding of a doctoral study that the indigenous cultural practice *Ukuhlanza amagceke* (cleansing the yard) is a critical multiple place of learning for the rural villagers. It asks the question: What are the factors that influence the practice and what would enable the community to guide the evolution of their own practice.

The research site is a rural African village *Ebunzimeni* (not its real name), Bennett and Peart (1986) suggest that by the 17th century the people had settled in the area they currently live in today. *Ebunzimeni* village is part of *Kudele* Traditional Council (KTC) (not real names) in Maputaland, Northern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa (SA). Geographically, socially and politically this small village is located at the margins of the KTC, the KZN province and SA and shares international borders with two countries. The area is characterised by underdevelopment, poverty, high illiteracy levels, lack of infrastructure, ill-health, unemployment, and lack of services such as water, sanitation, electricity. The main source of income for many households is from government social grants which are mostly old age pensions and child grants.

The socio-cultural context: The village at the cross roads

Historically the village has always been at the crossroads of all forms of change including voluntary change, as well as change forced consciously or unconsciously through different factors and shapers. The consequences of these factors and shapers on villagers have either been dehumanising or humanising. Dehumanisation or liminality is seen as conceptual otherness, where the 'other' is not seen as human but rather as subhuman (Eze, 1997; Ngara, 2007). This is a learning process that leads to inferiority, and alienation from one's culture and one's identity.

Since the 17th century to date, oral history records over fifteen Kudele *amakhosi* (chiefs) who have ruled the *Kudele* people in the area called Ingwavuma shared between the Swaziland and Zululand kingdoms. By 1879 Britain had unilaterally proclaimed the Ingwavuma area to be part of Zululand and therefore under the colonial Natal administration (Bennett & Peart 1986). Consequently the *Kudele*, who paid allegiance to the Swazi king, were then unilaterally told they had to pay allegiance to the Zulu king (Gumbi 2005; Meer 2010). Furthermore, close scrutiny of the Kudele's totems documented in two dialects, isiZulu and siSwati, suggests tensions regarding allegiances and identity. The isiZulu totems suggest very strong connections with the Zulu kingdom with direct reference to its founding kings of the Zulu nation, such as *Ndabezitha*, *Mageba* and *Zulu* (Krige 1936).

The traditions and cultural practices in the village are critical for the survival of the village and villagers. To be fully part of the village is to subscribe to these beliefs and value system which stresses interconnectedness, interdependence and spirituality. These are the prerogative of a local *Nkosi* (chief) facilitated through indigenous institutional protocols. For example, *Inkosi ingabantu abantu bayinkosi* (the chief is the people and the people are the chief). The *Inkosi* (chief) is not elected, s/he is handed down to humanity by *Umvelinqangi* (He who came first, God), the creator of all things or "the First Cause" (Krige 1936). In the context of constitutional democracy in South Africa today, No. 44 of the 2003 Local government Municipality Systems Act, there exist major unspoken or undocumented tensions between modern and traditional ways of life for the African person.

Indigenous economy in the village was localized and traditionally not cash dependent. In the village, livelihoods depended on and revolved around cattle, agriculture, hunting, weaving, pottery, and work on wood, amongst many. 'Payments' traditionally were often conducted through the bartering system. For example, if one person needed to plough, the village would come together to help out. Economic activities were integrated into the everyday life in the village carried out in relation to gender. The imposition of hut tax and poll tax for Africans was a sophisticated strategy that created social conditions for a successful and forced migrant labour system and the introduction of capitalistic economy. The so called 'discovery' of gold and

diamond mines had major implications for the indigenous economy and culture. The migrant labour system had far reaching consequences on the cultural practices, livelihoods, family structures, and value systems, as it required a large number of cheap labour which was drawn mainly from African men (Bennett & Peart 1986; Idang 2015).

The exclusionist conservation encroachment was yet another negative force on the village. Torquebiau et al, (2010) report that 19% of KTC land was under the provincial nature conservation service, but with the incorporation of the Community Conservation Area (CCA) it is ultimately 33.6%. The 19% of this land was acquired through violence and forced removals while the additional 14.6% was acquired through dogged negotiation processes that included bribing, using half-truths and inflated community benefits. Both processes of acquisition had major impacts on the livelihoods and life for indigenous people. For example the conservation project pushed the villagers away from the only source of water, the fertile river banks inaccessibility to natural resource. Livestock in the village was very limited and was an expensive commodity.

Both the migrant labour system and the ongoing encroachment of the exclusionist conservation impacted on the village, the villagers and the indigenous cultural practices. These impacts have had major influences on the livelihoods of the local people in terms of how perceive themselves to be, how they live their lives or participate in their own cultural practices. The cultural practices play a significant role in the life of the villagers, it is a place where local knowledge is generated and passed on intergenerationally and intragenerationally. However, in the context of three hundred years of colonialization and over fifty years of the apartheid system in SA, where Africans were systematically stripped of their cultural identity, dehumanized and seen as subhuman, questions are raised about the authenticity and humanizing role of cultural practices. The need for critical participants in the evolution of their cultural practice is obvious because failure to do so may lead to preservation of a practice that has no meaning, no relevance and is dehumanising to their lives. This highlights the need to unpack the cultural practices so that local communities do not practice and preserve something that dehumanizes them.

The African lens: Afrocentrism

My analysis of this cultural practice was derived from an Afrocentric perspective. This is because as an African, this locates me within a cultural context that I am familiar with, creating opportunities for me to relate and draw socially and psychologically from within as well as from other cultural perspectives. For example valuing centrality, intuition, diunitism as valid sources of information and/ or alternative meaning making processes is Afrocentric (Karanja 2010; Ngara 2007; Mazama 2003; Asante 1990). Afrocentrism is defined as follows:

Afrocentric, Africentric, or African-centered are interchangeable terms representing the concept which categorises a quality of thought and practice which is rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people and which represents and reflects the life experiences, history and traditions of African people as the centre of analyses. (Hill 1995:4)

From an Afrocentrist's point of view, African scholars must study society from an African perspective thus challenging the dominant hegemonic practices as well as making an African contribution based on African epistemologies. It is about naming, defining and deriving existence from the African perspective (Oloruntoba 2015; Tolliver 2015). Afrocentrism acknowledges culture as one common factor about being African. *Ubuntu* states that a person is a person through others, or "I am because we are" expressed as *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* in Nguni languages, *buthu* in Pedi or *Harrabee* in Kiswahili, *ujaama* in Tanzania (Hlela 2016). Culture is a critical component of society, the foundation of who we are as a people. One learns from the group to which one belongs. It is shared practice in terms of meaning and purpose (Idang 2015; Davhula 2016). It is "a way of thinking, feeling and believing a storehouse of pooled learning" (Odora Hoopers 2009:9). Significant and relevant for this paper is the relationship between the cultural practice as a place of learning local knowledge, and partaking in the practice as meaning making. The purpose of the practice and its function for the local people is social cohesion, moral regeneration, cultural restoration and its revitalisation.

Still found today in Africa is the continued dehumanising effects and impacts of colonialism, apartheid and neo colonialism. This includes the total destruction of the African culture in favour of Western culture and how this has direct impact on identity. How one learns and what is learned and therefore deemed knowledge, are issues which have been articulated by many authors across Africa such as Nyerere, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Nkruma, Biko, Fanon and others. Through enculturation Africans have been forcefully and unconsciously stripped of their culture, their knowledge, their default drive or what Asante refers to as their centrality. In short, 'unpacking indigenous African cultural practices' is not museification of the practices but rather seeking to understand their function in the village and life of the villagers and encouraging conscious evolution of the practice. Afrocentrism's major project is the humanisation of the African culture and the African person, including focussing on issues such as social, cultural and cognitive justice (Chilisa & Preece 2005; Mkabela 2005; Ntseane 2011; Olorunfoba 2015; Tolliver 2015). This paper is a contribution to the depository on community learning from an African perspective because current dominant discussions are often Eurocentric. Currently there are very limited empirical studies that focus on learning in an African context from an Afrocentric perspective.

The Indigenous African Cultural Practice - *Ukukhlanza amagceke*

Cleansing the yard literally means that the yard of a homestead is cleansed by the one who dirtied it. The ceremony is the practice of the cause and effect rule, diunitism and spirituality. First, it seeks to punish the *non ubuntu* behavior that is pregnancy out of wedlock (cause and effect). It is a spiritual practice because of the interrelationship between the yet to be born, the living and the dead, and also the connection between the physical and the meta physical world (Preece, 2009). The ability to hold these views as equally important is referred to as diunitism. Diunital logic is 'both...and' rather than 'either...or' and holistic. (Karanja 2010; Ngara 2007).

In the village, being pregnant outside of wedlock is looked down upon. It is a shame, and requires the practice of 'cleansing the yard' as the deed contradicts the natural law and lowers the status of the pregnant woman, the young women in the village, the household and the mother of the household. In the village this is a critical practice of appeasing *Mvelinqangi* (God). It creates a

connection between the living, the dead and the yet to be born. To understand this cultural practice one has to understand the broader cultural context of the exchange of gifts by two families in preparation for a wedding. One of the processes of this exchange is *ilobolo*, often incorrectly referred to as bride price. Among the Nguni people, for a commoner, *ilobolo* is 11 cows given to the woman's family if the woman does not already have a child and is therefore presumed to be a virgin. The 11th cow represents purity and is often referred to as the mother's cow. It recognizes the gift of giving birth as purity.



Figure 1: Thoko's photograph of the cultural practice: Women dancing.

The cleansing the yard practice changes the normal *ilobolo* procedure. In the cleansing the yard ceremony the one cow that is brought to the pregnant woman's homestead by the offending man (who impregnated the woman) represents the 11th cow because, should the woman get married after this ceremony, the 11th cow will never be handed over to her family again.

Secondly, impregnating a woman outside of wedlock disgraces the image of the young woman, her family, and the young women in the village. For this, the offending man slaughters a goat to cleanse all young women in the village. The practice therefore becomes place for participation in the village and brings together critical players in appeasing God through the dead (*amadlozi*) and importantly the expected child who will carry the man's name. Without this cultural practice the child will carry the mother's name. This is the ultimate shame. The facilitator of the union between the two families is called *umzukulu* (a negotiator). Once the date has been set by the pregnant woman's family in consultation with *umzukulu*, the *induna* (headman) is informed and then the villagers or neighbors are invited through word of mouth. The villagers' response to the call is to bring *isipheko* (individual families helping out in different forms such as bringing food, money, human resource) to the hosting family. Human resource contributions include the collection of wood for fuel, water, and helping with cooking on the day.

METHODOLOGY

Indigenous protocols, value systems and ethical issues were adhered to throughout the process of research from negotiating access, to the presentation and verification of final results. The entire village participated in a three day participatory learning action (PLA) workshop from which six community members were purposively selected to form a reflective focus group (RFG) which was to play a significant role in continuous data collection and analysis referred to as first level data analysis.

This group became co-researchers as they collected and analysed data through photo voice. The RFG received training on the research design, photo voice principles and ethics, and the use of a digital camera.

Data collection and data analysis as a practice of community learning took place over a period of a year using photo voice. Photo voice is a fast and effective approach into getting relevant information from the local community through photography and getting the community to

understand their situation. Members of the RFG were asked to take photographs of what they saw as participation within the village. In this instance the photographs presented were those of participation in a cultural ceremony. The research design used a five staged integrated process called triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. The process started with each member of the RFG taking twenty photographs of what each member defined as participation in the village. The second stage was a structured process of triangulation of an individual narrative where each member presented their own narrative of each photograph to the researcher. The third stage was called the snowballing of the individual narrative into a collective narrative (Twine & John 2015; Hlela 2016). This was the stage where each RFG member presented their narrative to the rest of the RFG and the researcher referred to as triangulation of informants (sources). This was a place to test and challenge different narratives from insider and outsider perspectives. The fourth stage was photo exhibition which builds from the third stage but this time included, the research team as well as the villagers. The fifth and the final stage was where possible to seek interviews with protagonists mentioned in the four stages. The first four stages served as first level community based analysis. The second level data analysis used content analysis through categorization, 'unitizing' data, recognizing relationships and developing categories (Bertram & Christiansen 2014).

RESULTS

The village intrinsically understands the practice and participation in cultural ceremony as a learning place comprising different but critical sub learning places for the sustenance of what it is to be a villager. It is a place of learning and teaching of critical values, skills and understanding that promotes that which is deemed valuable in the community through participation. Reverence of this practice assumes that one keeps livestock or has means to buy as reflected by *Ndoda*, a member of the RFG, below.

The offending family or the impregnating man bring to the pregnant woman's household a cow as well as a goat to cleanse the village girls. These are slaughtered by the head of

the household or the eldest son. Certain small parts of the carcass are cut off and these form part of the incense used as part of the sacrifice when talking to the ancestors... Without this communication there is no ceremony (*Ndoda*).

Furthermore, the statement shows that without participation one will never know, for example, how to slaughter a cow or the important parts of the carcass that are part of the sacrifices. This knowledge in relation to *Ndoda's* statement above demonstrates how one learns unconsciously and incidentally through participation while at the same time being socialized into spirituality, the connection of the dead, the living and the yet to be born. It is within this context that key prospective characters, such as the negotiator, learn through participation and learn from the right people.

Again learning through practicing the ceremony is cyclical. One starts with socialization, moves to incidental learning and finally becomes involved in self-directed learning. The continuation and repetition of the cycle present the learner as a teacher.

For example, participation for a negotiator becomes a place for practice, and for a prospective negotiator place for apprenticeship. As a negotiator reflected on the learning process:

I do not know how I learnt that but maybe it is not about learning but the responsibility and the role that one is expected to play within the family. I tend to represent my family in different occasions. I will speak on behalf of the family in family funerals. This was the first time I was asked to be *umzukulu* (negotiator). I think I knew my turn would soon come so I had to observe and learn from others, but you learn by doing. (*Umzukulu*)

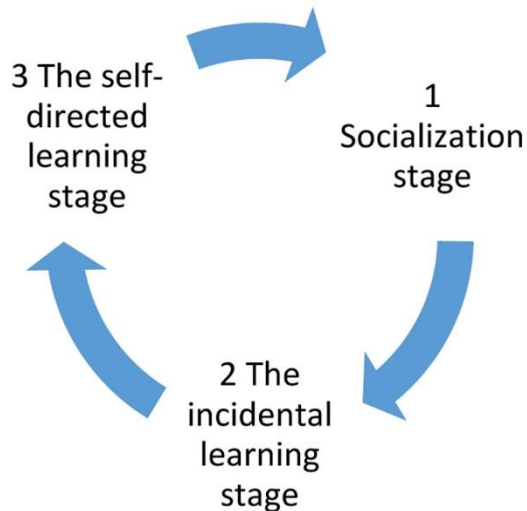


Figure 2 The Cyclical Nature of Learning: The Process of Becoming

Umzukulu's reflection suggests that through continued participation he was unconsciously being inducted into the practice (socialization). Through constant participation he incidentally begins to identify different role players and learns more about being a negotiator. He personally associates and appreciates the cultural event as part of who s/he is. This propels him/her to consciously seek to be an active member (a negotiator) in the event. For him however to gain the required skills, knowledge and attitude, he must through participation self-direct his learning consciously towards attainment of this purpose. Self-directed learning includes attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (Bandura 1986; Heyes 2016). In Heyes's view, to learn best from others requires that we learn from the right others. *Umzukulu's* conscious act of wanting to learn makes him an actor, an active participant in the cultural activity identifying the correct learning moment and the right other. His comment reflects how his perceptions were formulated and critiqued at an intra-personal, inter personal and context space. Self-directed learning is when the negotiator consciously pursues the 'career' trajectory of being a negotiator. This is a deliberate effort of participation, leading into becoming a full member of a community,

playing and contributing to the sustenance of the community as well as becoming a critical member in the facilitation of the next cycle of learning. Learning for *Umzukulu* is embedded and highly contextualized, often described as “we are born like that” by the locals. The cyclical nature of learning becomes a process of moving as members of the community from the margins to the center of participation (See Figure 2).

DISCUSSION

The discussion is presented under five themes and how each one affects self-directed meaningful learning: The cultural practice as learning place for *ubuntu*; The cyclical nature of learning; Learning process as spaces of learning; Impact of outside and inside forces.

The cultural practice as learning place of *ubuntu*

From an Afrocentric view, participation is about learning to be *umuntu* (a human person) in the context of practising *Ubuntu* (humanism). *Ubuntu* is a combination of a collective identity; oneness of mind, body, and spirit; and the value of the living, the dead and yet to be born (Preece 2009; Ntseane 2011 & Hlela 2014). Participation in the ceremony does not derive its origins or standing from the individual but from the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of community or the “I/we”. It is about what local people know and do and what local communities have known and done for generations. Learning through participation uses community knowledge produced from local history which forms important knowledge, skills and attitudes critical to survival. It is characterized by spirituality and the metaphysical world. It is often described as holistic, embedded, unconscious, and it embraces lifelong learning and informal learning. Importantly, community responsibilities and relationships, and gender roles are critical factors in meaning making. These characteristics of this learning are referred to as African indigenous learning (AIL) (Ngara 2007; Merriam & Ntseane 2008; Ntseane 2011; Pitikoe & Preece 2016).

The practice and participation in the ceremony becomes a learning place for these key values. Learning place implying 'pause' rather than movement (Tuan cited in Rule 2004: 325), and is a concrete objective 'in which one can dwell' or a 'site' (Rigney cited in Erll, Nunning et al. 2008). It is a geographical place that one can occupy. As indicated, the ceremony provides multiple places of learning for different individuals at different stages of the ceremony.

The Cyclical nature of learning

A brief definition of each stage of the cycle is presented (See Figure 2). This is because often this kind of learning is referred to as informal learning or socialization. Learning through participation is nuanced and far more complex than has been defined before. Informal learning according to Rogers (2014) is as a result of participation in daily activities that could be ceremonies, work, family or leisure. It is within this understanding that the three stages arises making an argument for three different conceptions of informal learning.

Socialization is embedded learning, learning through different daily activities and highly unconscious to both the teacher and the learner. Referred to as tacit learning in the main, it is about internalization of values, attitudes, skills and behaviours in a particular community (Rogers 2014; Schugurensky 2000; Marsick & Watkins 2001). Incidental learning on the other hand is very similar to socialization but different because levels of consciousness to the results of learning are higher furthermore it is incidental to other activities. Schugurensky (2000) defines this learning as learning that the learner did not have any previous intention of learning but learning does take place. It is unintentional but conscious. Marsick and Watkins (2001: 15) define incidental learning as learning "taken for granted, tacit, or unconscious". In self-directed learning on the other hand, levels of consciousness on the learner's part are much higher. The intention to learn is heightened. Marsick and Watkins (2001) argue that self-directed learning is not highly structured but is intentional. Rogers (2014) calls it task-conscious learning. It suggests intentionality, consciousness and willingness towards learning on the part of the learner.

This three stage process of learning therefore suggests a far more complex process of learning in participation and provides a different dimension to AIL. In addition it suggests that participation in a ceremony of this nature in the village is participation in a non-formal learning place. There are clearly village defined aims and objectives of participation. Learning is clearly intentional from the elder's point of view. The next discussion focusses on the less explored space of meaning making within AIL called diunital logic space.

Learning processes as spaces of learning

In the meaning making process learning spaces are more abstract and there is less restriction on how learning can be facilitated (Heneberry & Turner 2016). In Rule's view, meaning making can be facilitated at the inter-personal, intra-personal levels and within the context. Inter-personal and intra-personal meaning making suggest reflective cognition processes located in consciousness to learning, while meaning making in context may also include being unconscious to learning. The cyclical nature of learning through participation in the ceremony reflects these processes. The fourth space allows for an African spiritual learning processes, called the diunital logic space (Karanja 2010 & Ngara 2007). This is a space for 'both...and' rather than 'either...or' and holistic rather than atomistic (Karanja, 2010:13). It is a learning space that is informed by the acknowledgement of the significant role of *Umvelinqangi* (He who came first, God), the creator of all things or "the First Cause" in meaning making. This spirituality-centred space encompasses the ways of knowing for most African people. The cleansing ceremony is both punishment and the celebration of the yet to be born and the connection of the dead the living and the yet to be born all equally valued at the same time. The work of Merriam and Ntseane (2008) in Botswana and the work of Gambu (2000) in South Africa are good examples showing diunital logic space.

The impact of outside forces/shapers on the practice

The cultural practice of cleansing the yard is currently demonstrating strain in relation to affordability, sustainability and importantly in meeting the stated fundamental social purposes both from outside and inside the community. The need to highlight these might help revive this significant practice.

The results suggest that the practising of the ceremony is dependent on keeping livestock, particularly cows and goats. Two external forces are presented that work against the livestock rearing. These are the conservation encroachment onto the village and the migrant labour system.

Nature conservation invasion has played a significant role in the destruction of the indigenous economy. During the 17th century the Kudele people had settled in this area. In the 1800s colonialism through imposed international borders split their loyalties between two kingdoms. They were forcibly removed in the 1950s and again in the 1980s to make way for protected areas and the CCA. The last forced removals means that the community has been totally cutoff and has very limited access to the only source of water, the ever flowing river. The implication is that there is therefore less livestock for the villagers. The indigenous economy and its value systems were based on a close family unit, the ethos of communalism and the strong interdependency among village people. By cutting off people from the only water source, access to natural resources and grazing land means less livestock. Less livestock means the migrant labour system becomes the only option, pushing the village into a capitalistic economy which imposes its own different value system.

The imposition of hut tax and poll tax for Africans was a sophisticated government strategy that created social conditions for a successful and forced migrant labour system and an introduction of capitalistic economy (Bennett & Peart 1986). The so called 'discovery' of gold and diamond and the creation of the mines had major implications for the indigenous livelihoods, family structures as well as value systems, as it required large amounts of cheap labour which was drawn mainly from African men. In short the migrant labour system has disrupted the cyclical nature of learning by removing the men from the villages. As indicated, men and women play a significant role in the village but the men's role is associated more with the maintenance of the local economy and value systems (Bennett & Peart 1986). Secondly, given the traditional attitude of reverence for the earth, working underground is in total contradiction to the local value systems – underground is a place for the departed, a place for the ancestors. For the *Ebunzumeni* people, underground is a respected place; working underground is undertaken individually or collectively

only if it is necessary. By working in mines these men are not only forced out of their ways of lives and their roles, they are being forced to participate in something against their belief system.

These two forces, conservation encroachment and migrant labour, present implications for the practice of the ceremony. Since the 17th century the village has been practising the culture, but the forced removals means less ability to keep livestock, and greater detachment from their own environmental context of centuries. The migrant labour system means taking away key protagonists out of the indigenous system and forcing them to do that which is against their value system.

The impact of inside forces/shapers on the practice

With these changes brought about by the migrant labour system, cultural practices are no longer taught with meaning and understanding, and instead there is an unquestioning preservation approach to the teaching of a practice. What I am questioning here is participation that does not recognize or is not conscious of the significance of the practice in the daily lives of the villagers and the entire value system. Habermas (1972) refers to this kind of learning as instrumental learning characterized by control, manipulation and task orientation. It 'often involves refinement or elaboration of existing frame of reference, thus adding, modifying or integrating ideas within a pre-existing scheme' (Gravett 2006: 72). Data suggest that the chorus like, and unanimous response of 'we learn like that', 'that is how we are like' or 'we born like that' each time RFG members were asked the 'why' question was the demonstration of instrumental participation which is blind participation, and unquestioning participation which strips the cultural practice of its spiritual and educational value. Stage one and two of the cyclical learning process (Figure 2) present strong opportunities for, and seem to encourage, blind participation.

The impact of instrumental learning was demonstrated in the process of triangulation through the progressive expansion of photo discussions. For example, *Thoko* (not her real name) a female member of the RFG, 35 years old, is a single mother with nine children and with a Grade 12 certificate. Like all members of the RFG, she took a photograph (Figure 1) of what she defined as community participation. In this case it was a cultural practice (*ukuhlansa amagceke*).

Her biographical information questions the cultural practice as a learning place for participants as she does not seem to have learned life lessons for herself from participating in the ceremonies. Living in the village all her life, *Thoko* would have participated in a number of cleansing the yard cultural ceremonies, and her own if she had any. Yet she has nine children out of wedlock. Secondly, engaging in a reflective five staged triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions, *Thoko* never voluntarily associated the ceremony to her life openly yet profusely argued that the practice was empowering and humanizing for the villagers. The reflective process suggests the process was about the event in the photograph, not herself and her life.

Again, the same blind participation was demonstrated in the RFG workshop where each member presented their collection of photographs. An observation was made by the researcher that in all photographs presented, a particular order in the sitting arrangement occurred. Women sit on one side and with both legs flat on the ground or on a grass mat and men sit on the other side, never on the floor but on a chair or a stone. When this was pointed out to the RFG this was the response:

- It is because there were not enough seats (A man's response).
- That is just the way it is – we were born like that (A woman's response).
- I think it is a sign of respect that as a woman you do not just sit anyhow (A woman's response).

The first two comments suggest that the sitting arrangement is a common but unobvious practice. The third comment suggests critical awareness of the function of the practice but the second comment suggests the practice does not have to be questioned.

This blind, instrumental learning has consequences of blind behaviour and invites disciplinary power according to Foucault (Hegarty & Bruckmuller 2013). This is when one behaves in a certain way because one has learned that there is simply no other way – it appears to be common sense. One unconsciously behaves in a certain way as if one is always being watched. Two points

however emerge. One is that instrumental learning of blind participation strips away the educational value of the practice, and secondly, it can unintentionally inculcate blindness because learning in this context is taken for granted. Instrumental learning through blind participation raises the question: How do villagers become critical participants in the cultural ceremony so that the educational value is not lost through instrumental participation?

CONCLUSION

Rural African communities' survival is based on well-developed indigenous knowledge systems generated and sustained through culture. Participation in culture creates multiple opportunities for learning. The generation of knowledge and the passing on of knowledge means that well developed meaning making processes and learning styles exist, even though these are not formally articulated or documented. Significantly, learning is a process of acquiring *ubuntu* values. These values, the knowledge, and the learning styles and processes are under major threat from within and outside the villages. There is a desperate need to recognise these threats and to consciously intervene in the protection and revival of some of the cultural practices for the purposes of cognitive and cultural justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Two recommendations are made below which relate to the role of indigenous institutional protocols and African scholars in the conscious intervention for critical participation in the ceremony as well as in relation to the external interventions into rural villagers.

Indigenous institutional arrangements as custodians of culture within constitutional democracy in SA must define and redefine culture. At the same time culture and cultural practices must evolve and their function in society be clearly articulated by local leaders. Odora Hoppers (2009) argues that social cohesion in South Africa has meant that Africans have had to forgo their

culture, which educationally puts the African society and learners at disadvantage. This is the prerogative of chieftainship in the rural village as well as African scholars. Today in South Africa, students are calling for a decolonised and Afrocentric education and African indigenous leaders and scholars must heed the call. Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks instead of developing Afrocentric ways forward.

Again, programming in community intervention programmes in Africa draws uncritically on Western theoretical and programming (curriculum) frameworks. Locating community development interventions within Afrocentrism, through programme and project design, will facilitate inclusivity, diversity, community management and ownership. Afrocentric approaches to community development will locate the socio- cultural context of the locals at the center of planning, implementation and evaluation. It will contribute to the development of local agency and humanization within local communities. In simple terms this means redefinition of project conception, implementation and evaluation.

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Chapter 8: Gaps and cracks: Towards redefining adult learning in the African context

ABSTRACT

Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks such as andragogy, experiential learning and transformative learning. These are informed by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning, shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. Such frameworks are then imposed on African 'territories' of learning, much like a colonial template for carving up the continent, for and under Western eyes. This paper challenges the appropriateness of these frameworks. It adopts an Afrocentric research paradigm which understands research as a collective and collaborative humanising project which is contextually sensitive and culturally informed. The paper presents a participatory inquiry into community learning in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal. Its analysis of the communal practice of *Ukuhlanza amagceke* (cleansing the yard) reveals learning as non-formal, informal, collective, holistic and an intergenerational process.

Keywords: non-formal learning, informal learning, learning space and place

We cannot in all seriousness study ourselves through other people's assumptions. We do, of course, use concepts and conceptual frameworks developed by other people to analyse ourselves and what we do: it would be impossible not to. I am not saying we must not know what others know or think about us. I am saying that we must think for ourselves like others do for themselves. (Prah, cited in Chilisa and Preece, 2005, p. 48).

Attempts to define adult learning from an African perspective have been made, but are still limited and do not seem to translate to programming or curriculum design. This is particularly so because innovation and creativity is stifled by the dominant hegemonic theorisation of adult learning that indirectly channels and influences how learning is understood and defined. This is based on the false view that knowledge can be/is free of its epistemic origins and therefore generalizable. Studies of adult learning in Africa, where they exist, often draw uncritically on Western theoretical and methodological frameworks such as andragogy, experiential learning and transformative learning. These are informed by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning, shaped by industrial and post-industrial political economy, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. Such frameworks are then imposed on African 'territories' of learning, much like a colonial template for carving up the continent, for and under Western eyes.

The need to define adult learning from an African perspective is informed by the view that current dominant definitions often reflect values and perceptions about Africa and the African context that are not African. Hence in African contexts, there is too often disjuncture between community development interventions that aim to promote independence and self-reliance and the reality of community experiences and responses to these external interventions. There is a need to build more organically on community-based knowledge and learning, so that community development interventions integrate into the practices of the community or learners within their context and in an authentic fashion. An understanding of adult learning will in turn inform the development of the community intervention model.

There seems to be a lack of boldness, innovation or creativity in defining that which we know to that which others believe it to be. This paper argues that presenting adult learning within the

continent simply as socialisation is limiting and stifles development, as demonstrated by limited and slow growth of this critical area. Based on a qualitative, empirical study, conducted in a rural village in South Africa using an Afrocentric participatory research design, this paper argues that adult learning within the continent is as nuanced and complex as any other form of learning and requires further exploration. Importantly, it found that indigenous processes of learning are under major threats from within the villagers themselves as well as from outside forces, raising the question: How are emerging trends in research studies contributing to the revitalisation or death of indigenous learning processes?

Ebunzimeni village, the research site, is located at the margins of the country (South Africa), the province (KwaZulu-Natal) as well as Kudele Traditional council (KTC). Bordering two countries has had major implications for this village, historically used as an entry and exit point for political insurgents and there is currently a need for tighter border control. Nature conservation encroachment into the community area, with the aim of effecting better border control and for conservation purposes has had major implications on the people's livelihoods and, most recently, their ancestral land has been proclaimed as a community conservation area (CCA), resulting in forced removals. The CCA is run by a conservation non-governmental organisation (CNGO), which the community have had major problems with and want changed.

I have worked as a researcher in the area of nature conservation, particularly on the settlement of land claims by local communities that have been forcibly removed from their ancestral land. I have many years of working within the research site as a researcher-cum-community development worker. I have written and present a number of papers on this experience.

The negotiated purpose of the research project is to understand the kinds of community learning that take place in this community and to investigate whether, how and to what extent these learnings assist or influence authentic community humanisation and development. The overarching question of the research project was: What is the nature of learning in *Ebunzimeni* village? Adopting an Afrocentric participatory research design (APRD), and through the use of participatory learning action (PLA) and photo voice over a period of six months, the community

was engaged through the action of research identifying, analysing, critiquing and comparing the character of each place.

1. The emerging trends in the theorization of adult learning

Thus far, two types of approach to theorization about adult learning have emerged from within the continent, the first being to test Western theories within the continent. This approach has two different orientations – inclusive and exclusive orientations. I would argue that while it tests Western theory, the intention of inclusive orientation is cultural relevance and sensitivity, as demonstrated by the work of Merriam and Ntseane (2008), Ntseane (2011, 2012) and Cox and John (2015) on transformative learning theory in this journal. Exclusive orientation imposes Western theories and seems to play a policing role in the application of such theories. An example here would be the application of communities of practice by Wenger (1999). The second approach of theory generation is from within the continent. While great strides have been made to define adult learning from within, too often conclusions are similar and learning is through socialisation, reflected through phrases such as ‘sitting next to Nellie’ (Lekoko and Modise, 2011), ‘the learning taken for granted’ (Odora Hoppers, 2009) or ‘we are born like that’ (Hlela, 2016). There is a desperate need to develop both areas for cognitive and cultural justice purposes and, significantly, for an African contribution.

The seminal review by Taylor (2008) on different studies on transformative learning by Mezirow, titled ‘An update of transformative learning theory: a critical review of the empirical research’ (1999-2005) did not only present a critique of this theory, but created opportunities for other studies to be conducted in different contexts for the benefits of the theory, as well as relevance of the theory to the context. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) concluded in their study of Bastwana people in Southern Africa that cultural context has a role to play in the process of transformative learning. In this context, transformative does not necessarily equate to autonomy. Similarly, Cox and John (2015) concluded that in an abnormal context like South Africa, where African people’s lives were continuously disrupted by apartheid and the consequences thereof, structural violence (such as poverty disruptions) is normalised rather than catalytic. They conclude that

transformative learning does take place, but suggest that traumatic experiences might not be the only triggers to transformative learning, but also certain parts of the learning process. This prompted Ntseane (2011, p. 308) to raise the question: *How can we make transformational learning culturally sensitive?* This is an important question and it raises epistemological and ontological issues.

Borrowing from Ntseane (2011) a question is asked: *How can we make communities of practice epistemological and ontologically relevant in the African context?* Far too many studies have been conducted within the continent, however unlike in transformational learning, a review is still outstanding. The CoP is mainly a collective process – people share common concerns and interests and they meet regularly to deepen their understanding and improve their practice (Wenger, 1999). Learning in the CoP relies on partnerships, structures and processes external to the individual context (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). Learning is movement from the periphery to the centre (John, 2006).

A variety of orientations in the application of the CoP is emerging; in Ghana, for example, Anyidoho (2010), while critiquing the homogeneous approach in defining community advocates for CoP as a model for implementing development. A similar approach, but more in the way of keeping the CoP 'pure' is reflected in John's (2004) article titled *Community development research: merging (or submerging) communities of practice? A response to Van Vlaenderen*. John (2004) argues for the correct understanding of the concepts and appropriate implication. In the application of CoP in the South African context through an empirical study, Islam (2012) found that the broader implications beyond the CoP context also plays itself out within the CoP. In a racially, culturally and class divided society such as exists in SA, these factors determine the movement or non-movement from the periphery to the centre. The majority of CoP studies are characterised by class, for example teachers, academics or any profession as reflected in studies by Leshem (2007), Cuddapah (2011), Cowan (2012) and many more.

The two theories have implicitly or explicitly influenced theorisation of adult learning and African indigenous learning both directly and indirectly. These studies chiefly seek relevance to the local

context, but are an imposition of foreign epistemologies and ontologies. This is the basis of the call by Afrocentrists to develop theory from within, as this will not only be beneficial for cognitive justice, but also centrality in meaning making, and by default drawing meaning from one's cultural context.

2. The movement from pan-Africanism to Afrocentrism

Pan-Africanism as a movement “was both an intellectual, social and political resistance against enslavement of the African person.” (Oloruntoba, 2015, p. 10). The aim was to promote unity and solidarity amongst Africans within the continent as well as those in diaspora, through political and cultural means. Politically, Africans gave African perspectives to the colonial experience and its impacts on the continent and people. The goal of Pan-Africanism was the attainment of political African liberation. However, regime change did not mean structural change.

Legun (1990) states that only three countries within the continent attempted to make significant structural changes and developed new institutions with different political and economic programmes from those of the colonialists. These countries are Burkina Faso, Ghana and Ethiopia. However, leaders of these countries were either assassinated or became favourites of the International Monetary Fund. In short, African liberation did not translate into African ideas. On the education and training front, Bhola (2002) asserts that –

Post-independence regimes have found the colonizers' educational systems useful for their own purposes: to train functionaries for governance and to deliver development projects as defined in the West and in Africa by Westernized Africans. These systems have been neither efficient nor effective in the achievement of their objectives. (Bhola, 2002, p. 13).

Afrocentrism is a call for the generation of African ideas and knowledge, rooted in African epistemology and ontology and located in the shared culture of *ubuntu* (humanness) by Africans. There is general agreement on the terms used, its purpose and what it stands for. Hill suggests

that “Afrocentric, Africentric, or African-centred are interchangeable terms representing the concept which categorises a quality of thought and practice which is rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people” (Hill 1995, p. 4). The fundamental value is *ubuntu*, which can be categorised into three sub-themes as collective identity and the collective nature, the value of interdependence of all things (ontology), and the oneness of mind, body, and spirit (Epistemology) (Hlela, 2016; Ramose, 2003; Preece, 2009; Ngara, 2007; Dei, 1994).

Common amongst Afrocentrists is questioning the imposition and retainment of Eurocentric values in how Africans come to understand who they are in the world. They argue for an African paradigm of knowing, thereby creating a space for an African ‘voice’ in diversity in the context of multiculturalism and pluralism. The paradigm is based on shared and common experiences emanating from lived experiences and the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on African people. Amongst Africans, the common ways of acquiring knowledge are based on the interplay of the body, mind and spirit. By articulating Afrocentricity as a valid, non-hegemonic perspective, they locate it in the realm of cognitive and cultural justice (Hlela, 2016; Tolliver, 2015; Ngara, 2007; Dube, 2000; Makgoba, Shope and Mazwai, 1999; Dei, 1994; Asante, 1987, 1990).

Divergence in thought amongst proponents of Afrocentrism occurs mainly in the strategy needed to achieve Afrocentrism goals, located in different philosophies from within. Kaphagawani (2000) and Chilisa and Preece (2005) identify four emerging categories of African philosophies that inform the internal debate: ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalistic ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. Agada (2013) defines ethnophilosophy as focusing on traditional worldviews of African tribes, and lambastes the fact that Afrocentricism has not progressed beyond this stage. Philosophic sagacity views knowledge as the prerogative of sages, located in long-lived experiences. Nationalistic ideological philosophy, probably the most prominent, is about the humanisation of Africans, Aryanization and African renaissance. It argues for hybridity of knowledge by privileging the African point of view. Hybridity refers to a space where different meaning-making processes and knowledges meet and are accorded equal status (Kanu, 2011). Professional philosophy is based on the view that African intelligence creates knowledge that must meet Eurocentric standards.

This paper is located within Nationalistic ideological philosophy, informed by the view that cracks and gaps in the dominant discourse create opportunities for an Afrocentric perspective, which will enhance theorisation and generation of knowledge. This view is based on an *isiZulu* saying: *yakhela ngamaqubu enye* (birds build their nests from other bird's feathers).

On the question raised as to whether the emerging trends contribute to the development to African scholarship, the view presented above is that they do, with the proviso that the imposition of Eurocentric theories and epistemologies, as demonstrated by the CoP, needs attention. Gaps and cracks in the theory must be identified for the theory to make a contribution.

3. Methodology

The methodology used adopted an APRD which drew on Asante's (1987 & 1990) *Ma'at and Nommo, that is, a quest for social justice and harmony (Ma'at) based on African ways of meaning-making and generation of knowledge (Nommo)*. It also included Mazama's (2003) seven characters of African research, (1) the African experience must guide and inform all inquiry; (2) the spirituality is important and must be given its due action; (3) immersion in the subject is necessary; (4) holism is a must; (5) intuition is a valid source of information; (6) not everything that matters is measurable; and (7) knowledge generated must be liberating (Mazama, 2003, p. 27); Reviere's (2001) five canons of African inquiry (1) the *kujitoo* canon is about the researcher's positionality requiring that the researcher takes to the people and shares his/her position up front. It rejects the notion of value-free research. The second canon is *Utulivu* which holds that "the researcher [must] actively avoid creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities but rather strive to create harmonious relationships between and within these groups" (Reviere, 2001, p.71). The third canon is *Ujamaa* which demands the acknowledgement and upkeep of community; in the same vein it rejects the separation, the division between the researcher, the researched and the place. The fourth canon, *Ukweli*, is about groundedness of research in the African place. The final canon is *uhaki* which is about being cognisant of the value of harmony, fairness and maintenance thereof within a research process, particularly regarding those that are researched and Hlela's (2016) *ujamma* catalytic validity wheel of action, which is an i

interplay of dialogic, process, democratic and product validity for the creation of a humanisation place through research and adherence to the required standards of research (explained in Chapter 9). The APRD understands research as a collective and collaborative humanising project which is contextually sensitive and culturally informed.

After following and adhering to indigenous institutions, permission to implement the study was granted. The process started by negotiating the purpose and ethical issues. This was followed by a three-day community workshop involving the entire village and which ended with the selection of a group of six community members called the reflective focused group (RFG). This group received training in the research design, the ethics of photo voice and photography. The RFG collected photographs of what they understood to be participation in the village life over a period of six months and through different seasons.

The inductive approach informed data analysis, which started at the point of taking a photograph and led to a process of triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions. This process of photo discussion started with a member of the RFG taking photographs, presenting their narrative for each photograph to the researcher and then to rest of the community. Triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions was therefore triangulation of data source, triangulation of investigators as well as methodological triangulation (Hlela, 2016; Chilisa & Preece, 2005). This community-based data analysis resulted in different themes and categorisation of data, referred to as first level data analysis. The second level data analysis consisted of the researcher providing academic depth to the process.

4. Findings

Each member of the RFG presented twenty photographs of what they understood to be participation in village life. *Ebunzimeni* is a small village with about 100 households, suggesting that duplication of photographs was inevitable. This would help with categorisation and thematization of different forms of participation and participation places. The study is based on the assumption that participation is learning, drawing evidence from theories such as social

learning by Bandura (1986), situated cognition theory (Maynard 2001), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and dialogic space (Rule, 2004). African Indigenous Learning is participation in the practice of *ubuntu* (African humanism). It is through participation that one becomes human (*umuntu*), which reflects the values of collectivism, interconnectedness of things and spirituality (Lekoko & Modise, 2011; Preece, 2009).

4.1 The contextual factors

The *Ebunzimeni* village (*isigodi*) is part of the KTC located in KZN, SA. The *Kudele* Traditional Council is located at the extreme North of the province of KZN. 72% of people in this area live in poverty where the poverty line is defined as ZAR 51.25 per day by the World Bank. (Situational Analysis Report, 2016, p. 40). 10% of the KTC population is considered employed while 75% is unemployed and economically inactive and 15% not accounted for. 48% have never attended school (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010; uMkhanyakude District Municipality, 2014).

Traditionally and historically, the KTC is ruled by the local chief (*inkosi*) on behalf of the Zulu king. The king and the chief are not democratically elected, but God-ordained. Similarly, at village level the chief is represented by a local headman, while at homestead level the head of the household is the representative. This protocol is respected and cherished as part of the value system. In the village, age is associated with wisdom. Age and growth also represent shift and movement, indicating the level of learning. This leads to deeper understandings of the 'script' of the place or the culture of the place.

Bennett and Peart (1986) suggest that by the 17th century the *Kudele* people had settled in the area they currently live in today. This suggests that the unilateral delineation of land by colonialists in 1895 meant that the KTC, which had traditionally owed allegiance to the Swazi kingdom now had to be loyal to the Zulu kingdom. (Meer, 2010). Attainment of freedom by many African countries sparked fear for the Afrikaner government in SA. Rugged terrain and inaccessibility made border control in the KTC area a nightmare for the SA government, and they therefore wanted to donate this land back to Swaziland. However, this attempt was challenged in court and won by the then homeland government of Zululand, consequently setting up

kingdoms against each other, neighbouring tribes against each other and hence no infrastructure development took place.

The area is classified as malaria endemic. This has major implications economically for tourism, which is a huge potential. There is a lack of infrastructural development in the area, such as running water, roads and electricity. Perhaps the most continuously felt contextual factor by the local community is that of nature conservation, which started with forced removals in 1950 to make way for a protected area and again in the 1980's to make way for the so-called Community Conservation Area (CCA). The final removal dislodged the community from their only source of water, the ever-flowing Usuthu river. They could no longer plough on the flood plain and this meant less livestock in the village and the destruction of the local economy, and traditional practices which depend on having livestock. The result of the removals is that 19% of the KTC land falls under the provincial nature conservation service and 6.4% under the Community Conservation Area (Torquebiau, Dosso, Nakaggwa & Philippon, 2010).

These are some of the shapers and factors that inform the sociocultural context of the village and which further inform and shape how members individually and collectively come to understand who they are, their identity, their culture and how they imagine their future.

4.2 Findings on learning

Four main categories emerged from the presentation of photographs, cultural activities, homestead activities, community-initiated projects and externally-initiated projects. These were the cleansing of the yard ceremony, water collection, the school building project and the CCA project respectively.

Ukuhlanza amagceke means 'cleansing the yard by the one who dirtied it' and is a public and communal acknowledgement of the breach of morality when a woman falls pregnant out of wedlock. This act goes against the 'script'. The impregnating man must 'cleanse the yard' by handing over a cow and goat as a symbol of remorse and taking responsibility. This act is also a celebration of the connection between the unborn to the dead (ancestors) and the living.

The purpose of the ceremony is a public rebuke, an educational event for those involved, while at the same time it is a spiritual act. Every member of the village is expected to participate. Young men and women have a role to play because they are expected to learn. The pregnant woman, for example, loses her place in the group of young women; she is not allowed to dance with them again.

Participation in the ceremony is voluntary, yet it is expected. The ceremony as a place creates sub-places for different types of learning for different people. The young men help with slaughtering and cooking, while young women help with preparation of meals. The older and wiser become teachers in these sub-places. They dictate how learning takes place. The main characteristic of learning in all sub-places is embeddedness in different activities: it is hands on, practical, common practice, and repetitive. The ceremony as a non-formal, educational event, presents different types of learning, such as socialisation, incidental learning and self-directed learning.

In the household activity category, collecting water is a very important activity in the village, particularly for women. As indicated, there is no running water in the village, making the waterhole a critical place for those who participate in collecting water. Indeed, human beings need water for different purposes in order to survive. The study found that the waterhole was a critical place which plays a far bigger function than simply collecting water. In the dry season, it can take one person over 30 minutes to fill up a 25-litre container. Waterholes are a distance from the households, so women walk in groups with 25-litre containers balanced on their heads. I asked a group of women at the waterhole what they talk about:

There is nothing else we do, think or talk about but our children. We look at the time when it is 12 o'clock and we have not cooked for the children and we think what they will eat. We know it's time to go. (Woman B)

We talk about everything. (Woman A)

The response by the two women suggests close-knit relationships amongst members, and that I as an outsider cannot enter. The responses were intended to shut me off, possibly because I am a man. However, Woman D's response after hanging around for a long time gives a sense of the significance of these meetings:

It's not easy sometimes – you need someone to talk too. I do not come from this village. I came here to be married and I had to get to know other women as I only live with my in-laws and my husband is away. The group helps me to go back home and be a better 'bride' to the household. (Woman D)

Besides 'problem-based' learning suggested above, the comment indicates intentionality, consciousness and willingness to participate or learn, suggesting that the waterhole is a place of self-directed and context-based learning.

The third category was a community initiated project – in this instance a community-built, community-managed and community-funded three-classroom high school. This is a post-1994 project, which the SA democratic government should provide. High school-going children in the village had to walk 10 kilometres to the closest high school, or pay for transport. Alternatively, their parents would have to rent a place for the child in the village where the high school was located. The last two options were very expensive and consequently most children only completed primary education.

Participation in the project was 'voluntary'; at the same time, non-participation was deemed disrespectful and contrary to the ethos of collectivism. This is what the headman had to say:

We asked the community to pay. It never was too much, we do not have money here, but those who were able to pay were asked to pay. Remember, it was not going to be a once-off payment. This was a long process. (Headman)

Paying means that some members of the village cannot [or] could not afford [it]. Not because they do not want to, but because there is no money. (TG)

Understanding that participation in the project could not be limited by payment is highlighted by both comments above. Participation in the project was physical and practical for all village men, both young and old. Participation in the project was based on the hopes and dreams these men have for their children, as articulated by the village headman:

This is for our children and their children's children with the hope that through education they can change their lives. You see, I never went to school. I had to teach myself to read and to write because I left and worked in Durban for a long time.

In the cultural ceremony, the connection between the dead, the living and the yet to be born was highlighted. The headman's statement highlights the significance of the yet to be born.

The last category, an externally-initiated project is the CCA project, a conservation NGO initiative initially funded by national government, but subsequently sourcing funding from international conservation donors. The common feature of these externally-initiated projects is the purpose, which seems to be to fast-track this community into becoming cash dependent, through job creation. Non-formal education programmes play a significant role. 250 sporadic jobs were created for the community during the fencing phase, only a very limited number of tourists visit the area, and the professional hunting project has not taken off. The project has failed to meet the expectations of the community, such as job creation and a flourishing tourism industry.

In 1975 it is alleged that the inkosi (chief) was bribed into convincing the villagers to move to make way for the CCA (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010). This allegation was supported by a local man from the village, Mr Ndlovu, who worked closely with the inkosi to convince the villagers:

I feel I have been forgotten (in the CCA project). I was asked to support the project and make others understand as such ... I am not employed [as] I was promised. I risked my life convincing people to move. Today this white boy is running away from me. (Ndlovu)

Participation by the local community must, in the first instance, be historically located (forced removals). The community's high expectations of eco-tourism benefits were based on insufficient

information for informed community decision making. Participation in the project thus implied participation for material incentives for individuals in the community, as reflected by Ndlovu above. The nature of participation in the past has continued to inform current participation, characterised by a deficit approach; for example, some women were trained in permaculture, some community members were trained to work on fencing and a few were trained as field rangers (Shaw, 2010).

In summary, I found that the nature of learning in the village was defined through the different daily activities that the villagers are involved in in their individual and communal lives, such as homestead activities, participation in different cultural ceremonies, and community projects. These activities provide places for non-formal and informal education.

4.3 Discussion and implications

To answer the key question (What is the nature of learning in the village?) , I draw from Rule's (2004, 2015) categorisation of dialogic space, that is, intra-personal, inter-personal, and context dimensions, to which I add the diunital logic space (Karanja, 2008; Ngara, 2007). Diunital logic is an African system of thought which incorporates Newtonian logic and the role of a higher being in our lives in meaning making (Karanja, 2010; Ngara, 2007; Myers, 1988), making it a 'both ... and' rather than 'either ... or' system of thought (Karanja, 2008, p. 13). According to Rule, the term 'dialogic spaces' refers to the abstract conception of space, where meaning making through critical reflection can be facilitated.

Contextual dimension space

The contextual dimension space in the village plays a significant role in the life of every person who enters that physical place (village). This is the basis of meaning making in the village; it is a 'script' that each villager can refer to. Context is fundamentally a social creation and therefore contextual dimension space refers to the role others play in relation to everyone else in the village. Perhaps to understand the significance of this space, contextual factors are relevant. The KTC is ruled by the local chief (*inkosi*), in this case a woman, on behalf of the Zulu king. At village

level the chief is represented by a local headman/woman, while at homestead level the head of the household is the representative. The *inkosi* is not elected, s/he is bestowed on humanity by *Umvelinqangi* (He who came first, God, the creator of all things or 'the First Cause'). The prerogative of this institution is the facilitation and preservation of God's values at all levels. The institution is by no means 'sacred' – instead it represents and safeguards the sacred values dictated by *Umvelinqangi* the most noteworthy value being *ubuntu*, often referred to as African humanism.

However, there exists confusion on the sacredness of the institution of *inkosi*, as communicated by one man in the village when he said:

Some believe in a God they have never seen. Mine lives here.

While the man equates the chief to God, what he is really communicating is the importance of the chief's position and what (s)he represents in the village. The question of whether the chief is sacred was clarified by the village headman, who said that 'the chief is the people and the people are the chief'. In other words, the chief is like everyone else in the KTC, but has been appointed and therefore has special qualities that might also exist in any other person. Furthermore, during the process of negotiating informed consent for this research project, further evidence arose. Negotiations had been ongoing with the chief, the traditional council and the village headman, and agreements were finally reached for the implementation of the project. I nevertheless felt that I still needed to negotiate individual consent at village level. I was summarily told by the villagers that if I had negotiated and come to an agreement with the chief, who were they to say no. Consequently, no individual consent forms were signed. The point here is that if the villagers accept and have this understanding of the institution of *inkosi* then the role of the institution in their lives becomes the context from which they derive meaning and knowing.

In this study through the community-based data analysis, four categories of activities defined as participation emerged –the practice of various cultural activities, the many different homestead activities, community-initiated project and outsider-initiated projects. In each and every

category, the significant role of the chief permeated, suggesting that different forms of systems exist to induct and uphold the institution and the values it represents.

Contextual dimension space amongst villagers is what Foucault (1991) refers to as 'disciplinary power'. This is when one behaves in a certain way because one has learned that there is simply no other way; it is common sense and one unconsciously behaves in a certain way as if one is always being watched. McLaren (1999) speaks of cultural pedagogy, referring to the way cultural agents generate certain hegemonic ways of viewing and understanding the world. In the industrial and post-industrial political economy, in a context of liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture, this significant value is questioned and challenged, but nevertheless exists. Consequently, Foucault implores us to –

Cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. (Foucault, 1991, p. 194)

Contextual dimension space is significant for social cohesion, interdependency and interconnectedness within and amongst the villagers. It arises and is shaped by their socio-cultural context. Bribing of the *inkosi* to gain access to the community through a community project, as described earlier, demonstrates that community intervention programmes realise the significance and influence of the institution (of *inkosi*) to gain access, even though the programmes are not interested in rooting themselves in the local context.

Inter-personal dimension space

Inter-personal dimension space in the village is fundamental in practising, facilitating and passing on key values, non-formally and informally. Non-formal learning, according to Rogers, is 'structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.' (Rogers, 2013, p. 8).

Participation in a cultural ceremony is voluntary, but expected. It is participation in a non-formal learning event, a place that teaches *ubuntu* values. *Ubuntu* values of interconnectedness and interdependence implies that what is good for the collective will eventually be good for the individual, not the opposite. This is learning within and amongst others, as articulated by Ntseane (2011) as the I/we phenomenon passed on informally and non-formally in the village. In the village, there are designated places for passing on important knowledge and values. Interpersonal dimension space is the interface of different perspectives in meaning making; these are emic and etic perspectives. An example of this is when women gather at the waterhole or participate in a cultural ceremony.

Participation in ceremonies is managed and monitored through the practice of *isipheko* (community contributions). *Isipheko* refers to contributions made through human resources, monetary contribution or physical participation.

The week that precedes the ceremony, we help the hosting family by collecting water and wood for fuel. On the day, we help with cooking. We are all busy. We do the same, whether there is a death or ceremonies. (Thoko)

As can be seen in this quote, learning through participating in the ceremony does not start on the day of the ceremony, but precedes the ceremony and goes beyond it. However, not a single moment of participation was referred to as learning or teaching. Learning is through participation, interacting and sharing with others through actions based on clearly articulated and shared values, such as morality and spirituality. Learning is incidental to other activities. This is a well-structured learning event for the protagonist. The learning outcomes for the protagonists are public rebuke and connecting the unborn to the living and dead. It is about punishment of bad deeds, it celebrates the connection of the yet to be born with the dead (ancestors), a key value if you are a member of the village. The protagonists are very aware of these outcomes and the intentionality of the whole exercise. As a consequence of her actions, the unmarried pregnant woman forfeits some of the rights afforded to girls in the village, a group she will no longer belong to. Due to the tacit nature of learning, villagers often struggled to

articulate what was learned and how it was learned. When queried, they would often respond, 'we are born like that' or 'that is the way things are done'. This is because this knowledge and learning has been passed on for centuries, formally, informally and non-formally, inter-generationally and intra-generationally.

The cultural practices furthermore created informal learning sub-places or opportunities for others to learn. "Informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It may be intentional, but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random) [and frequently unconscious]." (Rogers, 2014, p. 8). For example, slaughtering a cow, cooking, or playing certain parts in a ceremony would present themselves as sub-learning places for other members to learn through participation. Ndoda, talking about learning in the sub-learning place of slaughtering a cow says:

Any chance to learn how it's done is very important. It's a chance you cannot miss ... you will never know when it's your turn to do it. On one particular day, your father will turn and say, "You do it," and you dare not disappoint. Failure to kill with the first blow is a bad omen.

Again, what Ndoda highlights is a consciousness to learning in sub-learning places. When boys, young men and older men help the hosting family to slaughter a beast, the teachers and learners in that place are very aware of their function and the significance of participation.

Interpersonal dimension space therefore distinguishes the communal character of knowing and meaning making as learning with each other, learning from each other, and learning amongst each other. It is learning in participation with the other, and therefore recognises the collective as constituting an indispensable component of meaning making and knowing, and a critical ontological issue.

Intra-personal dimension space

Intra-personal dimension space can be understood in a limited fashion as the ability to engage with the self in a critical reflection process. The findings presented thus far demonstrate that dialogue with the self often takes place in the context of others, physically, contextually or spiritually. In other words, intra-personal dimension space is a consciences or unconscious reflective process of knowing or meaning making. This process was demonstrated by the negotiator. The negotiator represents the offending family and negotiates between the two families by facilitating the 'cleansing the yard' ceremony. The negotiator is therefore a critical player. When asked about his acquisition of negotiating skills he responded:

I do not know how I learnt that, but maybe it is not about learning but the responsibility and the role that one is expected to play within the family. I tend to represent my family on different occasions. I will speak on behalf of the family at family funerals. This was the first time I was asked to be a negotiator. I think I knew my turn would soon come so I had to observe and learn from others, but you learn by doing. (Negotiator)

The negotiator's response highlights a shift in participation, from unreflective participation to reflective participation, uncritical participation to critical participation, and instrumental participation to transformational participation. The shift happens at an intra-personal dimension space for the good of the family and community. The negotiator is introduced into this designated role through continued participation (socialisation) in different ceremonies. Schugurensky (2000) defines socialization as tacit learning, or internalization of values, attitudes and behaviours that take place in everyday life. He incidentally begins to identify different roles in different sub-learning places. He further defines Incidental learning as learning that the learner did not have any previous intention of learning, but nevertheless, learning does take place. Once roles have been differentiated, the negotiator pursues his identified role through self-directed learning. Self-directed learning, according to Brookfield (1985), is not highly structured, but is intentional (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Rogers (2014, p. 8) calls it 'task-conscious learning'. The shift in consciousness is clearly not at intrapersonal dimension space alone – it is physically demonstrated at the interpersonal level by shifts in the roles played, which demonstrate the

internalisation of the 'script' as defined in the contextual dimension space. Once the negotiator has had a chance to put into practice what he has learnt, he moves into the circle of negotiators and becomes a teacher himself. Diouf, Sheckley, & Kehrhahn (2000) in their study conclude similarly that learning is facilitated at a particular period of personal development by appropriate, familiar and respected individual/s.

Diunital logic space

Diunitism is an act of dialogue with the self (logical reasoning) in the context of God (spiritual reasoning). This is the interplay of the body, mind and spirit in meaning making, positioned in diunital logic, which is both ... and' logic, for instance, understanding that the 'cleansing the yard' ceremony is a public rebuke, punishment for an immoral deed, and a spiritual celebration all at the same time. The villagers' belief that they are responsible for their lived lives is taken for granted. At the same time, they are mindful of the significant role that the ancestors have over their lives and therefore there is a need for continuously appeasing them through ceremonies. Poverty is rife, and life in the village is characterised by underdevelopment, lack of basic infrastructure, a high rate of unemployment and illiteracy, and most families depend on government social grants (Chitakira and Torquebiau, 2010)), but when there is extra cash or livestock, it is used to appease the ancestors through ceremonies. It is within this logic that in a small village of a hundred homesteads, there are more than five Christian churches that co-exist with a strong traditional-values belief system.

Appreciation of diunital logic dimension sheds light on African ontology and epistemology, which is based on the interconnectedness of all things and the interplay of the body, mind and spirit in meaning making (Lekoko and Modise, 2011; Ramose, 2002; Ngara, 2007; Dei, 1994) These ontological and epistemological assumptions inform the 'script' that shapes the contextual space dimension, the intra- and interpersonal spaces. Regrettably, diunitism is a space often overlooked, particularly in programming, curriculum design or project conceptualisation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in responding to the borrowed implicit question, 'How can we make adult learning epistemologically and ontologically authentic in the African context?', the findings of this research project are that in the village there are very ancient and customary non-formal and informal learning places. These indigenous learning places are characterised by a cyclical nature of learning, starting at the socialisation stage (incidental learning stage) and the self-directed stage, making learning a life-wide process of engagement. This suggests strongly that meaning making processes are facilitated at interconnected and interdependent dimension spaces, which means that while learning is an individual process it is subject to other far more substantial factors, such as socio-cultural factors and spirituality.

In an attempt to define the nature of learning in the village, four dimension spaces were used to present the interconnectedness and interplay of all the places. The study found that there are non-formal and informal education processes that are foundational to the socio-cultural context that shapes every place and its participants in the village. However, the paper also highlighted the weakness of the system in that undue influence on the chief by unscrupulous people can render the entire village and its socio-cultural values questionable.

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Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man (woman) who will take responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the magic hands of the people. (Fanon, 1968, p. 197)

1. Introduction

Participation in this research was a journey of disruption, shift in consciousness and violent confrontation with the self in a collective context. While the research design never claimed to be action research, but instead Afrocentric participatory research, it nevertheless created places of learning for the research participants to realise that indeed, no famous person would arrive to change their reality; only they themselves could be the agents of change. The philosophical grounding of this research study and the conclusions drawn are informed by an isiZulu saying foregrounded in Chapter Two:

yakhela ngamaqubu enye (birds build their nest from other birds' feathers).

Afrocentrism was the ideology that informed this study, while drawing and borrowing from dominant hegemonic practices, research and theories for the development of African scholarship.

This thesis is made up of nine chapters: Chapters 1 (introduction), 2 (Literature review and theoretical framework), 5 and 6 (Rich, thick description) 8 and 9 (Discussions and conclusions) are all fully fledged traditional chapters, while Chapters 3, 4 and 7 are papers published or still to be published in accredited journals.

Traditionally this final chapter in a PHD through publication has one main purpose: to pull together all the component papers in this thesis through general discussions and conclusions. Coherence for this thesis was achieved using the same theoretical framework of Afrocentrism, research methodology, literature review and a rich, thick description, all of which apply to the study as a whole. Afrocentrism as a theoretical framework permeates every chapter and paper that is part of this thesis. Afrocentrism informed and shaped the Afrocentric participatory research methodology, which in turn was the basis for each paper presented. The literature review focused in the main on learning from Western and African perspectives and was also shared by each chapter. The documentation of all data produced in this research project was through a rich, thick description that permeated all the chapters in this thesis.

The other basis for coherence in this study is derived from the key assumption that all human beings are historical, cultural and social beings who generate knowledge and actions for their own wellbeing. Indeed, it was Habermas (1972) who asserted that the ultimate human goal (interest) is survival and reproduction. Translated into social science, research suggests that social research is not value-free, interest-free or ideology-free, but rather a process which ideally should be driven by trustworthiness and validity issues (Lather, 1986).

While this chapter presents discussion and conclusions it also makes an Afrocentric scholarly contribution in three areas: Afrocentric research methodology, theorisation of community learning, and development of an Afrocentric model of community education.

2. The Afrocentric research design as place for humanization

Contribution to the Afrocentric research design is necessary because in the context of neoliberalism and the years of the apartheid system in South Africa, Mkabela (2005) claims that liberatory Afrocentric research is yet to be realised in South African context. This research project makes a significant contribution in this area. Also in the South African higher education context, the most dominant research paradigms taught at post graduate level are post positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms. Afrocentrism is a fairly new paradigm within this setting, often presented as weak in terms of its epistemological and ontological base.

The Afrocentric research design was presented in Chapter 3 and 4: Participatory community learning approach: myth or reality? and Learning through the action of research: The evaluation of a research design. These papers scrutinize trustworthiness issues in an Afrocentric research design. This scrutiny highlights four fundamental areas:

- The research process as a humanising learning place, firmly rooted in the socio-cultural context (ideological orientation);
- Remaining compliant to the rigour of trustworthiness/validity, yet at the same time remaining true to the African value systems. It is a research process, a learning process and learning for change (trustworthiness or validity);
- A participatory Afrocentric research design (research as learning place);
- Providing critical considerations and possible guidelines for non-formal education programming and modelling.

This section scrutinises two foci – ideological orientation and catalytic validity, areas not covered in the papers.

2.1 Ideological orientation

The ideological orientation of this research within the African context was based on a plea for cognitive and cultural justice. In Visvanathan's (2001) view, knowledge is inherently tied to the

epistemic community (culture), that is, the group or society that establishes the rules or methods for making that knowledge because in literature, knowledge is often “undone from its context and ideology, its ‘embodiedness’ and ‘situatedness’, and presented as neutral and universally good.” (van der Velden, 2004, p. 74). The argument here is that culture is foundational to knowledge generation and meaning making. It is a critical component of society, the foundation of who we are as a people (Idang, 2015; Davhula, 2016). Africans have been robbed of their culture through colonialism and imperialism and therefore also robbed of their knowledge, prompting Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2000) to say Africa still defines herself from western positions. In research, this view is presented by Prah as follows:

We cannot in all seriousness study ourselves through other people’s assumptions. I am not saying we must not know what others know or think of us. I am saying that we must think for ourselves like others do for themselves (Prah in Chilisa and Preece, 2005, p. 48).

To understand Prah’s quotation, one must understand the old arguments that challenge traditional views and assumptions that research is a value-free, interest-free or ideology-free scientific process (Hesse, 1980; Lather, 1986; Oloruntoba, 2015; Tolliver, 2015). On the contrary, these views and assumptions, particularly in social science research into knowledge production in Africa has led to Western perspectives being imposed on Africa, or what Oloruntoba refers to as “epistemological and ontological violence, I dare say murder”. (Oloruntoba, 2015). The two analogies, ‘violence’ and ‘murder’ present the varied views and approaches from within Afrocentrism to knowledge generation. Understanding African epistemology and ontology as having been, and continuing to be violated or murdered, means different paths or forms of engagement. For example, addressing the consequences of violence implies counselling and rehabilitation, and working with the knowledge one has to develop new relevant knowledge that draws from the past. On the other hand, murder suggests resurrection and possible new beginnings. The resurrection approach suggests a delineation between Western and African perspectives and therefore a need to redevelop and reconstruct African perspectives as a response to the ravages of Western domination (violation/murder). Whatever the approach,

amongst Afrocentrists there is commonality in the acknowledgment of the obvious association between research and ideology.

Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse ... If we are adequately Afrocentric, the international implications will not be lost on us (Mafege, 2000, cited in Oloruntoba, 2015, p. 17)

If one acknowledges that research is never neutral, one must therefore concede that trustworthiness or validity issues become of paramount importance in research design. Importantly, research ceases to be elitist and reserved for only a few.

The project of Afrocentric research is about the humanisation of the African person in the context of the globalising world. This means that research produced must seek to make scholarly contributions that reflect the African context in the generation of knowledge, and seek to bring about dignity and identity to African society. Ideologically locating research design within Afrocentrism, as in Eurocentric or Eastern research, must be dictated to by African epistemologies and ontologies. Afrocentric research design is presented in the papers *Participatory community learning approach: myth or reality?* (Chapter 3) and *Learning through the action of research: The evaluation of a research design* (Chapter 4). Based on the experiences of conducting an Afrocentric research project, I reflect on this process with an intention of contributing to the development of such research. Below is a different take on catalytic validity; the common approach to catalytic validity in (Western) literature is presented as a contribution to meaning making.

2.2 Research for humanisation

In my study, catalytic validity is a key concept for understanding the status of learning within an Afrocentric research design. General validity-related concerns with the study were raised in Chapter 1 in relation to researcher positionality, the community-negotiated purpose of the study as well as the chosen Afrocentric participatory research design. My argument is that research

that claims to be Afrocentric must address catalytic validity as a vehicle through which it contributes to the humanisation of participants during the process of research or as the end product of research. Catalytic validity as process, Lather argues, is “the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in ... knowing reality in order to better it.” (Lather, 1986, cited in Bertram and Christiansen, 2014, p. 192). This suggests an ongoing process of reorientation, or the disruption of research participants’ frames of references. This is the opposite view to the dominant understanding of catalytic validity as product defined, often “the degree to which a given research study empowers and liberates a research community.” (Lather, 1986, in Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007, p. 238).

What emerges from this study is that catalytic validity, understood as a transforming process, can contribute to humanisation by facilitating disruptions, shifts in consciousness and confrontation with the self in a collective context. This is a process of humanisation, a movement from a situation of un-freedom to freedom, as well as a process of learning, de-learning and relearning about what it means to be African. This must be an ongoing process.

2.2.1 The Afrocentric research design

Data collection and data analysis as practices of community learning took place over a period of a year for this research project. Six community members were purposively selected to form a reflective focus group (RFG). They received training on the research design, photo voice principles and ethics, and the use of a digital camera. Members of the RFG were asked to take photographs of what they saw while participating within the village. The research design used a four-stage process which I termed ‘triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions’ – a structured process of triangulation of individual narratives, and the snowballing of these individual narratives into a collective narrative (Hlela, 2016).

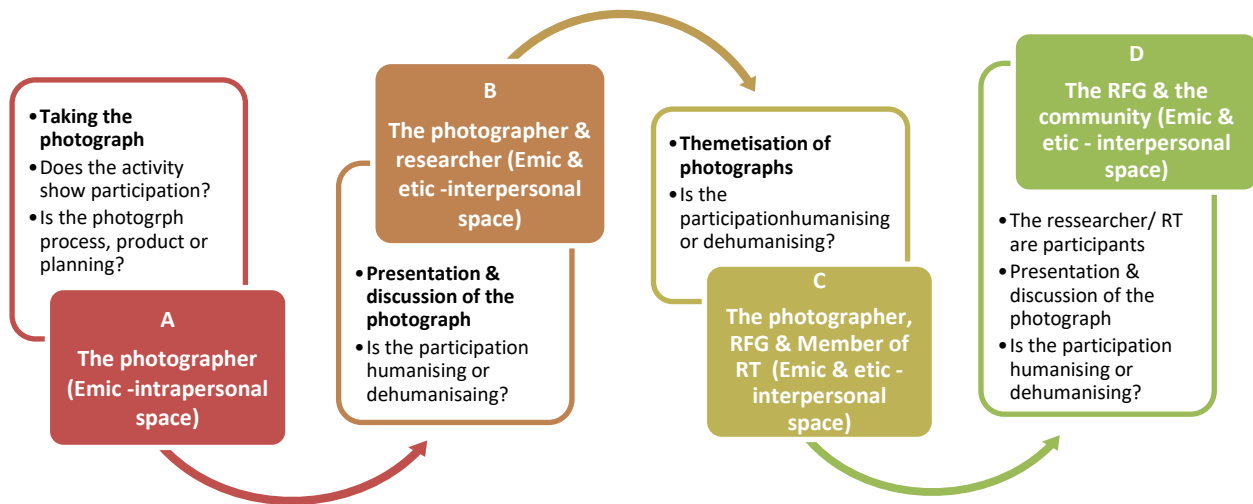


Figure 9.1: Triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions

This is a structured process of data collection and community-based data analysis. It is based on three critical values: collective history, collective enquiry and mutual dialogue. The research design created moments of critical reflection that focused on everyday village activities, turning these into unfamiliar activities for village members and thereby giving them the opportunity to develop enhanced or new meanings. The summarized version of the design above is used to demonstrate catalytic validity as process.

Catalytic validity as process: The shifts and changes during the research process

This refers to the extent that the researcher and participants' frames of references were continuously being challenged, as well as to the fitness of data collection techniques:

The photography phase:

You could not just take a photograph. You think first about whether there is participation, you think about the three categories – sometime you [are] not sure where it belongs and you think about all the questions [we were given]. You run through the answers in your head first. If you cannot answer some questions, you think again, "Does this show participation?" (Joseph)

Joseph's comments suggest a critical and high level of engagement, a shift in perceiving and interpreting familiar places or activities in the village. Through the research design, Joseph's familiar place or activity is turned into an unfamiliar place through critical engagement and reflection. Joseph is afforded an opportunity to challenge his frame of reference or meaning perspective (Mezirow, 2000). He has an opportunity to elaborate, refine or change his frame of reference. Joseph confronts his reality and the research design provides an incongruency with his usual way of thinking. Joseph is in a critical process of viewing his reality in a new light. This is a journey of disruption, shift in consciousness and violent confrontation with his reality.

The presentation and research phase:

Joseph presents the photograph and shares his interpretation, analysis and narrative with the researcher through an open-ended interview. The researcher might probe, or give positive non-verbal feedback, such as a nod or smile.

We could not leave open holes overnight. It is dangerous. That is simply not done in the village. (Joseph)

What do you mean it is not done? (Researcher)

With no electricity in the village, livestock and people might get hurt. (Joseph)

Oooh ... It is respect for the underground. (Researcher)

Critical in the conversation is how the most important part – respect for the underground as ancestral land is almost an afterthought. Without the “ooh” response, this critical value and knowledge could have been lost. However, through the interplay of emic (internally perceived) and etic (externally perceived) perspectives, this valuable knowledge is resurrected or highlighted, resulting in a more developed or changed narrative (Krathwohl, 2009). This is affirmation and development of a cultural value system – in this case, indigenous knowledge.

Presentation in a mini photo exhibition-cum workshop:

The workshop was facilitated by a member of the research team. She facilitated and controlled the debates and deliberations, keeping in check the researcher's participation. The researcher

was an active participant because of the knowledge gained in the preceding stage. For example, the narrative of “We could not leave open holes overnight. It is dangerous. That is simply not done in the village,” was interrogated, challenged and then confirmed by the rest of the RFG. By the end of the workshop, the six-member RFG agreed and shared the view that the underground is the land of the ancestors. For these members, this will never be simply an afterthought.

This stage created a learning place that tapped into local knowledge and regenerated ‘new and relevant knowledge’ for all involved. The learning process must move people from what they already know to the unknown, while at the same time being affirming, endorsing and enhancing African identity and values, if it is to be liberating, humanising and conscientising (Mazama, 2003). This, according to Reviere (2001) is the *Ujamaa* canon; it refers to change informed and driven by local communities. In traditional dominant research this is referred to as catalytic validity. Catalytic validity is ‘explicitly political’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003, p. 111), and it is about getting participants to come to an understanding of their world and to seek to change it.

The village photographic exhibition

In accordance with the *utulivu* canon, “the research actively avoids creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities, but rather strives to create harmonious relationships between and within these groups.” (Reviere, 2001, p. 713). This stage was not only critical in data verification, but also in avoiding creating divisions within the village. All of the villagers had participated in the initial workshop and were part of the research, and therefore all had a contribution to make. *Utulivu* therefore locates the research design within research good practice, and a principled, ethical stance of non-maleficence is often described as ‘to do no harm’ (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014).

The *uhaki* canon echoes this – it is concerned with ‘being cognizant of the value of harmony, fairness and maintenance thereof within the research process, particularly to those that are researched’ (Reviere, 2001, p. 713). There is a close association between the *uhaki* canon and what is often referred to as internal validity. This refers to articulating the voices of the

participants (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993), and member checking – creating places for the participants to check if what is reflected in the report is indeed true of that community (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The villagers had to have their say as well.

The whole village was invited to attend the exhibition. Photographs were placed on the walls and the community walked around. Members of the RFG had a chance to talk about their photographs, but the purpose of the exhibition was to get the community to give their own interpretations of each photograph. However, this purpose was not achieved for two reasons: firstly, the time allocated for this stage was very short (a morning) and secondly, the persons and places in the photograph became the focus, a process that proved difficult to manage and control.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that validity in this research project is located in an Afrocentrism ideology which goes beyond the confines of catalytic validity, as explained below.

Catalytic validity as product: Shifts and changes as a result of the research project

The catalytic validity as product is not the focus of this section, but is summarised as the shifts and changes in the village as a result of participation in the research project. This took the form of the symbolic takeover of the CCA by the local community and the documentation of their own history.

The symbolic takeover of the CCA took place six months after the research project, where the *Kudele* Traditional Council summoned the *Emahlanzeni* NGO, the provincial conservation services, the researcher and other relevant stakeholders to a meeting.

The Chief and the KTC were very clear in highlighting the significant role of the research process in helping them to arrive at this juncture. I refer to this as a ‘symbolic takeover’ because the decision to keep the *Emahlanzeni* NGO as part of the CCA was a strategic decision, informed by the fact that the community did not have the know-how and the necessary resources for a total takeover. In Chapter 1, I detailed the journey of negotiating and arriving at a negotiated purpose. The Chief and the KTC were very clear that they wanted to be involved in a process that would

eventually lead to a total takeover. This would have located this research study in action research; however, through negotiation we agreed on a participatory approach. The agreed approach was to facilitate scrutiny of community learning places, which would result in knowledge transference, for example, the characteristics of humanising places versus less humanising places in the village. The meeting, I argue, was a result of knowledge transfer, and the KTC put action to that knowledge. During the research process, the CCA project was referred to by community members as *Emahlanzeni* project. They did not own it – they understood themselves to be employees. The significance of the meeting was that the narrative and the language had changed; they now owned the project and positioned themselves as drivers of the project and were seeking partners' views. It was finally their project, but they realised the need for partnership. This was a critical lesson learnt from internally initiated projects, where the community had gone ahead and built a high school, but because the Department of Education was not involved, the school stood empty and incomplete (Chapter 6). The community's action of calling the meeting points to the catalytic validity of the research process, based on critical memory (democratic validity), mutual dialogue (dialogic validity), collective enquiry (process validity) and the documentation of the community history (product validity).

Product validity was attained through the development of the history of the *Kudele* people. Documentation of local history was initially facilitated through participation in a three-day community workshop, which used participatory learning techniques. The second part of the process was publishing this ongoing history development process in a newspaper and asking for broader public participation, which sparked interest locally and beyond. For example, an old lady now living in Pietermaritzburg, who had lived in the area contacted me and made a major contribution in relation to totems, and significantly, she mentioned one chief that had not been mentioned before whose identity would have been lost as he had been banished from the area. For ethical reasons, the details of this development cannot be revealed.

The process of redeveloping this collective history was not for the purposes of apportioning blame, nor of seeking to inspire revenge. On the contrary, it is a carefully structured process of critical memory and gaining new perspectives on the past, which always informs the current and

future reality. The collective history development plotted the history of the community's migration, how they came to settle where they are, the impacts of colonialism, apartheid and the national government of South Africa and inter-tribal wars in the area. The process of learning in the development of a collective history contributed to the development of agency, as indicated by their action described above as a symbolic takeover. They learned that their conditions were not God-ordained, but created and that it was they who could play a part in changing their reality.

For this research design the collective history contributed towards the development of a rich, thick description. For the community, it was a documentation of their own history in the form of a book (and thus the ethical requirement of beneficence was addressed), in vernacular titled *Siphoxa usathane* (Shaming the devil), still to be published. In this instance, a community believed that the land belonged to their ancestors and therefore belonged to them, the current generation. Both products, the book and the thick description were presented to the community. The book was presented to the Chief and the KTC to read and make changes. The thick description was read to the *Ebunzimeni* village for verification purposes.

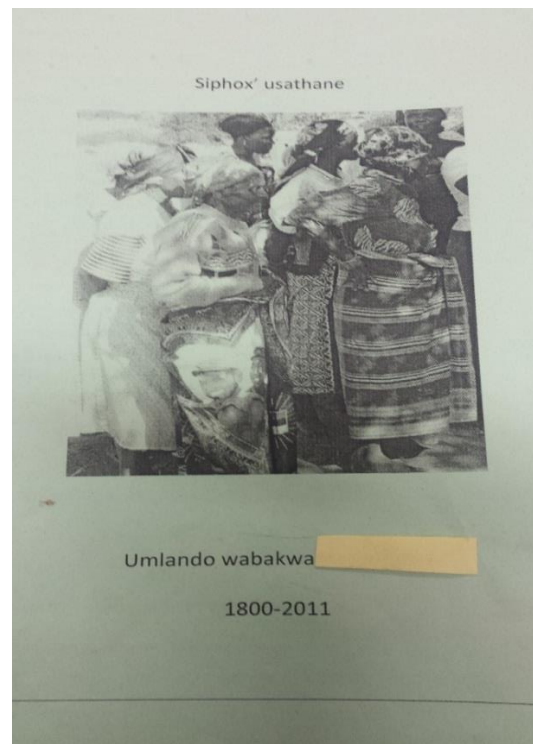


Figure 9.2: The cover of the book on the community's history

This section has made the simple argument that research located in Afrocentrism is research that is ideologically located and therefore ‘explicitly political’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003, p. 111) for catalytic validity. Reviere (2001) refers to the *ujamaa* canon, in which change is informed and driven by local communities. The argument Lather (1986) made was that catalytic validity (or the *ujamaa* canon) can be process, product or both. The *ujamaa* canon’s wheel of action can be used as a foundation for research for change:

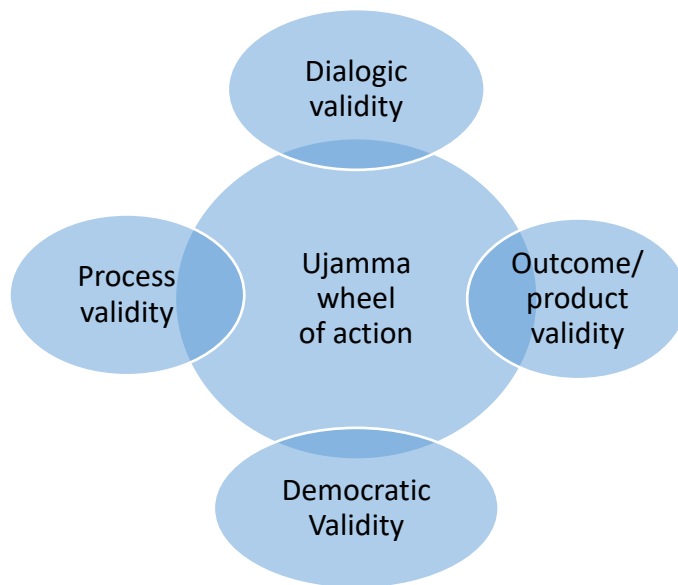


Figure 9.3: The *ujamaa*/catalytic validity wheel of action

The *ujamaa*/catalytic wheel of action draws from Herr and Anderson (2005) who defined dialogic validity as the extent at which the research design is subjected to peer review or research participants, highlighting a critical review of the process. Afrocentric research is not an individualistic journey. Process validity refers to the extent at which the research process is cyclical and process oriented in terms of problematization in practice, suggesting embeddedness and long term involvement in a study. Democratic validity refers to the extent at which the conception, implementation and post research participants are continuously involved and part

of a process of research, and finally outcomes validity refers to the extent at which each cycle in problem-based research yields results in the resolution of the problem.

In conclusion, triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions was an attempt towards meeting the *ujamma*/catalytic validity wheel of action requirements. Four key values emerged: Afrocentric participatory research design (democratic validity), collective enquiry (process validity), collective history (product validity) and mutual dialogue (dialogic validity). The *ujamma*/catalytic validity wheel of action must therefore result in a shift in consciousness of the African person, or those who subscribe to those values, from a position of unfreedom to freedom; it is the arrival at a collective self; it is a belief in critical hope and change; it is the practice of collective change for shared purpose. Afrocentrism implores those of us who subscribe to its principles and values to always base our engagement in projects based on humanisation principles, informed and shaped by African values and a commitment to contributing to the development of this scholarship for the benefit of all in the globalising world. An Afrocentric humanising project will therefore result in the redevelopment of an African identity, not only within the African person, but also in the broader community, that an African person is a good and a capable human being. It is expressed in the achievement of collective goals as opposed to individualistic self-interests.

3. Towards theorization about learning from an African perspective

Lekoko and Modise (2011) claim that learning in the African context cannot be conceptualized through theory. This view, I believe, is based on the underlying dominant view, an empiricist view that theorisation must be a 'scientific' process that meets logical explanations. However, the study in Chapter 7 and 8 argued for dunitism, a space for both Newtonian logic and spiritually centred logic in meaning making. This logic surpasses scientific explanations and is difficult to explain or understand and therefore it is ignored in formal and informal education programmes. The consequence of this neglect is dire for the African learner participating in formal and informal programmes. For example, the AIDS and HIV pandemic continues to ravage local communities,

despite comprehensive educational programmes. The KZN Human Resources Development Council's deduction is that –

The health and welfare of the population affects the availability of people to contribute to society, and it affects the productive capacity of the province. Issues related to health and welfare also affect participation and success in education and training. (KZN Human Resource Development Council, 2016, p. 37)

Again, in adult education literacy classes, the community college strategic plan (2016) raises issues of high rates of dropout in classes and minimal participation by men. In higher education institutions, a call for an Afrocentric and socialist education is made. The point I make is that diagnostic interventions might raise issues about health and welfare; however, questions are not raised as to why interventions that seek to resolve these challenges are failing. As with high dropout rates in literacy classes, many reasons for this failure have been provided, but very few, if any, consider the alienating and dominating Newtonian logic in such classes. This is also apparent in higher education, where without addressing the dominant ontology and epistemology, an equitable meaning making process remains a farfetched idea.

This research furthermore contributed in rescuing the definition of community learning within the continent from the doldrums of a single category of socialisation. Community learning was presented in three conceptualisations of informal learning (incidental learning, socialisation and self-directed learning). All of these had the potential to lead to instrumental, transformative and communicative learning. The socio-cultural context is a critical factor in meaning making in the village. As indicated in Chapter 7, not all learning is informal, but participating in a cultural ceremony equates to participating in informal community-based education. Again, participation in the research design, in the form of triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions constituted participation in non-formal education. The research design and the techniques used imply organisation of learning, and clearly defined learning places and sub places. There is structured (organised) and unstructured (unorganised) learning, individual and

collective critical reflection. The result of this structured learning process was presented in the section above.

Key characteristics of learning that emerged from this research:

1. Participatory learning in the village is an embodied co-emergent process of living. It is a process of becoming *umuntu* (human person), that is the internalisation of *ubuntu* values. Identifying with shared *ubuntu* values in the village mean that one can belong to the community through the practice of these values in all spheres and play a significant role in passing on these values. Failure to become and to belong renders one as '*inswelaboya*', directly translated – an animal. Learning is not only embedded in the cultural context of the village, but is part of the complete practice of *ubuntu* that fosters interdependence, connectedness of all things and spirituality. Learning is therefore not only in relation to other people, but also in relation to biodiversity. This therefore suggests that village people have a repertoire of knowledge built over the years, which they continue to add to in order to deal with new life challenges.
2. Participation in the village is participation in the process of learning which is often cyclical and therefore often repetitive in nature; it is a life-long, life-wide and life-deep activity for the collective or the individual. It is characterised by embeddedness in the social context and belief systems. It is place-based learning, requiring people's full participation in the activities in the village. Learning lies in participation rather than only in mental meaning. For example, learning through practicing a ceremony is cyclical, starting with socialization and progressing to incidental learning and self-directed learning. The first two stages are characterized by high levels of unconsciousness to learning and learning places not named as such, and therefore the roles of teacher and learner are not defined.
3. Learning in the village can be self-directed, as demonstrated by the life of the local headman. The headman is an illiterate man yet through self-directed interest he has taught himself to read and write. Self-directed learning suggests someone modelling a process or learning from others, and includes attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (Bandura, 1986;

Heyes, 2016). In Heyes's view, to learn best from others requires that we learn from the others who are right.

4. The reflective lens in participatory learning, as reflected in the participation in this research project, relates to the villagers being active members in the creation and co-creation of knowledge and change. It suggests that participatory community learning is not just about transmission and retention of existing knowledge, but also in the creation of new knowledge, bringing about and coping with change. It was characterised in this research project by being grounded in context, the interplay between an emic (internally perceived) and etic (externally perceived) perspective and valuing of indigenous knowledge systems.

The lessons derived from the application of an Afrocentric research model and the findings and conclusions thereof are presented in the next and final section as guidelines to programming in community interventions. The limited sample of the study does not allow one to extrapolate a model.

4. Guidelines for Afrocentric programming: The communitisation guide

Formal education provision in SA, as in many countries, is formalised and streamlined almost in regimental fashion. Central planning and control through quality control, assessment and checks form a major part of the planned and received curriculum. The same is true within adult education targeting rural African communities. Curriculum, or in this instance programming, while it seems open, is often determined and controlled by international funders or donors whose approach is typically 'one size fit all', through a predetermined planning, monitoring and reporting regime. Like formal education, the focus is on measurability and outcomes. Consequently, both forms (formal and non-formal) of programming fall short on centricity and alternative forms of meaning making. Asante (1991) reminds us that centricity as a concept locates students/learners within their cultural context and references, enabling students to relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives. Intuition (Mazama, 2003),

diunitsim (Karanja, 2010 & Ngara, 2007) or extra-cognitive phenomena (Shavinina & Seeratan, 2004) as valid sources of information and alternative meaning making processes are ignored in typical adult education interventions. This section presents guidelines for Afrocentric programming, fundamentally drawing from the *ujamma* wheel of action, which is a guideline for Afrocentric research.

Adult Education's interest in curriculum theory and practice in community education has traditionally been emancipatory pedagogy and therefore focusing on issues of power and social justice (Boone, 2002; Freire, 1974; Grundy, 1987 and many more). However, in general there has been limited focus in curriculum theory and practice on issues of cultural justice, cognitive justice, and environmental justice. Like Boone (2002) I have taken the term 'programming' to mean curriculum design which is a contested assumption (Jarvis, 1995). Furthermore, programming in community interventions in Africa often draws uncritically on Western theoretical and programming (curriculum) frameworks such as andragogy, constructivism, self-directed learning, experiential learning and many others. All of these frameworks are characterised by individualistic conceptions of learners and learning informed by market imperatives, liberal democratic politics and consumerist culture. Again, there is significant emphasis on continuing education and community development and less on community education, which in my view is the foundation of authentic community development. These theoretical and programming frameworks are then imposed on African 'places' of learning, very much like how Colonialism and apartheid were imposed on Africa by Westerners and now by Africans on Africa. Hence in the African context, there is too often disjuncture between community development interventions that aim to promote independence and self-reliance, and the reality of community experiences and responses to these external interventions. The Communitisation guidelines to programming, which I present here as an alternative, targets rural African communities who are often marginalised and excluded from the mainstream, affected by many forces or shapers such as poverty, disease, illiteracy and lack of infrastructure. It draws major lessons from the experience of implementing and reflecting on an Afrocentric research design, for example, triangulation through progressive expansion of photo discussions and the *ujamma* wheel of action, which act

as guidelines for Afrocentric research. It is therefore a contribution towards Afrocentric programming.

The guidelines for Afrocentric programming referred to as communitisation guidelines are based on the understanding that programming is a cultural construction, an approach to organising community learning that is based on collaborative principles and interests and which seeks to advance the humanisation of local people. Indeed, the view agrees with Bradshaw (1995) that good practice “is neither restricted to, nor necessarily assured by, any one particular educational philosophy or ideology” (Bradshaw, 1995, p. 57). However, these communitisation guidelines acknowledge the unstated assumption of the importance of being an insider in any curriculum/programming. The Communitisation guidelines propose a process of locating the African person as an insider in the practice of programming. For this reason, it makes no apology for its Afrocentric location.

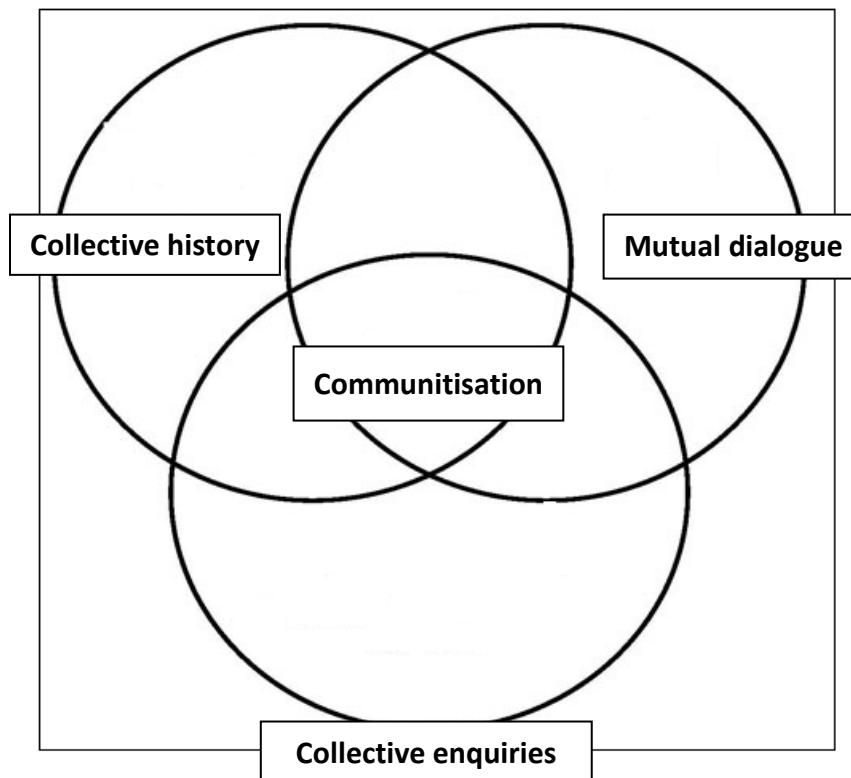


Figure 9.4: The communitisation guide for programming

The communitisation guide I is a cyclical and interactive guide with no clear start or end, but a set of tenets that must inform every stage of conceptualisation, planning, implementation and evaluation. Communitisation refers to the extent at which each stage in programming seeks to locate itself in the community, ontologically and epistemologically. The communitisation guide can be equated with building a hut in the village (a place of learning). Everyone in the village knows how to build a hut, but when the need to build a hut in a household arises, it is the head of the household who brews traditional beer and the rest of the village participates in the planning, designing, implementing and evaluation of the hut, using mainly local materials and local resources, or both local and externally sourced materials and resources to fulfil a local need. It is the head of the household, a local using local rationality who dictates the terms, even if external resources are used. When the house is built, he takes pride in it. It is his own house even though everyone contributed in physical labour. In the village, a man is not allowed to walk past a hut that is being built without contributing in labour, even for a little while. Again, like any learning place in the village, constructing a hut creates other sub-learning places for the participants: although people are learning about construction, the process might also bring enemies together. Developing the hut-building analogy, I would suggest that programme construction becomes a collective process based on local needs, mostly using local resources and shared knowledge for the purposes of integration and sustainability within the village. Indeed, there are structural variations in design in the village, suggesting and demonstrating that construction is not cast in stone, but allows for innovation, creativity and diversions to meet current and future needs. Construction requires both internally and externally sourced materials and resources, but it mainly uses local materials to meet local needs. Fundamentally this is the essence of each of the tenets discussed below.

4.1 Mutual dialogue (the conducive environment of constructing a hut)

Mutual dialogue is understood here as a shared discourse between insiders about the required 'hut', and between outsiders and insiders about the required 'hut'. Summarised succinctly by Burbules as –

a way of reconciling differences; a means of promoting empathy and understanding for others; a mode of collaborative inquiry; a method of critically comparing and testing alternative hypotheses; a form of constructivist teaching and learning; a forum for deliberation and negotiation about public policy differences; a therapeutic engagement of self- and other-exploration; and a basis for shaping uncoerced social and political consensus (Burbules, 2000, p. 2).

Mutual dialogue is the practice of respect for another person and therefore of that person as capable of thinking for himself. It is recognition of the other as human in a particular place and time, and that constitutes the socio-cultural context. Dialoguing and the mode of dialoguing become fundamental. Mutual dialogue in programming or modelling is the conscious creation of a learning place that recognises and values the vernacular. Language is the critical component of dialogue because it is the conduit and reveals culture and value systems. The use thereof maximises chances of critical engagement. Language “stores, upholds and legitimises the value systems of society” (Chilisa and Preece, 2005, p. 55). It is a practical gesture of recognising the other as a human person in true dialogue.

Language is fundamental to true dialogue, but other factors are important too. In Freire's (1975) view, dialogue cannot exist without love, humility, faith in humankind, trust, hope and critical engagement. From an Afrocentric position, true dialogue must start with love for the African person, humility towards the African person, faith in the African's ways of life, language and meaning making, and trust in the African person as a human person in his/her own right. Through mutual engagement and true dialogue, programming at all levels can create conditions of hope:

Serious correct political (social, cultural) analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do (Freire, 2004, *Opening Words*).

4.2 Collective history (looking back at what has been constructed before)

Construction of huts in the village is a very old practice. Over the years this has changed and developed significantly to better meet current and future needs. New modern structures in the village are emerging particularly low-cost housing which is provided by government. This suggests not only that local skills will eventually perish, but also places of community learning. As these places shrink, so do places to pass on this oral history of how huts were built. Ultimately villagers will come to believe that they do not know how to build a hut or transfer those skills to other projects. This is a process of creating problem people. Collective history is a process of revisiting this past, highlighting the good and the bad as a demonstration of existence, not only of the past but also of skills, knowledge, sciences and the process of the destruction thereof.

Collective history is a critical place of community learning in programming. In practice, it is a structured process of recreating history from the local people's point of view. It is a means of developing consciousness towards humanisation of the African person historically in the present, and into the future, which Biko (2004) referred to as 'black consciousness', Fanon (1968) as 'self-consciousness' or 'liberatory praxis', and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (2000) as 'decolonising the mind'. In the village, participatory learning places are often not named or referred to as learning places. On the contrary, the collective history process must be named as such and its purposes shared amongst all for it to be a mutual engagement. The development of collective history becomes a process of de-learning the bad of the past, relearning the good, and learning how the bad and good of the past can inform the present and the future. It is the attitude of the mind which must be consciously wrested with through an inward-looking process of developing agency through history. This is a collective process of reclaiming collective history and redevelopment of African identity. In Nyerere's view, dehumanised people come to understand their world as a God-given reality and therefore change or the possibility for change remains with Him. However, a collective

history presents a people-made history, and therefore opportunities for locals see themselves as agents of change.

Collective history is a product of a collective critical memory journey which is based on mutual dialogue. Collective history is based on collective critical memory, which suggests a common point of reference for the villagers (participants) and the researcher (outside agencies) or a 'site' (Rigney in Erll, Nunning et al., 2008) or a place: a 'site' to remember or a 'place' of remembrance, to exchange and pass on a history of collective identity. Through critical memory, telling and retelling their history, the villagers become aware that history is a product of a structured process that privileged some at the expense of others. Critical memory in the redevelopment of collective history is not about romanticising the past and/or apportioning blame, but critical ownership of the past and recreation of the imagined future.

It is therefore not an oversight or mistake that collective history is one component that is non-existent in community intervention models or education models. Collective history can be a trigger for agency within the continent and this is a threat to the imposition and retention of Eurocentric values. Critical to note is that recreation of collective history is not an obsession, a blame game, but a systematic process of regaining self-identity, self-respect and identity as *umuntu* (human person) who has a dehumanising past.

4.3 Collective inquiry (sensitive construction of the hut)

Equally important in the construction of a hut through participation of the villagers is the use of villagers' prior knowledge, local tools, language and value systems, to name but a few. The absence of these will see still village participation, but it will be out of respect and humanness, not constructive participation. The goal of collective inquiry is a structured process based on local value systems, that seeks to hand over the collective inquiry process to the locals. The biggest assets that the collective inquiry regards as a given in any African society is *ubuntu* (humanness), the local language, and a common history of movement from freedom to unfreedom and back to freedom. The outsider must first and foremost have love and hope for the local community (Freire, 1975 & 2004), informed by the quest for social justice and harmony (*Ma'at*) and African

ways of meaning making and generation of knowledge (*Nommo*) (Asante, 1987, 1990) or the five canons that inform engagement *kujitoo, utulive, ujamma, ukweli and uhaki* (Reviere, 2001).

The collective inquiry is a collective approach to learning facilitated through participatory techniques for mutual dialogue. Far more important than the techniques are the philosophy underpinnings of the collective inquiry, which is mutual dialogue. The guidelines are meant to inform the practice of freedoms at several levels, first at the level of community learning: participants learning about themselves, who they are within their cultural context, how they have come to be. Participation in organised learning equips learners with understanding of distorted views of themselves (collective history). Secondly, it includes freedom to express opinion, feelings and emotions in the vernacular within their own particular cultural context, because it is through the vernacular that one can fully participate by drawing from a repertoire of cultural expressions and traditions, while at the same time redeveloping them (mutual dialogue). Thirdly, it is freedom because it is reflective and acknowledges history, but at the same time it is futuristic. It is fusion of local knowledge and new external knowledge (collective enquiry) to recreate and challenge cultural traditions and practices that dehumanise. Fourthly, it is a process that renders both the views of the learner (insider) and facilitator (outsider) as limited and therefore requiring swapping and changing of roles frequently (collective enquiry), because single entities are not enough in the facilitation of change.

The communitisation guidelines is a structure of programming that seeks to promote an indigenous system of survival through promotion of the African's self-esteem, dignity and efficacy as bases for the advancement of true development. It is based, but not limited to, indigenous ways of knowing.

4.4 Final thoughts on the communitisation guidelines

Communitisation guidelines is a particular approach to programming that informs all stages, that is conceptualisation, designing, facilitation and evaluation of non-formal community education interventions. It refers here to an authentic community-based, community-owned and community-managed, externally-initiated community project. The guide espouses Afrocentric

values because without this ideological orientation, even well- intentioned interventions are likely to facilitate dehumanisation for the African person. Secondly, and most importantly, these guidelines highlight the need for diversity in assumptions made about meaning making and knowledge:

- *On contextual factors:* Communitisation guidelines assume that a person as a human being has their own language, tradition, culture, value systems and meaning making processes. These attributes are critical shapers of context knowledge. Modelling or programming based on these values become ‘windows’ of opportunity to introduce new information that is likely to turn into local knowledge.
- *On forms of knowledge:* It is a systematic process that seeks to merge outside/new knowledge or etic perspectives with local knowledge or emic perspectives, based on the view that t new information/etic perspectives can only be fused with local knowledge if the locals own it, embrace it, are able to make clear links with their way of life, and are willing to play a part in passing it on within their own local places.
- *On coherence:* Muller (2008) provides a useful conception of coherence: conceptual and contextual coherence simply refer to internal disciplinary logic and contextual factors respectively. In this instance, contextual coherence can be equated to African epistemology and ontology. It is valuing local knowledge, language, tradition, culture, value systems and meaning making processes. The challenge, however, is in understanding contextual coherence within local knowledge, which is where the schism often will occur between outside and inside knowledge. Contextual coherence in local knowledge is a given, not questioned. For example, a certain tree is not meant to be within a homestead, or a frog can cause lightning. These beliefs are generally denigrated to mythical status, yet these reflect factual knowledge based on continuous and historical observation and experimentation.

5. Final conclusions

In conclusion, I humbly recall the wise words of Lin Yun:

There are many ways to understanding life and the universe through superstition, religion, philosophy, science, and so forth. While each approach has its own experts, priests, philosophers, doctors, poets – all are merely blind men (and women) receiving different impressions from touching the same elephant ... From his (her) own perspective, each expert's conclusion is knowledgeable and makes sense. Their theories, however, are merely parts of the whole picture. I too, am one of the blind. And because I touch a different part of the elephant, I have developed my own theory (Lin Yun, cited in Weisbord and Jaoff, 2002, p. 63).

It is the humbleness of Lin Yun that informed the title of Chapter 8: *Gaps and cracks in theorisation: Towards redefining adult learning in the African context*. It is an acknowledgement that this research project is merely an impression of a sensation of part of an elephant. However, I derived joy in the African saying that 'to eat an elephant you start with one piece'. This thesis is my piece. There are clearly many pieces that are still to come from this elephant.

This PhD by publication thesis's overarching research question was: what is the nature of learning in the *Ebunzimeni* village. The research project adopted an Afrocentric research design to find answers to this question. The answer to this question was presented in Chapter 8. Significantly, this was not just an answer to the research question but a journey for the researcher, the research team, and the entire village of *Ebunzimeni*. Together we came to an agreement that different places present different types of learning. Importantly, together we identified and compared places in terms of learning that were either dehumanising or humanising. Through an Afrocentric research design, the villagers were challenged to confront their familiar places of participation for the purpose of understanding how they learn, often articulated during the research process as 'we are born like that' which in the end became 'so this is how we learn'. The research process proved that Fanon's words, quoted in the introduction to this chapter, are correct.

Appendix 1: The Community three-day workshop & Research strategies

1. Participatory learning action (PLA) Community workshop

Aim: Get background and evolution of the village in relation to community learning. To identify community learning places.

Participants: Kudele community and the reflective focus group (RFG)

Facilitators: Researcher & research team (RT)

Materials: Flip charts, koki pens, seeds, stones, exam pads, camera, recorder

Outcomes:

- Document the history of this community
- Identify and document key community learning activities
- Identify the significance and importance of these learning activities in relation to their livelihoods
- Geographically identify where these community participatory learning take place.

DAY ONE

	Activities	Time	
Introduction	Introductions Purpose of this research Intro of the techniques & tools to be used	30 minutes	
Defining learning	How does the community understand learning to be? How does it happen? Where does it happen? With who does it happens? Group activity – divide group into a group of 6-8 members in a group	30 minutes	
Group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 groups with different topics • Time line of community learning 	45 minutes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social & Resource mapping Venn Diagrams (Stake holders) • Matrix ranking 		
Plenary	Group report backs – other group members can add, challenge	30 minutes/group (1hr)	
Lunch			
Group work	<p>4 groups Youth, Ward committees, Women & oSuthu Participants with same topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this community participate in the community activities? • What learning occurs for adults within the community as a result of this participation? • What other forces influence this adult learning? • How does this learning inform community empowerment within this community? 	45 minutes	
Lunch			
Plenary	Group report backs –	30 minutes/group (1hr)	
			Identification of 8 members – photo-voice (2 from each grouping)
			The same 8 will participate in transect walk I day 2

DAY TWO

Transect walk with member of the community

Four groups were developed women, men, young women and young men. Each member of the research team was responsible for each group with the assistance of the RFG member.

Aim: The purpose of the transect walk is to document, experience, take photographs, make connections, check consistency or inconsistency with information from the PLA w/s yesterday.

Duration: 3 hrs

Materials: Notebooks, camera, recorder

Task: The four groups to present on the whole workshop on the following questions:

- Places where learning takes place (place). Explain the what, how, when, why and by whom of the place/s
- Define the place, geographical location, participants, etc.
- What is the purpose of the place and the learning taking place here?
- What other influences seem to influence this learning?
- Who participate: What happens? Why? How? Who facilitates? Why? How?
- What is the discourse used in this place? Language, written, culture, etc.
- How is conflict perceived in this place?
- Where possible find out if one can spend a day with the participants.
- Collect evidence of learning activities, products of learning, pictures etc.

After lunch: Group presentations & community engagement

- Member of the research team presents on behalf of each group. The purpose is to educate the RT member so well so that s/he is able to represent the group.
- Once the presentation is done the group has a chance to add and then the rest of the community or groups can add and question the group presentation.

DAY THREE

Participant observation

Aim: To observe 4 different sites of learning in the community (identified in the community workshop)

Duration: whole morning

Materials: Recorder, note book, camera, photos

Context: In the community workshop/ through transact walk four community learning places would have been identified. The researcher, research team & RFG members will then spend time in each learning site.

Descriptive observation

Notes for the researcher:

- Who, what, when, where, why, how
- Never take anything for granted.
- Notes – What people did and said, notes on unfolding analysis. (Divide page into 2 columns)
- Draw maps of where people are/positions

Observation schedule:

- Places where learning takes place (place). Explain the what, how, when, why and by whom of the place/s
- Define the place, geographical location, participants, etc.
- What is the purpose of the place and the learning taking place here?
- What other influences seem to influence this learning?
- Who participate: What happens? Why? How? Who facilitates? Why? How?
- What is the focus of the participation?
- What is the discourse used in this place? Language, written, culture, etc.
- How is conflict perceived in this place?

After lunch: Group presentations & community engagement

- Member of the research team presents what was observed.
- The RFG member accompanying the RT member can add and question the presentation.
- The rest of the community has a chance to add and question the presentation.

2. Photo voice & reflections

Activity 1: Photo voice

- Aim:** To collect photographs of what participants (only 8) perceive as community learning and reflections of the participants (photographers).
- Duration:** 45 minutes per photographer (6 hrs)
- Materials:** Recorder, note book, and laptop.
- Context:** Community learning photographs would have been taken by participants over a period of a month without the researcher's interference. This will be an opportunity for the photographer to 'show & tell'. The reflection will focus on 4 photographs.

Reflective interview:

- Explain the activity presented in picture
- What does the picture show?
 - The product of community learning
 - The process of community learning
 - Preparation for community learning?
- Places where learning takes place (place). Explain the what, how, when, why and by whom of the place/s
- Define the place, geographical location, participants, etc.
- What is the purpose of the place and the learning taking place here?
- What other influences seem to influence this learning?
- Who participate: What happens? Why? How? Who facilitates? Why? How?
- What is the discourse used in this place? Language, written, culture, etc.
- How is conflict perceived in this place?

PLA – Techniques explained

Technique	Description	Application/uses
Time line	Is a chronology or sequence of events that have taken place in a particular village or area. These may pertain to the general history of the village, or to specific subject such as community learning.	The technique can be applied to find out the background of a village or the evolution of specific activities such as community learning. Time line for community learning would include the occurrence of community learning (identifying learning places), indicate trends in community learning, shifts in learning in these places, major success or failure stories in community learning. Introduction of new forms of community learning, implications for the community in this community learning, Years & events that lead to major community learning and so on
Social mapping	It's a construction of a map of the village living area. Using basic materials. This could be drawn on the ground and use different colours such as chalk, cement. Through this technique, an understanding of the village layout, showing the main features such as housing, churches, schools and other infrastructure is produced. Once this is developed other information can be added e.g. showing & marking community learning places. For this purpose, other markers can be used such as seeds etc. Using two different kinds of seed participants can be asked to show what they consider as good community learning places as well as not so good places. Other types of seeds can be used to show other elements such places where those who participate in good learning places live as well as the opposite group	This technique can be used for different purposes here it will be used to identify what community consider to be learning places, good learning places as well as bad learning place. Who participate in this places? Who does not participate? How they define a good or bad learning place?
Resource mapping	This technique can be used to locate the resource of an area such as forest, rivers, community hall, water taps, churches etc. It helps us analyse and understand these resources better. In this case as possible places of learning. Use the same resources as social mapping	Indicate all resources available to the village. Help get participants to talk about these resources and how they are places of learning
Venn diagrams (Stakeholders)	This show different stakeholders, institution, projects and individuals in the community. The relationship of these with each other and the village as perceived by the participants. It uses different sizes of circles, squares, etc. indicating the project and its relative importance	Used to identify different 'outside' influences in the community. Help establish a picture in terms of the participants' relationship with different institutions.

	or unimportant of a particular project to the participants.	The participants can be asked to first identify and indicate different institutions, organisations, projects, individuals from outside working in the community. These are then ranked according to their importance. They are then presented
Matrix ranking	This technique used when comparing and study the merits and demerits, advantages and disadvantages of a variety of items such as good community learning and learning places.	Used by means of preparing a visual chart with items (learning or learning places) on one side and criteria for other side. The criteria are developed by participants themselves. These could be the learning or learning place brings in money for the participants, that learning or learning place make participants become better community members. The learning or learning place help participants to look/understand themselves in a better way, leaning or learning place encourage participation, inclusion etc. Once the chart is developed scoring is done. Points are given by each participant by placing seeds or stone on the criteria or learning that is most important. For example, if learning or learning place is most empowering the participant may give it a score of 4 or 5. If it is less empowering 2 or 3 points. It is not empowering at all it may be given 1 or 0 points.
Transects	These are observation walks through the village living area or areas where community learning takes places. They can be used to zone different areas in the community (good or bad learning places), for locating indigenous technologies as well as locating good or bad learning places in the village	This technique is conducted with the participants. It is not just about locating and pinpointing these areas but also to discuss and understand the background, the dynamics, who participate in these places, why others do not? Who facilitates, etc.
Historical transects	Show trends that have taken place over a period of time. Show changes that have taken place that have taken place in terms of learning places	This technique is conducted with the participants. It is not just about locating and pinpointing these areas but also to discuss and understand the background, the dynamics, who participate in these places, why others do not? Who facilitates, etc.

Appendix 2: The RFG photo voice workshop

Aim: Engage the RFG in the first level data analysis process

Facilitator: Research team member

Materials: Printed photographs, glue, koki pens, flip charts, paper, printer, generator, tape recorder, video recorder

Outcomes:

- Get individual analysis and categorization of photographs
- Get a group analysis and categorization of photographs

Each RFG member would have a half-day session with the researcher to unpack their photographs. The purpose of the workshop will be for the group to have a collective unpacking and analysis of the pictures.

The workshop plan

Step 1

Get everyone to display their pictures. Pictures must be displayed in a certain order that each member will decide, e.g., themes, categories, story, etc.

Step 2

Gallery walk. Each member talks to their display to the whole group. Other members get an opportunity to ask questions and to dig deeper. New ideas and questions are recorded.

Step 3

Group takes over of the display. The group rearranges the whole display. They decide how this is to be done. As a group, they will have to explain themselves to the facilitator.

Step 4

Looking at the display the group will have to answer the following questions:

- How does this community participate in the community activities?
- What learning occurs for adults within the community as a result of this participation?
- What other forces influence this adult learning?
- How does this learning inform community empowerment within this community?

What is needed: Recorders, flip charts to jot ideas down.

Step 5

Making the judgment call: Rearranging pictures – showing disempowering and empowering pictures. Recording of the discussions.

What is the nature of community learning in Magwaha community?

Step 6

Call for action

What activities/participation in this community is disempowering or empowering? How can those that are disempowering be changed.

Concrete plans to bring about change – how is this information shared with the community. Who is to do what and when?

Step 7

Plan the community exhibition day.

- The display
- The guides
- The stories to be told: (empowering and disempowering)

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does this community participate in the community activities?• What learning occurs for adults within the community as a result of this participation?• What other forces influence this adult learning?• How does this learning inform community empowerment within this community? |
|--|

Appendix 3: Photo voice training

Camera use training for the Reflective focus group

DAY ONE

Phase 1: Picture reading

Different photographs were used by the researcher. The photographs were handed to the 6 members. They were asked to explain what was happening in each photograph. They were asked to make a judgement about the photograph: *What does the picture show?*

- The product of community participation
- The process of community participation
- Preparation of community participation.

The photographs were swapped around and the process repeated. What was highlighted by the process was that the same photograph can have different interpretations and meaning for different people.

The three categorisations were explained using different photographs as follows:

- The product of community participation – a photograph of a slaughtered cow
- The process of community participation – a photograph showing men slaughtering a cow
- Preparation of community participation – A cow in a kraal.

Introduction to the ethics of photo voice

Ethical issues were introduced as follows:

Using the example above, members of the RFG were asked which photograph they prefer and why. All members preferred the photograph of a cow in the kraal. Probing questions were asked.

Different reasons were presented and discussed, such as that ‘the other photographs are not tasteful’, ‘I would prefer not to see those 2’, etc.

Taking the pictures

Samsung ES30 cameras were provided to each RFG member together with a set of batteries. Digital cameras provided another element in data collection in that not only still pictures could be continuously captured, but live video clips could be captured as well. I had download the photographs, taking a crash course on the internet for this purpose. This was a practical course which lead to a fun afternoon of taking photographs and talking about the technical process of doing that.

Homework

To take three photographs over the period of a day in the village that show –

- The product of community participation
- The process of community participation
- Preparation of community participation.

DAY TWO

Phase 2: Taking pictures

Each member to take three photographs over the period of a day.

DAY THREE

Phase 3: Picture analysis

I presented a photograph that I had taken in the village, a photograph of the river. I said this shows community participation as product. I took the photograph because the village headman had told me how the villagers had historically helped the political insurgents cross the river. The

photograph on its own does not say much, but the story that I told about photograph is very important. The photograph showing the river also protects the community because no-one is depicted in the picture. My narrative was then guided by the following points:

- Places where learning takes place (place). Explain the what, how, when, why and by whom of the place/s
- Define the place, geographical location, participants, etc.
- What is the purpose of the place and the learning taking place here?
- What other influences seem to influence this learning?
- Who participate: What happens? Why? How? Who facilitates? Why? How?
- What is the discourse used in this place? Language, written, culture, etc.
- How is conflict perceived in this place?

Each RFG member chose one photograph to present to the whole group.

Phase 4: Picture judgment

While looking at my photograph of the river, I asked if the photograph was empowering or disempowering? Features of empowerment and disempowerment were defined, based on the table below. The RFG felt that the image was empowering psychologically, socially and politically. Each member was then asked to make a judgement on their presented photograph. Again, a discussion followed on whether other members agreed or not. The purpose was not to seek consensus, but justification of the individual’s assessment of his/her photograph.

	SIGNS OF EMPOWERMENT	SIGNS OF DISEMPOWERMENT
Economic Empowerment	Community Levy Project brings economic gains to local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned.	Community Levy Project merely results in small, spasmodic cash gains for a local community. Most profit goes to local elites, outside contractors, etc. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from Community Levy Project, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits

		because they lack capacity and /or appropriate skills.
Psychological empowerment	Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their Community Levy Project.	Many people have not shared in the benefits of Community Levy Project and are thus confused, frustrated, disinterested or disillusioned with the project.
Social empowerment	Community Levy Project maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build the project. In the case of income generation projects, some funds are used for community development purposes.	Disharmony and social decay. Vulnerable groups bear the brunt of problems associated with the project and fail to share equitably in its benefits. Rather than cooperating, families or socio-economic groups compete for the perceived benefits of the project.
Political empowerment	Agencies initiating or implementing the project seek out the opinions of community groups of women, youth, and disabled persons and provide opportunities for them to be represented on the project and to ultimately take the project over.	The agency has an autocratic and/or self-interested leadership. Communities are treated as passive beneficiaries. No ownership by community members.
Environmental empowerment	Increased participation and awareness of environmental issues and projects in protected areas, as well as within the members' community.	Disharmony between environmental issues and participating member/s or communities.

Source: Scheyvens, 1999; Adapted by Hlela 2008

Phase 5: Ethical issues

Ethical issues were never dealt with as a separate topic, but as part of 'reading' photographs. This extract was written for my methodology chapter, which was not used. It is presented here to demonstrate the awareness of these issues of the researcher. It also demonstrates tensions between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism towards these issues:

Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001), in their article *Photo voice Ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photo voice*, list some critical ethical issues in relation to photo voice. In their view, the camera gives “the photographer power to create meaning about the subject of the photograph.” (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 563). In their view, photo voice can intrude into one’s private space, disclose embarrassing facts about individuals, placing one in a false light by the photograph or the products being used for commercial benefits. Indeed, these ethical issues challenge Afrocentrism in that the emphasis is on individualism as oppose to collective interests. However, Wang and Redwood-Jones make meaningful suggestions on how to deal with the challenge. In their view, the consent required and submitted for ethical clearance purposes is not enough; a second consent, which they call ‘acknowledgement and release’, is required. This consent is about asking for permission each time a picture is to be taken. The implication of this additional layer of consent is a loss of spontaneity and thus this participatory research project did not do this as it was felt that consent was indeed granted at the three levels, as discussed. Consequently, a different form of consent was given by the community after the community photo exhibition. Again, given the number of photographs produced, only verbal consent was granted and furthermore, the *Nduna* gave written consent for the re-use of these visual materials.

Appendix 4: Biographical information of the Reflective Focus Group

The intended purpose of the RFG was twofold: (1) for community ownership and accountability and (2) for research purposes as co-researchers. In line with the research paradigms and the principles of photo voice, strong and respectful relationships with and amongst members is critical (Strack, Lovelace, Jordan and Holmes, 2010; Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). In this group, participants were to “share observations, have common experience, and develop an emotional connection. Individual participants may start to consider themselves community change agents.” (Carlson et al., 2006, cited in Strack, Lovelace, Jordan and Holmes, 2010, p. 632). The purpose for this group was ownership of the process and opportunities to learn from it, feel that they were accountable to the local leadership and community, but critically, to facilitate change beyond this research project.

Name	Age	Marital status	Level of Education	Employment	Number of dependents	Source of income
A	28	not	Gr 12	Unemployed	1	Grant
B		not	Gr 12	Unemployed	2	Grant
C	45	not	Gr4	Unemployed	12	Grant, zibambeleni Selling
D	23	not	Gr 12	Unemployed	1	Grant
E	41	not	Gr 8	Unemployed	2	Grant
F	32	not	Gr 12	Unemployed	9	Emahlanzeni Trust & grant

Appendix 5: The research team (RT)

The team was made up of three experienced community development practitioners – two females, one middle aged and one young adult, and one middle-aged man. This diversity allowed for maximising, encouraging and creating effective places of participation for the participant community. The team received training on PLA and were brought up to speed with the research design, its philosophical underpinnings as well as contextual issues. Four training sessions were held with the team. These lasted between two and two and half hours each.

The main role of the research team was to help with the facilitation of the PLA community workshop, as part of the PLA facilitation process is to ensure maximum participation using smaller groups. For the workshop, we needed two women to facilitate women's groups (older and younger) as well as two men to facilitate men's groups (older and younger). Through the PLA workshops certain techniques were used, such as transect walks. This is a form of observation which required women facilitators to walk with women and was likely to create barriers if it was done by myself as a man. By implication this meant that the team had a major role to play during and after the data collection stage, but most importantly, they were immersed in this research process. Their role included asking critical questions that as a researcher I might have overlooked. This research took place over a period of four days and required an experienced team for effective facilitation and reflections from this workshop.

Given the research team's role in phase one, they had a good historical and current contextual understanding of the research site, as well as a good understanding of the methodology of the study. Since their involvement in phase one, they had played different roles to inform how the study would go for the village. For example, when *Nduna Ndlovu* was hospitalised and diagnosed with diabetes and his leg was subsequently amputated, the team travelled with me to visit him at the hospital. This was a critical gesture, demonstrating that we cared and were with him. It was a gesture that spoke to building and maintenance of relationships.

On validity matters, one member of the RT played a critical role in stage four of data collection and analysis to address the issue of my positionality and closeness to the process. She facilitated a day-long RFG photo voice analysis workshop. Before this workshop, I had a long, interactive session with each member of the RFG, where each photograph was presented and analysed. The workshop was a repetition of the same exercise, but each RFG member presented to the whole group and the whole group had a chance to question and make further suggestions about the photographs presented. The workshop was critical in the analysis of data, while new data was generated at the same time. I thought that by giving the RT member this key role, I could address the critical issue of validity. This involvement provided the team member with great insights into this study and she continued to play a role in debriefing, acting as a sounding board and asking challenging questions about my assumptions. Chilisa and Preece (2005) and Creswell and Miller (2000) refer to this role as peer debriefing or peer review and one of the key validity procedures.

Appendix 6: Consent letter to gatekeeper (chief)



Centre for Adult Education
School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Private Bag X01
Scottsville, 3209,
Telephone +27(33) 2605592
Facsimile +27(33) 260 5756

10 January 2011

Dear Ndunankulu (Chief Headman)

RE: RESEARCH STUDY ON COMMUNITY LEARNING IN THE MATHENJWA TRADITIOANL AUTHORITY

I am a Doctoral student from the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am a researcher who is undertaking a study under the title: **Participatory community learning for community empowerment: A case study in Maputaland.** The purpose of the study is to understand the kinds of community learning that take place in this community and to investigate whether, how and the extent to which these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development.

I have identified your community particularly the Magwaha community under the leadership of Baba Nduna Nkomonde as the sites that can assist me in obtaining data for my thesis. I am thus seeking permission for the following:

- Reflective focus group: Set up a reflective focus group that will help me oversee this project. I am hoping that this group would be made up of women and men, the leadership of the traditional authority, the leadership of the ward. The purpose of the group will be to help me manage the project, to help me understand the local situation better, but most

importantly to own the project. We will have meetings with this group each time I am working in the community.

- Data collection: have two community workshops, interviews and observations. Interviews will be recorded. Community members will also be asked to take pictures of what they perceive to be community learning processes. Tapes and photos will be either coded labeled such that participant's identity is protected. This will be stored safely within our School.
- Document the community history: The information collected will be used to develop an easy to read booklet that documents the history of this community.

During my interaction with this community different techniques will be utilised to get the necessary information. These will include community workshops, taking pictures, tape recorder to ensure that no important information is lost and the tape and pictures will remain in a safe place and be made accessible only to the university officials as well as the reflective focus group. While this study will focus on the Magwaha ward I am sure the findings of the study might also affect the traditional authority as a whole. Participation in this study is voluntary and if members of the community at any given time do not wish to participate in this research they may withdraw without any negative consequences to themselves or the community. The information and identity will remain totally confidential and anonymous.

You can contact me on 082 764 260 9 or on Hlelaz@ukzn.ac.za or you may contact my Research Supervisor Dr Peter Rule 033 260 5592 at UKZN in Pietermaritzburg for further information.

Yours sincerely

Zamokwakho Hlela

CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (full names of official) grant

Zamokwakho Hlela permission to working with
community to carry out our community research studies.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

IFORM LESIVUMELWANO

Mina,

MAHEJWA ALBERI (amagama
agcwele) nginika uZamokwakho Hlela imvume yokusebenza nomphakathi was

ngenhloso yokwenza uchaningo.

Sayina Mothanywa

Usuku 17/01/2012

Appendix 7: Consent letter to gatekeeper (headman)



Centre for Adult Education
School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Private Bag X01
Scottsville, 3209,
Telephone +27(33) 2605592
Facsimile +27(33) 260 5756

10 January 2011

Dear Nduna

RE: RESEARCH STUDY ON COMMUNITY LEARNING IN THE MATHENJWA TRADITIOANL AUTHORITY

I am a Doctoral student from the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am a researcher who is undertaking a study under the title: **Participatory community learning for community empowerment: A case study in Maputaland.** The purpose of the study is to understand the kinds of community learning that take place in this community and to investigate whether, how and the extent to which these learnings assist or influence authentic community empowerment and development.

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- Data collection: have two community workshops, interviews and observations. Interviews will be recorded. Community members will also be asked to take pictures of what they perceive to be community learning processes. Tapes and photos will be either coded labeled such that participant's identity is protected. This will be stored safely within our School.
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You can contact me on 082 764 260 9 or on Hlelaz@ukzn.ac.za or you may contact my Research Supervisor Dr Peter Rule 033 260 5592 at UKZN in Pietermaritzburg for further information.

Yours sincerely

Zamokwakho Hlela

CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (full names of official) grant

Zamokwakho Hlela permission to working with
community to carry out our community research studies.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

IFORM LESIVUMELWANO

Mina,

Pasi Elliot Nkomonde (amagama

agcwele) nginika uZamokwakho Hlela imvume yokusebenza nomphakathi was

Magwaha (Mkonjane)

ngenhloso yokwenza uchaningo.

Sayina P. Nkomonde

Usuku 22-2011-11

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