A Recruitment Strategy for Literacy Programs

Paving the way towards **Social Inclusion** for Autochthonous Adult Learners in the **Province of Drenthe**

Maastricht University
School of Business and Economics

Master Learning and Development in Organisations
Course: Supporting Learning at the Workplace, EBC4100

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Date:
June 5, 2020

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Problem & Objective

Every tenth person in the Province of Drenthe faces **literacy problems**, meaning that they score lower on *"the ability to interpret, manage, and write information in daily settings"*. Adults with a low proficiency in literacy are more vulnerable to the risk of being socially excluded. The Province of Drenthe is aiming to strengthen the vitality of the region, by fostering **social inclusion**. Therefore, the province seeks to have people with a low proficiency in literacy participating in literacy programs. Autochthonous adults form the most prominent group of adults with a low proficiency in literacy. Especially, these potential learners are difficult to identify and to attract to literacy programs. This report explored best practice strategies to support recruitment efforts aimed at autochthonous adults with a low proficiency in literacy.

Major Findings

Based on academic literature, several pillars were identified. With the findings from interviews with experts, several recruitment practices are recommended. These practices need to be strongly aligned and cover the three identified pillars of recruitment. The first pillar, '**Partnering & Networking**', is a crucial part of a recruitment success. Providers frequently rely on their operations, funding, and learning infrastructure. The recommended practices focus on the use of existing networks within the community, and novel partners that bear a positive association with the target audience. The second pillar, '**Program Design**', is important for recruitment as it strongly impacts the learning experience of autochthonous adults. Within this pillar, it is recommended to create Camouflage Courses to work from a proficiency perspective,

be geographically close to the potential learners, and to use the 'Salami 'tactic to create shorter courses and customized goals for learners. The third pillar, '**Communication**', plays an essential role in creating awareness and interest for the target audience. Following the model of Berlo*, the communication pillar is divided into four sub pillars: sender, channel, message and recipient.

As a **Sender**, it is recommended making use of active, authentic ambassadors. Senders must be trained so that they are knowledgeable about the issues surrounding literacy and the course content. **Channels** that connect with people during positive moments in their lives are highly effective. Besides, the impact of word of mouth can be increased through a welcoming culture of the literacy provider. **Messages** should be kept short and simple to connect with the target audience.

It is important for the **Recipient** to identify with the Sender to establish a trusting and supporting relationship.

Implementing these recommendations requires resources that may not always be available to the literacy provider. Therefore, partnering with other institutions and creating awareness for the issue of low proficiency in literacy is crucial for the recruitment of autochthonous adults, and eventually, to, foster social inclusion.

To create a holistic strategy the various practices that are in place need to be fully integrated and aligned. The effectiveness of the recruitment strategy will increase by overthinking and challenging the various tactics regularly.

"The ability to read and write is one goal of our work, but maybe even more important is the social interaction and participation in social and economic life." (R12)*

Management Samenvatting

Probleem & Doelstelling

Elke tiende persoon in de provincie Drenthe heeft te maken met **laaggeletterdheid**, wat betekent dat ze moeite hebben met "het vermogen om informatie te interpreteren, te beheren en te schrijven in het dagelijks leven". Laaggeletterde volwassenen lopen een groter risico om sociaal uitgesloten te worden. De provincie Drenthe streeft ernaar de vitaliteit van de regio te versterken door **sociale integratie** te bevorderen. Daarom wil de provincie de laaggeletterde volwassenen laten deelnemen aan taaltrajecten. Autochtone volwassenen vormen de grootste groep volwassenen met laaggeletterdheid, deze potentiële deelnemers moeilijk te identificeren en aan te trekken voor taaltrajecten. In dit rapport wordt gekeken naar 'best practice' strategieën voor het werven van autochtone laaggeletterde volwassenen.

Belangrijkste Bevindingen

Verschillende pijles zijn gedefinieerd op basis van academische onderzoek. Met de bevindingen van de expert interviews, worden er verschillende wervingspraktijken aanbevolen. De eerste pijler, '**Partners & Netwerk**', is een cruciaal onderdeel van het wervingssucces. Aanbieders van taaltrajecten vertrouwen vaak op partners voor hun activiteiten, financiering en leslokalen. De aanbevolen praktijken zijn gericht op het gebruik van bestaande netwerken binnen de gemeenschap en nieuwe partners die een positieve associatie met de doelgroep hebben. De tweede pijler, '**Programmaontwerp**', is belangrijk voor de werving, omdat het een sterke invloed heeft op de leerervaring van de autochtone volwassenen. Binnen deze pijler wordt aangeraden om Camouflagecursussen te creëren die werken vanuit een bekwaamheid perspectief, om geografisch dicht bij de potentiële deelnemers te zijn, en om

'Salamitactiek' te gebruiken om kortere trajecten en gepersonaliseerde doelen voor de deelnemers te creëren. De derde pijler, '**Communicatie**', speelt een essentiële rol in het creëren van bewustzijn en interesse voor de doelgroep. De communicatiepijler is onderverdeeld naar het model van Berlo (32) in vier subpijlers: zender, kanaal, bericht en ontvanger.

Als **Zender** is het aan te raden om gebruik te maken van actieve, authentieke ambassadeurs. De zenders moeten getraind worden zodat ze kennis hebben van de problematiek rond geletterdheid en de inhoud van het traject. **Kanalen** die in contact komen met mensen tijdens positieve momenten in hun leven, zijn zeer effectief. Daarnaast kan de impact van mond-tot-mondreclame worden vergroot door een gastvrije cultuur van de taal aanbieder. **Berichten** dienen kort en eenvoudig te worden gehouden om in contact te komen met het doelgroep.

Het is belangrijk dat de **Ontvanger** zich identificeert met de Zender om een betrouwbare en ondersteunende relatie creëren. De uitvoering van deze aanbevelingen vereist middelen die niet altijd beschikbaar zijn voor de aanbieder van het traject. Daarom is samenwerking met andere instellingen en het creëren van bewustzijn voor het thema geletterdheid cruciaal voor de werving van autochtone volwassenen, en dus voor het bevorderen van sociale inclusie.

Om een alomvattende strategie te creëren is het van belang dat de verschillende praktijken volledig worden geïntegreerd en op elkaar worden afgestemd. De effectiviteit van de wervingsstrategie wordt vergroot door de verschillende tactieken regelmatig strategisch te overdenken en uit te dagen.

"Het vermogen om te lezen en te schrijven is een doel van ons werk, maar misschien nog wel belangrijker is de sociale interactie en de deelname aan het sociale en economische leven." (R12)*
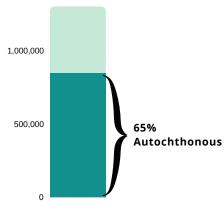
Introduction

Many people are struggling with **reading and writing**, skills that are **fundamental** in times of rapid innovation of technologies, changing demands in the labour market, and the reinforced human connection (1). Although The Netherlands has a relatively low percentage of adults with low proficiency in literacy compared to other countries, The Netherlands deals with an **increasing number** of inhabitants facing **literacy problems**, meaning that they score lower on "the ability to interpret, manage and write information in daily settings" (1). The number of autochthonous learners makes up 65% of the total number of individuals with low proficiency in literacy in The Netherlands (2).

1.3 million people with low proficiency in literacy in The Netherlands

There are many initiatives on national, provincial, regional and municipal levels aiming to decrease the number of autochthonous adults (between 15 and 65 years old) facing a low proficiency in literacy and in turn, to combat the problem of social exclusion.

The Province of Drenthe, which this report focuses on, deals with similar issues. Specifically, this province is focussing on strengthening the vitality in different domains in the upcoming years. In doing so, they aim to boost the liveability of the province. A part of the province is characterised by various problems at the (social) economic and demographic levels, such as the increasing number of people with low proficiency in literacy. Currently, **10.4%** of the population in Drenthe has a low proficiency in literacy (10). The Province of Drenthe would like to see this group participating in literacy programs **to combat social exclusion and to foster social inclusion**.

Therefore, the UNESCO Chair on Adult Education of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Kohnstamm Institute are researching on behalf of the Province of Drenthe.

Within that collaboration, they have reached out to us to conduct a study within a project in the course of 'Supporting Learning at the Workplace' of the Master Program 'Learning and Development in Organisations' at Maastricht University. Specifically, the aim is to develop a **best practice recruitment strategy** to attract Dutch autochthonous adults with literacy issues ('NT1-speakers') to participate in literacy programs.

The rest of this report is organised as follows: In the **first chapter**, the context setting will elaborate on the background of the project. The **second chapter** includes information on the recruitment of (vulnerable) groups into learning programs. The **third chapter** describes the project design. The **fourth chapter** combines the findings with best practice recruitment strategies and tailored solutions for the Province of Drenthe. Furthermore, avenues for further exploration will be explored. The **fith chapter** includes final remarks. Within this chapter the limitations of the best-practice recruitment strategies and the conclusion of our project is discussed.

In addition to this report, The Province of Drenthe, Maastricht University, Kohnstamm Institute and the UNESCO Chair on Adult Education of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel will be provided with a **comprehensive fact sheet** (in Dutch as well as in English) on a best-practice recruitment strategy.

1. SETTING THE CONTEXT

1. Setting the Context

Social Inclusion & Social Exclusion

According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (4), **15%** of the Dutch population is **socially excluded**. Social exclusion prevents people from fully participating in our society. Therefore, social inclusion plays an important role in improving and protecting the lives of disadvantaged people in society (5). Social inclusion can be seen as a process helping those who are at risk of poverty and exclusion to participate in **economic**, **social**, and **cultural life**. It creates opportunities and resources for them to participate and fosters a standard of living, which is considered normal in society (6). Social inclusion involves many benefits. For instance, it creates a "society that is safer, more stable and more just" (5, p. iii). Furthermore, "it promotes growth, productivity, and well-being" (5, p. iii). These benefits feed into sustainable economic growth and development (5). People who are socially excluded benefit less from the advantage's society can bring them.

Individual disadvantages caused by low proficiency in literacy often translate into social exclusion.

Disadvantages could entail **high economic costs** for society. First, people with low proficiency in literacy are socially excluded in many areas of their lives and often require more social support arrangements from the government (7,8). This increases public expenditure and minimizes (income) taxes (9). Second, social exclusion has been associated with income disparities and productivity losses (1) and may even stifle economic development (9). Apart from economic effects, research has shown that autochthonous adult learners with low proficiency in literacy are **more vulnerable** compared to their literate native peers (10,11). As they are overrepresented in low-income jobs and have a higher risk of poverty, overall, they also participate less often in voluntary work (10).This prevents them from fully participating in our society.

Thus, there is a need to foster social inclusion by providing people with adequate tools and resources to curb the number of people facing low proficiency in literacy (12).

Literacy Programs

Education is a tool that leads to more social inclusion (13). By teaching people the necessary skills, they become more capable of dealing with daily problems (9,14). In this context, learning how to read, write, and apply literacy skills in everyday context is crucial in all domains in life and determines to a significant extent people's outcome in personal and working life. These skills enable people to find a job, improve in school, be healthy, and care for themselves (15).

To engage more actively in society, autochthonous adult learners must participate in literacy programs. **Engaging people** with low proficiency in literacy in **literacy courses** will have **broader outcomes:**

- might bring up to **€ 700 million** to society
- **labour productivity** of participants increases by € 985
- **better labour market outcomes** in 20% of the cases
- **lower health care costs** by € 359
- might bring **health care gains** (16) of € 1,501 per participant

In sum, engaging autochthonous adults with low proficiency in literacy in literacy programs is a stepping stone towards combating social exclusion and fostering social inclusion.
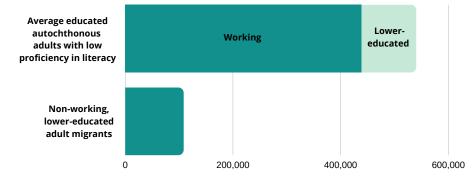
Autochthone adult learners

To **foster social inclusion**, a strategy needs to be found to recruit people with low proficiency in literacy to **literacy programs**. To do so, it is relevant to gain an understanding of people with low proficiency in literacy. In general, people often think that the ones who participate in literacy programs are **second language learners**. Indeed, 37% of the first migrant generation and 9% of the second migrant generation have low proficiency in literacy. Among the autochthonous adults in the Netherlands, this number amounts to 8.4% (2). From this share, about 4.2% of autochthonous adults with low proficiency in literacy are the averagely educated, a group of around **540,000** people. Within this group, most of the people are working.

The rest, about 120,000 people, consists of lower-educated autochthonous adults. In contrast, the number of non-working, lower-educated adult migrants amounts to 108,000 people (2). This clearly shows that autochthonous adults form the most prominent target group for literacy programs.

This is also reflected in the monitor of Trendbureau Drenthe, which shows that 14 organisations are involved in attracting both groups whereas 11 organisations are solely focused on autochthonous learners and 5 organisations are solely focused on adult migrants. This report focuses on the autochthonous adult learners, who are also referred to as the **NT1**.

Within the group of people who are facing low proficiency in literacy, some vulnerable groups are more likely to participate in adult education than others. Among the ones that are harder to attract are:

- Autochthonous learners with low educational attainment
- Elderly adults
- Adults employed in jobs requiring fewer skills
- The unemployed   (10,17)

In the case of The Netherlands, these target groups do not deem literacy skills important or lack **confidence** to participate in these programs, and people tend to hide their **difficulties** with reading and writing (18,19). Therefore, these people are harder to attract. Next to this, it is considered a **taboo topic** and people are often ashamed of their low skill level (10). This is different for migrant adult learners, who have to obtain a certain level of Dutch to become Dutch citizens (20). Migrant learners do not experience shame like autochthonous learners may because they are learning a foreign language and may well be proficient in their native tongue.

They do not see themselves as having a low proficiency in literacy, but not proficient yet in another language (10). Hence, migrant learners might have a higher intrinsic motivation than autochthonous learners to participate in courses. In this report, we use autochthonous adults, (adult) learners, participants interchangeably.

The case of the Province of Drenthe

The Province of Drenthe is one of many provinces in The Netherlands dealing with a high amount of people facing low proficiency in literacy. The composition of the population in Drenthe is changing considerably, with an ageing population, smaller potential labour forces and a decrease in the number of households (3). Moreover, Janssens et al. (3) indicated that the province has to deal with a complexity of **socio-economic problems**: low level of education (with 25% more low-educated people compared to the national average), high level of (youth) unemployment, low levels of income and high levels of loneliness. Whilst The Netherlands is characterised by strong population growth, the population in Drenthe is decreasing. This influences the housing market, the economy and the available facilities for the inhabitants (3). The province, therefore, is focused on increasing the **vitality and 'liveability'** of the area. A liveable area is defined as an area where it is good to live and to work (3). It covers the economic environment, the social environment, the level of facilities and the needs of residents.

Raising the liveability of the province is more complex than it seems.

In addition to low proficiency in literacy, the province faces high unemployment and a decrease in population. This does not necessarily lead to better chances in labour markets, as job mismatches often occur. We observe that low proficiency in literacy and socio-economic problems are often interconnected. Thus, a **big part of this complex issue is literacy**. At the moment, 10.4% of the population has a low proficiency in literacy skills in Drenthe (10). For people living in the Province, this creates barriers and makes it more difficult to participate in social and working life. Therefore, it is particularly important in the Province of Drenthe to increase literacy skills in order to contribute to the vitality and liveability of the region.

Who is involved in recruitment strategies in The Province of Drenthe?

Various **stakeholders** from different organisations and institutions are involved in offering literacy programs to those in need which creates a complex network. For instance, over 25 organisations are involved in recruitment of autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs (21). Their recruitment methods **diverge** with most of them using word of mouth, language ambassadors, house-to-house magazines, and social media. Only around 57% of the organisations track their **recruitment effectiveness** (21). Various institutions, like the provincial 'Bondgenootschap voor een geletterd Drenthe', the regional 'Trendbureau Drenthe' and the national 'Stichting Lezen & Schrijven' provide specialised knowledge of literacy to these local and regional organisations. Regional, national, and European policymakers have a big impact on **the success** of the programs, so do course designers and teachers. Besides those officially responsible for mobilisation and execution, organisations like 'child care facilities' and individuals such as doctors are involved in the communication with potential learners. This **complex organism** demands close collaboration and strong communication.

Key objective

When people with low proficiency in literacy participate in literacy courses it leads to improvement of their reading and writing skills level, and this, in turn, can have a positive impact on social inclusion (7). The first step in understanding how this group will participate in literacy courses is to know how to attract them. Therefore, the key objective of the project is to develop a **best practice recruitment strategy for autochthonous adult learners in The Province of Drenthe**. The recruitment strategy will be based on academic research, interviews with European experts from the field of literacy and interviews with experts in recruiting vulnerable groups in at least two other sectors.

2. RECRUITMENT OF (VULNERABLE) GROUPS INTO LEARNING PROGRAMS

2. Recruitment of (Vulnerable) Groups into Learning Programs

The aim in this project is to provide valuable and realistic measures for The Province of Drenthe to tackle their primary issue of recruiting autochthonous adult learners with low proficiency in literacy to literacy programs. Therefore, a preliminary literature review was carried out to get an understanding of what is already known. Literature was found by Google Scholar searches using combinations of the terms "adults", "vulnerable adults", "recruitment", "recruitment strategies", "literacy", "autochthones". The snowball method was used to find additional information on the same topic. Also, our academic advisors provided us with relevant papers, theses and reports on the topic. A closer look was taken into recruitment strategies in other domains that engage with vulnerable adults to learn from their insights, strategies and best practices. This is why our focus was not merely limited to recruitment in the field of autochthonous adult learners. As a result, new insights are gained in order to find answers to the current research question. Further, recruitment was explored from a **communication perspective**.

This perspective enables us to learn more about the general mechanisms of attracting people and facilitating their actions. Taking a holistic approach, **three main concepts** were identified that possibly influence the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners:

| Partnering and Networking |

| Program Design |

| Communication |

In the following sections, these concepts will be introduced and explored in a review of relevant academic literature.

Partnering and Networking

The first concept which possibly influences the **recruitment of autochthonous adult learners** is partnering and networking. It refers to the involvement of organisations in recruitment. Specifically, how they work together and in which way this collaboration benefits the recruitment process. Three levels of partnering and networking are discerned:

The political level

The organisational level

The individual level

The political level

Partnering starts at the very top of our society - namely, with **political will**. Policy needs to **set the conditions** so that an increasing number of adult autochthonous learners can participate in literacy courses (1,17, 22, 23). These conditions include:

- Provision of public funding
- Provision of educational facilities
- Ensuring the quality of institutions of further education
(24)

Generally, the Dutch government seems to make efforts to create the conditions necessary to recruit more autochthonous adult learners - among others - for literacy courses (20). This means partnering with municipalities, NGOs, employers, healthcare institutions, schools and libraries.

The organisational level

Next to the political level, partnering includes the organisations providing education for autochthonous adult learners. The joint effort and the co-operation of partners such as education providers, NGOs, libraries and schools is crucial to reach autochthonous adult learners (19,24,25).

More organisations can reach more learners. Organisations with similar target groups can bundle their experiences and resources. This helps them to learn from each other and facilitates recruitment of autochthonous adult learners.

The individual level

Third, on the individual level of the learner, 'partnering and networking' refers to the support of **people involved in potential learners' life**. These can be friends, relatives, co-workers, employers, doctors etc. Their engagement and support play a crucial role in participation in training (26,27). When learners feel that people are concerned with their well-being and that they are valued and respected, they are more courageous and determined to **participate in a literacy course**.

Also, people involved in potential learners' lives might make them aware of the courses and encourage them. For instance, a general practitioner might note a patient's issues with reading texts related to healthcare. Therefore, organisations must partner with people involved in potential learners' lives to recruit them into programs.

To sum up, we observe that collaboration between the political, the organisational and the individual level supports the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners.

In our project, we explore how the collaboration on organisational level benefits recruitment of autochthonous adult learners and how it can be improved. By examining the factors influencing an individual autochthonous adult's decision to participate in the program, we also discuss the individual level.

Summary Box

Recruitment of adult autochthonous learners relies on collaboration and joint effort from:
- The political level
- The organisational level
- The individual level

Program Design

Apart from having a network of partners in place, the **design of the programs** is the second concept that impacts the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners. Program design refers to how the courses are formally organised (group versus one-to-one classes, timing, frequency, duration, and location) and to teaching methods and expertise (support, alignment of expectations and goals). In this context, it is essential to realise that preferences for particular program design are different because learners' needs are different. Prior studies suggest that the program design impacts the registration of learners. It is essential to critically scrutinise whether courses are organised so that the program design meets the learner's needs. Program design needs to connect to what learners desire in order to motivate them to participate in a course (28).

While one learner feels more comfortable in a **one-to-one class**, other learners might prefer a **group class** (29). Besides, learners differ in their availability during the week. That is why **timing**, **frequency**, and **duration** of courses matter. For example, mothers might choose a shorter course in the evening when their partners are home to take care of children.

In contrast, younger learners might prefer a longer course in the morning to spend their afternoons with leisure activities or work—furthermore, the **location of the course** matters for potential learners. The course facilities must be located close to the learners' lifeworld (24). **Feeling supported** by a course provider is also essential to motivate learners to participate in classes. It increases their **learning intention** and **self-efficacy** (30). Thus, when learners feel supported during the recruitment phase, they might be more likely to join a course. Another essential aspect to consider is **individual goals and expectations** (24,31).

A course designed to achieve a specific certificate might attract learners, explicitly aiming for this certificate. Learners who just want to improve their skills without the goal of attaining a formal certification might prefer a more informal course setting and choose a different offer.

In sum, tackling learners' needs in the **program design is crucial** to motivate them to participate. It should be noted that there is **no one-fits-all approach** and that different learners demand different designs.

The aim is to get more insights into how program design determines the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners in our project. By examining the factors influencing an individual autochthonous adult's decision to participate in the program, we also discuss the individual level.

Summary Box

- Aligning the program design with learners' needs is essential to motivate them to participate in courses.
- Recruitment depends on the personal preferences of learners connected to the program design.
- Factors determining recruitment on the course level are:
  - Group versus one-to-one classes
  - Timing
  - Frequency
  - Duration
  - Location
- Factors determining recruitment on the learners' level are:
  - Feeling supported
  - Meeting expectations and goals

Communication

Partnering, networking, and program design constitute an integral part of recruiting autochthonous adult learners. In this section, we want to highlight the role of a third concept: communication. Incorporating communication theory for the recruitment of adult learners to literacy programs brings new perspectives. It is expected that these new perspectives will be enriching, as communication plays a significant role in recruitment. The challenge is that the right communicator needs to get the right message via the right medium to the right person. This communication concept, including the communicator, message, channel, and the recipient is strongly connected. The components need to be aligned to communicate and recruit successfully.

This idea is captured in the **Source-Message-Channel-Recipient (SMCR) Model of Communication** by David Berlo (32). His model is not specific to any particular field of communication and can be applied to various contexts (33). Therefore, we use it as a starting point to analyse communication in recruiting autochthonous adult learners. The model shows a clear structure and helps to ask relevant questions.

The categories of the SMCR model will be introduced below in connection to findings based on literature dealing with recruitment strategies for the target audience.

Sender

Recipient — Communication — Message

Channel

Element 1: Sender

The "sender" is the beginning of the model and has a message to communicate (32). The sender can, for example, be a person, a group of people, or an organisation. The sender encodes the message (32). The sender needs sufficient communication in order to communicate the message successfully. This involves speaking and listening skills. In this context, the **professional qualification of staff** in recruiting autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs is essential (23). Staff needs the ability to identify and to motivate learners through communication. Other factors that are important in the sender's communication are the **attitude towards the audience**, the topic, and Berlo (32). Apart from the attitude, the knowledge about the subject, the audience, the situation, and other background information influences communication effectiveness (34). Furthermore, the social system in which communication takes place needs to be considered by the sender. For instance, this includes values, beliefs, culture, and religion (33). This might explain the critical role of **word of mouth** for recruiting adult learners (25). Participants of literacy courses are acquainted with the situation and the beliefs of potential learners.

Thus, they probably have a positive attitude towards the topic if they spread the word. Therefore, it might be useful to encourage them to actively share their experience with an ambassador.

This concept made us question how various communicators or senders influence the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners. This is one of the aspects we aim to unravel in this project.

Element 2: Message

The message, which is communicated by the sender, consists of the content, the structure, elements such as gestures or body language, the treatment, and the code (32,34). The treatment refers to how the message is delivered. This could be whether it follows an emotional or logical approach, while the code refers to the form of the message. The code could have the form of, for example, a text or a video. These different aspects of the message must be aligned and suitable for both the target audience and the channel (33). Considering a target audience that has difficulties with reading and writing, this is a vital point. Studies on the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners found that **framing** is crucial in the message for interventions.

For instance, using terminology such as "literacy" or "reading" might raise negative emotions and shame on the recipient's side (35). Therefore, the message must be adapted to the target group in a way that it triggers positive emotions and identification and lowers perceived barriers. One way is to include these **situational barriers** in the message. This could be done for example, by offering childcare during classes (36). This project looks into further requirements for messages to be effective in the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners.

Element 3: Channel

The channels transmit the message via our five senses of hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting (33). Examples include interpersonal communication, watching television, or shaking hands (32). One can also think of the channel as a medium: brochures, radio, posters, or other media (32). The message is most effective if the channels are oriented to the target audience and purpose of the message (33). Literature concerning the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners also gives insights into channels that enable **approaching the target group**.

Recruitment involves communication via mail, phone calls, or personal contact as well as communication via social media, commercials, or brochures (37). Face to face interactions, word of mouth, networking, and partnering are quite useful, whereas online channels were less effective (25). Exploring different and novel channels could serve as a starting point to consider new approaches to attract autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs. This is especially so since the target group often faces barriers that prevent them from fully participating in society (38). This makes them 'hard-to-reach.' For this reason, advanced recruitment strategies are needed to increase participation in programs (38). The goal is to develop a better understanding of which channels are effective in recruiting autochthonous adult learners.

Element 4: Recipient

The "recipient" is the audience that receives the message and decodes it (33). Decoding means interpreting the meaning of the message and responding to the sender effectively (34). The recipient's communication skills and attitudes towards the sender and the topic will affect the understanding of the message (32). The attitude towards the learning programs is influenced by individual, personal and situational antecedents next to characteristics of a person. It affects the perception of the potential learner of the benefits of participation and self-efficacy for development (26,39). The **attitude** will influence the intentions to participate, which in turn determines the participation in programs (39). It is essential to keep in mind that some autochthonous adult learners have negative attitudes towards pursuing further education (10). This may be connected to **negative prior experiences** with conventional education systems, distrust towards authorities, and shame for their low proficiency in literacy. Since this restricts them from acting upon their literacy issues, it presents a barrier (10) and leads to dropouts in adult education programs (40).

Recent studies show that it is important to build a positive and workable relationship with potential learners. This relationship functions as an **enabler**, which facilitates learning (41).

Furthermore, research in an organisational context has found that once employees participate in a training program, they are more likely to participate in a follow-up or another course in the future. Participation in a second program was even more likely when the employee had positive and **successful prior experiences** in the program. This suggests that the first successful recruitment effort might also involve people in programs in the long-term. (42).

In this project, the goal is to learn more about **enablers and barriers** for autochthonous adult learners in communication. This includes the **relation** between the sender and recipient. Besides, the aim is to dive into communication methods that impact the **attitude** towards low proficiency in literacy and help to **decode** messages. Overall, aligning the SMCR conditions enables effective communication.

Summary Box

- Challenge: The right source needs to get the right message via the right channel to the right recipient.
- Element 1: Sender: Encodes the message that needs to be communicated.
- Element 2: Message: The sender communicates this. It consists of:
  - Content *(chosen words related to what the sender wants to communicate)*
  - Structure *(order of a message, e.g., clear chronology)*
  - Elements (*gestures & body language*)
  - Treatment *(logically or emotionally, direct or indirect)*
  - Code *(written or direct communication, a video)*
- Element 3: Channel: Transmits the message via our five senses
  - *e.g interpersonal communication, social media, 'shaking hands'*
- Element 4: Recipient: receives, decodes, and interprets the message from the sender

3. PROJECT DESIGN

3. Project Design

In order to support the Province of Drenthe to attract autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs, we developed a best practice recruitment strategy. The process that was followed is described below. In the first step, we consulted Prof. Dr. Maurice de Greef and Prof. Dr. Mien Segers to familiarise ourselves with the recruitment of autochthonous adult learners and the context of the Province of Drenthe. Our project is a specific topic within a larger-scale research project of The Province of Drenthe on which Prof Dr M. De Greef, Senior Researcher M. Buisman and Prof. Dr M. Segers consult. We carried out **preliminary literature research**. The research included papers and reports on mobilising adult learners to literacy programs, attracting employees to learning activities, recruiting vulnerable adults in other fields and ways of communicating with target audiences. As prior studies provide the main pillars of successful recruitment strategies, we set a strong focus on the **"why"** and **"how"** in our field of research. To gain deeper insights and include experience and perceptions of interviewees, we undertake a **qualitative research approach**.

Interviews

Theoretical insights were used to formulate an **interview guideline**, which can be found in Appendix 1. The interview guideline is based on the **communication** model by David Berlo (32) to add a new perspective on the topic and to combine various findings from multiple disciplines. Therefore, the interview guideline includes questions on the sender, message, channel, and recipient of the recruitment strategy. Further, we identified **partnering and networking** and the **program design** as essential aspects to incorporate. They were established as the main pillars of recruitment strategies in the literature. Finally, the interview guideline has been reviewed by academic (adult learner) experts. Based on this, we conducted **semi-structured interviews**. This form of interviewing offers to react flexibly to the interviewee as the wording of the question can be chosen, and probes can be used to clarify and explore further on relevant issues (43). Thereby, in-depth insights into our question could be generated as we learned about perception, opinions, and attitudes (44). Therefore, this method was most suitable for creating a comprehensive best practice strategy.

Sample

12 individuals in 8 countries throughout Europe were interviewed. The sample consisted of the following persons: **European partners** with experience in **recruiting autochthonous adult learners** experts in the field of **healthcare** an expert from a **national knowledge institute** for vulnerable adults. We selected the first to learn from experts and their experience in other countries. Because of different contexts, situations, structures, and measures across Europe, there might be different approaches. The second and third groups provided insights into the recruitment of vulnerable adults in other fields, such as **healthcare** and **social knowledge institutes**. We contacted 11 interviewees via the network of the UNESCO Chair on Adult Education of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and further forwarded by these contacts. A cold-call was performed to contact the 12th interviewee.

The interviews were conducted via video call or phone conference due to geographical distance and the COVID-19 outbreak. The approximately one-hour long interviews were carried out in English or Dutch. During the interviews, field notes were taken, and the audio was recorded. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed.

Analysis

The transcriptions have been **coded for the analysis** with the coding software ATLAS.ti. The coding scheme is based on literature categories (See Appendix 2 for the coding scheme) and has been reviewed by academic experts. After coding the data, **key relationships** have been analysed and novel **findings** have been discussed.

Client Consulting → Preliminary Literature Research → Interviews with Experts in different fields → Data Analysis → Relationship Analysis → Best Practice Development

4. BEST PRACTICE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE PROVINCE OF DRENTHE

4. Best practice Recruitment Strategies for autochthonous adult learners for literacy programs in the Province of Drenthe

In this section, the **main findings** of the interviews will be described and it will be explained how they relate to best practices and the tailored implications for the Province of Drenthe. This section is divided into **three main pillars**: partnering & networking, program design and communication. The **partnering & networking** section dives into the collaborative network that the interviewees find themselves in and explores how this network can be established and maintained. The **program design** looks at the practical and strategic set-up of the programs and courses. The **communication** section follows the Berlo model, providing insights into the Sender, Channel, Message, and Recipient.

Moreover, this chapter includes **challenges for implementation** and **avenues for further exploration**.

Best practice recruitment strategy

Partnering & Networking

Program Design

Communication

4.1 Partnering

"We contact the company ourselves, but we have a lot of help from the branch organisations. So, the network is our best friend." (R12)

Partnering with other institutions was mentioned in the literature and by many interviewees as being **crucial for the success of programs** for vulnerable adults (19). Partnering and networking can be divided into three levels: the political, organisational and individual level. On the **political level**, interviewees mentioned collaborating with policymakers and resource providers, both in terms of money and knowledge. Second, on the **organisational level**, interviewees mentioned collaborating with charities, commercial organisations and associations. Amongst others, they mentioned education providers, job centres, emergency services, the Red Cross, libraries and the police. On the **individual level**, interviewees partnered with doctors, social workers and ambassadors of the programs. One interviewee mentioned working exclusively with adult learners through their employers. The collaboration resulted in direct connections to the target group and insights into best practices. So aligning the interests of the network seems to have a positive impact on each partner.

"You need to find each other and connect. So we can all offer something and stand stronger together." (R6)

Findings on partnering were coded into two categories. The first category, "**Partnering & Networking**", describes the general practice of partnering. It highlights which organisations and individuals the interviewees worked with and how this helped them in recruiting autochtonous adult learners. The second category "**Aligning the Interests**," focused on maintaining constructive relationships with the partners and what can be done to work together as effectively as possible. The second category has also been used to answer the question "Have you ever encountered a situation where your interests and partner diverge". Interestingly, the second category showed minimal negative perspectives; most interviewees already found their collaboration very useful. Therefore, the second category mainly focuses on how to establish and maintain a productive relationship.

4.1.1 Partnering & Networking

Partnering & Networking was mentioned by all twelve interviewees as a crucial factor for success. Many interviewees even said that partnering was **necessary for their work**. For instance, some of the providers do not have access to teaching rooms or the target group without their partners. Others mentioned that even though they are in direct contact with their target group, the partners in the network are crucial for providing insights into the target group, to **create awareness** for literacy or to **receive funding** for their courses. Many of these partners have direct relationships with the target group, allowing them to gain more insights into their needs and interests, establish trust and support relationships.

"We need mediators. You need people who know the people [the learners], because they need to explain, they need to help them see what the problem is and explain the programs that are available. So, we need the mediators who know the people [the learners]." (R11)

Besides, direct relationships with the target group and well-established partners often have **strategic communication approaches** and **known marketing channels**, which can help to spread the message of the program. For instance, in the following case (45).

"Whenever we want to publicize something, then I ask them to look at it in order to make the text more interesting." (R6)

With loyal supporters across various channels, the football club, for example, reaches the target audience very effectively. Besides, loyal fans engage in communication.

"If a story was shared via the club, it was shared immensely across Facebook, Twitter or something else by these fans. This has been seen [by the target group], who then registered to our program themselves." (R6)

Next to reaching the target group, using an established partner can break the ice for conversations. This helps to be **more approachable**. For example, when standing at an unemployment fair in the football club's apparel, which in this case is a striking colour, people were curious: "What is the club doing here?".

Governmental institutions often bear a negative association with the target group (10), whereas organisations like football clubs are often perceived more positively. This was confirmed by the interviewee, who mentioned:

"The big advantage for us is that people do not mistrust us. We are not a bureaucratic organisation like the municipality or the unemployment office." (R6)

This helps to approach the target group and to frame a positive message. Furthermore, interviewees also mentioned that instead of increasing efforts on both sides, partnerships could strengthen efforts and gain new insights. One of the interviewees worked with education providers on a project basis who created **opportunities to experiment with new practices**. This allowed the interviewee to:

"[...] Take the freedom that we have as an international program and try out things. Sometimes we fail and sometimes things work out. The formal aspects of our world are much lower than in the regular system." (R10)

4.1.2 Effective ways of partnering

Interviewees had different ways of collaborating with their partners. Some mentioned communication mainly by email while others focused on face-to-face meetings. **Both communication with partners** in general and **in-depth explanation of the program goal and expectations** were crucial. As mentioned by one of the interviewees:

"It is our job to explain things very well to the professionals and to communicate clearly when we start with another group. [...] So the people that are out there recruiting for us, they need to be very aware of the contents." (R6)

Another interesting practice mentioned by one of the interviewees is to invite oneself to one of the meetings of the institution who is a potential stakeholder. By doing so, you will get the opportunity to provide a detailed explanation and answer questions if necessary.

Using Partners with HALO effect
In terms of partnering, a best practice strategy is **partnering with organisations that already fulfil a positive role in the potential learner's life**,

as seen in the example of working with a well-known regional football club to offer programs for their target group. Similar practices would be to work together with the regional institutions focussing on music, sport or other interests. By this, the program makes use of the reputation and HALO effect of the partner, as the interviewee mentioned:

"Even when football clubs are performing badly in the competition, they still want to be associated with the club." (R6)

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⚙️ **Practical implications for the province of Drenthe**

In the case of the province of Drenthe, there are various partners which can possibly be approached. For instance, the **TT organisation**, which organises an annual event in their circuit for motorcyclists in Assen, can be approached. This example will be particularly effective as the target audience is diverse and relatively large. Furthermore, the **Wildlands Adventure Zoo Emmen** is an organisation that has a broad network with many visitors per year. The Province of Drenthe also has a **football club**, **FC Emmen**, playing in the "premier-division" of The Netherlands. Additionally, in the culture domain, the **Holland International Blues Festival** is organised every year in Grolloo and can be a possible stakeholder, using the music theme to attract potential learners. These initiatives will provide similar positive associations and identifications with the target group. Inviting oneself to meetings of the organisations and thoroughly explaining their goal and the program design will stimulate a constructive collaboration.

4.2. Program Design

Findings from the interviews generally resonate with what has been found in literature concerning program design for autochthonous adult learners. For most of the interviewees, the program design is needed to match **learners' needs** in order to motivate them to participate (28). More specifically, this was divided into 4 categories: **awareness of social obstacles**, **barriers**, **enablers**, and **program design**. It is essential to be aware of the social obstacles the target group faces in order to recruit the target group. Social obstacles and barriers in addition to enablers have broader implications for the program design. The program design refers to the way programs are organised to meet the learner's needs.

The results of the project indicate that both awareness of social obstacles and barriers in addition to enablers are strongly linked to the program design. Thus, when designing programs, it should be considered that learners face specific **challenges**. Obstacles include **personal problems**, **negative emotions** such as shame and embarrassment next to **practical barriers** such as not having time due to the fact that they have to take care of their children. At the same time, a tailored program design them overcome these obstacles and motivate them to participate.

In the following, after results of the analyses of the **main social obstacles, barriers and enablers** the suggestions of the interviewees concerning the design programs will be summarized.

4.2.1 Awareness of social obstacles

The interviewees mentioned several problems their learners' have to face. For example, one interviewee mentioned that a low proficiency in literacy is often at the root of problems like financial debts and depression. Another interviewee claimed that these problems make it harder for learners to follow a course:

"I think it is the motivation, the self-esteem, their social and psychological background it is often very hard to follow the course." (R4)

Apart from these personal problems, learners face difficulties, because a low proficiency in literacy **is not accepted by society**. Justifying that they have a problem with reading and writing is one of the main obstacles. For instance, having difficulties with math seems to be much more socially accepted than having problems with reading and writing.

"People don't mind talking about being not good with numbers, not good at math. But they do not like to say that they are not good at reading." (R9)

In this context, having the feeling that low proficiency in literacy is **one's own fault** was another aspect that was expressed by several interviewees. Some interviewees mentioned that awareness and acceptance are crucial to tackle the issue. In sum, the combination of personal problems and attitudes rooted in society makes it harder for learners to accept that they have a low proficiency in literacy and eventually join a course.

4.2.2 Barriers

There are two main barriers for autochthonous adult learners, which have an impact on recruitment for literacy programs. The **first one** is negative emotions connected to their low proficiency in literacy.

First, **shame**, **embarrassment** and **fear** were some of the negative emotions mentioned most. This is illustrated by an experience of one of the interviewees:

"Still a man who was 65, he couldn't read and he used glasses, so once he was asked to read, he dropped his glasses on the floor and stepped on the glasses [..]. It was at a meeting, so he said: 'o my god I lost my glasses and broke my glasses'. He tried to hide everything." (R3)

It was suggested by several interviewees that these feelings were often connected to **bad prior experiences with education**.

"[...] quick learning success for these adult learners is very important to get over experiences in the past when there was no success at all and they were always the ones who did not pass the test or who were laughed at. We don't want to repeat this experience for them." (R10)

The **second barrier** is that **people do not always recognise they have a low proficiency in literacy**. Besides, in a deficiency-oriented society, it is even harder for learners to realise and admit that they have a problem. Furthermore, potential learners are hard to reach, because they tend to be socially excluded.

"[...] they'd rather hide themselves than that they participate in anything. Or they are so out of reach of the system that they can't be found at all." (R8)

Overall, negative feelings often result from society's view on a low proficiency in literacy. They are rooted in learners' own personal problems and further fuelled by negative prior experiences in formal education

4.2.3 Enablers

Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned three aspects, which can overcome potential barriers: **Connecting to daily issues**, **proximity** and **free childcare**. Connecting to everyday problems refers to how programs are framed in order to attract learners. Proximity focuses on whether the location of programs is geographically close to the learners' daily life. Besides, free childcare links to providing learners with the possibility of childcare while they participate in a program. All three concepts refer to overcoming learners' barriers in order to stimulate participation in literacy programs (24, 28, 35, 36).

Connecting to daily issues
About half of the interviewees claimed that organising programs concerning something else than

literacy helps to attract learners. By this, they avoid direct confrontation with the issues of learners and learning can be seen as supportive for functioning in daily life. Furthermore, using **terminology other than literacy** helps to avoid negative feelings (35). Approaching learners in framing a **positive message** motivates them to learn and participate.

"[...] So rather than finding an unemployed adult and looking at the qualifications and saying: "Oh yes, you didn't get your maths, you didn't get your English, that's why you haven't got a job, so you need to go on a course". You need to work with people a bit more from where they are coming from and engage with them that way." (R2)

Proximity to learners' daily life

The majority of the interviewees emphasized that learners' **access** to programs needs to be **as easy as possible**. This involves programs that are close to learners' daily life (24). Potential barriers such as not having the time and money to commute are lowered. Not only the geographical location seemed to matter. Also, the **type of location** played a significant role in recruitment of adult learners. One interviewee suggested not to use locations that participants might have a prior association with education with.

"The library or a language house or a language point or a language teacher or anything but the language is the last place people go to tackle their problem. Because they are too ashamed of that and think I can't read so what do I have to do in the library." (R8)

Free childcare

Half of the interviewees claimed that providing childcare enables particularly women to participate in programs.

"Sometimes [the barriers] are so terribly basic that it is very easy to get over them, so the moment you arrive at the childcare centre or add childcare to your care process, you suddenly reach them." (R8)

One interviewee explained that during every class one participant took care of all the children. Every class, they rotated so that everyone participated equally. In addition, the interviewee's organisation arranged a nanny from a local NGO every now and then.

4.2.4 Program Design

This section provides an overview of program designs which match learners' needs. Three categories describe what interviewees experience to be successful: **Flexibility and group composition**, **having a proficiency perspective** and **starting small and expanding**.

Flexibility and Group Composition

Flexibility refers to giving people the possibility to set their own goals and joining courses, which are rather **non-formal**. Setting individual and reachable goals rather than having the obligation to finish a course with a certificate attracts learners to programs (24, 31). This was also supported by most of the interviewees. Not having to sit obligatory exams also connects well to learners' preference of non-formal courses with **freedom rather than obligations**. Another interesting insight was that once learners completed a non-formal course, they were more likely to take part in a more formal one.

"Particularly to get them in through the door, engaged in learning, and you just need a bit of space to work with the learners to get them to a point where they are more ready and better prepared to consider doing something that's more formal." (R11)

Two of the interviewees also point out that the non-formal design of the courses is closely connected to **registration for programs**. One interviewee indicated that **initial tests** prevent learners from joining courses. Another interviewee suggests that potentially **shameful questions** regarding private life should be avoided during registration. For instance, questions involving details about ethnicity and prior use of drugs should be excluded.

Concerning group composition, interviewees favoured **heterogeneous** and **small groups** with a maximum of 12 participants.

"Surely we have the idea that a heterogeneous group has more effect, because they also get to know each other. Preconceptions disappear. They're going to help each other. One's good at this, another's good at that." (R6)

Proficiency Perspective

Most interviewees were mostly in line with the importance of a **focus on learners' strengths** rather than deficiencies. A focus on their capabilities and reaching their goals increases their learning intention and self-efficacy (30).

"We focus on the strengths of people. Everyone is good at something. What we try is that in the learning process there will be parts where people can show what they can do well. Someone might not write well, but he is a good painter for example." (R10)

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Start Small and Expand

To give learners' the feeling they can achieve their goals, interviewees suggested **dividing courses** into manageable parts. By this, courses seem **more workable** and learners are **more motivated** to join a program and maybe even continue with a follow-up.

"600 [hours] is such a big number, that most people say they are not able to do this. [...] We downsize long courses into small units like for example 10 to 30 learning lessons. With these compact courses, the first thing we try is to motivate people and show them that it is also fun to learn, it is work, but it is also fun. And most of our learners come back repeatedly into follow-up courses." (R10)

⚙️ **Practical implications for the province of Drenthe**

Based on the findings from the interviews, three recommendations for the Province of Drenthe can be made:

1. Be close to your learners and their network

The first important approach would be to reduce barriers for learners by making programs more accessible.

On the one hand, this includes choosing a geographical location, which is close to the learners' neighbourhood. This is more practical for them and saves time and costs. On the other hand, it is possible to select a building with no prior negative associations. Instead of libraries, schools and impressive offices, one would rather choose:

- Community centre's
- Culture Cafes
- Clubhouses
- Bars

2. Camouflage Courses - The real struggle, not the underlying language barrier

The second approach is to set a focus on proficiency rather than constantly making learners aware of their deficiencies. This approach starts with framing programs. A suggestion is to connect them to daily issues rather than calling them a "literacy course", for instance. A solution to this could be to design the courses in a way that they connect to daily issues of learners. Examples for this are:

- Sewing classes
- Cooking classes
- Positive health initiatives

- Walk-in cafes on financial topics like household budgeting
- Application and CV trainings

In terms of group composition, the suggestion is to keep groups small and set a focus on more heterogeneous members with different backgrounds.

3. The Salami Tactic - Small pieces & personal goals

A third approach to make programs attractive for learners is what was named the "**Salami Tactic**" by one of the interviewees. It plays with the analogy of cutting slices of a Salami bigger and bigger every time. This refers to designing programs in a way that they are workable for learners. In practice, this could be implemented by having shorter courses for starters and prolonging them over time. Furthermore, it is essential that learners experience quick learning successes to stimulate their **motivation and self-efficacy**.

The Salami tactic is also applicable to learners' goals. Taking into account that each learner should learn at his/her own pace, it makes sense to set **short-term goals** gradually while at the same time having a **long-term goal** in mind.

Language providers could address this by identifying and fully accepting learners' goals and tailor them to their learning trajectory. By this, learners are approached in a more positive and proficiency-oriented way, which motivates them to participate. Recruitment strategies should thus focus on these aspects. For example, it should be possible to communicate to learners that a course will just take a few hours per week and that they can thus focus on their own wishes and goals.

4.3 Communication

Communication is crucial for reaching the target group effectively and goes beyond conversations and marketing campaigns. To provide a holistic view of what communication is built on, the communication section follows the **Berlo model** (32), giving insights into the Sender, Channel, Message, and Recipient. That means that we take a closer look at which characteristics make a sender effective, which communication channels work for recruiting, which messages trigger the target audience most and what factors should be considered when reaching out to the recipient.

Sender
Communication
Recipient
Message
Channel

4.3.1 Element 1: Sender

The person, organisation or institution is the one who designs the message and chooses the communication channels (32).

In general, the characteristics of a sender consists of four principal categories;

approaching the target group with certain pre-knowledge, developing the skills to start a dialogue, establishing the role of ambassadors and building relationships within this process. An aligned communication strategy that appeals to many different groups requires knowledge, skills, and a consistent attitude.

"If you start with the communication strategy, that might only appeal to one group and then you miss out a different group of people. If all your communication focuses on engaging new parents, then that might not appeal to people who are looking for employee motivation. So, you need to make sure that the communication strategy aligns with whatever your dream is your target group locally, whoever or whatever your project is, whoever you're supposed to be working with, you need to align it with that". (R11).

Using ambassadors is a commonly-used practice in recruitment strategies of literacy programs. Overall, the use of ambassadors has shown to be effective in recruiting learners by the majority of the interviewees from 8 different countries. However, it is essential to be aware of the fact that not everyone who has participated in literacy programs can serve as an ambassador.

"If you are talking about an ambassador then they should really be educated properly. That they clearly know where they are coming from and how to use their own experiences for this purpose. [..] Not everybody is capable of transforming this experience into practice in a functional way." (R8)

Authenticity and identification

When ambassadors approach potential learners it is particularly important to **make programs immediately appealing** to them. To do this in an educational context, ambassadors have to be authentic and show that they once were in the same position as potential learners. Apart from this, they should explain that literacy programs helped them to achieve their goals (46). By this, potential learners can **identify themselves with ambassadors** and reflect on the eventual outcomes of such a program. This might encourage them to take the same path like this interviewee explains:

"They always search for a connection, helping them to tell about the project and making clear that it is always customized per group, that the problems that they encounter are the same as others, that they are not alone in this." (R6)

To establish a relationship, the ambassadors' speech and testimony needs to be authentic (46). One of the interviewees suggested that ambassadors who sincerely share and are extremely engaged, have a higher impact on potential learners. In contrast, an advertisement played by actors that appeared on television had a rather small effect.

Breaking the ice

It was already mentioned that establishing partnerships with specific institutions helps in breaking the ice. An ambassador recruits by reaching out to potential learners. This can be done by joining them during their initial acquaintance with the literacy program and during the first steps of the programs. **Ambassadors have to be approachable**. They have to smile, to know how to establish a connection with those potential learners, to improvise and to express confidence. All these techniques are icebreakers in order to encourage participation and support in building a sense of connection and trust (47).

"I have two guys on my staff who are really great at communicating, they can sell everything. They talk to the parents and so we get into a dialogue with the parents. The parents have time and we inform them about our projects and learning opportunities." (R10)

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A recommendation to make the role of ambassadors more effective could be to give a personal email address instead of the contact details of the course provider. By this, the potential learners can directly contact the person they met. For instance, it has been shown that teachers who use icebreakers improve the adult learners' participation. Icebreakers increase humour used during classes, realise a safe environment and even help teachers to remember the learners' names, which also has positive outcomes as they feel **heard and appreciated** (47).

The first contact

First of all, it is essential to **identify the target group**. In this project, the target group autochthonous adults who have a low proficiency in literacy. It is important to approach them appropriately. Speaking and listening skills can support this. In this context, the **professional qualification of staff** in recruiting autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs is essential (23).

"*Just because I think people need to read and write better does not mean that they themselves think they really need it. Maybe they have different goals than I have. So the message has to be in a way that the people can see the benefit for themselves" (R1).*

When approaching the target group, the first contact is extremely important, as you have to **trigger potential learners' interest**. They have to be curious about what you offer so they can dare to engage and to reflect on it and maybe come back a few days, weeks, or months later.

Setting the right expectations

Adult learners would like course providers to **clearly communicate the requirements and expectations** of the courses. The most basic one is to be informed about the established policies and practices at the institution (48, 49). Moreover, learners need to get familiar with how the courses and exams are structured and how they will be assessed (49). **From the very first session**, expectations have to be set and the learners have to feel supported in handling courses, exams and assessment questions (48, 49).

For people with low proficiency in literacy, it needs to be clear that effort is needed and at the same time attention will be provided in order to improve in reading speed and understanding (1). The key to keeping participants motivated and encouraged is being realistic about the effort and time needed to achieve these goals (49). Specifically, the participants need to understand that engaging in literacy courses will not guarantee a high level of literacy within a few days.

AAA-Active, Authentic Ambassadors

Everyone who has previously participated in literacy courses can serve as an ambassador. However, **not everyone can transform the experience into effective recruitment**. Indeed, ambassadors need to be able to **communicate the correct things** to effectively recruit and convince autochthonous adults to engage in literacy programs. However, an ambassador can only be an effective communicator if he or she has the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude. This is why there is a need in training ambassadors so that they can develop the proper skills to inspire potential learners and to convince them to engage in literacy courses.

"The ambassadors received separate education and training from [name of person] in order to be able to join us to city council meetings and such. Or to join us at symposia or congresses to tell their story." (R6).

Apart from the knowledge and the skills, the attitude towards the audience and the topic are crucial in order to build relationships (32). Furthermore, the social system in which communication takes place needs to be considered by the sender.

For example, this includes values, beliefs, culture and religion (33) and is part of approaching the target group in an appropriate way. On the one hand, the Province of Drenthe should seek for **organisations which are specialised in training ambassadors.** On the other hand, the province should find people from Drenthe with whom autochthonous learners can identify.

Role models for potential learners

To keep and stimulate the attention of potential learners, ambassadors have to be perceived as **role models by potential learners**. **Storytelling** is one of the best practices ambassadors of the Province of Drenthe could use. When ambassadors share stories about how they achieved **a goal, which is common to the goal of potential learners**, it can be the spark that persuades potential learners to join a course.

Being knowledgeable

In order to communicate effectively with autochthonous adults with a low proficiency in literacy, **specific knowledge is required**. This consists of knowledge about the topic, the audience, the situation and other background information (34). To precisely identify adults with a low proficiency in literacy, results have shown that **they generally have the following behaviours** in common (50):

- Agreeing with everything
- Being well-defended, not easily identifiable as they want to maintain their dignity
- Being literal and concrete
- Being slower in comprehending
- Have a limited perspective and little critical thinking skills, because their perspectives are only linked to direct experiences
- Being restless in teaching-learning environments as they are afraid of showing their lack of skill due to bad prior experiences
- Not voluntarily answering questions when in a group setting

The ambassadors are asked to **spot behaviour** mentioned above in order to identify potential learners. To identify and notice some behaviour is also applicable for further steps of the process of engaging in literacy courses, for instance as one of the interviewees describes in the following quote:

"We give computer classes in the libraries and in those computer classes, we asked the teachers to keep an eye on signals of low literacy.

[...] Teachers are in the position to easily start the dialogue by mentioning to the person that they notice that more things play a significant role. And if they would be open to participate in a literacy course or to talk with someone about how you can tackle this." (R8)

⚙ Practical implications for the Province of Drenthe

The Province of Drenthe should take into consideration the important role of ambassadors in establishing a connection with potential learners. Through training, it is expected that the role of ambassadors can be more effective. Certainly, a **balance** has to be found between training and absolutely keeping and respecting the **ambassadors' authenticity**.

4.3.2 Element 2: Channel
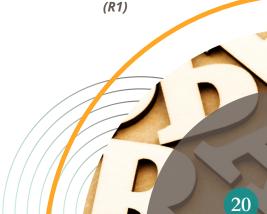
A broad range of communication channels have been mentioned in the interviews. As the role of word of mouth stood out, the main findings for this channel will be summarized separately. This section focuses on other communication channels followed by one best practice example.

Generally, conventional channels such as **leaflets, brochures and notes** were used frequently to inform potential learners. One interviewee stated that:

"those are not always used directly by the learner. It might be [...] that a librarian sees the flyer and thinks that she knows somebody, or he knows somebody, who might benefit from that course and passes it on. So, [...] there might be a sort of indirect effect of it as well." (R11)

Furthermore, the **website** of the organisation was stated as an important channel. Other frequently used media are posters and banners, especially in the windows of the learning centre and in the neighbourhood.

"They can just go in there and ask what's going on and we also put posters on the windows, so they might have an idea what's going on there." (R1)

One-way media such as **TV, newspaper and radio** were mentioned and used less often for several reasons. First, campaigns via these channels were often **not affordable** with the given budgets. Second, **potential learners have not been reached** via these channels effectively. These channels were rather used for broader awareness campaigns in society.

Third, the **control over the message** that is distributed was limited.

"We have the problem that the local newspapers want to tell stories about victims. [...] We are not interested in this." (R10)

Besides, **social media** has been mentioned frequently to be a relevant channel for sharing content and interacting with (potential) learners. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp have been mentioned to engage with (potential) learners. Furthermore, one interviewee stated that LinkedIn was effective to engage companies offering courses.

"We have tried this for 3 years now and actually companies call us, because they have seen the video on LinkedIn or on Facebook." (R6)

Lastly, channels were stated to be effective when reaching the target audience in **another context**. For example, these channels include face-to-face meetings via **companies**, which offer courses or **'info cafés'** at centres informing about various topics. Also, channels such as the **blackboard** at supermarkets or **communication channels from partners** have been mentioned.

"And our courses are on this blackboard in the supermarket. People actually read it when they are packing their stuff and pulling a piece of paper and then call and ask "What is this? Can I come?". "How much does it cost?" is also asked very often. So, this is how we recruit our learners." (R10)

Especially, contexts which are closely connected to the daily lives and interests of potential learners, have been mentioned to be highly effective. Connection include their leisure activities, interests or children, for example. In the following part, a recommendation is introduced based on this insight.

The **"Jumping Castle"** is a best-practice example of effective communication to reach autochthonous adults with low proficiency in literacy. The idea itself is simple: Placing a jumping castle along with a very small information stand on a marketplace. However, the implementation considers important aspects of communication which make recruitment highly effective.

Enabling conversation through children

Program providers engage the target audience in a conversation by reaching out to their children. An attraction for children like a jumping castle creates a situation where the children are busy and the parents have time and are relaxed. The staff at the information stand makes use of this waiting time and the relaxed atmosphere in which people are **open for a conversation**. They can identify potential learners quickly and interact with them face-to-face. The **senders are highly skilled** and

"are really great in communicating, they can sell everything." (R10)

like one interviewee explained. The staff has a good understanding of the courses and the target audience and approaches them in a positive way:

"we don't address deficits "oh you can´t read or write, you should learn." (R10)

Content-wise information on learning opportunities is provided. During the conversation, staff generates interest and makes a first step towards **building a relationship** with the potential learner. Interested learners are provided with a **short and simple** note with basic information and a phone number to take with them.

Another important aspect is the location. The event takes place in an area with a rather low-socioeconomic status, one of the interviewees mentioned:

"Where we are located and the marketplace. We have a lot of citizens who are potential learners." (R10).

By this, the chances to reach people with a low proficiency in literacy are higher. Furthermore, these people are approached in their neighbourhood. What makes this intervention so useful and unique is that it has a **direct link to the daily lives** of many potential learners involving their children at an entertaining leisure activity.

⚙ Practical implications for the Province of Drenthe

In the case of the province of Drenthe, relevant events such as flea markets or fairs can be identified in areas with a rather low socioeconomic status. Conversations with parents could be enabled via a jumping castle, face painting / hairstyling, do-it-yourself key rings or games / quizzes for children. For instance, a quiz or a game, such as "Twister" or "Boccia" can also be realised with a limited budget.

Word of mouth

As part of a recruitment strategy, specific messages need a particular channel to be effective. Channel strategies have been categorized in many interviews. What stands out is the 'word of mouth', which has been mentioned by 10 of the 12 interviewees with 8 different nationalities. **Knowing the target group** and aligning the channel to the **purpose of the message** is crucial in this aspect (33). The category **private versus public** again highlighted that public and formal recruitment is less effective than private communication to attract autochthonous adult learners due to the **established connection via a private setting** for this target group. This interviewee emphasized that word of mouth is the most important channel:

"I think there are lots of potential different communicators. [...] The 'word of mouth' is very important. That message was all the more effective because it was coming from somebody who was part of that community. I think that [word of mouth] is actually the biggest one." (R11).

Using relations to convince prospective learners

The previous quote emphasizes the crucial role **word of mouth** plays for recruiting adult learners (25). The strength of this channel lies in the familiarity of the person who is communicating the message. This face to face connection **strengthens the influence** of the message. This is in line with the results that interpersonal communication and word of mouth are quite effective, whereas online channels were less effective (25). In another institution, word of mouth is used as part of the recruitment strategy.

"It is not so easy to just go out in the street, meet a learner and find them and include them. You need people from the community who meet in other contexts like through their children and the job centres, because of work." (R1)

Identification with friends and family

Participants of literacy courses know the **situation and beliefs of potential learners**. Thus, they probably have a **positive attitude** towards the topic when spreading the word. Again, using relations provides an easier way to convince prospective learners (36). As mentioned in several interviews, people do not identify with having a low proficiency in literacy, but do **identify with friends and family**. Similar to buying products and services from a company, the message may seem commercial and unreal, but as soon as a friend or family member shares the experience, it is already more reliable as they have no other intentions or possible benefits. Thus, personal experience is more effective than formal information. This interviewee mentioned how people approached them when they heard from a friend or family member:

"For us the most important publicity that we get it's precisely the word of mouth publicity. Normally they mention: 'my friend Lola told me that you are helpful and you give a lot of facilities and you are very nice people." (R2)

Spread the word!

Based on the importance and usefulness of word of mouth as a channel, it is important to build a **"welcome culture"** at the literacy program location. It should be encouraged that participants are allowed to bring others. Maybe these people are scared or ashamed to go alone or need a stepping stone to get more information without having to comply with any obligations. The institution can organise a '**family and friends' day**' to stimulate word of mouth communication. On this day, certain activities can be organised to promote the literacy program. One interviewee has experienced how this "welcoming culture" has been supportive to word of mouth communication.

"When people come to courses and we see that they like it, we tell them if you have family members or friends who would like to participate, they are welcome. And this "welcome culture", at this point, is rather important. And the learners decide for themselves if they communicate this or not." (R10)

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Promote activities to family and friends

To trigger this inclusion of friends and family, it is essential to **create publicity** in spots where people come together. To convince potential learners, it is necessary to use public communication to provide the neighbourhood with a topic to talk about and, therefore, further support word of mouth. One interviewee mentioned an example where the family participated in activities together to strengthen relationships.

"[...] Then they get an iPad. Then, they receive an activity to explore the neighbourhood with the iPad with their family. Later there is an exposition of this task in the library and they are allowed to invite people. [...] They also get a vlog task to cook a healthy meal together and to vlog about this. This they can show to friends and family." (R6).

⚙ Practical implications for the Province of Drenthe

In the Province of Drenthe, the Drenthe museum can be used for the exhibition. Furthermore, local libraries can play a role in helping to organise a friends and family day and providing resources for such a photo exhibition.

4.3.3 ✉ Element 3: Message

The message, which is communicated by the sender, consists of the contents, the structure and elements such as gestures or body language (32, 34). Studies on recruitment of autochthonous adult learners found that framing is crucial in the message for interventions. In the interviews, this topic has been mentioned several times. The findings of the message are categorized into content, framing, and identification.

Content

During the interviews, it soon became apparent that it is best to keep the **content short and straightforward** when wanting to get a message across. This applies mainly to using social media and leaflets.

"[...] [learners] are not so used to print media and are more used to short messages, because they all use Whatsapp and I think they are trained that way." "[...], But if you have anything written down it has to be written simply and not talking about this official simple language, but in the sense of not so much text [...]" (R1)

In addition to this, some of the interviewees mentioned that within this content there should be a **telephone number** posted. By this, people who want to have more information or to sign up can call the provider of literacy courses at any time. This makes it easier for them to reach out.

"It can take time for people to hear about something and make the call later. Recommendation: put a phone number on the poster, easier to reach than the website. With a text number also okay, leave your number for example." (R9)

Framing and Identification

Success stories can be effective to use in spreading the message to reach the target audience. The success stories also help to **frame** the message in a more proficiency-oriented way. This recommendation aligns with the suggestion to design programs in an appropriate manner. A course should be presented as a trajectory or program and not as a one-time event. For this reason, the long-term perspective should be taken into account.

"Big message that they had: benefits of learning! How it changed my life. One woman told in the advertisement: "it didn't open the word to me, it opened the world for me" [...]. There are many benefits to learning. You are building on this positive impact on your life = strong message!" (R9)

Finally, the visualisation needs to appeal to the target audience. This is also connected to the framing of the message in order to take care of the learners' needs.

The KISS Principle

To create a **powerful communication tool**, we recommend making use of the **KISS principle** in the message. There are different versions of the KISS principle, but most commonly used is: "Keep It Short and Simple". The KISS principle is seen as the **key to work efficiently** by using as **few words as possible** to create an understanding. Most people tend to devote many words to a specific subject, which makes the message unclear and harder to understand. The underlying idea of the KISS principle revolves around a statement by Albert Einstein: "if you can't explain it, you don't understand it yourself". Conversely, it can be said that something can be adequately explained if it was understood well. Managers also make use of the KISS principle to make complex models or enormous data understandable (51).

Practical implications for the Province of Drenthe

This principle is a suitable method for our target audience in The Province of Drenthe, since they have difficulties with reading and writing. Simplicity is a key design principle in a proficiency-oriented approach. The easier something is to understand and to use, the more likely it is that learners adopted it and are engaged with it.

4.3.4 Element 4: Recipient

The "recipient" is the audience that receives the message and decodes it (33). In this project, the recipient is the autochthonous adult learner. During the interviews, certain topics were discussed in an extensive manner; low proficiency in literacy, previous experience of the target audience, the **role of trust and support** in establishing the relationship, and the **specificity** of the target group.

As mentioned before, when approaching the target group, the first contact is extremely important, as you have to **generate interest**. During the interviews it is mentioned several times that this group is best approachable when there is personal encouragement. This aligns with the recommendation on interpersonal communication specified in the section of the 'Sender'.

"I think a lot of people need [...] personal encouragement. I would guess, what is still required in the majority of cases and you do get learners who are confident enough to walk through the door, but usually those with the very clear and specific motivation to get in a particular course or qualification." (R11)

To overcome this negative prior experience barrier (as mentioned in the Program Design section), it is important to build up a **relationship based on trust and support**. As recent studies show, building a positive and workable relationship with potential learners is important as this relationship functions as an enabler, which facilitates learning (41). This has been also confirmed by what was said during the interviews. Establishing a relationship based on trust and support relates to less fear and more confidence, which is one of the biggest barriers.

"Trust and support are essential. Our education centre is based on that. If you don't give them support, they don't feel accompanied by you, it doesn't make any sense [...]." (R2)

Most of the interviewees did not specify their target group when communicating. There need to be different course contents for various target audiences (e.g. young mothers, employed, ICT).

Practical implications for the Province of Drenthe

In order to attract the recipient, the recommendation can be made that trust and support needs to be established in the relationship between the provider of the literacy course and the target group. **Individual support and personal conversations** can stimulate a relationship based on trust. The provider of the course needs to **be involved**. There are a number of actions which help to earn autochthonous adult learners' trust and to involve them. These actions include treating the target group equally, giving them a sense of security and a feeling of care and togetherness and supporting them in their goal reaching process.

Summary: Best practice Recruitment Strategies

Goal & Measure-ment

Targeting

Holistic approach

Social media channel fit

Partners with HALO effect

Best practice recruitment strategy

Be close!

Camouflage Courses

Partnering & Networking

Program Design

Salami Tactic

AAA

Be reliable!

Be knowledge-able!

Sender

Communication

Recipient

Channel

Message

Jumping castle

Spread the word!

KISS!

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4.4 Possible Challenges for Implementation

Various possible challenges may occur during the implementation of these recommendations.

Many interviewees, for instance, mentioned having **limited resources**, including **budget**, **time** of people and **competences of staff**. This may limit the organisations to spend time concerning recruitment. Therefore, time they can dedicate to one-on-one conversations with potential learners, partners and the staff may not be enough. Besides, **training for staff and ambassadors** on the issues of literacy and the course content is often limited. Next to this, the **required competencies**, for instance for PR initiatives, is not always available. Possible approaches to overcome this challenge include **working with other stakeholders**. These stakeholders may have strong connections with target audiences and have the necessary skills.

There might be **difficulties in identifying and convincing partners** to establish a long-term relationship. Reasons include existing initiatives and low interest in the topic of literacy. Therefore, it is crucial to **create more awareness** for the topic of literacy. **International events**, such as the International Literacy Day, also help to underline the urgency of the topic of literacy.

Next to this, **making use of the existing network** can help to establish the connection with new partners.

Besides, **camouflage courses** may attract people from outside the target group. However, positive health initiatives in The Netherlands, which are similar to camouflage courses and have broader goals, have shown to be very effective and as mentioned by interviewees. Current policies, such as funding for literacy programs, can prevent language providers from taking the flexibility to create camouflage courses and use the salami tactic. Therefore, **clear communication** to policy makers on the topic of literacy and these best practices is crucial for success.

As the topic of literacy is complex and highly interconnected with other social issues, **research on the topic is crucial** for communication to policy makers, as well as, effective recruitment and execution of the programs.

There is still **room for a deeper and more integrated understanding** of the topic.

In the next chapter, some avenues for further exploration will be outlined.

Time

Budget

Communication

Further Research

4.5 Avenues for further Exploration

In this chapter, **avenues for further exploration** are presented. Several approaches are discussed on how to further increase the effectiveness of recruitment. These approaches include: the holistic nature of recruitment strategies, goals and measurement, targeting and social media channel fit.

Holistic recruitment strategy

"[...] I think you can't just look at any one of them in isolation [...]. I think that successful strategies need to include the whole of those things." (R11)

Exploring the impact of changing from a rather isolated to a holistic strategic approach might reveal further insights on the effectiveness of recruitment. To create a **holistic strategy** the various practices that are in place need to be fully **integrated and aligned**. Then, each practice contributes as a "tactic" to the overall strategy and goal, which might enhance the effectiveness. The effectiveness of the recruitment strategy might even be more increased by **thinking** the various tactics **through strategically** and challenging them regularly.

Goals & measurement

The effectiveness of having **goals** for the strategy and **sub-goals** for each tactic, and measuring these is an interesting avenue to explore further. Most interviewees worked for organisations in which they only have one goal, the recruitment of learners. They measure the number of participants, and funding-related aspects, if applicable. However, it could be revealing to learn more about the effectiveness of the practices by for instance measuring the number of calls or the clicks on the website. Obtainable information (e.g. website analytics) and evaluations of participants could form a basis to define relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPI). If these KPI are measured and analysed regularly, they might serve as a base for **decision-making** regarding **optimization and integration** of practices.

Targeting

"You need a strategy but it's not likely to be 'penny on a single thing', you need enough resources to be able to do a multitude of different things for different learners." (R11).

Examining the influence of targeting on the effectiveness of recruitment might unravel new insights. Interviewees defined their target audience broadly as potential learners in the operating region. However, it might be more effective to target more specifically. Targeting options include **demographics, attitudes and interests**. To gain a better understanding of these targeting options, personas are a helpful tool. These models characterise people in a target group illustratively. For example, the **personas from Lost Lemon** look into "what kind of behaviour do people show when it comes to tackling their problem" (R8), while **personas from KLASSE!** are based on experiences and interests (54). Personas might support the staff to adapt the communication and help potential learners to identify themselves with the course offers. Targeting via personas could be "a new and unique method for finding, approaching and recruiting low-literate NT1 people" (53).
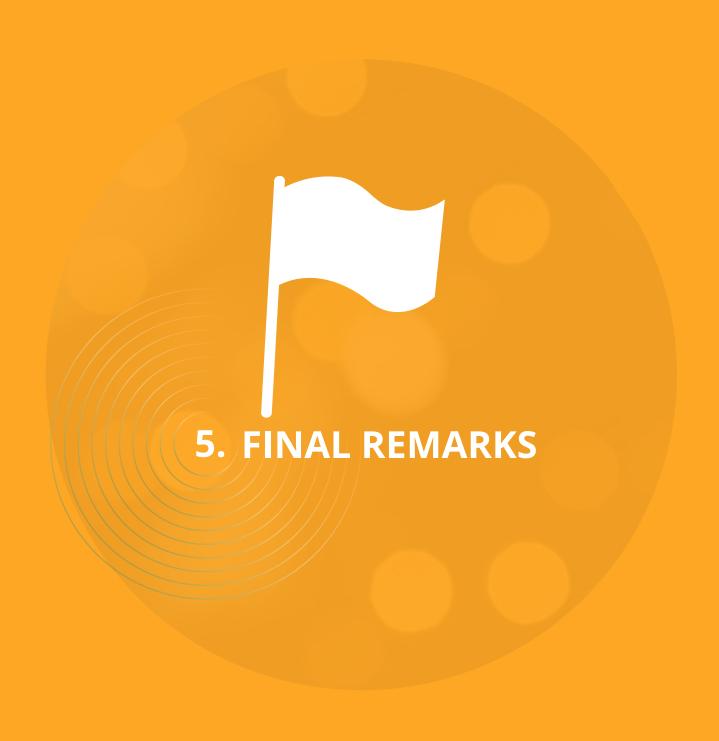
Social media channel fit

Further exploring the **fit of the communication channel, message and the target audience** might be informative. In the analysis, it was observed that there is little experience in the selection of the right social media platform.

However, it might be more effective to align the **choice of platforms** and the **messages that are spread** with the **media usage and interests** of the target audience. Developing a good understanding of the social media platforms as well as of the aspects which trigger the audience might be a way to approach the channels selection more strategically. Organisations could benefit from several interaction options such as messaging, liking and sharing to establish a relationship and to provide support. As social media provides measures (e.g. views, likes, shares etc.), organisations can monitor, analyse and optimize their activities to recruit more effectively.

To sum up, further explorations should be undertaken to enhance the effectiveness of recruiting autochthonous adult learners. Suggested avenues include the holistic recruitment strategy approach, goals & measurement, targeting and the social media channel fit.

5. FINAL REMARKS

5. Final Remarks

Limitations of the project

This report provides **valuable insights and qualitative evidence** on the effectiveness of recruitment strategies for autochthonous adult learners to literacy programs. However, some limitations of the project should be taken into account.

First, due to the **scope of the project** the sample size was restricted to a sample of twelve experts. The results show agreement as interviewees mostly agreed on recommendations which also correspond to findings in academic literature. Moreover, experts with different backgrounds (e.g. recruiting vulnerable adults in health care) were included to enrich the findings. Since the focus of the project is on providing insights on the organisational level, intermediaries were chosen as interview partners. Therefore, autochthonous adult learners, and their insights, were not included in the interviews.

Second, as the findings were collected from adults in **varying contexts**, they may not be generalizable and transferable to every context. Aspects such as educational and governmental structures, culture, way of communication and society differ across countries and provinces.. Furthermore, countries attach varying degrees of relevance to the issue and recruitment is highly situation-specific. In the project, the best practice strategy is tailored for the Province of Drenthe.

Conclusion

The Province of Drenthe would like to see autochthonous adults with a low proficiency in literacy participating in programs to combat social exclusion and foster social inclusion. This report aimed at forming a best practice recruitment strategy in order to attract the target audience to literacy programs.

Qualitative research has been conducted to form the recruitment strategy and to provide specific recommendations to the language providers in the Province of Drenthe. Three main pillars are identified as crucial for recruitment: The first pillar, '**Partnering & Networking**' focusses on the use of existing networks and novel partners that bear positive association with the target audience and a halo effect. Within the second pillar, '**Program Design**' it is recommended to create camouflage courses to be geographically close to potential learners, to work from a proficiency perspective, and the use of the salami tactic to create shorter courses and goals for the learners. Following the model of Berlo (32), the '**Communication**' recommendations were divided into channel, sender, message and recipient.
As a sender, the recommendation concerns making use of active, authentic ambassadors. Senders must be trained so that they are knowledgeable about the issues surrounding literacy and the course content, to recruit effectively. Various channel types can be used, specifically it is recommended using channels that connect with people during positive moments in their lives.

Besides, word of mouth is an established and crucial channel. To make word of mouth even more effective, the providers must have a welcoming culture. Messages should be kept short and simple to connect with the audience. For the recipient, It is important to have a trusting and supporting relationship with the course provider.
Furthermore, to continuously improve these best practices, avenues for **further explorations** are discussed. Further explorations include having a holistic, strategic approach to recruitment, strengthened by goal setting and measuring the effectiveness, targeting through defined personas and selecting social media channels strategically. Implementing these recommendations **requires resources** that may not always be available to the course provider. Therefore, **partnering with other institutions** and **creating awareness** for the issue of literacy is crucial for the recruitment of autochthonous adults, and therefore, fostering social inclusion.

"The ability to read and write is one goal of our work, but maybe even more important is the social interaction and participation in social and economic life" (R10).

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Final Advice

Final advice for a best practice recruitment strategy of autochthonous adults for literacy programs.

Partner with HALO effect
It is strongly recommended for the language providers to work with partners who are usually out of scope. This will enable providers to benefit from a positive association and identification that the target group has with these partners. Value-adding partners in the Province of Drenthe include: 'Wildlands Zoo Emmen', 'TT Assen', and the 'Holland International Blues Festival'. Establish the relationship by meeting the partners face-to-face thoroughly to explain the program goal and expectations on their meetings.

Be close!
Proximity helps to save costs and time for the target audience. Besides, neighbourhood buildings are more accessible for potential learners. Make use of existing buildings without prior negative associations.

Camouflage Courses
Working from a proficiency perspective is more attractive for potential learners.

Camouflaging courses help to overcome negative prior experiences and taboos around literacy. For this reason, potential learners are more likely to enter a course that links to their daily lives. Examples include: sewing courses, cooking classes, and financial support meetings.

Salami Tactic
Build learning motivation by quick learning successes. Start with short courses and goals and build up expectations when the learner is ready.

AAA – Active, authentic ambassadors
Make use of prior and current learners to spread the word and convince potential learners in an authentic way. Ambassadors help to bring up issues, provide insights, and break the ice. Train your ambassadors to communicate effectively.

Be knowledgeable!
Approaching the target audience must be done with care. Senders must understand the issues around literacy and know how to identify them. The right expectations regarding the course content need to be communicated to attract the potential learner.

Jumping Castle
Approach people during positive moments in their daily lives. Communication through formal institutions may bear negative prior associations, whilst approaching people in positive contexts is effective. These moments include public events, such as flea markets and fairs. Build up a jumping castle or a face-paint booth to easily connect with parents from the area.

Spread the word!
Using relations and word of mouth is highly effective to reach the target audience. Neighbours, friends, and family are influential as potential learners identify with them. Have a welcoming culture which encourages people to bring friends and family along.

KISS!
Regarding messages, there is one rule: KISS! - Keep it Short and Simple. Short and simple messages resonate well with the audience. Use success stories in your messages to show what is possible.

Be reliable!
Prior experiences, social barriers, and insecurities require strong relationships based on trust and support. Build reliable relationships to motivate learners in the long run.

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7. APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Guideline

Introduction & Consent	• Inform interviewee about background, goal and structure of the interview • Information on length and audio recording • Agreement on the audio recording, anonymous use of the answers for the analysis and the report
1. Introduction Participants	• Can you briefly explain the goal of your institution and your role within this? • How long have you worked in this institution? • Are you involved in the recruitment of adult learners? If so, for how long?
2. Opening Questions	• What is the goal of your program? • Who do you want to reach with your programs? • What is the biggest challenge when it comes to attracting autochthonous adult learners? And why?
3. Partners	• What are partners you collaborate with to recruit potential learners? How is collaboration going? • Have you ever encountered a situation in which there were diverging interests among your partners and your organisation? If so, how? Including influence on recruitment of autochthonous learners. • How could the different partners collaborate to recruit most effectively?
4. General Questions about (Literacy) Programs	• How do you classify autochthonous people with low proficiency in literacy skills (NT1) further (e.g. levels)? Are there any tests? • How does the registration work? (online or offline, long or short process?) E.g. need to apply or just sign up, waiting time? • How do you name your (literacy) courses? Do you address the issue (e.g. low proficiency in literacy) directly or indirectly? (e.g. naming literacy courses "helping children with homework") • Could you think of the factors that might influence prospects to sign up or not (autochthone learners)? E.g. group size, diverse group vs. homogenous group (ethnic, gender, age), hours a week, etc.?

Recruitment strategy
We would like to start asking some specific questions from a communication perspective.

5. Sender

- Who would you identify as being responsible for the communication of your courses? (E.g. program teachers/ managers, participants of low literacy courses)
- Who, according to you, would be the most effective communicator?
- What is the relation between the communicator and the autochthone learners?
- What relationship or role facilitates the successful recruitment of autochthonous learners? (e.g. helper/ supporter, critique, eye-opener?)
- Which role do ambassadors play in the recruitment of autochthone learners? (e.g. people who already completed a course)

6. Message

- When reaching out to adult autochthone learners, what are you including in the content/message?
- What exactly should be communicated? What content engages autochthonous learners?
- Do you provide rational information or rather tell a (success) story?
- What is the core of the message (e.g. opportunity to step into a new life)? Is it based on psychological insights? Are there also practical barriers?

7. Channel

- Via which communication channels do you recruit autochthone learners for your programs? (both online and offline)?
- Does one-way communication (e.g. posters) work or is interaction/ dialogue necessary (e.g. Word of mouth, Influencer/ blogger, social media, references)?
- In your opinion, does it matter whether you communicate the message privately or publicly?
- Do you hire PR agencies to get support for the campaigns/ design/ network? If yes, what kind of agencies and why do you need their support? (In terms of communication)

8. Recipient

- Who is the main target group within autochthone learners (e.g. people with low proficiency in literacy or people who convince them)?
- Do you have different strategies to mobilise different audiences? (e.g. women vs. men, younger vs. older people)
- Do you differentiate between new learners and recruiting for a follow-up class? How?
- In case people with low proficiency in literacy: How do you bring the message across when the autochthone learner has difficulties with reading?

| 9. Goal	• What do you want to achieve by communicating your program? (E.g. recruit them to sign up, participate in a trial session, awareness etc.?) • Does your recruitment strategy consist of different stages? E.g. raise awareness, generate interest, create desire, facilitate action? (AIDA-Model) • Do you also work on generating discussions/dialogue in society about low literacy as it might be perceived as a taboo topic?
10. Measurement/ Effectiveness:	• How do you measure the effectiveness of the recruitment strategy? What are the main KPIs? • How would you describe the effectiveness of attracting autochthone learners? • How much do you know about the autochthone learners in terms of their media usage, attitudes, leisure activities, etc? • Do you wish to target even more "specifically"? What would be your approach to that?
11. Individual Learners	• How do you approach people who have had negative prior experience with offers like yours (e.g. literacy courses, prior education) in their lives? • How do you approach people who find it hard to admit to themselves that they have low proficiency? • What role does trust and support play in communication toward autochthone learners? How do you build trust and make autochthone learners feel supported? Does it help in mobilisation?
12. Outlook	• Do you think there are any companies or tactics that are doing the right thing and that we could learn from?
Probes	• Could you give me an example? • Why do you view it that way? • Could you explain that further? • Could you go more into detail?
13. Finishing Question	• If you have all the resources in the world, what would you do to attract adult autochthone learners to literacy programs?

Appendix 2: Coding Scheme and Frequencies
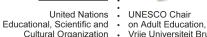
Code Name	Frequency	%	Number of Interviews
1. Partnering & Networking			
Partnering & Networking	56	8.63	12
Aligning partner interest and strategy	24	3.70	8
2. Program Design			
Awareness of social obstacles for target group	31	4.78	11
Barriers & Enablers	32	4.93	11
Expectations	11	1.69	5
Institution goal	17	2.62	11
Intervention Set-up	61	9.40	12
Program goal	13	2.00	7
Registration	18	2.77	9
Target audience	19	2.93	9

Code Name	Frequency	%	Number of Interviews
3. Measurement			
Measurement	12	1.85	8
4. Communication			
4.1 Sender			
Approaching the interest group	38	5.86	11
Dialogue/Building relationships	36	5.55	11
Being knowledgeable	6	0.92	5
Most effective communicator	5	0.77	4
Role of ambassadors	26	4.01	9
4.2 Channel			
PR Agencies	8	1.23	7
Private vs. Public	12	1.85	10
Types	55	8.47	12
Word of mouth	15	2.31	11

Code Name	Frequency	%	Number of Interviews
4.3 Message			
Content	32	4.93	10
Framing	42	6.47	11
Identification	11	1.69	7
4.4 Recipient			
Low proficiency in literacy	17	2.62	6
Prior experiences	11	1.69	8
Role of trust and support	22	3.39	10
Specificity target group	19	2.93	7

Name of Respondents	Organisation	Role
Alex Stevenson	Learning and Work, England	Head of English, Maths, and ESOL in an Institute
Anna Delort Puyol	Acefir, Spain	Second Language Teacher
Gigja Baldursdottir	Adult Education Center, Iceland	Adult Education Teacher
Ingrid Wilhelmsen	Fonix, Norway	Business Consultant
Jeanny Engels	Vilans, The Netherlands	Knowledge Provider
Kai Sterzenbach	Lernende Region - Netzwerk Köln e.V., Germany	Managing Director
Karin Kurvits	Pärnu Täiskasvanute Gümnaasium & AEAE, Estonia	Headmaster
Laura Hofte	FC Twente, The Netherlands	Social Work Project Leader
Margaret Murray	NALA, Ireland	Student and Membership Officer
M. Ángeles Araujo	CFA Palau de Mar, Spain	Director of Studies
Michaela Merkus	Movisie, Knowledge Center Social Work, The Netherlands	Senior-Coach, Trainer and Advisor
Nikola Amrhein	Volkshochschule Neukölln Berlin , Germany	Head of Department for Basic Education

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June 5, 2020

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