The Impact of Language on Educational Access in South Africa

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List of Acronyms

ADEA: Association for the Development of Education in Africa

ANC: African National Congress

BE: Bantu Education, education system meant for Black learners during the apartheid era

CS: code switching

DET: Department of Education & Training (viz., last name of department charged with education for Africans under BE)

DoE: Department of Education (national)

FAL: first additional language: other language compulsorily offered by learners at NSC; level almost similar to HL

GDE: Gauteng Department of Education

HL: home language, language learnt by children in home context through immersion during their first years (see mother-tongue); home language level: highest level of language knowledge at NSC, that presupposes native speaker competence

L1:   first language, language taken as main in school

L2:   second language, language learnt in school context

LoL&T: Language of Learning & Teaching

MoI: Medium of Instruction

MT: Mother-Tongue, language learnt by children through immersion during their first years (see home language)

NP: National Party

N(R)CS: National (Revised) Curriculum Statement

NSC: National Senior Certificate

OBE: Outcome Based Education

Pansalb: Pan South African Language Board

SA: South Africa(n)

SC: Senior Certificate

SGB: School Governing Body

Acknowledgements

Preface

This research monograph by Dr Michel Lafon is one of several in the CREATE Pathways to Access Series that addresses strategies for improvements in access to education in South Africa.

Being familiar with English (or Afrikaans) is important for accessing knowledge in the South African schooling system. In the main, English (and Afrikaans) is the lingua franca of our classrooms, textbooks and exams beyond the foundation phase and the main means of communication in higher education, business and global economics. But for many learners, it remains a foreign language. For those children who struggle with its expressions and idioms, for those who listen but cannot understand, English is the fundamental barrier to learning. Yet quality education is thought to speak English or Afrikaans.

This monograph provides a succinct account of language policy and practice in South African schools. Lafon cites the extensive research that plots the difficulties learners experience when learning in a language other than their mother-tongue and discusses the drawbacks and advantages of the strategies the Department of Education has taken to remedy the increasing shift to English as language of instruction. Lafon draws on empirical data collected in schools to vividly illustrate the educational and cultural dilemmas schools and parents face when developing a school language policy. He concludes with an argument in favour of multilingualism.

This paper is essential reading for anyone grappling with the silent exclusions that result from language policy in education.

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Summary

The role of Medium of Instruction (MoI) or Language of Learning and Teaching (LoL&T) has not received sufficient attention as a factor denying meaningful access to education in South Africa. Yet the majority of under-performing learners are also children who learn in a language that is not their mother-tongue.

This research aims to assess how recent language policies have changed the linguistic practices of schools and how this impacts on 'meaningful' access (understood as learners' access to the curriculum and therefore broad content knowledge). Interviews and open discussions were conducted with principals, teachers and parents from various township schools located in Mlazi (KwaZulu Natal) and in Soweto and Attridgeville (Gauteng) to illustrate the problems.

The paper unpicks the different solutions - taken and proposed – to the disjuncture between MoI and meaningful access, whilst taking into account the legacy of past policies. Several proposals have been made to improve educational outcomes within the existing policy regarding medium of instruction (MoI) and language in general. Other proposals, in order to give transformation in education more immediate and concrete content, seek to exploit to its limit, or even alter, the official framework. They claim that such a move is a condition to reverse the overall poor outcome among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The MoI issue has sometimes been invoked in the debate on the relevance in societies of the periphery of what some see as essentially a Western educational model, a debate that the African renaissance ideology has helped rekindle in South Africa.

The Impact of Language on Educational Access in South Africa

1. Introduction

In South Africa (SA), the rate of non-completion of the education cycle, either by dropping out or failure at Matric/Senior Certificate level[1], shows significant bias along former apartheid racial categories[2]. 'African', and possibly 'coloured' learners[3], are more likely than 'whites' and 'indians' to drop-out of the system before completion. A number of factors have been identified that contribute to explain this - most prominently low socio-economic status and the poor quality of schools. In this paper, I argue that the role of Medium of Instruction (MoI) or language of learning and teaching (LoL&T)[4] in denying meaningful access to education has been underestimated and should be given due consideration.

This research aims to assess how language policies have changed the linguistic practices of schools and how this impacts on 'meaningful' access (understood as learners' access to the curriculum and therefore broad content knowledge). The official medium of instruction in SA schools, after grade 3, is overwhelmingly English, with Afrikaans remaining for some white and coloured communities. The same situation prevails for the medium of assessment at Senior Certificate (SC[5]). Many african children, therefore, school, study and are assessed in a language that is not their home language or mother-tongue: over 78% of South Africans are non-MT speakers of Afrikaans or English (Statistics South Africa, 2003: 15), while for white and indian learners, there is more often a coincidence between mother-tongue and LoL&T.

The discrepancy between mother-tongue (or home language)[6] and the MoI may hamper educational access at two levels:

- as an immediate and tangible obstacle: for black learners, access to certain schools, including those commonly referred to as 'ex-model C' school is conditioned upon their knowledge of, and/or their 'willingness' (or parental willingness) to be taught in certain languages, i.e. English or Afrikaans;

- school failure: the limited command of the MoI by non-MoI native speakers, is a significant factor in poor school achievement, notably at SC level.

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[1] Senior Certificate is commonly known as 'matric' (for matriculation). The results at SC determine access to higher education: good marks ensure the exemption of the entry exam (hence matric), which is also called endorsement. From 2008, with the generalization of an educational reform, SC became 'National Senior Certificate'. The language requirements for the NSC have been somewhat altered as we shall see later.

[2] Education under apartheid was divided along apartheid instituted hierarchy of 'racial' groups, i.e. 'African', 'coloured', 'indian' and 'white'.

[3] According to Carpentier (2008) coloured children in the Western Cape fared educationally more poorly than africans, apparently because of the lower proportion among them coming from economically elite families.

[4] The expression Language of Teaching and Learning is a more encompassing one than Medium of Instruction (MoI). However, its systematic use may give credit to the notion that the Language of Teaching is automatically that of learning as well. When it differs from mother tongue, it is not necessarily so, for the early grades at least (Alexander 2000). We will therefore make a distinctive use of either MoI or LoL&T. Some authors now prefer the possibly less committing language of study but we have not adopted it here for this very reason.

[5] Senior Certificate is commonly known as 'matric' (for matriculation). The results at SC determine access to higher education: good marks ensure the exemption of the entry exam (hence matric), which is also called endorsement. From 2008, with the generalization of an educational reform, SC became 'National Senior Certificate'. The language requirements for the NSC have been somewhat altered as we shall see later.

[6] I use these terms interchangeably, even though mother-tongue, taken literally, is a notion whose validity in SA is often disputable.

This paper will look in some detail at SA language policy, placing it in its historical perspective. Our point of departure is a reminder that literacy is a crucial tenet of western education systems and this can compound the difficulties of learners from non-literate cultural backgrounds. Looking at present-day SA schools the paper will then categorize educational access problems linked to the choice of medium of instruction. Case studies in township schools located in Mlazi (KwaZulu Natal) and in Soweto and Attridgeville (Gauteng) then attempt to illustrate these realities. Various interviews and open discussions were conducted with principals, teachers and parents from various schools (see Appendix 1). The paper then turns to the different responses generated by two of the main stakeholders, state and parents. Finally recommendations are made.

This paper was commissioned by the South Africa team for the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE)[7]. The arguments in this paper relate most closely to CREATE's third and sixth zones of exclusion (see Appendix Two), though language permeates most of the zones as a partially invisible factor.

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[7] See: www.create-rpc.org for more information.

2. Language policy in South African schools: a historical overview

The question of medium of instruction in South Africa has been contentious for a great number of years. It cannot be divorced from its historical contexts. This includes the inception of western education under missionary care during the early phase of colonisation and the taking over of the system by the state under apartheid. The complex legacy of these successive moments still shapes the present and will be explored in more detail.

2.1 Non-literacy/ western based education systems

Whereas literacy is a defining feature of western education systems, many indigenous learning systems, in particular in Africa, are not based on literacy and use (or used) different strategies and techniques, usually gender and age-specific, to prepare the youth for their roles as efficient adults. Akkari and Dassen (2004) refer to these indigenous learning systems as 'situated or contextualized education', where learners follow experts in their daily routine and learn by practicing with them. The training procedures at stake here are mainly based on example and imitation, as well as practical trials, a feature which is permitted by the physical attachment of trainees to trainer for a normally lengthy period of time. Like most human activities, they are embedded in oral language, to the exclusion of literacy.

Western formal education systems[8] are different to many indigenous learning systems, particularly in Africa, because of the role of literacy. In western system, as Hannon (1995, cited in Bloch, 2000:4) notes, 'literacy is the key to the curriculum. Virtually all schooling after the first year or two assumes pupil literacy'. If classroom practices do include orality, literacy is the vehicle through which assimilation by learners is assessed, and in SA assessment practices are based around literacy. .In situations where the MoI is a language different from the community language, that makes literacy (understood here as the capacity of using an originally alien medium in written form) a crucial measurement of education. Education appears then premised on one's capacity for such linguistic acquisition.

But writing and reading techniques are not necessarily a neutral vehicle for transmission of knowledge: literacy relates to the mental processes that come with its practice over a period of time, in environments laden with written messages. Goody's work (for example, 2000) has shown how literacy changes approaches to reasoning, the past and to memory, in significant ways.

A question that arises when assessing the importance of language in educational access in formerly non literate societies is the extent to which literacy has been appropriated, whether it is in the local 'native' language or in a non-native, 'alien' one.

2.2 The Missionary period

From the 18th century onwards, European missionaries, in the wake of the colonial penetration, initiated and then took on the formal education of some African children. This type of education, linked to their conversion to Christianity, was initially offered mainly as a means to break away from 'heathen' traditions. Missionaries attacked many African social practices they deemed abhorrent to a Christian conduct. Whilst doing so, in order to create a

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[8] While we acknowledge the existence of endogenous literary traditions in some areas of West Africa, and of the impact of Arabic script among Muslim populations, Southern Africa -except for the Muslim groups and individuals brought to the Cape in the Dutch period as slaves or prisoners, their descendants and some early converts- falls clearly outside the scope of these endeavours. The later is negligible for our present purpose.

literate environment which they saw as a condition for the spread of Christianity, early missionaries set out to develop spelling systems and grammar, and compiled lexicons and dictionaries, that would enable them to deliver the Message in vernacular indigenous languages. By the same token, they developed educational material.

Albeit with significant discrepancies, the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal[9] adhered to this pedagogical strategy for the schools they financially supported. For example, in Natal, the use of Zulu as a medium of instruction became entrenched as early as 1885. As the Boer republics were usually short of funds, however, they were in no position to regulate education offered by the missions which were mostly left to their own devices. It is only after the Union was established that a certain degree of harmonisation of education policies and funding between the four constituting provinces was attained. In the Orange Free State, for example, in 1928 Sesotho was made compulsory (Behr, 1978: 162).

As time passed, the syllabus in mission schools evolved and, 'except in the matter of language, there was not much difference between black and white education' as Chief Luthuli[10], himself a teacher, observed (Luthuli, 2006: 20).

The missionaries' efforts also brought forth a degree of appropriation of literacy in the main African/Bantu[11] languages. Vernacular literature abounded, with authors of the calibre of Soga, Mqhayi, Sol Plaatje, Mofolo, Sekese, Jordan, Vilakazi, Dube, Dhlomo (see Maake, 2000 for a positive view). Those early African intellectuals were in the process of 'weaning themselves' gradually from their mentors (Mphahlele, 2004: 35) when Bantu Education was imposed.

2.3 Apartheid and Bantu education

From 1954 onwards, as a crucial tenet of the apartheid policy implemented by the Nationalist Party who had gained a Parliamentary majority in 1948, education for Africans, was separated from that of other 'racial' groups, in terms of syllabus and MoI. Education for Africans located within 'white' SA was allocated to the Native Affairs Department, later to become the Department of Education and Training (DET). The remainder of schools were placed under homeland education departments as those entities were established[12]. Education for African pupils under apartheid was called Bantu Education (BE).

Bantu Education syllabus was based on the notion of 'an ordained hierarchy of races' and perceived 'cultural specificities' (Nyaggah, 1980: 65). It aimed 'to isolate [Africans] and convince [them] of their permanent inferiority' (Luthuli, 2006: 35), with whites constructed as superior.

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[9] Until Union was established in 1910 in the wake of the (2nd) Anglo-Boer war, the territory of present-day South Africa was divided between the Boers Republics and the British colonies. The Zulu kingdom remained formerly independent until its annexion in 1883. The destiny of (nowadays) Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland diverged as these polities managed, against many odds, to maintain their formal independence.

[10] Luthuli was one of the founding fathers of the ANC. He is widely respected for his moderate, non-violent but principled political stands. He received the Nobel Prize in 1960.

[11]The term Bantu, in English or Afrikaans, has acquired negative connotations in SA which still forbids its use. It is however the correct typological description of the family of languages at stake here, since not all African languages spoken in SA are Bantu – namely Khoisan languages. It is used widely outside South Africa among linguists without prejudice and is common in the languages themselves. It is used in this context.

[12] Some of those territories became 'independent' homelands whereas other, labelled 'self-governing territories', remained under formal control of the apartheid state (Motala 1995:177). This difference of status was not without consequence as homelands could alter their education policy without apartheid government's stamp of approval.

African languages were turned into an instrument of that pernicious policy. They were used as MoI for the whole primary band (8 years)[13]. From what was then standard 5 (now grade 7), and later from standard 7 (now Grade 9), there was a shift of MoI to English and/or Afrikaans[14] (except in the teaching of the African languages themselves). This strategy was later referred to as subtractive bilingualism. English and Afrikaans were to be used in parity (the 50-50 rule), but that was unevenly implemented for a long time.

Bantu Education met with strong resistance from various sectors of society, including black teachers. Soudien (2002) looks at the ways they responded to this imposition, from resistance to unwilling acceptance. It was the decision taken by the Southern Transvaal Department of Education and Training in 1976 to implement the 50-50 rule, i.e. imposing Afrikaans at exam time, that triggered the Soweto protests (see Heugh, 2002a).

Because schools constituted the market for books in African languages and access to it was monitored by BE civil servants, many African writers turned to write in English, to gain access to a wider audience, inside and outside South Africa. Their move however deprived African language literature of potentially creative and original texts and arguably thwarted, or seriously compromised, the literacy appropriation process that was in progress[15].

2.4 Current language policy[16]

In most countries language policy and language policy in education are two facets of the same coin. This is particularly so in SA.

Present day SA language policy [17] as taken from the Constitution (South Africa, 1996) is the result of a trade-off between the ANC and the National Party (NP) in the early 1990s and this reflects in what is known as the LiEP (Language in Education Policy). In Constitutional negotiations, the ANC (especially former exiles) was in favour of declaring English the country's only official language. In their view, this would promote national unity, counteract the linguistic parochialism that apartheid promoted and downgrade Afrikaans. However, the NP fought to maintain the official status of Afrikaans. According to Heugh (2002a: 460), linguistic provisions in the 1993 Interim Constitution, later enshrined, if somewhat watered down, in the 1996 Constitution, resulted from a last-minute compromise between the NP and the ANC[18]. As a result, all languages that had official status at some level or other were maintained and SA now has eleven official languages, a figure which includes nine African (Bantu) languages - Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Tswana, Tsonga, Swati, Sotho, Pedi (Northern-Sotho), Ndebele, alongside English and Afrikaans (see Alexander, 1989; Moyo, 2002; Heugh, 2002a; Lafon, 2006)[19].

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[13] Although some schools apparently managed to keep English as MoI from standard 2 or 3 onwards (various interviews).

[14] Having said that, some black learners recall the use of African languages in certain subjects, particularly in the teaching of English grammar in later grades.

[15] See Gunner (1988) for detailed comments on Zulu Literature

[16] See http://www.education.gov.za for further information.

[17] Further information on language policy in education can be found at: http://www.education.gov.za.

[18] The 1993 Interim Constitution contained a non-diminution clause, whereby no language (i.e. Afrikaans) could diminish in status. As placating Afrikaners became less crucial, the clause was not carried forward in the final text.

[19] Khoisan languages were mentioned as 'heritage languages'; provision for sign language was made but not on the same footing as the official languages.

The language policy in education[20] as a whole was informed by various concerns, among which were:

- the absolute rejection of any stipulation reminiscent of Bantu Education by the ANC;

- an aspiration for freedom of choice in all domains within the new culture of rights;

- a fear of fuelling language-based conflicts in an already volatile situation;

- the implicit recognition of the overall dominance of English; and

- the realization of the complexity of the linguistic scene.

These concerns probably explain the absence of any language imposition and the significant degree of autonomy left to individual schools regarding its 'language areas' (LoL&T and subject choices).

Article 29 of the 1996 Constitution (South Africa, 1996) states that 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice' and that the state has a duty to ensure the fulfilment of that right. The 1996 Schools Act together with the 1997 Norms and Standards for Language Policy in Public Schools further specify that any of the 11 official languages can be the LoL&T in primary and secondary schools. They recommend initial literacy and numeracy in the mother-tongue (MT), MT maintenance throughout the curriculum, and 'additive bilingualism[21]' later on, as well as multilingualism and 'communication across barriers of colour, language and religion' (DoE, 2007). At matric/SC, the language requirements are for each learner to take exams in at least two official languages, one being the learner's MoI, that must be offered at first language level, the other, any other of the official languages[22,23].

While all languages are called equal, some languages are more equal and have more prominence than others, namely English (and Afrikaans). In spite of the lofty principles spelt out in the Constitution, support for the use of African languages as LoL&T remains limited to the first three years. Hence, at the matric level, learners have to take exams in English or Afrikaans as their first language, as they are the only MoI available in schools.

School Governing Bodies (SGB), which are formed in each school, decide on the school's language policy. In negotiations, this was seen as a concession to the NP as it allowed for Afrikaans to be used in the curriculum as the LoL&T, should parents in a given school so wish. By law, there maybe single-, dual- or parallel medium schools. However, single-medium schools constitute by far the majority. Legislation also states that it is unlawful to refuse entry to a school to a child if they are not fully conversant in the MoI.

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[20] Woolman & Fleisch recent book (2009) describes in details the various motives behind the policies as they are now. It shows how, beyond the necessity of reaching a compromise, both sides were influenced by their own practices and political orientations.

[21] Additive bilingualism is meant to contrast with the subtractive policy of the past whereby African languages disappeared abruptly to make way to English and Afrikaans.

[22] Learners who grew up outside SA may substitute another language, taken from a list established by the Department.

[23] The language stipulations for the National Senior Certificate have been altered slightly. I come back to this later.

3. Realities on the ground in South African schools

The following section looks at some of the realities on the ground in South African schools.

3.1 A bimodal system

The present day South African education system still reflects in a large part the legacy of the past. 'Dysfunctional and impoverished schools, used by the majority of South African children' (Botsis and Cronje, 2007: 50) generally cater for black students, whilst 'a small number of well resourced schools (are) used by the privileged minority'. These latter schools include most so-called 'ex-model C schools'[24], and some former Indian schools. Essentially, it has become a 'bimodal system' (Pretorius, 2008), with discrepancies further strengthened by language practices. The better-equipped and managed 'ex-model C' schools are all Afrikaans or English medium. Schools using African languages as MoI/LoL&T in the initial stages of primary school and using code-switching alongside the official MoI in later grades are usually characterised by poor infrastructure, weak management and low quality education.

With the end of apartheid, parents in South Africa enjoyed the freedom to enrol their children in any school of their choice, as long as the schools accepted them (apart from their ability to pay school fees, the main admissions criteria was proximity to place of residence or to the parental place of work).

Many better-off African parents opt away from what can be termed 'black schools' whenever they can afford it, triggering an influx of black learners into former white-only ex-Model C schools (as well as former indian and coloured schools). Parental motivation is not necessarily a rejection of African languages per se, as a MarkData survey conducted in 2000 showed (comments in Lafon, 2006). 'They [parents] genuinely see no other way,' Alexander (2000:8) observed. For most, ex-model C schools provide better quality education whereas former 'black schools' are synonymous with poor quality.

Thus, because it is inextricably linked to social, economical and political contexts, the choice of MoI/LoL&T in SA cannot be seen as a purely pedagogical issue. Its associated features have become an integral part of the problem itself as they inform linguistic attitudes and, by way of retroaction, language policy.

3.2 Language as an admissions criteria: ex-model C schools

3.2.1 Using language to block access: single-medium Afrikaans schools

Language policy in many Afrikaans-medium schools is meant to deter african, indian and (some) coloured parents from enrolling their children, according to Professor R Finlayson[25], (personal communication, 2001). However, the use of language in this way has fuelled litigation and as a result the situation on the ground is changing.

Due to a combination of factors (for example, re-zoning school catchment areas, internal / external migration, language shifts in some Afrikaans-speaking families), many Afrikaans single-medium schools have become under-utilised. In law, a school that has available space

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[24] In 1991, as a forerunner to the unification of the education system, state-run white schools were required to choose between four options, labelled A, B, C, and D, differing mostly by the degree of self-management and funding. By 1992, by choice or pressure, 95% of the formerly white schools had become fee-charging model C schools (MacKenzie, 1993: 290; van Rooyen and Rossouw, 2007: 24).

[25] Professor Finlayson is Xhosa Professor at Unisa.

cannot refuse learners entry, resulting in these schools being forced to admit African learners, regardless of their linguistic inclination. However, most African parents do not want their children to study in Afrikaans and insist that they be taught in English. Another stipulation indicates that where there are in excess of 35 learners (in secondary) and 40 (in primary school) who want to study in a certain language, parents have the right to demand tuition in the language they choose. Often supported by provincial Departments of Education, parents have successfully challenged school language policies, resulting in many schools to become dual medium schools (Afrikaans/English); and some appear to be moving towards becoming English only schools. By 2006, only 300 Afrikaans single-medium schools remained, down from 2,500 in 1994 (Smit, 2007:64). In some senses, the use of Afrikaans as the LoL&T in order to bar African children from a given school is decreasing[26].

3.2.2 Using language as a condition of access: English single-medium schools

From the early 1990s onwards, as a response to increasing demand, some English-medium (ex-model C) schools have used English language tests as an entrance requirement (Murray, 2002: 436). In recent years, the practice seems to have gained a new favour as African learners continue to enter these schools.

In some cases language tests are conducted openly as in the case of one Durban school (interview with school principal, August 2007) or indirectly, through speaking to parents (interview with various parents, 2007). In the Durban school referred to, around 20% of candidates failed the test in 2007 and consequently were not admitted to the school (interview, school principal). Such language testing however is not really legal. They may be viewed as unfair discrimination, especially as they are only imposed on African learners. Yet, to my knowledge, they have not lead to complaints by parents, or sanctions been set by the DoE. Some principals, more cautious not to infringe on legislation or concerned with ensuring equal access, provide remedial English classes (interview, Alison Kitto[27], January 2008).

As a consequence of this and in order to better prepare their children, many African parents seek English-medium pre-primary schools and / or make English their home language. As they fall under the Welfare Department (and not Education) pre-primary schools are not bound by the Language in Education Policy[28].

With regard to language testing in ex-model C schools, I propose that language is used to deny access, not to education as such, students not fulfilling the language criteria are able to school elsewhere. Rather, access is denied to the school of choice, often with better quality learning, developed infrastructure and geographical convenience.

3.3 Language in 'African' primary schools

As things currently stand, African languages may be used as the LoL&T during the first three years of compulsory schooling, i.e. Foundation phase. Beyond grade 4 only two languages are essentially supported, English and Afrikaans. It is important to bear in mind that the possible

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[26] At the end of March 2009 a court case was brought by an Afrikaans-medium school against the Mpumalanga Department of Education which had sought to force it to adopt English as MoI to satisfy African learners. The authority of the SGB to decide on language policy was strongly reaffirmed, although the Department is appealing this decision.
[27] Secretary, SA Principals' Association
[28] When Grade R (final year of pre-primary schooling) is organised in a state primary school, as is more the case, it usually follows the language policy of the school (Dr. N. Phatudi, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, Interview, Nov 2008).

use of African languages as MoI/LoL&T in grades 1 to 3 of primary school is in reality restricted to former DET schools, whatever the present population of other schools is. Hence, the association of the use of African languages with low quality education continues the legacy of apartheid education.

In SA English is the main language used in education from grade 4 onwards. It is also used mainly in national government, by major companies, in the media, in higher education, etc, and is associated with global business and economic success (Crystal, 2003). As a consequence, most African parents want their children to learn English and many are convinced that the best way is for them to learn, is through the medium of English in schools. Many African parents prefer schools where English is the MoI, even in the first three grades. Therefore, a growing number of primary schools that had previously used African languages in the first three years have officially become English-medium schools, regardless of the school's sociolinguistic and pedagogic circumstances. Some schools that are not adapting run the risk of closure (Botsis & Cronje 2007: 52; observational data, Soweto, January 2008). Indeed, about 40 schools in Gauteng were empty in 2008 according to Wits EPU senior researcher Mario Pillay (personal communication, September 2008); There are areas where primary schools which use African languages as the LoL&T, face a shortage of pupils.

Some observations from my field visits to Soweto may illustrate the changing situation and attempts by schools to adapt.

Initially a 'Zulu' school, Thabisile Junior Primary located in Diepkloof, Soweto opted to use English as its only official MoI/LoL&T in the 1990s. Subsequently, confronted by learners' weak cognitive development and worried by their inability to read and write in Zulu, the SGB, with full support from the principal, reverted to Zulu as the official MoI in 2002. This seemed to satisfy most teachers. In 2006, however, the school adopted another strategy: Zulu remains the LoL&T in the first 2 grades, with English being introduced in grade 1 orally, and in the written form in grade 3, with English being given more time. This partial change back to English was the result of parental pressure. The principal (interviews March 2005 and January, 2008) was worried that the school might not survive.

Dumezweni School, also in Diepkloof, proudly presents itself as a 'Zulu' school. It has never changed its language policy, yet it is being forced to change its approach. Nearly half the learners hail from crèches where they are used to English and 'Zulu writing is difficult for them'. As a result the school now starts with English as the MoI for two years (grade R and grade 1), Zulu literacy is introduced in grades 2 and 3. In grade 4 English becomes the MoL&T, with Zulu as a subject (interview, principal, April 2008).

In both schools, English becomes the medium of teaching and learning from grade 4, while Zulu is kept as a subject.

The imbalance between English and African languages is shown in the testing of English for entry and the lack of testing of African language for entry into primary schools (even where children come from different African language groups).

3.4 New educational mapping and some of the consequences

The changes discussed in previous sections have led to changes in educational mapping which have potential implications for the language and cognitive development of students. These changes include:

- the 'africanisation' of the enrolment in a growing number of ex-model C and ex-Indian schools. In 2000, there were already 101 former white schools in Gauteng with over 80% African learners (Motala et al, 2003:19);

- the drastic reduction in the number of schools offering the three-year African languages MT period (grades one to three). In 2004, out of 25,736 public schools[29], only 6,542 had an African language as 'primary medium of instruction', versus 16,796 that had English (Pandor, 2007a);

- the emergence of private English-medium schools in townships, with racially mixed staff (e.g. Atteridgeville, see Pretorius, 2008).

- the growth of private pre-primary schools in townships whose main attraction is to be 'English-medium'.

It is too early to assess the long-term impacts of these changes, in terms of school results, professional achievements and social integration, if not identity anchorage.

What seems evident is that due to a lack of exposure, a growing number of African learners are at risk of failing to acquire elaborate knowledge of their own language. This was illustrated in a grade 3 class I observed in 2005 in Thabisile Junior Primary (Diepkloof, Soweto), which then had Zulu as its official MoI (see above). A teacher showing pictures of animals elicited the following words from learners: yi-lion, yi-elephant, etc. The 'proper' Zulu words ibhubhesi, indlovu, were unknown to most and had to be taught. Often the same happens with counting: children will be familiar with English numbers (one, two, three, etc) rather than with numbers in their African language (observations, Soweto, April 2008).

Having said this, the knowledge of random English words and expressions among these learners should not lead you to believe the students have native-like command of the language. That it does not happen is apparent when township learners attend ex-model C schools (in particular in schools where African learners are now the majority). Even though little code-switching takes place in lessons (as teachers are in the main non-African language speakers[30]), English is seldom used outside the classroom. This probably bears testimony to the learners' linguistic abilities (interviews and observations from ex-model C school in Durban) as linguistic fluency tends to only come from regular, everyday use.

There has also been a growth in numbers of African youth from 'elite' families, who have now largely severed ties with their historic social and cultural environments. Some of these students find difficulties communicating with peers from underprivileged background, as well as older family members. Sadly, some parents see this shortcoming as a good omen for their future success in life[31].

If we discount Africa students who have strong non-MT language skills (the so-called black elite and possibly part of the black middle-class), for around two-thirds of SA learners, English is a language they are unfamiliar with when they first set foot in school. With English so prominent in the education system and society at large, socio-economic inequalities might as a result increase between students with a good grasp of English (white, Indian and elite African / coloured learners) and those with a weaker grasp of English (the majority of African

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[29] It is unknown as to whether these were primary or secondary schools, or both.

[30] Increasingly this may change as those schools take on more teachers who don't have English as a MT.

[31] This is not always the case though. For example, one Xhosa-speaking mother interviewed whose first born daughter did not learn Xhosa as she was registered in an ex-model C school. Having seen the difficulties this daughter faced in terms of social integration, the mother spoke Xhosa at home with her second born. This went against the advice received from a (white) pre-primary school director that thought this would hamper her acquisition of English.

learners and some coloured learners). Race and class here are interlinked. Yet the social positioning of those African learners with little knowledge of things African, whether traditional (rural) or township, is uncertain. They are often derogatorily labelled coconuts (i.e. black on the outside, white on the inside, see Rudwick, 2008) by their peers. Indeed, an african person without the mastery of an African language is often looked down upon by other africans in SA (Rudwick, 2008). This lack of social recognition and its likely consequences in terms of personal identity, may belittle benefits from access to a better quality education.

4. Negative effects of the use of non-native language as the Medium of Instruction

The command of the MoI is linked to cognitive development and has implications for the acquisition of knowledge. If learners do not have sufficient academic proficiency in the MoI, they often have problems in learning, not necessarily because they do not understand concepts or ideas, but rather because they fail to grasp their linguistic representation.

Since UNESCO's 1953 pioneering study (UNESCO, 1953), it has generally been accepted that learning in the mother tongue or home language assists cognitive development (see: Cummins, 2000; Webb, 2006:131). In research from the USA and Canada, Cummins (2000) established a relationship between first and second language proficiency, a 'threshold' that enables learners to transfer from one to the other. Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in a second language (L2) is dependent on it already being acquired in the first language (L1).

This hypothesis has recently been verified in the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) continent-wide survey into the impact of the use of MT versus a non-mother tongue, ex-colonial, non-native language as MoI. The report, by Alidou et al (2006, cited in Heugh, 2007), concluded that the longer the MT was used, the greater the learners' cognitive development. It also highlighted the importance of a gradual transition from the MT to the 'alien' MoI, and the maintenance of the MT well into the transition.

In SA, the impact of the choice of MoI/LoL&T on school results can best be appreciated in its historical sequence.

In 1954, Bantu Education instituted an 8 year compulsory education period during which a learner's 'MT'[32] was to be his MoI. It was reduced to 3 years from 1979 in the aftermath of the 1976 Sowetan uprising. This change was coincidental with a large downtrend in the matric pass rate, which outlasted by far the period and the scope of school disruptions. From a peak in 1979 at 87%, with 37% gaining university endorsement (and possible access to higher education), percentages declined steadily to reach a 49% pass rate (with 12.5% endorsement) in 1999. (However this might coincide with more students taking the matric test).

The Threshold Project (see Macdonald, 1990), commissioned to analyse the causes of extensive school failure in the 1980s amongst African students, highlighted the negative impact of a too early and drastic shift of MoI away from the MT. It found that in three years of learning English as a second language, children had not acquired a sufficient range of vocabulary to be able to use it efficiently as a MoI further on. The same idea was taken up by Van Dyk (1993: 185), who states:

> Although there are many other variables involved in the failure of African children to progress at schools and afterwards, not the least of which are unequal funding and general disruption, it is perhaps the problems that scholars experience with MOI that have the most wide-ranging and debilitating effect on them.

For Heugh (2002b), the reduction of the mother-tongue period heralded 'a cycle of ever-decreasing educational competency'. She concluded that 'despite serious discrepancies in expenditure between white and black children, there was surprisingly significant education success for black South Africans before 1976' (Heugh, 2002b:4) and squarely ascribes this positive result to the extended duration of mother-tongue education, at a time when BE had undergone significant improvements from its early stage.

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[32] There was not always consistency in ascribing a learners a MT.

The negative effect of learning in a non-MT was confirmed in interviews I conducted with African teachers and other professionals who themselves had been educated under Bantu Education. They admit to the benefits they themselves reaped from learning for a longer period in their MT. They see, in the knowledge they gained of their own language and culture, the key to their own ability. Many African teachers, particularly aware of the difficulties their learners have to confront when learning through a second language, consider they would do better in their mother-tongue (Murray, 2002: 438; interview data)[33].

Matric pass rates have picked up since the end of apartheid, but stabilised from 2001 at around 65%, and exemption rates at 15% (Carpentier, 2008:88). These figures however hide wide discrepancies between racial and socio-economic groups. In 2002, only 10% of African candidates secured exemption passes, as opposed to half of white candidates (Carpentier, 2005: 279).

A number of observations seem to support very strongly the hypothesis that language remains a determining factor in educational access among African learners in SA.

October's (2002) study, conducted in the Western Cape, tried to isolate the language factor in matric achievement. She compared matric results in key subjects for three groups of learners, differentiated through the language they took as their home language (HL) (i.e. English, Afrikaans or Xhosa) and the former category of the schools they went to (i.e. former white, coloured, Indian and black). She found that there was a close link between the average mark in the first language and other key subjects amongst learners who went to former coloured and white schools, namely those learners with native or near-native proficiency in the medium of instruction. However, for African Xhosa-speaking learners, even though attainment in their first language would be higher and above average, there was a significant drop in all other subjects, including their second language (English in most cases). For them, in most subjects the importance of English was paramount as it is the MoI and the language through which they are taught and examined. To quote one of October's (2002:76) conclusions:

> The level of proficiency in this subject [English or Afrikaans second language] is not high, i.e. <u>not even at second language level</u> [underlined by the author]. We can therefore say that the instrument (language medium) used for communication (and therefore learning) is not appropriate for these learners. Needless to say, this will impact negatively on any learning that may take place.

Looking specifically at the Western Cape, Carpentier (2008:31) details matric results according to the socio-economic category of the schools, i.e. the wealth quintile which serves to regulate state funding. As expected, the better resourced the school, the higher the results, and this contrast, again, in the context of SA, is un-dissociable from 'race'[34]. In the most underprivileged schools (quintile 1), learners' degree of achievement was 24% for language, 19% for maths, 32% for natural sciences; in the best schools (quintile 5), the ratios were 80%, 63% and 71% respectively. Quintiles 1 and 2 are almost exclusively African in terms of learners and teachers, with increasing number of 'non-white' students from quintile 3 upwards; white students feature in significant numbers in quintiles 4 and 5 only.

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[33] Indeed, the ability of some teachers to teach in English and more generally their academic command of the language has also been questioned. The Threshold report (Macdonald, 1990) noted that many of them, trained in the BE colleges, were lacking necessary English language skills. It is unclear to what extend the situation has changed since the closure of BE colleges around 2002 and the transfer of teacher-training to Higher Education Institutions. The realisation of some of their own shortcoming seems to explain why a majority of them (76% in KZN, Ngcobo 2001: 27) prefered sending their own offspring to ex-model C schools and also points to the link between MoI and education quality in SA.

[34] I acknowledge that this determinism should be nuanced: there are poor schools which show excellent results and wealthy ones that fare dismally, yet it is largely verified.

I shall conclude here by a statement drawn from a recent analysis that appeared in an official document from Umalusi[35], one of the key-stakeholders in the educational field. In 2004, Lolwana (2004:47) wrote:

> There is an increasing weight of evidence that, after poverty, language, and in particular proficiency in the medium of instruction, is the largest single factor affecting learner performance at school.

The above lends credibility to the conclusion that the academic achievement of learners whose MT differs from the MoI is significantly dependent on their linguistic skills and that overcoming language barriers becomes even more difficult in unfavourable circumstances.

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[35] The body that monitors exam quality in SA.

5. Attempts to solve problems around language and access: Department of Education responses

For many of those whose home language differs from English, language clearly remains a barrier to educational success. Since this distribution corresponds roughly to the former disenfranchised groups, it has implications for Constitutional commitments to equality and equity. The Department of Education's (DoE) action to tackle this problem was premised essentially on the weight of the past and the principles of language equity, as spelt out in the Constitution and LiEP.

The DoE took two types of measures.

5.1 Palliative measures

5.1.1 Compensation

Recognising the specific challenge brought about by a non-native MoI for African learners, a palliative and temporary measure was instituted in 1999 for learners whose 'first language differs from either English or Afrikaans and who offer an African language as their first language' (Pandor, 2007b). Their marks were to be upped by 5%, 'on non-language subjects'. This measure, put in place for ten years, is due for review in 2008 when the new Senior Certificate will come into place[36]. It did not seem though to have had much impact: according to the DoE, the proportion of learners that passed thanks to the compensation was under 2% (Pandor, 2007b).

5.1.2 Condoning of code-switching

As numerous studies have shown, 'code-switching is a typical feature of multilingual societies such as South Africa' (Murray, 2002:439). Code-switching (CS) has always occurred in classrooms, with teachers and learners moving between the official MoI (i.e. English/ Afrikaans) and another language both are familiar with (e.g. African language or a local vernacular). The 1979 change in language policy with the shrinking of the mother-tongue period has probably increased the role of code-switching as a palliative if unofficial strategy (e.g. Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 1993, cited in Webb et al, 2009).

Since 1996, in a stark change from previous policy, code-switching has been condoned by the DoE. According to the Principal of Bantu Vukani, a Senior Primary School[37] located in Lamontville, Durban (interview, August 2007), CS is limited to up to 20% of teaching time[38]. This limit however is not necessarily adhered to, as in many township and rural schools CS is seen as a positive and productive approach (Murray, 2002: 440). The switch can take many forms. It can imply an entire or a partial repetition of the lesson in the vernacular, or a translation of core notions only. I witnessed in Mlazi School, grade 11 lessons conducted essentially in the vernacular (Zulu), with core notions spelt out in English, presumably for exam purposes.

By removing the language barrier, code-switching to the local language facilitates understanding and allows students to express themselves more freely. It makes for much more active participation in lessons. This was vividly illustrated by a video of an Eastern Cape

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[36] I was not able to ascertain whether it was to be discontinued or extended.
[37] Catering for students from grade 4 to grade 6.
[38] I failed however to find any official confirmation of this stipulation.

maths class, shot and circulated by the education NGO Praesa (Wescott, 2004). When the lesson was given in Xhosa, African learners would react and respond[39].

In terms of educational access, the use of code-switching has probably diluted the problem arising from the grade 4 shift from MT to the (official) medium of instruction, at least in township and rural schools. In that sense, it does reduce the impact of the use of a medium not sufficiently mastered (although not so for learners transferring into ex-model C schools staffed with native English-speaking teachers). Along with automatic grade progression, it probably contributes to maintaining learners in school over the 9-year compulsory period.

However, code-switching has its limits. It is essentially an oral strategy for the classroom. Literacy practices in school remain exclusively in the official MoI - English/ Afrikaans from grade 4 and the same goes in the matric exam in grade 12. Thus, code-switching offers no help for learners during the matric examination and it does not prepare them for literacy. Conversely one could argue that it reinforces oral practices and the pre-eminence of orality.

5.2 Policy measures

5.2.1 Upgrading mother-tongue education

Mother tongue education has also been upgraded in some ways. As Outcome Based Education (OBE) and the National Curriculum Statement (later the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)) were gradually phased in from around 2000, the DoE has had the curriculum statement for each grade and discipline translated in all the official languages[40]. New manuals have been published and circulated, where African languages feature as subjects at home language level, for example, Zulu grade 11 (Khumalo et al, 2006) and Zulu grade 10 (Khanyile et al, 2005); but also as the MoI for content subjects.

With the primary phase, the Minister of Education (2004-2009), Naledi Pandor, strongly re-emphasized in a speech at Unisa in 2006 the recommended use of African languages as LOL&T for the first 3 years of schooling (as is presently supported) and possibly until grade 6 (as is not). She however specifically excluded 'schools serving multilingual communities', a limitation which arguably dispels the positive aspect of the recommendation (see Lafon, 2008 for a critical view of this limitation).

This speech fuelled controversy and the Minister was taken to task on the matter. In a reply to a question in Parliament, on 9 February 2007 (Pandor, 2007a) she seemed to retreat and denied having announced any intention to change policy on MoI after grade 3. She also confirmed that the 1997 language policy had not been altered, implying that the choice of language(s) remained with each SGB. A number of principals in former African schools however seem to have taken the declaration on mother-tongue as official policy (interviews). The Minister further denied any intention to change policy on MoI after grade 3.

That said, two recent experiments show some ways in which adaptations to the MoI are being explored in South Africa.

Since 2006, an experiment which has seen African languages used as the MoI until grade 6 has been conducted in individual schools in the Eastern and Western Cape. The extension of the trial into a number of pilot schools across the nine provinces is presently being considered (interviews with Language Area officers; Mr Nematangari, DoE; Mrs Camp, GDE, November 2008; Praesa conference on bilingual education, Cape Town, December 2008).

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[39] The video also shows the reverse: non-MT Xhosa speakers who studied Xhosa as L2, had a maths class in Xhosa. They appear unable to respond.

[40] See: http://www.education.gov.za/

Also in 2006, examination papers for four subjects (physics, maths, biology and history) in the matric trial exam were translated into all nine official African languages. In schools distributed across the country, learners received a translation in their home language alongside the original in English. The two main limitations of this trial were:

- a discrepancy between the official LOL&T during the school year and the alternative language of the test: learners were not familiar with the scientific terminology used in the African language texts;
- the fact that learners could not respond in the African language: their responses were still constrained by their English language skills.

In order to allow this experiment to reach its full potential, these limitations would have to be removed (i.e. the use of the African language in the teaching and learning process; and the ability of learners to respond in the African language if they so choose). To my knowledge, there has not been any public comment from the DoE on this experience[41].

Moreover, in order to motivate trainee teachers to choose African languages as their subject-areas, African languages have been identified as priority areas in the DoE Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme launched in 2007[42].

5.2.2 New language stipulation in the Senior Certificate (matric) exam

In 2008, the Senior Certificate (matric) exam was changed, in particular with regard to language stipulations. In order to gain the National Senior Certificate, learners now have to secure a pass in their 'home language', at home language level. 'Home language' is officially defined in the same document as the 'first acquired by children through immersion at home' (DoE, 2005:21). This is obviously intended for learners with African linguistic backgrounds, however, the criteria for ascribing a specific home language to any individual may be contentious. The other required language must be offered as the First Additional Language (FAL)[43]. Either one could have been the LOL&T[44]. It allowed African learners to use their mother tongue at Home Language level, and English as the FAL. As a possible consequence, the difference in expectations between HL and FAL levels has been blurred. It is too early to assess the impact of this change measure and the details of its implementation may change with time.

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[41] I am indebted to Vic Webb for information on this experience, as CentRePoL was commissioned to assess the process. I witnessed the presentation of the preliminary conclusions to DoE officials in April 2007.
[42] See: http://www.funzalushaka.doe.gov.za/ for more information
[43] For learners from outside South Africa, another language may replace the second official language.
[44] Previously the LOL&T was offered as the home language.

6. Conclusion

Among the number of factors impeding access to quality education in SA, it seems contrary to evidence to deny the role of language for those learners for whom the official MoI (English/ Afrikaans) is not their MT.

Given the widely recognized advantages of education in the MT in the early phase and for as long as possible, it would seem in the interest of the country if all learners could benefit from it. After grade 4 there is little in the way of MT education for African students (excluding those whose parents who have shifted to English as their home language). Although code-switching to the local vernacular is frequently used, making it a co-LOL&T during lessons; exams and writing are exclusively in English.

In order to extend the use of home language in education, there seem to be two options:

- disseminate English to the point where it becomes a home language for a growing number of African children;

- rehabilitate African languages as the LOL&T beyond grade 3.

The first option seems out of reach in the short term at least, in a country where close to 80% of the population are not native-English speakers. Its full concretization could be achieved however in a couple of generations, possibly faster. If one keeps to the narrow objective of educational improvement, then this option may appear well-grounded. But education, and that includes language in education, should not be viewed in isolation from broader issues, i.e. it cannot ignore the socio-political history of the country and its cultural contexts. Indeed, Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986:106) states, 'the language question cannot be solved outside the larger arena of economics and politics, or outside the answer to the question of what society we want'. By making English the 'killer language' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) and as such the MoI/ LOL&T in all schools, implies a minorization of local languages and hence of language-speakers, which is in direct odds with SA's Constitutional goals and aim to maintain the country's rich and diverse linguistic heritage[45]. Indeed, if local languages are not part of the curriculum they are likely to be gradually confined to the household and may even disappear over time (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000 for examples of this happening). This has implications for culture as well as language (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). For if African languages are excluded from schooling, this suggests they cannot be languages of science or knowledge.

In South Africa when formal education was limited to a small elite, local languages and cultures were maintained thanks to the 'uneducated' part of the population. In SA this is rapidly changing with the extension of schooling, which has become near-universal (Motola et al, 2007). In SA (and more generally, the African continent) it is crucial, for the sake of linguistic diversity and specificity, that the education system fully acknowledges local languages. An education system representative of the country in its entirety cannot but take into account the full range of languages spoken by significant groups of the population.

Another aspect that needs attention is the exclusive focus on literacy at exam time. If oral tests made up part of the mark, for example, this could give space to code-switching (and local language varieties), and therefore reflect real school practices. Oral exams are already used successfully in some countries.

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[45] The Pansalb motto is 'Izilimi ziningi, izwe linye!' (in Zulu) / 'many languages, one country' (English)

To my mind, an acknowledgement of some cultural relativism in education, as opposed to the mere imposition of the western-model, might be relevant (Mclean, 1989). The use of local languages in schools is but a first step. For example, it is contrary to common sense that the social values eminently present in traditional African cultures, often subsumed in SA under the catch-term ubuntu, remain largely ignored in the education system. Local practices should be afforded recognition, giving way to a customized education system that would incorporate relevant western and non-western features[46].

In SA this type of acknowledgement would allow for some leverage between learners of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The promotion of African languages in the school system would thus be instrumental to further equity.

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[46] For example, perhaps the passing of initiation could be given credit within the final mark for a learner; stick-fighting could be elevated as a sports discipline; dancing could be recognized as a powerful strategy for integration and socialization, etc.

7. Recommendations: making space for African languages

The way forward I suggest is therefore probably the most difficult one. It must reconcile parents' legitimate concerns for efficient and quality education and the reality of a country characterized by a diversity of languages and cultures and a complex history of colonisation and political domination by a minority, strengthened by ethnic manipulation. Laying to rest the skeletons of the past, could see linguistic and cultural diversity as an inspiring resource.

I therefore propose a number of measures to help African languages and cultures gain their place in the new South Africa. Only thus would the education system be in pace with social realities, consistent with the Constitution and work efficiently towards ensuring equity of rights as well as reparation for the past. The list below is seen as a starting point and if measures were implemented, others could be set in motion:

- Equalise funding and resources for all state schools (including fees), so the socio-economic gaps between schools using African languages as the MoI in the foundation phase (i.e. some township and rural schools) and those using English / Afrikaans, be reduced;

- Ensure there are fewer racial patterns in the allocation of teaching staff so all township schools could have native English teacher(s) and ex-model C schools have more African teachers.

- Impose and monitor a pro-mother-tongue language policy in crèches and pre-primary schools (i.e. grade R & before);

- Encourage African parents to demand at least partial tuition in African language when their children join a former white school[47];

- Put African home languages on the same footing as English in the school system, by adequate allocation of time and similar treatment, encouraging literacy in both;

- Pursue the development of African languages, in particular in terminology for sciences;

- Provide learners with bilingual (English and African language) explanations for scientific terminology and concepts (see Fricke and Meyer, 2005). Pare (2008) has shown that this helps learners more than either monolingual solution;

- Make African languages compulsory at NSC for all learners, at one level or another (home, first or second additional) (see Granville et al, 1997; Lafon, 2008);

- Incorporate oral practices in the NSC.

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[47] Indeed, there does not seem to be any instance where African parents have used the ad hoc legal provision to challenge the DoE to provide secondary education in an African language

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Location of interviews with school principals and staff

Soweto, Gauteng:

       Thabisile Junior Primary, Diepkloof;

       Dumezweni Primary, Diepkloof

       Thembaelihle Primary, Orlando

Atteridgeville, Gauteng

       Patogeng Primary

       Bothukwa Primary

Mlazi, KZN

       Mziwamandja Secondary

Lamontville; KZN

       Bantu Vukani Primary

Appendix 2: CREATE's Zones of Exclusion

Zone 0 – children who are excluded from pre-schooling

Zone 1 -children who have never been to school, and are unlikely to attend school;

Zone 2 - children who enter primary schooling, but who drop out before completing the primary cycle

Zone 3 - children who enter primary schooling and are enrolled but are "at risk" of dropping out before completion as a result of irregular attendance, low achievement, and silent exclusion from worthwhile learning

Zone 4 – children who fail to make the transition to secondary school grades

Zone 5 children who enter secondary schooling but who drop out before completing the cycle

Zone 6 children who enter secondary schooling and are enrolled but are "at risk" of dropping out before completion as a result of irregular attendance, low achievement and silent exclusion from worthwhile learning

Consortium for Research on
Educational Access, Transitions & Equity
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Report summary:
The role of Medium of Instruction or Language of Learning and Teaching has not received sufficient attention as a factor denying meaningful access to education in South Africa. Yet the majority of under-performing learners are also children who learn in a language that is not their mother-tongue. This research aims to assess how recent language policies have changed the linguistic practices of schools and how this impacts on 'meaningful' access (understood as learners' access to the curriculum and therefore broad content knowledge). Interviews and open discussions were conducted with principals, teachers and parents from various township schools located in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng to illustrate the problems.

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