UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE POLICY AS A TOOL FOR ACCESS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVE

N. Cele
Institutional Planning
University of Zululand
Richards Bay, South Africa
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3689-7385

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the development of language policy for transformation and social inclusion has significantly failed to achieve the ideal order of things given lack of robust monitoring and systematic implementation. This article uses a framework for policy analysis to reflect on the language policy in South African Universities. It explores reasons why the national language policy was introduced and uses the "effect and implementation" two-pronged framework to show how the national language policy has remained an instrument for the reinforcement of the supremacy of English as opposed to enhancing the development of African languages. The article further argues for the deliberate resourcing of the development of African languages to deal with language realities in South African universities. It asserts that the implementation of the South African national language policy framework is unmonitored and unresourced. It critiques the national language policy as political rhetorical and proposes a guiding framework for the development of African languages for meaningful us e in higher education as part of social inclusion.

This article explored why the national language policy was established and why using the two-pronged policy analysis framework it can be argued that the policy has failed to have an effect impact on its aspirations and its implementation. A debate about the importance of African languages in teaching and learning, research, community engagement and organisational administration needs to become an integral part of the conversation on student-centeredness; improving graduation throughput; developing indigenous knowledge systems; improving research productivity; transformation and social inclusion; and social and cultural diversity at universities. These debates should be informed by newly developed knowledge frontiers on the role of African and indigenous languages in teaching and learning, and knowledge generation.

Keywords: language policy, social inclusion, public policy, transformation, access, teaching and learning

INTRODUCTION

This article argues that the development of language policy for transformation and social inclusion in South African higher education has significantly failed to achieve the ideal order

of social redress, given the lack of systematic implementation and robust monitoring (DHET 2017). The article uses a framework for policy analysis to critique and reflects on language policy arrangements in South African Universities. It explores reasons for the introduction of a National Language Policy, using the "implementation and effect" two-pronged framework to show how policy has remained an instrument for the reinforcement of the English supremacy and dominance as opposed to enhancing the development of indigenous African languages (Salomone 2018), (Makoni 2016), (Makoni 2017). The article further argues for the deliberate well-resourcing of the African languages development project to confront compelling language realities in South African universities. It further asserts that the implementation of the South African National Language Policy framework is unmonitored and impecuniously resourced (DHET 2017). It critiques the National Language Policy as political rhetorical devoid of explicit guidelines for the development of indigenous African languages in a meaningful manner to make these languages instruments of learning and science and knowledge generation within the auspices of public good and social inclusion discourse in universities (DHET 2002).

POLICY ASPIRATIONS, SOCIETY AND CONTEXTUAL REALITIES

Policy analysis is a form of policy evaluation that seeks to determine policy effectiveness to establish whether a policy should be upheld, prolonged or reviewed. Various policy analysis frameworks present a range of evaluation questions that assess the fitness of purpose and fitness for any policy initiative in question. These questions relate to agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation phases (Barkenbus 1998). When evaluating policy, the purpose for the development of the policy and reflection on its espoused ideals have to be understood by asking the following key questions (Taylor et al. 1997). Effect questions:

- What is the policy responding to? Understanding the purpose of policy helps evaluate whether or not the policy has achieved the desired effect.
- What effect does policy have on the targeted problem?
- What are the suggested intentions behind the introduction of the legislation or policy?
- What are the unintended consequences of policy interventions?
- Who are the intended beneficiaries of the legislation or policy framework?
- What are the intended consequences for policy enactment?
- What effects does policy have on different groups?

Implementation questions:

- How is the implementation of policy/ legislation to be achieved?

- What is the financial cost of policy institutionalisation and how does the cost expedite implementation?

- Is policy as a transformation tool feasible beyond its text and rhetoric?

- How does one develop ownership of policy / legislation amongst the potential users of that policy?

- Is policy accepted and enacted upon by stakeholders?

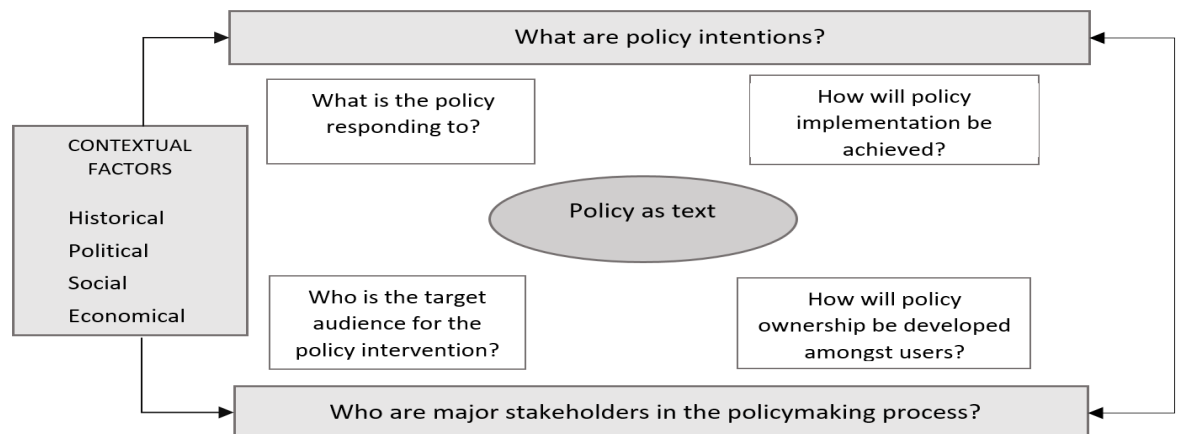- How is the implementation monitored, and policy impact assessed?

Figure 1: What kind of policy is it?

Lester (2002) proposed that proper analysis of public policy should adopt a two-pronged analytical framework focussing on the effects of policy and the implementation of policy. The assessment of policy success focusses on establishing whether or not the policy has achieved its articulated intentions and goals, with success measured through the impact of policy in shifting behaviour patterns and lived experiences of those affected by such policy, following the understanding of what the policy is responding to. However, Milton et al. (2012) caution that it is often difficult to derive the ultimate and direct cause and effect of policy and its effectiveness in any situation given the fact that policy impact is always part of multiple factors equally affecting the same phenomenon or situation. It would be ideal to have various questions answered in a context where policy effectiveness is assessed. To be able to generate the right answers to all these questions, a foundational understanding of the nature of policy should be established. The fitness of policy purpose as socio-cultural, historical, political or economic imperative should be established as depicted in Figure 1.

The conceptual understanding of policy in Figure 1 helps develop an understanding of whether policy should be assessed as a text, political slogan, transformation tool or an instrument for societal positioning. In this context, policy can be analysed using various stages

of the policy life cycle which include, establishing the policy purpose, implementing the policy, monitoring the implementation and reviewing the policy (Barkenbus 1998). The stage at which policy gets evaluated shapes the understanding of its effectiveness or impact. When policy is at the inception stage, the analysis should seek to address "fitness of purpose" questions, and target stakeholders' consultation processes. When policy is at an implementation phase, implementation frameworks and resources rallied around policy implementation should be assessed. When policy has reached the full implementation cycle, questions of impact and effect should be posed.

IMPERATIVES SHAPING THE HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE POLICY

The issue of a language policy in South African Higher Education has been part of an ongoing effort to create an inclusive system that is ready to teach everybody's children. Various policy tools have been developed to steer the higher education system towards a public good, socially-inclusive enterprise (DHET 2017). Reflections on higher education transformation in South Africa generally are premised on public policy with a starting-point reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (DOJ 1996); Pan South African Language Board Act 59 of 1995 (DAC 1995); the 1996 report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (DoE 1996a); the White Paper on Higher Education (DHET 1998); the Higher Education Act of 1997 (DoE 1997); Policy for the Registration of Learners for Home Education (DoE 1999); the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001); the Language Policy for Higher Education of 2002 (DHET 2002); the National Language Policy Framework of 2003 (DAC 2003); Adult Education Act 52 of 2000 (DHET 2010a); Higher Education Laws Amendment, Act 26 of 2010 (DHET 2010b); Higher Education Laws Amendment, Act 26 of 2010 (DHET 2010c); White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE 2011); National Education Policy Act, 1996 No. 27 of 1996 (DoE 1996b); and White Paper on Post-Secondary Education and Training (DHET 2013). Other documents include the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET 2008); the Declaration of the Higher Education Summit (DHET 2010); the National Development Plan (Department: The Presidency 2012); Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act no.3 of 2012 (DHET 2013b); the terms of reference of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Public Universities (DHET 2015); and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET 2013a). Arguably, the purpose of the national language policy has always been that of political positioning and social redress with its main purpose being that of making African languages, languages of teaching

and science by developing these languages and integrating them into formal programmes of universities (DHET 2017). The language policy is a response to the apartheid system of social exclusion where African languages were marginalised and reduced to non-official communication tools. After grappling with transformation challenges in the higher education sector, the *Declaration of the 2010 Higher Education Summit* was a significant platform where language was considered to be a tool for transforming institutional culture and bringing about social inclusion and diversity. Subsequent to the 2010 Summit Declaration, there was a Higher Education Summit held in 2015 (DHET 2015a), which identified transformation priorities and the *South African Human Rights Commission Report on Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa,* produced after the Human Rights Commission convened in 2014, a national hearing on transformation in institutions of higher learning in South Africa (HSRC 2014). The outcome of both initiatives has sharpened and consolidated views on issues shaping transformation in higher education institutions, thus evoking a refreshed understanding of approaches and activities constituting the transformation agenda in universities. The language policy is an integral part of the transformation imperative in higher education.

As expressed in the White Paper on Higher Education and Training of 1998 (DHET 1998); the transformation of universities is broadly conceptualised around the principles of equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; public good and accountability. The most recent and inclusive sector-wide statement (Durban Statement) on higher education transformation emanated from the Higher Education Transformation Summit (October 2015) (DHET 2015b). The summit acknowledged that the transformation agenda is challenged by among other things, the language practices at universities, which create barriers to effective teaching and learning and erodes affirmation of African culture. Linked to this fact was the realisation that institutional environments continued to reflect the broader inequalities in society and resulted in experiences of alienation by many staff and students, including persistence of racism, patriarchy, homophobia, gender based violence, ableism, and classism in the system (HSRC 2014). The other contributing reality to social exclusion was the fact that university curricula and forms of knowledge production are not sufficiently situated within the African contexts, and are dominated by western worldviews entrenched in the use of English and Afrikaans. This has recently been further exacerbated by the implicit positioning of English as a main unifying neutral language in South African universities when new language policies at the University of Stellenbosch, University of South Africa, University of Pretoria and the University of Free State elevated the status of English in their language policies. This stance was taken because English and Afrikaans parallel programmes often separated students according to race, and that mother

tongue instruction could not be for Afrikaans students only (Salomone 2018). The inability of universities to develop and use indigenous African languages as languages of teaching and science, continues to create a barrier to access and success in higher education (DHET 2017). It further poses a question to the Africanisation of curriculum and pedagogies in a manner that ensure transformation, and social inclusion in higher education.

Through the national language policy, institutions have been asked to indicate, as part of their institutional planning processes, how they intend addressing difficulties around multilingualism and, in particular, the development of African languages as communication, science and teaching tools. Through this array of guiding regulations and resolutions, universities have been asked to:

- review current language policies to determine appropriateness;
- establish explicit mechanisms through which the overall institutional culture shapes experiences of students and staff and their learning opportunities;
- take measures to include African languages on an equitable basis as means of social inclusion.

With the exception of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, universities have developed policies to encourage multilingualism but have not fully realised the desired state of such policies. Institutions are encouraged to continue implementing these initiatives within available means and practicability (DHET 2002). This has mostly resulted in provision of English proficiency courses to first-year students (DHET 2017). This article argues that in instances where students are enrolled in programmes that require interaction with diverse communities, (such as health sciences, psychology, law and social work), universities should require both students and staff members to take African language courses. It is clear that the purpose of the South African language policy is multi-pronged and social redress remains at the heart of the intent (DET 1997; DHET 2002; DHET 2017), but implementation does not yield the desired public good. The complexity of the baseline framework of the higher education language policy envisaged in the higher education system is depicted in Figure 2. Figure 2 shows that for the language policy to work it has to be conceptualised around curriculum provisioning, graduateness, knowledge domains and strands, resources and the political will.

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In South Africa, indigenous languages have not been developed well for extensive use in

conducting higher education business and knowledge generation. English and Afrikaans have always been positioned for mainstream business, research and educational engagements. These languages, mainly English were bestowed with an elitist status and unfair advantage in educational, political, economic, social, technological, and religious platforms, while undermining the affirmation of indigenous African languages. English for instance has endured a structural advantage played an essential role in South Africa's transition from "Dutchification
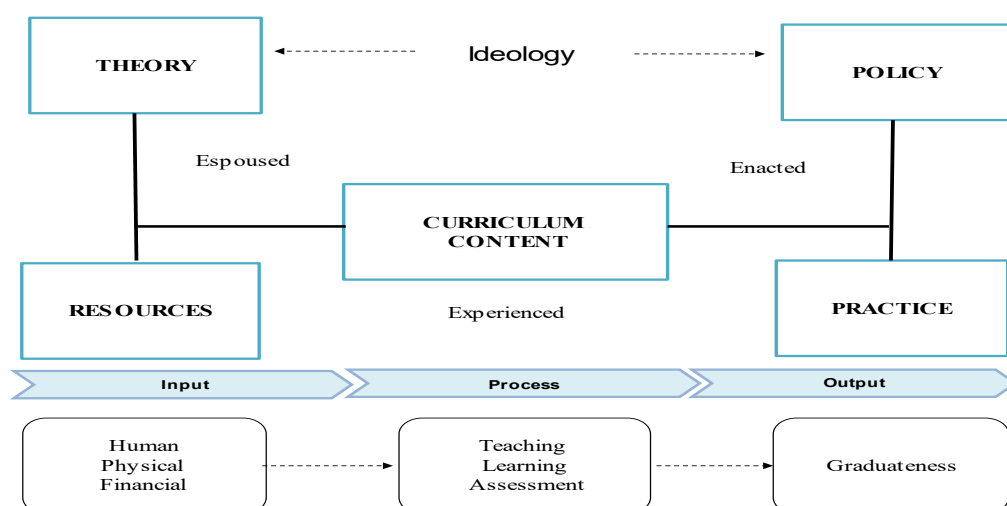

Figure 2: Framework Guiding Policy Formulation and Application

(1652–1795), to Anglicisation (1795–1948), to Afrikanerisation (1948–1994), to democratisation (1994)" (Kamwangamalu 2002). This reality has stunted the development of African languages over decades and suppressed the use of these languages as tools for intellectual engagement and knowledge generation. There is a great need to reshape the language policy in South African higher education in a manner that enhances cultural integration, enhances distribution of learning opportunities and promotes epistemological access. Language policy and practice continue to create a disempowering effect on African black communities in many universities, an effect that often leads to new forms of social exclusion and denial of access to knowledge and acquisition of skills.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS DOMINATION

Although South African indigenous citizens spoke various African languages, scholars often argue that from 1652 to 1806 the question of the official language of instruction was not an issue because the majority of the white population spoke Dutch (Reagan 1988). African languages were never considered part of mainstream communication languages in the

conceptualisation of formal education policies. Native languages as usable media of communication were not valued. Even African communities at the time had not realised the implications of the side-lining of their languages and culture in education. The positioning of English as a medium of instruction came into play in 1814 when the British settlers took charge of the Cape administration. In 1809, General Colin proposed that English teachers be imported to ensure that the next South African generation, both black and white, would be "English" (Reagan 1988). All black teachers who spoke English efficiently were offered huge salaries to promote the optimum use of English throughout the country. This was a political strategy to Anglicise the Cape (and subsequently the whole of South Africa) as a sound British base, a stance orchestrated by English authorities as a political campaign. In 1825 the implementation of policies that legitimised English as the South African first official language were effected. The Smuts Education Act of 1907 made the teaching of English obligatory, stipulating that every child had to learn English at school. Free English schools were established to promote the English language and culture (Behr 1988). During this period and prior to the 1994 democratic order, it was never envisioned that any African language would ever become an official language in South Africa. The conceptual development and implementation of the language policy was a premise of political disposition of inequalities and the use of language, and education as a state apparatus for social segregation and disenfranchisement of indigenous Africans.

Historically English was given an elitist and a prestigious status from the outset. English missionaries promoted English as a medium of instruction in schools, where indigenous blacks who demonstrated competence in English were granted the status of "Exempted Black Englishmen". This title exonerated them from breaking racial segregation laws and allowed them to stay in "white" towns, a phenomenon otherwise completely illegal in the days of racial oppression (Cele 2001). It is unfortunate that such an otherwise controversial contextual promotion of English led to the social construction of English fluency as a symbol of close-to-whiteness, a symbol of status in society and a beacon of high-level education and intellectual standing. English retains its dominant elitist status despite the political correctness of the recent national language policy. It continues to dominate mainstream platforms of human engagement in civil society, higher education and business in South Africa and across the world. For example, the analysis of institutional performance through the ranking of world universities shows that global higher-education evaluation systems continue to give preference to English medium universities over universities of other linguistic heritage. Universities cannot afford to continue embracing this reality at the expense of student access and success in South Africa.

NEW LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE LOST PUBLIC GOOD PROMISE

The current language policy embedded in the South African Constitution (DOJ 1996) recognises 11 official languages in South Africa: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Apart from political liberation, this policy intends to promote, among other things:

- the creation of conditions for the development and the promotion of the equal use of all official languages (multilingualism with the scope undefined and development infrastructure not provided);
- the prevention of the use of the language for exploitation, domination or division;
- the non-diminution of rights relating to language and the status of languages existing at the commencement of the Constitution;
- secure means to provide, respectively, for the right to language choice in educational institutions;
- protect the right to establish educational institutions based on common language, religion and culture.

In 1997, the Higher Education Act made an effort to inform and transform language policy in higher education with the intention to widen access into higher education, enhance access to knowledge and embrace social inclusion. Two primary documents – "Language in education policy" (DoE 1997) and "Language policy for higher education" (Department of Arts and Culture 2002) – laid out a framework for the development of relevant language policy. The Higher Education Act recognised the need for educational institutions to develop and adopt language policies that promote the public good and social inclusion values of teaching and learning, research generation and community engagement. Ironically, the colonial stamina of English has advanced the dominance of English, the marginalisation of Afrikaans and ushered a token recognition of African languages in South African higher education. Most universities that historically used Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and business engagement like the University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University have seen the language policy developments yielding the elimination of Afrikaans as an official medium of instruction – Afrikaans being replaced with English. African languages have primarily been given a token recognition status in almost all South African Universities with the exception of peripheral African languages development initiatives in the University of KwaZulu-Natal and University of South Africa (UNISA).

PREVAILING LANGUAGE POLICIES IN UNIVERSITIES

While the principle of African languages becoming official media of instruction is widely endorsed, they remain underdeveloped and scientifically unusable. While policy developers witness the diminished use and status of indigenous languages in universities, without practical programmes to develop them, these narratives remain misleading policy positions. Like the case is elsewhere in Africa, efforts to enhance the status and use of indigenous languages has remained unsuccessful (Bamgbose 2011). This comes despite the fact that Africa is a highly multilingual continent (for example, Nigeria has 400 languages, DRC 206, Ethiopia 92, Tanzania 113, Sudan 21) if measured with sub-Saharan Africa, where population against language, being the world's leading and most densely multilingual section of the globe. Bunyi's (1999) case study on the indigenous African languages in Kenya helps to demonstrate some of the difficulties that the African languages have faced since colonisation. Bunyi argues that there is a need for African education systems to be liberated from "the Eurocentric colonial legacy [and make] the grounding of African education in African indigenous cultures, primary vehicles for social transformation".

Table 1: Current language policies in South African Universities

Name of University	Prevailing language policy
University of Zululand	English and isiZulu
University of KwaZulu Natal	English and isiZulu
University of Witwatersrand	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
University of Stellenbosch	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
University of Cape Town	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
University of Western Cape	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
Cape Peninsula University	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
Nelson Mandela University	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
Walter Sisulu University	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
University of Fort Hare	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
Mangosuthu University	English and isiZulu
Durban University of Technology	English and isiZulu
University of Johannesburg	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
University of Pretoria	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
Tshwane University of Technology	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
University of Mpumalanga	English
Sol Plaatjie University	English
University of South Africa	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
Central University of Technology	English, Afrikaans, Sesotho
Vaal University of Technology	English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho
North-West University	English, Afrikaans, Setswana
University of Free State	English, Afrikaans, Sesotho
University of Venda	English, Sesotho, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
University of Limpopo	English, Sesotho, Tshivenda, Xitsonga

Name of University	Prevailing language policy
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	English
Rhodes University	English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa

Bunyi continues to make a compelling argument that since language is both a part of culture and medium of deliberation in any given context, it is, therefore, necessary to rethink the role and centrality of indigenous African languages in the education system. Such a rethink should influence curriculum design and development, pedagogical and epistemological access, an assertion supported by the argument that there is an intimate relationship between stages of child development and language learning and comprehension. Spencer (1985) attests to this when he argues that:

"No developed or affluent nations, though many of these have minority languages, utilise a language for education and other national purposes which is of external origin or at most few of its people" (cited in Bunyi 1999, 337).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggested that "illiteracy has a close correlation with poverty" cited in (Bamgbose 1991, 38). Africa needs to increase its literacy rates and this, by implication, means an increase in the use of indigenous languages as media of instruction in learning institutions and communication tools in business. Two issues were identified in the study of the use and spread of colonial languages such as English and Afrikaans in the South African context, and these are (1) the future of these colonial languages and (2) the future of indigenous languages with which the colonial languages interact (Kamwangamalu 2003). On the last interaction, scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) have labelled English as a "killer language, since contact between English and indigenous languages tends to lead to the demise of the latter" (Kamwangamalu 2003, 65).

Indigenous languages are an essential asset in the preservation, diversification and enrichment of indigenous knowledge (Tuhus-Dubrow 2002). English has been described as an imperialist tool whose spread has been engineered by powerful British and American interests even after the removal of direct imperialist control of African countries by the colonial authorities. As suggested by Kamwangamalu (2003), the use of English language in some African contexts does more harm than good as it stunts efforts to nurture and grow local indigenous languages and knowledge systems, and prevents the masses of the population from participating in essential civil society discourse and affairs in African countries. Kamwangamalu makes two crucial observations concerning the above assertion. Firstly, he argues that English has been construed as a double-edged sword, as "even though it provides

access to education and job opportunities, it also acts as a barrier to such opportunities for those who do not speak it or whose English is poor" (2002, 3). Secondly, English, even though an important language in "knowledge, science and technology, is increasingly being seen as the major threat to the maintenance of indigenous languages. It remains a remnant of colonialism and a cause of cultural alienation, a vehicle of values not always in harmony with local traditions and beliefs" (Kamwangamalu 2002, 3) and the public good. Additionally, English in African context continues to be seen as a corrosive influence on individual self-esteem and collective cultural identity because it conveys an "Anglo-Saxon", "Western" or "Judeo-Christian" world view alien to the societies and cultures to which English is spreading (Kamwangamalu 2003, 67). Hence UNESCO (1953, 11) has strongly argued that:

> "It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium" (cited in Bunyi 1999, 339).

These arguments questioning the value of English in South African higher education and societal development concomitantly pose an intriguing question concerning the extent the National Language Policy and its translation to individual university language policies. Firmly embedded on the ambiguities of developing a policy for public good and the adverse consequences thereof are factors such as adequate support, resources, implementation and monitoring.

Since independence, most African countries have come up with language policies that hitherto remain unimplemented due to lack of funding and political will. However, Bamgbose (1991) has argued that the cost argument has not been proven and remains impossible to prove. Besides the cost argument, language policies in these African countries remain characterised by such problems as "avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation" (Bamgbose 1991, 6; 111, cited in (Phillipson 1996, 162). Teachers should be empowered to realise their new roles in language learning so that teaching and learning becomes more meaningful (Rogus and Nuzzi 1993). Emphasis on language as a means of both teaching and learning recognises that the learners' use of language for learning is strongly influenced by a teachers' language command that prescribes and describes their role as learners (Kadenge 2014). By verbalising, explaining, questioning, discussing, debating, hypothesising, learners construct knowledge and make it their own (Court 1993).

In a comparative research project on language policy, looking at European indigenous-

language policies in such countries as Switzerland, Canada and India, and comparing them with African ones, the African Union, according to Phillipson (1996), discovered that African leaders in most countries had not realised the importance of promoting indigenous languages. Bunyi argues that the pattern in most African countries is that of relentless legitimising and "overvaluing western languages which translates into de-legitimisation and devaluation of indigenous African languages" (1999, 350). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's experiences on the devaluation of African languages and overvaluation of the English language in colonial Kenya is instructive at this juncture:

> "... it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as *I AM* STUPID or, *I AM A* DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over to whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Whoever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and the ensuing process would bring out all the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community." (1986, 11).

While the intention of teaching English is economically valuable, privileging English and the suppression of indigenous languages remains highly problematic in the context where policy intentions are marginalised by the lack of political will to invest in the development of African languages.

Many studies have attempted to propose ways of strengthening language policies in Africa (Bodomo 1996; Breidlid 2008; Djité 1993). Webb (1999) notices that in the South African context, there has been an increasing mismatch between the stated policies on language and what one obtains on the ground. Webb (1999, 351) states that "whereas the country's institutional documents (the constitution and the national policies being developed) proclaim linguistic pluralism to be the national objective the country seems to be regressing to its pre-apartheid monolingual practice situation of "English only". If the country's legal documents were to be used, Barkhuizen (2002, 500) suggests, "in the educational context this means that all of South Africa's 11 official languages should be taught in schools as subjects and all should be used as languages of learning and teaching". The slow progress towards the implementation of indigenous African languages in schools and universities may be attributed to the "fervent reactions" from educationists, planners and politicians who have highlighted the impracticality of such a move (Barkhuizen 2002). From these debates what is clear is the valorisation of English as a language of success, progress and sophistication. These debates as Barkhuizen

(2002) argues, exclude those people who go to school or work with multiple languages and "want to live in a culturally integrated, multilingual society as people with the power to make [their own] decisions" (2002, 500). A study of the engineering profession at the University of the Witwatersrand (Hill and Van Zyl 2002) revealed that the workforce in the profession was multilingual. The research surveyed 58 engineering personnel and used focus group discussions, interviews, observation and questionnaires to gather data. In this study, researchers realised that English was used more than any other language in the South African engineering field, with some South African companies having adopted an "English only" policy. The researchers argue that:

> "... engineers are also practitioners whose profession especially in South Africa necessarily involves them in regular and essential interactions with a multi-lingual, multicultural workforce. Here, black engineers surely have a decided advantage as many bring into the field fluency in several African languages, and familiarity with many cultures represented in the workforce." (Hill and Van Zyl 2002, 24).

Indigenous African languages are used in code-switching with English. There is also a realisation that the use of African languages is effective in social relations and also making workers feel part of the companies for which they work. For instance, Hill and Van Zyl conclude that:

> "... engineers who can communicate with workers in their languages also receive better cooperation, even increased production and can understand possible discontent, alienation and other social issues which are useful to the management. Such cooperation is not possible in English or Afrikaans. This multilingualism prevents communication from breaking down and ensures work is done." (2002, 34).

With this in mind, it is important to highlight South African research that looks specifically at the possibilities of incorporating indigenous languages into the University curricula. A study by Neethling (2010, 71) suggests that the teaching of indigenous languages, especially isiXhosa, at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch "to perform higher functions such as serving as a medium of instructions is possible". This assessment was based on Neethling's observation that, for instance, UCT medical students could not graduate unless they demonstrated abilities to examine and speak to patients in Xhosa, English or Afrikaans. Moreover, UKZN had implemented the use of isiZulu for Nursing and Psychology, while:

> "... the University of Venda [was] developing a BA in IKS [indigenous knowledge systems] as

well as introducing other African languages including minority languages such as isiNdebele. The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University [offered] short courses in translation studies and has opened a Translation and Interpretation Office as part of the Department of Applied Language Studies in the Faculty of Arts." (Neethling 2010, 71).

The three universities, according to Neethling, had already accommodated, or "agreed to accommodate" isiXhosa on the campus signage boards and this has made isiXhosa-speaking students feel at home. This act did not only create a "homely" experience for the Xhosa students but also "mindfulness and inclusivity" rather than "identity vulnerability" (Kaschula 2013, 5, 6). Drawing from lessons from the Rhodes University's language policy, Kaschula (2013) argues that even though the University had "critically evaluate[d] it's historical narrative and practices as far as language is concerned", there seemed to be a disjuncture between the Language Policy of 2005 and what was currently transpired on the ground. The narrative on the lived experiences on language policies in universities shows that these policies are mostly available in a blueprint form and hardly implemented.

Besides the cost argument (Bamgbose 1991), language policies in African countries remain characterised by problems such as "avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation" (Bamgbose 1991, 6, 111, cited in Phillipson 1996, 162). There have been some studies that have attempted to propose ways of strengthening language policies in Africa (Bodomo 1996; Djite 1993; Breidlid 2008). Webb (1999) notices that in the South African context, there has been an increasing mismatch between the stated policies on language and what one obtains on the ground. Webb states "[W]hereas the country's institutional documents, (the Constitution and the national policies being developed) proclaim linguistic pluralism to be the national objective the country seems to be regressing to its pre-apartheid situation of monolingual practice situation of 'English only'" (1999, 351). If the country's legal documents were to be used, Barkhuizen suggests, "in the educational context this means that all of South Africa's 11 official languages should be taught in schools as subjects and all should be used as languages of learning and teaching" (2002, 500). The slow progress towards the implementation of indigenous African languages in schools and universities may be attributed to the "fervent reactions" from educationists, planners and politicians who have highlighted the impracticality of such a move (Barkhuizen 2002). There is a systemic valorisation of English as a language of success, progress and sophistication. Such values exclude those people who go to school or work with multiple languages and "want to live in a culturally integrated, multilingual society as people with the power to make [their own] decisions" (Barkhuizen 2002).

A study of multilingualism at Wits University (Hill and Van Zyl 2002) in an engineering

programme revealed that the workforce in the profession was multi-lingual. The research surveyed 58 engineering personnel and used focus group discussions, interviews, observation and questionnaires to gather data. As a background, the researchers realised that English is used more than a language in the South African engineering field with some South African companies having adopted an "English only" policy. The researchers argue that "engineers are also practitioners whose profession especially in South Africa necessarily involves them in regular and important interactions with a multi-lingual, multicultural workforce. Here, black engineers surely have a decided advantage as many bring into the field fluency in several African languages, and familiarity with many cultures represented in the workforce" (Hill and Van Zyl 2002, 24). Hill and Van Zyl (2002) argue that African languages, even though too numerous, were useful in worker interaction at the big engineering and mining firms.

> "African languages are spoken by a large stratum of black workers including skilled and semi-skilled personnel, machine operators, clerks, handymen, and unskilled labourers or helpers, and are the primary language of an increasing number of better-educated personnel including engineers. African languages are used on posters in the mines observed and in the reception areas to help job seekers. In the diamond mines, they are spoken in safety meetings where all workers are represented." (2002, 30).

There is an entrenched realisation that the use of African languages is effective in social relations and also making workers feel part of the companies for which they work. For instance, Hill and Van Zyl conclude that "engineers who can communicate with workers in their own languages also receive better cooperation, even increased production and are able to understand possible discontent, alienation and other social issues which are useful to the management". Such cooperation is not possible in English or Afrikaans. It becomes important that indigenous African languages be used as the medium of instruction and conducting business in universities as this will empower students and create strong links between the university and industries that draw in and position many of the students.

A study by Neethling (2010) suggests that the teaching of indigenous languages especially isiXhosa in the Universities of Cape Town (UCT), Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch "to perform higher functions such as serving as a medium of instructions, is possible" (2010, 71). This assessment is based on Neethling's observation that, for instance, UCT medical students cannot graduate unless they demonstrate abilities to examine and speak to patients in isiXhosa, English or Afrikaans. Moreover, UKZN implemented the use of isiZulu for Nursing and Psychology while "the University of Venda (UNIVEN) is developing a BA in IKS as well as introducing other African languages including minority languages such as isiNdebele. The Nelson Mandela University (NMU) now offers short courses in translation studies and has

opened a Translation and Interpretation Office as part of the department of Applied Language Studies in the Faculty of Arts". Moreover, UCT has in place a glossary project in the Economics department where isiXhosa-speaking students are given an opportunity to discuss and develop new economic concepts in their mother tongue, and this has facilitated a better understanding of these and other concepts (Neethling 2010). Most importantly, these three universities, according to Neethling (2010) have (already or in future) "agreed to accommodate" isiXhosa on the campus signage boards and this has made isiXhosa speaking students feel at home. This has not only created a "homely" experience for the Xhosa students but also "mindfulness and inclusivity" rather than "identity vulnerability" (Kaschula 2013, 5, 6). Drawing from lessons from Rhodes University's language policy, Kaschula (2013) argues that even though the university has "critically evaluate[d] its historical narrative and practices as far as language is concerned" there seems to be a disjuncture between the Language Policy of 2005 and what currently one obtains on the ground. This flags the problems associated with most policies that are not implemented. The assessments and activities executed at all three of the universities present models that need to be followed and implemented in all other universities in South Africa.

ACTIONS TO REVIVE PROGRESSIVE LANGUAGE POLICIES AT UNIVERSITIES

Further research needs to be undertaken to establish how local languages can be developed for scientific purposes and inclusion in mainstream and official communication platforms. It lacks credibility for the new language policy to politically to grant African languages equal status to English in education while these languages remain undeveloped to meet the demands of a modern education system and the imperatives of globalisation and internationalisation. Since the inception of the progressive language policy, the state has demonstrated limited deliberate intention to institutionalise the development of African languages by funding language-development initiatives and providing infrastructural support to the growth of these languages. If anything, African languages merely enjoy political liberation with no power. Although African languages have been granted equal status with English, it is an indisputable fact that English already has a head start advantage compared to any other language in South Africa.

That the equality of languages is engendered in the South African Constitution remains a political token that brings no reform and deliberate development of African languages. Any school language policy that incorporates the national policy, with its blatant commitment to political correctness, but ignores the political and economic power English has achieved as a competitive advantage of South Africans on a global stage of enterprise, will cause damage worse than that caused by the apartheid and segregation regimes. However, a stance that focuses

on the positioning of English as the only mainstream unifying language, undermining the role of African languages in widening access, success and social inclusion is bound to create more harm in higher education. To enable all learners to be confident, proficient and fluent users of South African official languages, institutions of learning should make provision for differentiated language instruction. In order to achieve this ambition, learning materials and human resources required to support the individual learner's language of choice should be well developed and made readily available. A debate about the importance of African languages in teaching and learning, research, community engagement and organisational administration needs to become an integral part of the conversation on student-centeredness; improving graduation throughput; developing indigenous knowledge systems; improving research productivity; transformation and social inclusion; and social and cultural diversity.

While it is true that South Africa has been celebrated as a country with a strong constitution and language policy with a legal backing Bamgbose (2003) argues that the country "shares some of the weaknesses of language planning practices in Africa, especially lack of a detailed plan of action for the implementation of proclaimed policy" (cited in Kamwendo 2006). It is time that universities stop congratulating and celebrating some tenets of the constitution that remain unimplemented and take a leading role in implementing them especially the higher education language policy framework. Without deliberate funding, development and monitoring implementation, these frameworks remain political tools that yield no effect on the education system, social development and economic well-being of society.

The national higher education language policy argues for increased use of African languages, yet the adverse effect of that has been the consolidation of English as a medium of instruction, elimination of Afrikaans in many universities and a very peripheral and cosmetic introduction of African languages into the intellectual mix. The emphasis in the new national policy is on an increase in African languages usage and the universities will have to report on language policy in the mandatory report to the Department of Higher Education and Training. To make language policies meaningful in universities these institutions need to consider:

- Conducting stakeholder consultation through focus groups to establish details and more meaningful ways to make the new national language policy-relevant and meaningful.
- Identifying various modalities through which the chosen African language can be phased into the mainstream communication fabric of universities and their core business.
- Identify means through which the development of a chosen language can be financially supported.

- Investing in resources to ensure that the chosen African languages are well developed and institutionalised into the mainstream communication frameworks of universities.

- Supporting the development of English proficiency among all academics and make English proficiency a requirement for employment confirmation of academic staff.

- Using chosen African language on an equal basis with English.

- Staff that came from backgrounds where official institutional languages were not dominant languages should be trained for language proficiency in English and chosen African languages.

- Putting in place programmes to develop students and staff to achieve full competence in written and spoken English and chosen African languages.

- Exploring the use of subtitles in the preferred alternative language on all audio-visual materials produced by the University for purposes of teaching and learning, research and general administration.

- Developing African languages for scientific and business use in universities.

- Using indigenous African language in curriculum design

- Using African language in designing learning materials used by our students.

- Allowing students to ask and answer questions in teaching and learning arrangements in the preferred African languages.

- Using African languages to explain and help students understand concepts in class.

- Using African languages to write research reports for postgraduate studies.

- Using African languages for business communication purposes.

- Identifying means through which the development of a chosen language/s can be supported.

- Investing resources to ensure that the chosen African language is well developed and institutionalised into the mainstream communication framework of the universities.

- Accounting to the state about developing African languages as part of their transformation imperatives.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article explored why the national language policy was established and why using the two-pronged policy analysis framework it can be argued that the policy has failed to have an effective impact on its aspirations and its implementation. A debate about the importance of African languages in teaching and learning, research, community engagement and organisational administration needs to become an integral part of the conversation on student-

centeredness; improving graduation throughput; developing indigenous knowledge systems; improving research productivity; transformation and social inclusion and cultural diversity at universities. For the National Language Policy to have an impact, these initiatives should be adequately funded, and their implementation appropriately coordinated and monitored as a public good imperative.

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