



**Perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Language Practice in the Faculty of Arts and Design at Durban University of Technology

Snenhlanhla Saralee Khanyile

Student Number: 21422557

**Supervisor:** Dr Felix Awung

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr Blaise Ngandeu

December 2021

## Declaration

### **Perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the UThungulu District of Kwazulu-Natal**

I declare that the dissertation herewith submitted for the Master of Language Practice Degree at the Durban University of Technology has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other University. I also hereby declare that except where acknowledged, this dissertation is entirely my own work, that all resources used or quoted have been acknowledged in the dissertation and the reference list.

Snenhlanhla Saralee Khanyile

Signature of student..... Date.....

I hereby approve the final submission of the following dissertation.

Dr F. Awung

Signature ..... Date.....

Dr Blaise Ngandeu

Signature ..... Date.....

## **Abstract**

The South African Constitution guarantees learners the right to receive education in the language of their choice. However, little has been done to realise the idea of mother-tongue education for all South Africans. More than 25 years after the end of apartheid, mother-tongue education in indigenous languages has only been implemented in the first three grades of schooling in certain schools. The number of English first-language speakers is only the fourth highest of all the language groups in South Africa. This means that majority of children in the country are taught in a language that is not their mother tongue. While research has been done on mother-tongue education and its challenges, less focus has been put on the educators' perceptions on mother-tongue education and this is a problem as educators are both the product and agents of this education system; their input is vital in making this a reality. It is in this regard that this study aimed to investigate the educators' perception on mother-tongue education. The researcher used a qualitative approach which studies human experience from general as well as individual perspectives, adopted a multiple-case study research design and collected data using questionnaires. Data was collected from 30 educators in five schools of KwaZulu-Natal. This study will certainly contribute to a broader understanding of the role that educators can play in making mother-tongue education a success in South Africa.

This study demonstrated that educators believed that the current mother-tongue education policy had learning benefits for learners in the UThungulu District. The study also found that the implementation of mother tongue instruction in UThungulu District was fraught with challenges such as ill-adapted terminology for mother tongue teaching, negative attitudes from the community, lack of training for teaching in the mother tongue and lack of resources. While teachers acknowledged the benefits of the policy, they also seemed to believe that the policy is only good for introducing learners to the education system and should not be continued into higher education. They also expressed the need for this policy to be promoted and given more attention so as to help educate the wider community about the benefits of mother-tongue education. The study is significant in shedding light on the role that educators as

agents of the system can play in bringing about the successful implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa.

## **Dedication**

To my late mother, Phumelele Bhengu, whose loving spirit continues to guide and protect me.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Felix Awung, without whom I would not have been able to complete this project. His dedication, encouragement and resourceful guidance were the spur that kept me going till the end. I am also immensely grateful to Dr Blaise Ngandeu, my co-supervisor, for his understanding, patience and diligent guidance.

My profound gratitude also goes to the 30 educators of the UThungulu District for accepting to participate in this study despite their busy schedules. The information they provided constitutes the bedrock of this study.

I would like to thank the National Research Foundation for awarding me a scholarship that helped to alleviate the financial burden of my studies.

I am also grateful to Mr Pragasen Reddy of the Faculty of Arts and Design (DUT) for going out of his way to find people to assist me with my studies. I also owe a million thanks to Dr Sylvia Zulu of the Department of Media, Language and Communication (DUT) for her constant support and encouragement throughout my studies.

My gratitude also goes to my friends, Gugu Magwaza and Tony Manyangadze, whose constant support and advice were very helpful during this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my grandmother, my father and Auntie Zinhle, for their endless love and support.

# Tables of contents

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Declaration</b> .....                                 | <b>i</b>  |
| <b>Abstract</b> .....                                    | <b>ii</b> |
| <b>Dedication</b> .....                                  | <b>iv</b> |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b> .....                            | <b>v</b>  |
| <b>Tables of contents</b> .....                          | <b>vi</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....                   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 <i>Context of the study</i> .....                    | 1         |
| 1.2 <i>Research problem</i> .....                        | 2         |
| 1.3 <i>Aim of the study</i> .....                        | 2         |
| 1.4 <i>Objectives of the study</i> .....                 | 2         |
| 1.5 <i>Research questions</i> .....                      | 3         |
| 1.6 <i>Literature review</i> .....                       | 3         |
| The Language in education policy .....                   | 3         |
| Mother-tongue education in South Africa .....            | 4         |
| Linguistic decolonisation in education .....             | 4         |
| Teacher Agency in the language-in-education policy ..... | 5         |
| 1.7 <i>Research methodology</i> .....                    | 6         |
| Research design .....                                    | 6         |
| Target population .....                                  | 8         |
| Sample size and sample method .....                      | 8         |
| Inclusion and exclusion criteria .....                   | 8         |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Data collection .....  | 9         |
| Data analysis .....  | 9         |
| Limitations of the study .....   | 10        |
| Trustworthiness .....  | 11        |
| Ethical considerations .....   | 12        |
| 1.8 <i>Structure of the dissertation</i> .....                               | 12        |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>                                  | <b>14</b> |
| 2.1 <i>Introduction</i> .....  | 14        |
| 2.2 <i>The Language-in-education policy in South Africa</i> .....            | 14        |
| 2.2.1 <i>The socio-linguistic situation of South Africa</i> .....            | 14        |
| 2.2.2 <i>Language policy in South Africa</i> .....                           | 15        |
| 2.2.3 <i>Language-in-education policy</i> .....                              | 18        |
| 2.3 <i>Mother-tongue education in South Africa</i> .....                     | 19        |
| 2.3.1 <i>Linguistic decolonisation</i> .....                                 | 19        |
| 2.3.2 <i>Importance of mother-tongue education</i> .....                     | 22        |
| 2.3.3 <i>Implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa</i> ..... | 26        |
| 2.4 <i>Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency</i> .....                       | 29        |
| 2.5 <i>Conclusion</i> .....  | 30        |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>                             | <b>31</b> |
| 3.1 <i>Introduction</i> .....  | 31        |
| 3.2 <i>Research design</i> .....   | 31        |
| 3.3 <i>Target population</i> .....   | 33        |
| 3.4 <i>Sample size and sample method</i> .....                               | 34        |
| 3.5 <i>Inclusion and exclusion criteria</i> .....                            | 34        |
| 3.6 <i>Data collection</i> .....   | 35        |



|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 3.7 Data analysis.....   | 37        |
| 3.8 Limitations of the study .....                                 | 39        |
| 3.9 Trustworthiness.....   | 39        |
| 3.10 Ethical considerations .....                                  | 40        |
| 3.11 Conclusion .....  | 41        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>                           | <b>42</b> |
| 4.1 Introduction .....   | 42        |
| 4.2 Profile of the participants .....                              | 42        |
| 4.3 Thematic analysis.....   | 44        |
| 4.4 Analysis of the findings .....                                 | 45        |
| 4.4.1 Language-in-education policy .....                           | 45        |
| 4.4.3 Challenges of mother-tongue education .....                  | 53        |
| 4.4.4 Educators' perceptions of mother-tongue education.....       | 59        |
| 4.5 Discussion of the findings.....                                | 63        |
| 4.6 Conclusion .....   | 68        |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION .....</b> | <b>69</b> |
| 5.1 Introduction .....   | 69        |
| 5.2 Summary of the study .....                                     | 69        |
| 5.3 Research objectives revisited .....                            | 70        |
| 5.4 Contributions of the study.....                                | 73        |
| 5.5 Recommendations .....  | 74        |
| 5.5.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education.....    | 74        |
| 5.5.2 Recommendations to teachers .....                            | 75        |
| 5.5.3 Recommendations to the community .....                       | 75        |
| 5.6 Suggestions for future research .....                          | 76        |
| <b>REFERENCE LIST .....</b>  | <b>77</b> |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Appendices .....</b>   | <b>86</b> |
| <i>Appendix A: (KZN Department of Basic Education) Gatekeeper’s permission letter .....</i> | <i>86</i> |
| <i>Appendix B: Schools’ Gatekeeper’s permission Letter .....</i>                            | <i>88</i> |
| <i>Appendix C: Letter of information and Consent.....</i>                                   | <i>89</i> |
| <i>Appendix D : Questionnaire .....</i>   | <i>93</i> |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context of the study

Research has revealed that children learn best when their mother tongue is used as the primary medium of instruction (Churr 2013; Kioko et al. 2014; Bornman et al. 2014). It is in this light that Churr (2013:275) further argues that the mother tongue is:

...a person's natural means of self-expression and represents a learner's indigenous knowledge about his community's values, history and experience, which the education system should build on to when developing and educating him/her.

However, South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid led to English and Afrikaans being retained as the media of instruction throughout the country. This implies that the majority of learners whose mother tongue was not any of these two languages were compelled to study in a second or second additional language. With the dawn of democracy, South Africa's Constitution sought to redress the injustices of the Apartheid era by recognising 11 languages as official languages (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). In line with the Constitution, the Language-in-education policy was adopted in 1997, and it afforded all learners the right to receive education in their mother tongue (Department of Education 'Language in Education Policy' 1997). In line with this policy, indigenous languages were introduced as media of instruction in the foundation phase of schooling. This meant that "in Grades 1 and 2, all learners shall learn in the mother tongue, one that is approved as an official language and from Grade 3, a first additional language is introduced in addition to the language of instruction" (Stein 2017:210). Given these developments, one would have hoped for changes in terms of the use of indigenous language in South African schools. Instead, research has shown that mother-tongue education is still met with challenges such as language attitudes, unavailability of resources, language diversity, curriculum development among others, and this is evidence that mother-tongue education is still far from being a reality (Stoop 2017; Tshotsho 2013). While much research has underscored the importance as well as the challenges associated with mother-tongue education, there seems to be little attention on perceptions of educators and their role in the implementation of the said policy. It was for this reason that the researcher of this study sought to investigate perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education, as the researcher believes that educators are in a better position to

understand what works or does not work in the classroom. It is within this context that the study adopted the ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta and Tedder 2006) so as to understand the role of educators as agents of language policy implementation in South African schools.

## **1.2 Research problem**

South Africa has a language-in-education policy that supports mother-tongue education but implementation has only been in the first three grades in selected schools (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). While research has focused on the challenges associated with mother-tongue education (Metila et al. 2016, Gobana 2013), little attention has been paid to what educators think and perceive as far as the system is concerned. It is in this regard that this study sought to find out perceptions of educators on mother-tongue education, for the researcher believes that perceptions of educators will help in better formulating and implementing language policies in the education sector that lead to learners acquiring quality education in their home languages. This is because educators are in a better position to give insights on the matter as they are both products and agents of the educational system in South Africa.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The aim of this study was achieved by targeting the following objectives:

- To examine the language in education policy in the UThungulu district.
- To analyse the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.
- To investigate the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.

- To find out the perceptions of Foundation Phase educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.

## **1.5 Research questions**

The study was also guided by the following research questions:

- What is the language in education policy in the UThungulu district?
- How has mother-tongue education been implemented in the UThungulu District?
- What are the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education?
- What are the Foundation Phase educators' perceptions of the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district?

## **1.6 Literature review**

### **The Language in education policy**

According to Wright (2014), South Africa's post-apartheid language-in-education policy is among the best in the world. The adoption of this policy was the result of the desire of the post-apartheid democratic government to right the wrongs of the past by implementing an inclusive policy that would give every citizen a sense of belonging. The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates as follows:

- All official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably (Section 6.4).
- Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where education in that language is reasonably practicable (Section 29(2)).

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the language policy, the language policy is managed at three governance levels, which are the national, the provincial and the local levels (Churr 2013).

Following the Constitution, the Language-in-education policy was adopted in 1997. This policy afforded all students the right to receive education in their chosen mother tongue (Department of Education 'Language in Education Policy' 1997). This implies that the government recognises

the importance of promoting African languages and providing education in the learners' home languages. However, it is unfortunate that this policy is only good in writing as research shows that little has been done to ensure that this policy is implemented accordingly because presently, most South Africans prefer their children to be educated in English (Churr 2013; Marnewick 2015; Incremental Introduction of African Languages: Draft Policy 2013; Stoop 2017). The ecological approach to teacher agency enabled the researcher to look at teachers as agents, who could provide clear accounts of the factors hindering the implementation of mother-tongue education in their respective institutions.

### **Mother-tongue education in South Africa**

According to Gobana (2014: 50) "The mother tongue is the language with which children constructed their knowledge, skills and experiences from their community". This definition underscores the importance for children to learn in their mother tongue because it is the language that they speak and understand best. However, mother-tongue education implementation has been met with numerous challenges in other countries and in South Africa, which are, amongst others, the lack of skilled teachers, insufficient resources and society's attitude towards it (Stoop 2017). These challenges could be due to the mindset that indigenous languages have less value, which is one of the most painful legacies of the Apartheid era.

Gobana (2014: 51) argues that "in order to conceptualise content of the subject matters, in the first place, children have to understand the language of instruction". It is for this reason that the researcher believes that children should be taught in a language that they master the most as the three-year policy stipulates. According to a study by the RUTU Foundation (2013), the benefits of mother-tongue education are obvious in the sense that children enjoy school more, they learn faster and better, their self-esteem increases and there is more parental participation in helping the children at home. This implies that other than the cognitive and psychological benefits of mother tongue instruction, it also has social benefits for the learner.

### **Linguistic decolonisation in education**

Jaffe (2009:534) asserts that:

Language decolonisation describes both the action taken in postcolonial contexts to undo the social, political, and cultural effects of the dominance of colonial languages and a philosophical challenge to the Western language ideologies that underpinned the colonial project and that have persisted in the postcolonial period.

South Africa is one of the many African countries that were colonised and are still in the process of decolonisation. In the education sector, South African languages suffered a great deal during the colonial and apartheid era. Snijman (2019) asserts that while black South Africans were forced to focus on more pressing matters like survival and resistance against the apartheid regime, the white community had enough time and resources for the development of their language, Afrikaans, into an academic language. This created a huge setback for black South Africans as it meant that some would be able to get mother-tongue education and others would not as their languages are considered 'not scientifically and academically developed'. Linguistic decolonisation implies that such views have to change because if languages like Afrikaans could develop into a scientific and academic language, the same can happen to African languages (Mbude 2018). In other words, African languages can and should be developed into scientific and academic languages so as to make mother-tongue education a reality in Africa in general and South Africa in particular.

### **Teacher Agency in the language-in-education policy**

This study aimed to investigate perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education. The researcher decided to explore the educators' perceptions. This study adopted Biesta and Tedder's Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency as the theoretical framework (Biesta and Tedder 2006). This is because the researcher believes that educators are important in the formulation and implementation of policies in schools as they are both products and agents of the educational system, which puts them in a better position to understand what works and what does not work in the classroom. According to Biesta and Tedder (2007:137), "agency is achieved through the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors". In other words, the teachers' ability to achieve agency in a certain environment requires an interaction of their own personal efforts, resources and contextual and structural factors, that is, the setting of the environment in relation to culture and beliefs, and the education system. This view of agency was formulated to highlight the importance of looking at individuals and what they are able or not able to do, alongside cultures,

structures and relationships that shape their particular ecologies (Parker 2016). It is in this light that the researcher believes that teachers are important in the formulation of policies as they would be able to help inform the formulation of policies that would work for particular environments. This theory helped the researcher to underscore the reasons why teachers are important and why the researcher chose to investigate their perceptions. The theory provided tools with which the researcher was able to highlight the role of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education. Personal efforts were examined alongside the environmental factors such as cultures and beliefs, the resources made available to them and how the education system is set up. All these factors shed light on the realities of mother tongue educators as experienced by the educators who participated in the study.

## **1.7 Research methodology**

### **Research design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Crossman (2018:1),

Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places.

This means that qualitative research studies social life through the study of a particular, targeted group. In this study, the targeted group is Foundation Phase educators who have used or are using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The researcher adopted the qualitative approach with the intention of finding out what educators think about mother-tongue education, its implementation and to find out whether this system is having a positive or negative impact on learners in rural areas since they are not as exposed to English.

Bandhari (2020:1) is of the view that qualitative research often tries to preserve the voice and perspective of participants. She asserts that:

Qualitative research is good for natural settings where data collection occurs in real-world contexts. It is also good for revealing meaningful insights to enlighten others or for designing, testing or improving systems or products. Open-ended responses in this type



of study help with the generation of new ideas, which means that researchers can get more information than anticipated (Bandhari 2020:1).

This definition led the researcher to believe that qualitative research design was relevant for this study because the study aimed to investigate perceptions of educators therefore preserving the voice of the participant and this was done in a natural setting i.e., the schools. This study was also aimed at revealing these perceptions using questionnaires with open-ended questions for the purpose of gaining more insight on mother-tongue education and possibly improving the implementation of mother-tongue education in schools.

A case study research design was used for this study. Thomas (2013) indicates that a case study deals with in-depth research into one or multiple cases. In the same light, Schoch (2016: 246) asserts that:

A case study gives you an opportunity to collect different kinds of data, such as interviews, documents, observations, surveys, and others, about the case and provides you with the chance to get an in-depth look at an organization or individual and the inner workings and interactions of that organization or individual.

What this implies is that a case study can be a certain situation or institution or even an individual. It was in this regard that the case study design was relevant to this study as the researcher was conducting an investigation of specific primary schools and it was advantageous because it gave the researcher a chance to get close to the situation in order to get an in-depth perspective of the phenomena to be studied.

In this study, the researcher adopted a multiple-case study method. According to Gustafsson (2017:1), a multiple-case study is used when a study includes more than one single case to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases and to analyse the data both within each situation and across situations. This indicates that the researcher investigates more than one institution or individual and then analyses the data from within and across situations or institutions. The researcher of this study chose a multiple-case study because the study was conducted at 5 different schools and because a multiple-case study provides trustworthiness in research especially if the researcher is expecting similar or contrasting findings from the different cases. The researcher was able to analyse the findings of each school individually and compare them to findings from other schools.

By using multiple primary schools in the UThungulu District, the researcher was able, through questionnaires to get an in-depth look at the situation of mother-tongue education in that area and was able to generalize it to KwaZulu-Natal at large. The researcher distributed the questionnaires across the schools and educators filled them in. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions that were aligned with the overall research questions and open-ended questions designed to allow participants to voice out their own opinions and suggestions. The open-ended questions allowed research participants to talk about mother-tongue education in their own words, free of the constraints imposed by fixed-response questions and provided a platform to add their opinions rather than just answering the posed questions, therefore providing more insight on the matter.

### **Target population**

Target population in research is defined as “the total group of individuals from which the sample might be drawn” (McLeod 2019: 1). The researcher chose a group with specific characteristics which are in line with their investigation. The researcher collected data from these individuals. The target population for this study were the educators in primary schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. This study collected data from 30 educators in 5 different schools in the UThungulu district.

### **Sample size and sample method**

Sampling is defined as “the process of selecting a representative group from the population under study” (McLeod 2019: 2). This means that the researcher cannot collect data from each member of the group; they have to create a sample. “By studying the sample, the researcher should be able to draw conclusions that are generalizable to the population of interest” (Sekaran & Bougie 2016: 237). In this study, a purposive sampling method was used. “A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study” (Crossman 2019: 1). Data was collected from 30 educators in 5 schools in KwaZulu-Natal. This method of sampling ensured that data was collected from participants who are experienced in the field and therefore had the answers to the questions presented to them.

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The researcher used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to select schools:

- School had to be in the rural area of the UThungulu District because this is where the focus of the study is.
- School had to be using mother tongue at Foundation Phase. This is because the study is based on schools that offer mother-tongue education.

The researcher used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants:

- Educator had to be a Foundation phase educator because mother-tongue education is only implemented at Foundation Phase.
- Educator had to have been teaching Foundation Phase for 3 years or more because the researcher wanted to collect data from participants who are experienced and are capable of answering the questions posed to them.

## **Data collection**

The researcher recruited 30 participants from the 5 schools in KwaZulu-Natal and used Questionnaires as a data collection tool. Questionnaires were used because study has revealed that “questionnaires are useful for gathering original data about people, their behaviour, experiences and social interactions, attitudes and opinions, and awareness of events” (McLafferty 2010; Parfitt 2005 cited in McGuirk et al. 2016). The researcher used close and open-ended questions because this type of questionnaire allowed the participants to give a detailed answer and thus enabled the researcher to get more information on the matter. The researcher used phone calls and emails to approach and recruit participants and used emails to send and receive questionnaires and signed documents. The researcher chose this method of collecting data to ensure that what is recorded is the true perception of the participant and not the researcher’s observations and conclusions.

## **Data analysis**

“Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research. Indeed, the qualitative researcher is often described as the research instrument insofar as his or her ability to understand, describe and interpret experiences and perceptions is key to uncovering meaning in particular circumstances and contexts” (Maguire & Delahunt 2017: 3351). The data collected was analysed using a thematic analysis method. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’)

within qualitative data” (Braun and Clarke 2017:1) which means that this is a method used to identify and break down patterns of meaning in a data set. They go on to add that “the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed” (Braun and Clarke 2017: 1). The researcher chose this method of analysing data because it enabled her to identify themes in the data set and could therefore make a sound conclusion.

Braun and Clarke (2019) further assert that thematic analysis can either be inductive or deductive. Inductive thematic analysis requires the themes to be generated from the data collected, while deductive thematic analysis requires the data to be generated before the data is collected (Braun and Clarke 2019). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used deductive thematic approach to analyse the data that was collected. The researcher saw it fit to use the deductive approach because she believed that it would provide precision and clarity throughout the research project. The researcher therefore generated themes based on the study’s research objectives, research questions and existing literature. This meant that the questions asked in the questionnaire were also determined by the objectives of the study and research questions. The themes that emerged were:

- 1) Language-in-education policy
- 2) Implementation of the language in education policy
- 3) Challenges to implementation
- 4) Perceptions of educators on mother-tongue education.

For the analysis, the researcher went through the questionnaires and familiarized herself with the data by actively reading the answers provided in the questionnaire multiple times, noting items of interest and organizing responses according to the themes. This method was effective because it allowed the researcher to grasp the overall ideas of the participants and therefore interpret the data more effectively.

### **Limitations of the study**

According to Lechtenberg (2013), “the limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of the results of your study”. The limitation of this study was that it was a case study of just 5 schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. This meant that the findings would be limited to those 5

schools. Secondly, it would be limited to primary school educators only. Lastly, the findings would be limited to the period in which the study would be conducted.

## **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) presented four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as a way to develop trustworthiness in qualitative research (cited in Cope 2014: 89).

Credibility is described as “referring to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher” (Cope 2014: 89). Shenton (2004:63) highlights that “in addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented”. With this in mind, the researcher ensured credibility by verifying the participants’ answers with other participants with the same profile.

Cope (2014: 89) defines confirmability as “the researcher’s ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants’ responses and not the researcher’s biases or viewpoints”. The researcher ensured confirmability by describing how the researcher came to their conclusions and interpretations and clarify via examples that the findings were derived directly from the data.

Cope goes on to describe transferability as “findings that can be applied to other settings or groups” (2014: 89). Many researchers (Stake 1994; Firestone 1993; Denscombe 1998) disagree on the concept of transferability since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, therefore it is difficult to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations. However, Firestone (1998) suggests that it is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer. The researcher achieved this by providing sufficient information on the participants and the research context to enable the reader to associate the findings with their own experiences.

“Dependability suggests that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar findings would be obtained” (Shenton 2004:

71). This implies that the researcher needed to give a detailed explanation of all the steps in the research and in this study the researcher provides a detailed account on the research design and its implementation, what was done in the field and evaluation of the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

### **Ethical considerations**

The rights of human subjects and their right will be taken into consideration. Their confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation was explained to them in the letter of informed consent. The researcher provided questionnaires for participants to fill in. The questions were clear and easy to answer. The research was conducted via emails as agreed upon by the teachers and researcher. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to answer.

## **1.8 Structure of the dissertation**

This study is structured as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this chapter, the introduction and overview of the research, the background to the study, aims and objectives, significance, statement of the problem and the research scope were explained.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter reviewed the existing literature and presented the theoretical framework of the research.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This section covered the research approach, data collection and data analysis. The researcher went into details and clarified how the study was conducted.

#### **Chapter 4: Presentation of data and analysis**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collected, analysed it accordingly and discussed the findings.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

This section presents the conclusion and makes recommendations for better implementation of mother-tongue education as well as offers suggestions for future research.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in rural areas. The researcher believes that perceptions of educators will help in better designing and implementing language policies in education and educators are in a better position to give insight on the matter as they are both products and agents of the education system in South Africa. This chapter first explores the language-in-education policy, highlighting the socio-linguistic situation of South Africa, language in education policies and how they have evolved from the colonial and apartheid era to the new South Africa. Subsequently, the chapter dissects the term linguistic decolonisation, which is the backbone of mother-tongue education, giving specific attention to its importance and how it has been experienced in South African schools and society. Thereafter, the chapter discusses mother-tongue education; why it is important and how implementation has been going. Lastly, this chapter discusses in detail the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

## 2.2 The Language-in-education policy in South Africa

This section focuses on the language-in-education policy in South Africa. It starts with a discussion on the socio-linguistic situation of South Africa, the language policy of the country before delving into the language-in-education policy.

### 2.2.1 The socio-linguistic situation of South Africa

South Africa is a multilingual country with 11 official languages, which are all afforded equal status. In addition to the official languages, South Africa is home to about nineteen other languages (Alexander 2018:1). This indicates that there are more languages used in household settings that are not official languages. Alexander (2018:1) also reveals that “most South Africans are multilingual, which means that they are able to speak at least two or more languages”.



“According to Stats SA’s Community Survey of 2019, nationally, just over one quarter (25,3%) of individuals spoke isiZulu at home, while 14,8% of individuals spoke isiXhosa, and 12,2% spoke Afrikaans. English, which is the dominant language of administration and education, was spoken by only 8,1% of individuals at home, making it the sixth most common home language in South Africa. English is, however, the second most commonly spoken language outside the household (16,6%) after isiZulu (25,1%), and preceding isiXhosa (12,8%) (Government of South Africa: 2020). Even though English is the main lingua franca in South Africa, most people only use English for work purposes or in situations where speakers do not understand each other’s languages. This is because the majority of South Africans are black and multilingual, which means that they are able to communicate in different African languages within their community.

Looking at these statistics, it can be noted that implementation of mother-tongue education is a complex but necessary task because South Africans are multilingual, and they value their own languages. Multilingualism refers to the use of more than one language in a particular society. It is also used to refer to individuals who each speak more than one language (Nordquist 2019:1). Multilingualism is therefore a reality in South Africa because we do not only have many languages co-existing in the country, but we also have a majority of the population speaking more than one language (SA Languages 2009:1). The co-existence of different languages within the same context in South Africa is more prevalent in urban centres, while the rural areas portray a more monolingual picture. It is for this reason that most schools that offer mother-tongue education in African languages are situated in the rural areas. It is for this reason that the research site for this study is in rural Kwazulu-Natal, where isiZulu is the dominant language of communication, and people only come into contact with English when they go to school.

## **2.2.2 Language policy in South Africa**

This section discusses the South African language policy as enacted by the South African government. According to Shakil et al. (2016), a policy is “a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol”. Shakil et al. believe that policy is made with the

intention to achieve a certain goal and is implemented by agents of that policy as protocol. With regard to language policy, Johnson (2013: 9) defines it as:

a policy mechanism that impacts the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language and includes official regulations – often enacted in the form of written documents, intended to effect some change in the form, function, use, or acquisition of language – which can influence economic, political, and educational opportunity.

Johnson's interpretation of language policy is that it is a documented process with regulations that bring about change in the structure, function, use and acquisition of language to influence opportunities in economics, politics and education. On their part, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: xi) define language policy as "a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system". Kaplan and Baldauf therefore see language policy as a set of rules and/or regulations that are put in place by authorities like governments as language procedure or protocol to effect change in society.

Looking at all these definitions of language policy, it can be noted that the common theme is that language policy is a set of rules, laws and regulations put in place to preserve or change the status and use of languages. For a multilingual context like South Africa, a language policy is important as it ensures that all languages are recognised and that everyone has a place in society. It was in this regard that the post-apartheid government in South Africa changed the number of official languages from two to eleven, with the inclusion of nine African languages. This was meant to influence opportunities for African indigenous languages in economics, politics and education. However, there are inherent challenges to this language policy when it comes to education, which include the lack of resources, shortage of trained teachers in mother-tongue education, lack of standardised versions of these languages due to different dialects and the negative language attitudes of the very people who are meant to receive mother-tongue education.

When South Africans gained freedom in 1994, a new Constitution had to be drawn up to ensure that the rights of all citizens were recognised. It was within this context that an inclusive language policy was adopted in 1996, which was underpinned by the need to promote equality and non-racialism (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). It is stipulated in Section 6.4 of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably," and in Section 6.2 that "the state must take practical and

positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages”. This means that all newly official indigenous languages are meant to be developed and used as languages of business, education and government, equivalent to previously advantaged languages which were English and Afrikaans. This approach was a fair and excellent approach that promised to include all individuals in business, economics and education, regardless of their language, culture or race.

It is also enacted in Section 6.3 of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that:

- “(a) The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages”; and
- “(b) Municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents.” The new language policy also impacted on the use of indigenous languages in education as stipulated in Section 29.2 of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that “Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.” This means that everyone is given the right to choose the language in which they receive education, where reasonably practicable.

This section of The Constitution indicates that government should balance the language needs of a certain province or municipality when choosing an official language. This means that they have to consider which language is used most, which language residents prefer, but also consider practicality and expense when it comes to the languages of education. The practicality and expense part of this statement is confusing as it means that some students will be deprived of a chance to exercise their right to receive education in the language of their choice if it is too costly or impractical.

Each province in South Africa has adopted its own language policy following the provisions of Sections 6, 9, 29, 31 and 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996). For the purpose of this study, the researcher looks at KwaZulu-Natal’s provincial official languages which were adopted on the basis of the province’s demographic trends according to the Census survey conducted in 2011 (Statistics South Africa 2012:23). The province recognizes IsiZulu, English, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sesotho and SiSwati as the province’s main official languages (KZN Use of Official Languages Policy: 2020). This means that these are the languages that the provincial government uses for official documentation and are the languages

learners can choose from when choosing their language of education. Additionally, section 6.2 of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) gives the school governing body the power to determine the language to be used in the school. It indicates that “The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the Constitution, this Act and any applicable provincial law”. This section of the Schools Act then takes away the freedom of the learners to choose the language of education for themselves and gives this right to the School Governing Body. This means that learners are not exactly exercising this right but rather the decision is made for them by the schools.

### **2.2.3 Language-in-education policy**

South Africa is said to have one of the most appropriately articulated language in education policies in the world, one which offers students the right to choose the language in which they receive education, which implies that all information is to be communicated to them in their mother tongue should they choose to receive education in their own languages (Bostock 2018: 29). However, this does not mean that what is written down is a reality for South Africans as this policy has not been implemented for the benefit of all learners. So far, mother-tongue education in indigenous languages is only offered in the foundation grades and mostly in the rural areas, which means that the majority of Black learners in South Africa still do not enjoy the right to study in their mother tongue. Ohyama (2018:1) is of the view that due to its history of language inequality under apartheid, an inclusive and dynamic language policy has an important role to play in building a linguistically and culturally diverse South Africa. This means that for South Africa to achieve real linguistic and cultural diversity, it is mandatory to have a language policy that is flexible enough to take into consideration education in all languages spoken in their territory. This includes mother tongues, especially in rural areas where children are less exposed to the English language. It is for this reason that this researcher sought to investigate the implementation of mother-tongue education in selected schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal so as to understand the challenges involved and the reasons why the policy has not been extended beyond the foundation grades.

Much research has been done on the concept of mother-tongue education and has revealed that children learn best through mother-tongue education (Churr 2013:1). This indicates that the mother tongue is a solid foundation on which learners can build onto when learning, as they are most familiar and comfortable with it. However, when it comes to implementation, many obstacles stand in the way. This is why the policy has so far been implemented only at the

foundation stage of primary schools in South Africa. This is partly due to the belief that society has on African languages; that African languages cannot be fully developed into academic and scientific languages and how English is considered the language of civilisation and success. People have not been educated enough about the benefits of mother-tongue education and as a result, parents and learners still prefer receiving education in English because they believe it will give them a better chance to compete in the world of work, since the dominant languages in the South African job market are English and Afrikaans. This means that the majority of South Africans who are not native English speakers have to compete with people who received education in English or Afrikaans as their mother tongue, which further exacerbates the level of inequality amongst races in the country.

## **2.3 Mother-tongue education in South Africa**

This section discusses linguistic decolonisation, mother tongue and mother-tongue education, moving to the importance of mother-tongue education and finally, implementation in South Africa.

### **2.3.1 Linguistic decolonisation**

One of the legacies of colonisation on the African continent has been the adoption of European languages as official languages in most African countries. This has resulted in the further relegation of indigenous languages to insignificant status and adversely affected the educational performances of Africans who are compelled to study in languages that they do not master (Wolff 2018:1). This also makes it difficult for Africans to compete in the formal economic sector where European languages dominate. It is for this reason that in recent years, there have been calls for African countries to decolonize their language policies and educational systems. The call is for schools, colleges, and universities to cultivate respect for people and their cultural and knowledge systems (Fataar 2018: 7). This is even more significant in the case of South Africa, which was a victim of both colonialism and apartheid; two systems which deprived black people of their rights to racial, economic, linguistic and cultural equality in their own country. Post-apartheid democratic government of South Africa sought to dismantle the system that had been put in place by colonialism and apartheid, by implementing policies that would lead to a more equal society (Endoh 2015:71). It was in this context that there was a need for educational and linguistic decolonisation to take place so that Black people would have equal rights and

opportunities in accessing education and using their languages in all spheres of life. This researcher therefore believes that the importance of mother-tongue education in South Africa can be better understood when considered within the context of linguistic decolonisation.

Decolonisation is the process of discarding the culture of the previous colonial powers and embracing your own (Betts 2010: 23). During the colonial period, indigenous people were made to believe that their languages were inferior and that destroyed their love for their own languages and culture, therefore shifting their beliefs to the Western culture and Western language ideologies. This seems to have made it easy for the colonisers to take over and rule them in their own countries. This is known as linguistic imperialism. According to Agyekum (2018: 88), linguistic imperialism is “a linguistic situation where the indigenous people are gradually conscientised to shun their indigenous languages and adopt foreign languages because of the benefits they expect to derive from them. They are made to believe that their languages cannot be used in any transaction in education, economics, science and technology but instead a foreign language is the best (Agyekum 2018: 88). Agyekum highlights what is a reality in South Africa as people have been made to believe that their languages are a barrier to their success and that English is the language of work, education and business. This means that linguistic decolonisation is necessary to undo the damage of colonialism in African societies.

Jaffe (2009:534 cited in Agyekum 2018) indicates that “Linguistic decolonisation describes both the action taken in postcolonial contexts to undo the social, political, and cultural effects of the dominance of colonial languages and a philosophical challenge to the Western language ideologies that underpinned the colonial project and that have persisted in the postcolonial period”. In other words, linguistic decolonisation is the steps taken to destroy the Western language ideologies that supported colonialism and that affected people socially, politically and culturally. This is relevant to this study because mother-tongue education cannot be possible if African languages are still regarded as inferior and colonial languages put on a pedestal. The best way to fight the psychology of colonialism is through education, starting with the discarding of English as a medium of instruction.

Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o also ties English with imperialism. He identifies rejection of English as an important part of the decolonisation process (cited in Lunga 1997). Ngũgĩ argues that colonialism’s most powerful weapon against peoples’ collective defiance is what he calls, the “cultural bomb.” He indicates that the effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in

their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.” (cited on Biji 2019:1). This means that colonialism stripped Africans of their cultures and conditioned them to think that they were less than they were. This propelled black people to bear Western- and Christian names and shun black cultural practices. They therefore slowly shifted from who they were, which made it easier for them to be manipulated into thinking that the whites were superior, especially when it came to language. It is exactly for this reason that linguistic decolonisation is necessary in African countries like South Africa, especially in education.

The South African education sector has been grappling with the issue of linguistic decolonisation for the past 25 years. Although policies have been made to address it, implementation has been a challenge. These policies were founded on promoting equality, non-racism and giving all South Africans a place in society. It is in this regard that (Lafon 2009: 6) asserts that:

In spite of the lofty principles spelt out in the Constitution, support for the use of African languages as Language of Learning & Teaching 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 media of instruction available in schools

This statement implies that the promise that every learner can exercise the right to choose their language of education remains a dream to many South Africans.

When the South African government adopted the language in education policy which indicated that children had the right to choose a language in which to receive their education, this created a sense of hope for the erosion of past linguistic myths in society. This lofty promise has however, not been easy to implement. This is especially true for rural schools where students in rural KwaZulu-Natal are taught in their mother tongue for only the first three years of schooling, after which the medium of instruction changes to English for the rest of their schooling career. These students are taught in a language that they are not familiar with and as a result, they fail or drop out of school completely. This researcher therefore believes that more efforts need to be made by all relevant stakeholders to ensure that linguistic decolonisation in the education sector becomes a reality. It is in this regard that this study is undertaken to find out the challenges involved in the implementation of mother-tongue education in rural KwaZulu-Natal, so as to recommend possible solutions to address the challenges.

### 2.3.2 Importance of mother-tongue education

The term 'mother tongue' has been defined by different scholars and organisations who, to some extent, seem to agree on a similar idea. UNESCO (2008: 6) is of the view that 'mother tongue' or 'mother language' refers to a child's first language, which is the language that a child learns from older family members in the home. In the same light, Savage (2019:1) refers to the mother tongue as "your first language or native language" highlighting that "it is the language that you most commonly speak". Gobana (2014: 50) is of the view that the mother tongue is the language that a child uses to construct his/her knowledge, skills and experiences from his/her immediate community. This researcher contends that all these scholars are right in their views on mother tongue; however, in a linguistically diverse context like South Africa, a child could be familiar with a number of languages at home and in the community. For example, a mother could speak isiZulu, while the father speaks Sesotho, and the whole community at large has speakers of seven other languages. This indicates that it is possible for a child to be familiar with more than one language at a young age. This situation is however quite rare in the rural areas where this study was conducted because it is a more homogenous community in which almost everyone speaks isiZulu.

Mother-tongue education refers to "a system of multilingual education which begins with or is based on the learners' first language or mother tongue" (Ssentanda 2014: 21). This implies that the learner's mother tongue is used as the language of learning and teaching, including assessment. Mother-tongue education, especially in linguistically diverse contexts has been largely debated with some scholars supporting it and others against it. It seems to have grown into an interesting field of research over the years as Kioko et al. (2014:1) reveal that although a lot of information is available on the benefits of mother-tongue education, this information does not seem to have reached the stakeholders whose buy-in is essential for meaningful changes to take place. This implies that although evidence has shown that mother-tongue education is best for learners, but those responsible for making it a reality continue to look away. This is why mother-tongue education is still as under-developed as it is.

The question of mother-tongue education has been an issue in many countries especially previously colonised countries and developing countries. The UNESCO GEN Report (2016) recommends that children should be taught in a language they understand. However, about 40% of the global population still do not have access to education in their mother tongues. This



is also the case for most South Africans who live in rural communities. Cooper (2017) argues that “while the implementation of mother-tongue education could be costly and time-consuming, it has beneficial effects in reducing dropout rates and increasing academic achievement when implemented effectively” (Cooper 2017:1). This researcher believes that while the cost factor is a reality in the South African case, it would be a mistake to abandon mother-tongue education because increased academic achievement and low dropout rates means children grow up to be contributing members of society with less unemployable youth and thus ultimately, less criminals. This is exactly why mother-tongue education is essential and the government needs to find out from teachers how they could better design the relevant policies for smooth implementation.

In the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2016), the following findings were revealed:

- a) In many western African school systems, French continues to be the main language of instruction, so the vast majority of children are taught from the early grades in a language with which they have limited familiarity. This seriously hampers their chances of learning. In Côte d'Ivoire, 55% of grade 5 students who speak the test language at home learned the basics in reading in 2008, compared with only 25% of the 8 out of 10 students who speak another language.
- b) In the Islamic Republic of Iran, around 20% of grade 4 students taking the test in Farsi, the official language of instruction, reported speaking a different language at home. Of these, 80% reached the basics in reading, compared with over 95% of Farsi speakers.
- c) Similarly, in Honduras, in 2011, 94% of grade 6 students who spoke the language of assessment at home learned the basics in reading in primary school compared to only 62% of those who did not.
- d) In Peru, the difference in test scores between indigenous and non-indigenous children in grade 2 is sizeable and increasing. In 2011, Spanish speakers were more than seven times as likely as indigenous language speakers to reach a satisfactory standard in reading. (UNESCO GEM Report 2016: 2).

These findings are a clear indication that language plays a huge role in academic achievement. This is in line with Churr's (2013) findings that children do better when they learn in their mother tongue. Recent evidence now claims that at least six years of mother tongue instruction –

increasing to eight years in less well-resourced conditions – is needed to sustain improved learning in later grades for minority language speakers and reduce learning gaps (Heugh et al. 2007; UNESCO 2011 cited in UNESCO 2016: 3). This implies that in South African rural areas, at least 8 years of mother-tongue education is required for learners. This is a far cry for the current situation in which children do only three years of mother-tongue education in poorly resourced conditions.

Many scholars (Cummins 2001; Kioko et al. 2014; Cooper 2017) have underscored the importance of mother-tongue education. According to Cummins (cited in Kioko et al. 2014), children with a solid foundation in their home language develop stronger literacy skills when exposed to a different language later in the educational system, and they find it easier to transfer their knowledge and skills across languages. This indicates that the mother tongue is an essential backbone in the learning of the child, and it helps with the acquisition of a second language. This is contrary to the erroneous view that it is important for children who are not mother tongue speakers of English need to start their education in English so that they will have a mastery of the language by the time they leave school.

Kioko et al. (2014: 5) further argue that the use of the home language in school is necessary for children to:

- a) successfully make a bridge between their experiences of learning at home and learning at school,
- b) help children learn concepts and vocabulary faster, thus bringing them to quick reading and understanding skills,
- c) encourage active participation by children in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and can effectively answer the questions posed to them and
- d) develop confidence in using both their language and the second language for higher level thinking, rather than just repeating or memorizing what has been taught. (Kioko et al. 2014: 5).

These benefits of mother-tongue education are exactly what children in the classroom need. Learning in their own languages promotes active learning which means they are able to grasp more and remember easily because the information they received came in a familiar language.

Similarly, the RUTU Foundation reported that there are many benefits when children study in their mother tongue, such as:

- Children learn better and faster in a language they can understand (preventing delays in learning)
- Parents' participation is increased. Parents can help with homework and can participate in school activities
- On average, the schools perform better, reporting less repetition
- Finally, schools report children stay in school longer.

This indicates that learning in your own language helps you perform better in school and this is what is needed for rural students to stay longer in school and perform better academically.

Stoop (2017: 21) goes on to add that:

When children start their schooling and education, it is a new social environment for them, and, in order to ease this transition, learning in a mother tongue is pivotal, since it provides a bridge from the "known" to the "unknown".

This implies that mother-tongue education makes life easier for children. All these benefits are however overlooked in society because of the social myths associated with English.

In a country like South Africa that prioritizes equality, it is an injustice that most children cannot exercise their right to receive education in their mother tongue, while there are children who enjoy the benefits of learning in their own mother tongue from grade 1 to 12. Weybright et al. (2017: 2- 3). report that school dropout rates in South Africa have reached crisis proportion with about 60% of learners dropping out before the completion of high school. They further assert that 52% of learners would have repeated a grade by the time they reach Grades 10–12, while 9% of 12th Graders repeat a grade, three times or more (Weybright et al. 2017: 2). These statistics are a clear indication that South African learners experience hardships in their schooling career, which leads them to explore other avenues for success because they are discouraged by failing and assume that school is not for them. Language seems to be one of the major factors that contribute to high dropout rates and academic failure, since English and Afrikaans are the only languages which are used as media of instruction up to Grade 12. The situation is even more dire in the rural areas, such as rural KwaZulu-Natal, where learners are

only exposed to English at school. This makes school a foreign place for them which is uncomfortable to be in. This is one of the reasons why it is essential to consider mother-tongue education for all learners, and not only foundation stage learners, as one way to curb the dropout and failure crises.

### **2.3.3 Implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa**

When a policy is put in place, implementation is the next expected step. Implementation, by definition, is the process of putting a decision or plan into effect (Oxford University Press 2019). In South Africa, a language policy that recognizes 11 official languages was put in place as a way of redressing linguistic injustices of the apartheid era. In the education sector, this policy offers students the right to choose the language in which they receive education. Section 29(2) of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) asserts that “everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where education in that language is reasonably practicable”. This indicates that the South African government recognises the importance of receiving education in one’s mother tongue. The implementation of the policy however remains a problem as the policy is currently only implemented at the foundation stage and mostly in the rural areas (Marnewick 2015: 1). It is in this regard that this researcher believes that educators can play an important role in providing the necessary guidance needed for effective implementation, because they know what works and what does not work in the classroom.

Currently, all school subjects in South Africa are taught in English from grade one to grade twelve in most schools, and at the foundation stage before switching to English in Grade four for a few other schools (Marnewick 2015: 1). The latter is true for learners in rural KwaZulu-Natal where this study was conducted, as they are taught in their mother tongue for only the first three years of schooling, after which the medium of instruction changes to English for the rest of their schooling career. This then creates a shift on how they perceive school because there is no longer that linguistic bridge that connects the known to the unknown (Marnewick 2015). It is for this reason that Kioko et al. (2014: 2) have argued that black learners are victims of an injustice as compared to the white counterparts because they still face the nightmare of starting school in a foreign medium of instruction which is different from the language that they speak at home. This leads to a high failure and dropout rate, which in widening the poverty gap between blacks and whites in South Africa. It is within this context that this researcher believes

that mother-tongue education among black South Africans should be encouraged, and the government should make efforts to ensure that the policy is implemented beyond the foundation stage.

Foley (2015) has also underscored the benefits of mother-tongue education. He however, asserts that such a policy is fraught with implementation challenges, such as language development, curriculum development, teacher education and school implementation, which he elaborates as follows:

- a) **Language development:** The written forms of indigenous official languages have not yet been fully developed to function as media of instruction, even at the foundation stage (Foley 2015: 1). The standard written forms of these languages therefore need to be codified, regularised, modernised and disseminated. This can be done by the “revision of spelling and orthography rules, elimination of dialectal variation, enlargement of vocabulary, creation of modern dictionaries and codification of grammars based on the current practices of speech communities” (Foley 2015: 1).
- b) **Curriculum development:** Curriculum is the pillar of any learning institution (Alvior 2014: 1). This means that schools or universities cannot exist without a curriculum and curriculum development is a planned, purposeful, progressive, which is planned and developed to achieve the desired educational outcome. Currently, the only subject curricula which exist in indigenous languages are the African languages as subjects themselves, while the rest are available in English and Afrikaans only (Foley 2015:1). To address this challenge, the first step to be taken should be the translation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (the RNCS) into indigenous languages, in a way that amplifies and clarifies the subject-specific terminology in indigenous languages (Foley 2015:1). This suggestion is significant in the sense that such actions would help to develop the capacity of African languages for use in academic discourse.
- c) **Teacher education:** Foley reveals that there is a crisis in the African languages teacher supply. He asserts that:

When the responsibility for teacher education was transferred from the former colleges of education to the universities, the numbers of students enrolling for

African language courses at universities dwindled, for various reasons, to almost nothing (Foley 2015:1).

This indicates that there is less students enrolling for African language teaching, which means less supply of African languages teachers. It is also necessary to remember that the problem is not with teachers of African languages but rather the ability to teach all subjects in African languages. To address this challenge, he recommends that the curriculum of African languages at tertiary institutions should be revised for the effective learning of these languages as vehicles of academic discourse (Foley 2015:1). He further opines that the entire curriculum used in the training of educators, including all official school subjects should be translated into all African languages (Foley 2015:1). This researcher believes that these suggestions would be beneficial if considered because they would lead to more students enrolling to study African languages from which they would graduate with a better capacity to teach all subjects in indigenous languages.

- d) **School implementation:** After all is said and done, the real question and real challenge remains; the question of whether schools will adopt the policy and implement it thoroughly. This is the biggest challenge to mother-tongue education because the policy cannot be forced upon parents and learners.

Foley (2015:1) contends that for mother tongue policy to be effectively implemented, the relevant stakeholders such as government education officials, management of schools, educators, as well as parents and learners, would have to be convinced of the benefits of the policy. In other words, these stakeholders need to see that education in African languages would lead to economic empowerment, social mobility and possibilities for further academic opportunities (Foley 2015:1). This is necessary because all the efforts in making this a reality would be in vain if the idea is rejected by those who are meant to implement it or benefit from it.

This researcher believes that Foley's (2015) interpretation of the challenges involved in the effective implementation of a mother-tongue education policy in South Africa as well as his suggestions to address the challenges are valid and relevant because they reflect the reality of mother-tongue education in South Africa.

## 2.4 Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency

This study adopts Biesta and Tedder's Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency as the theoretical framework. According to Guoyuan (2020:2), "Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of education quality". In the same light, Biesta et al. (2015: 624) see teacher agency as the teacher's active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions – for the overall quality of education." This means that teacher agency is the teacher's ability to decide how to teach in order to achieve their goals and to provide quality education. In the ecological view, teacher agency is positioned within the contingencies of contexts in which agents act upon their beliefs, values, and attributes they mobilize in relation to a particular situation (Guoyuan 2020:1). This means that the ecological view situates teacher agency within the contexts that teachers find themselves in and this is where they make decisions that best suit their particular ecologies.

According to Biesta and Tedder (2007:137), "agency is achieved through the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors". In other words, each environment, and each teacher are different and the teacher makes decisions on how to teach depending on factors such as their own individual beliefs and knowledge, the resources available to them and contextual factors, which are society beliefs and how the education system is set up. This ecological view of agency was formulated to underscore the importance of looking at the abilities and constraints of individual teachers in a context that is shaped by specific environmental factors (Parker 2016). This indicates that the environment is important as it determines what the teacher can and cannot do in their respective ecologies.

In the context of this study, this means that the decisions that these educators make are influenced by their experiences in teaching in a rural environment, the resources at their disposal and the community influence of the rural setting. This indicates that the specific environment in which a teacher works, influences the nature and extent of the agency that the teacher can exert on his or her practice. This researcher adopted this theory because it provides tools with which the researcher will be able to highlight the role of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education, which are individual efforts which talk to the teacher's individual beliefs and willingness to conduct lessons in the mother tongue, the environmental factors such as cultures and beliefs, the resources made available to them and

how the education system is set up. All these factors will determine the educator's decisions when exercising their agency in that particular environment.

These factors play a major role in the achievement of teacher agency, and this is why it is important to look at the teacher's ability to teach under different environments and ecologies. This means that teachers are the ones who know what happens in class and whether it is possible to implement mother-tongue education in a certain environment. It is for this reason that the researcher believes it is important to investigate the teachers' perceptions on mother-tongue education, because they are in a better position to know the effectiveness of the policy or the absence thereof.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a detailed view of mother-tongue education in South Africa. The chapter has discussed the socio-linguistic situation of South Africa, the language policy of the country with specific attention to the language-in-education policy, the concept of linguistic decolonisation, as well as Biesta and Tedder's Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The next chapter will present the research methodology that was used for the study.



# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of this study were to:

- examine the language in education policy in the UThungulu district
- analyse the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district
- investigate the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district
- find out the perceptions of Foundation Phase educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.

This chapter describes the research methodology used in the study. It therefore outlines the research design, target population, sampling size and sampling method, recruitment process, data collection method, data analysis, limitations of the study, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

## 3.2 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Crossman (2018:1),

Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places.

This means that qualitative research studies social life through the study of a particular, targeted group. In this study, the targeted group is foundation phase educators who have used or are using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The researcher adopted the qualitative approach with the intention of finding out what educators think about mother-tongue education, its implementation and to find out whether this system is having a positive or negative impact on learners in rural areas since they are not as exposed to English.

Bandhari (2020:1) is of the view that qualitative research often tries to preserve the voice and perspective of participants. She asserts that:

Qualitative research is good for natural settings where data collection occurs in real-world contexts. It is also good for revealing meaningful insights to enlighten others or for designing, testing or improving systems or products. Open-ended responses in this type of study helps with the generation of new ideas, which means that researchers can get more information than anticipated (Bandhari 2020:1).

This definition led the researcher to believe that qualitative research design was relevant for this study because the study aimed to investigate perceptions of educators therefore preserving the voice of the participant and this was done in a natural setting i.e., the schools. This study was also aimed at revealing these perceptions using questionnaires with open-ended questions for the purpose of gaining more insight on mother-tongue education and possibly improving the implementation of mother-tongue education in schools.

A case study research strategy was used for this study. Thomas (2013) indicates that a case study deals with in-depth research into one or multiple cases. In the same light, Schoch (2016: 246) asserts that:

A case study gives you an opportunity to collect different kinds of data, such as interviews, documents, observations, surveys, and others, about the case and provides you with the chance to get an in-depth look at an organization or individual and the inner workings and interactions of that organization or individual.

What this implies is that a case study can be a certain situation or institution or even an individual. It was in this regard that the design was relevant to this study as the researcher was conducting an investigation of specific primary schools and it was advantageous because it gave the researcher a chance to get close to the situation in order to get an in-depth perspective of the phenomena to be studied.

In this study, the researcher adopted a multiple-case study method. According to Gustafsson (2017:1), a multiple-case study is used when a study includes more than one single case to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases and to analyse the data both within each situation and across situations. This indicates that the researcher investigates more than one institution or individual and then analyses the data from within and across situations or institutions. The researcher of this study chose a multiple-case study because the study was

conducted at 5 different schools and because a multiple-case study provides trustworthiness in research especially if the researcher is expecting similar or contrasting -- from the different cases. The researcher was able to analyse the findings of each school individually and compare them to findings from other schools.

By using multiple primary schools in the UThungulu District, the researcher was able, through questionnaires to get an in-depth look at the situation of mother-tongue education in that area and was able to generalize it to KwaZulu-Natal at large. The researcher distributed the questionnaires across the schools and educators filled them in. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions that were aligned with the overall research questions and open-ended questions designed to allow participants to voice out their own opinions and suggestions. The open-ended questions allowed research participants to talk about mother-tongue education in their own words, free of the constraints imposed by fixed-response questions and provided a platform to add their opinions rather than just answering the posed questions, therefore providing more insight on the matter.

### **3.3 Target population**

Target population is defined as “a group of individuals or participants with the specific attributes of interest and relevance” (Asiamah 2017:1612). This means that the researcher identifies a group of people with specific attributes relevant to the research being conducted. In this study, the target population was educators in primary schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. These educators have been teaching foundation phase for 3 years or more. The researcher chose them because they are experienced on the topic of study and are capable of answering questions and giving suggestions on mother-tongue education. Data was collected from 30 educators in 5 different schools in the UThungulu district. Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 243) highlight that having a target population is important because one cannot collect data from the entire population if dealing with a large population as this will cause fatigue and subsequently cause unnecessary errors. This implies that researchers need to identify a specific group of people who have the information that they are looking for. In this case, educators are the ones in the front line of education. They are expected to carry out the syllabus effectively to the learners and therefore they are the ones who can shed light on mother-tongue education, based on their experiences.

### **3.4 Sample size and sample method**

Sampling is defined by McLeod (2019:1) as “the process of selecting a representative group from the population under study”. This means that during this process the researcher selects a group of people to represent the members of a larger group. The researcher then creates a sample because it would be challenging to collect data from each member of a large group. Similarly, in this study, the researcher selected a smaller group of educators with specific attributes to represent all educators. The researcher then used data collected from the smaller group to generalize them to the larger population that is being researched. The findings from this sample were then studied and analysed in order to draw conclusions. This approach is also supported by Sekaran & Bougie who highlight that “by studying the sample, the researcher should be able to draw conclusions that are generalizable to the population of interest” (2016: 237).

In this study, a purposive sampling method was used. Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher selects participants based on who is likely to provide the best information for the research objectives (Etikan et al. 2017: 1). This implies that the researcher focuses on participants who have the needed information and are willing to make it available to the researcher. The researcher chose educators for this study because they are both products and agents of the school system in the country, which gives them a better understanding and experience on what happens in the classroom, the challenges that both educators and students face and what can be done to ensure that one day learners receive education in their mother tongue. These are 30 educators from 5 schools in KwaZulu-Natal. This method of sampling ensures that data is collected from participants who are experienced in the field and have the answers to the questions presented to them.

### **3.5 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

According to Patino et al. (2018:1), inclusion criteria are the key features of the target population that help investigators to answer their research questions. This means that these are the desirable characteristics of the target population which could interfere with the quality of the findings of the study. They further state that exclusion criteria are:

features of the potential study participants who meet the inclusion criteria but present with additional characteristics that could interfere with the success of the study or increase their risk for an unfavorable outcome (Patino et al. 2018:1).

This means that inclusion and exclusion criteria help to ensure that the researcher chooses the appropriate target population for the study in order to get data that will answer the research question.

For this study, the researcher used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the schools:

- School must be in the rural area of the UThungulu District because this is where the focus of the study is.
- School must be using mother tongue at Foundation Phase. This is because the study is based on schools that offer mother-tongue education.

The researcher used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants:

- Educator must be a foundation phase educator because mother-tongue education is only implemented at foundation phase.
- Educator must have been teaching foundation phase for 3 years or more because the researcher wants to collect data from participants who are experienced and can answer the questions posed to them.

### **3.6 Data collection**

Data collection is an important aspect of research. This is where the researcher uses a specific approach to collect information, one that will ensure that the data collected is sufficient and relevant to the topic of interest. Kabir (2016: 202) defines data collection as “the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes.” In this study, the researcher adopted the qualitative research approach and used a survey method to collect data. The researcher chose to use a survey method to collect data. Survey method is defined by Bluemke et al. (2017: 308) as “a research strategy in which information is systematically collected from a relatively large sample taken from a population.”

In other words, a survey is a method of gathering information from a fraction of the population being studied. The researcher of this study adopted a survey method because she intended to gather information from a particular group of teachers, which in this case were foundation phase teachers in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

The data collection instrument adopted for this study was a questionnaire. Kabir (2016: 208) asserts that “a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from participants.” In other words, a questionnaire is a document consisting of questions and prompts that researchers use to gather information on a particular topic. The researcher structures these questions in a way that allows them to gather relevant information.

The researcher used a questionnaire consisting of close and open-ended questions. “Close-ended questions offer a limited number of answers. They are intended to provide a precise, clearly identifiable and easily classified answer” (Fauvelle 2019:1). This means that these questions do not allow the participant to express their thoughts; they are only made to select one answer. The close-ended questions used a Likert scale, which is defined as a psychometric scale that has multiple categories from which participants choose to indicate their opinions, attitudes, or feelings about a particular issue (Nemoto & Beglar 2014: 2). On this scale, participants can express how much they agree or disagree to a given statement. Fauvelle defines an open-ended question as “a question that allows the participant to express himself or herself freely on a given subject” (2019:2). The open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to give a detailed answer using their own words and thus helping the researcher get in-depth information on the matter.

The questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter that explained the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of the study and assurance of the participants’ anonymity and confidentiality. The participants filled these questionnaires themselves and mailed them back to the researcher. The researcher opted for questionnaires because of the advantages that they enable the researcher to gather data from the participant without the researcher making their own assumptions, conclusions or observations since it is only the participant who can give information about their own experiences; they are cheap to administer, they do not require special skills and also because the study has revealed that “questionnaires are useful for gathering original data about people, their behavior, experiences and social interactions, attitudes and opinions, and awareness of events” (McLafferty 2010; Parfitt 2005 cited in McGuirk et al. 2016).

The researcher recruited 30 participants from the 5 schools in KwaZulu-Natal using phone calls and emails to approach and recruit participants and then used emails to send and receive questionnaires and signed documents. The phone numbers and email addresses of the different schools were found on the internet upon researching about the schools. Phone numbers were used in cases where email addresses were not found on the internet and when emails were not responded to. Participants were approached via phone calls and emails due to the COVID-19 pandemic that prohibits travel and personal contact. A letter of information was emailed to the principal to explain the purpose of the study. The letter also included the researcher and supervisor's details and ethical considerations. The principal then approached the educators for their consent and to ensure that they are willing to participate in the study.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

This study used thematic analysis as a method of analysing data. According to Kampira (2021:3), "the word 'theme' relates to the degree and/or intensity of occurrence of an expressed idea on a specific subject. Thus, the more expressed an idea is, the more likely that it is a theme of a subject". This implies that a theme is the main idea of a specific topic of discussion or interest. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data" (Braun and Clarke 2017:1) which means that this is a method used to identify and break down patterns of meaning in a data set. They go on to add that "the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed" (Braun and Clarke 2017: 1).

Similarly, Peterson (2017:1) asserts that "thematic analysis involves immersing oneself in the data in order to identify common ideas or themes that emerge based on the phenomenon under investigation and that resonate with the research questions posed in the study". This implies that this method is used to deduce meaning from a data set in order to provide answers to the research questions. Thematic analysis requires the researcher's data interpreting skills because a theme is "subjective in nature" (Kampira 2021:4), which means that different individuals can extract different themes from the same data set.

Braun and Clarke emphasize that this method is uniquely flexible which gives the researcher freedom to analyse and present findings in their own way. Nowell et al. (2017) believe that

thematic analysis' flexibility and ease of use is its core advantage. They assert that it is basic yet very helpful in querying the meaning of qualitative data. It is because of its flexibility that thematic analysis can be conducted under the guidance of different theoretical approaches such as inductive and deductive thematic analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2019), during inductive thematic analysis "the interpretation of data and development of themes is guided by the content in a dataset where concepts and theories are developed with the analysed data as a starting point" (cited in Kampira 2021:5). This indicates that using an inductive approach means that the researcher generates themes from the data set. This is where the researcher actively goes through the data set to identify recurring patterns of meaning to generate themes. For the purpose of this study, the researcher uses deductive thematic analysis. These two scholars, Braun and Clarke (2019) also assert that during a deductive thematic analysis, "themes are developed with reference to existing concepts, theories and evidence where concepts and theories are tested for applicability, rather than developed from the data" (cited in Kampira 2021:5). They further explain that this means "existing research and theory provide the lens through which we analyse and interpret data". This indicates that themes are generated before data is collected, which means that the questions asked in the data collection instrument are informed by existing literature, the research questions and research objectives of the study being conducted.

The researcher saw it fit to use the deductive approach because she believed that it would provide precision and clarity throughout the research project. The researcher therefore generated themes based on the study's research objectives, research questions and existing literature. This meant that the questions asked in the questionnaire were also determined by the objectives of the study and research questions. The themes that emerged were:

- 1) Language-in-education policy
- 2) Implementation of the language in education policy
- 3) Challenges to implementation
- 4) Perceptions of educators on mother-tongue education.

For the analysis, the researcher went through the questionnaires and familiarized herself with the data by actively reading the answers provided in the questionnaire multiple times, noting items of interest and organizing responses according to the themes. This method was effective



because it allowed the researcher to grasp the overall ideas of the participants and therefore interpret the data more effectively.

### **3.8 Limitations of the study**

According to Lechtenberg (2013), “the limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of the results of your study”. This means that limitations are those factors that hinder generalizability and use of findings as a result of how the study is structured. In this study, the limitations were that:

1. this is a case study of just 5 Primary schools in the UThungulu District, which means that findings are only limited to those 5 schools,
2. the participants are primary school, foundation phase teachers only,
3. the findings are limited to the period in which the study is conducted,
4. the study is limited to rural schools only
5. these schools use mother-tongue education at foundation phase.

The above-mentioned limitations imply that other studies in different districts and different African languages may reveal different findings to those of this study.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) presented four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as a way to develop trustworthiness in qualitative research (cited in Cope 2014: 89).

Credibility is described as “referring to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher” (Cope 2014: 89). In this study, the researcher ensured that the participants are educators of mother-tongue education and this means that they know exactly what the challenges and advantages of mother-tongue education are. Shenton (2004:63) highlights that “in addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented”. With this in mind, the researcher ensured credibility by verifying the participants’ answers with other participants with the same profile.

Cope (2014: 89) defines confirmability as “the researcher’s ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants’ responses and not the researcher’s biases or viewpoints”. The researcher ensured confirmability by describing how the researcher came to their conclusions and interpretations and clarify via examples that the findings were derived directly from the data.

Cope (2014: 89) goes on to describe transferability as “findings that can be applied to other settings or groups”. Many researchers (Stake 1994; Firestone 1993; Denscombe 1998) disagree on the concept of transferability since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals therefore it is difficult to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations. However, Firestone (1998) suggests that it is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer. The researcher achieved this by providing sufficient information on the participants and the research context to enable the reader to associate the findings with their own experiences.

“Dependability suggests that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained” (Shenton 2004: 71). This implies that the researcher needs to give a detailed explanation of all the steps in the research and in this study the researcher gave a detailed account on the research design and its implementation, what was done in the field and evaluation of the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

The rights of human subjects and their right was taken into consideration. Their confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation was explained to them in the letter of informed consent. The researcher provided questionnaires for participants to fill in. Though the questions were clear and easy to answer, participants were given a chance to ask questions for more clarity. The research was conducted via emails as agreed upon by the teachers and researcher. The questionnaires and all documents were sent to the teachers and upon completion, the teachers sent them back to the researcher. Teachers indicated that the questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to answer.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the research design used to achieve the findings of this research. This chapter has outlined the research design, the target population, the sampling size and sampling method, the recruitment process, the data collection method, the data analysis method, the limitations of the study, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data that was collected.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the data collected through the study. A questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants, then continues with an outline of the approach used to analyse the data, a presentation and discussion of the findings.

## 4.2 Profile of the participants

The participants in this study were 30 educators from 5 different primary schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. These educators had been teaching foundation phase for 3 years or more. Purposive sampling was used to select these participants. “Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher selects participants based on who is likely to provide the best information for the research objectives” (Etikan et al. 2017: 1). The researcher chose these participants specifically because of their experience in teaching learners using the mother tongue which puts them in a better position to provide information that would address the research objectives and give suggestions on the improvement of mother-tongue education. The researcher believes that the information given by these participants is valuable for the purpose of the study.

For confidentiality and anonymity reasons, these schools and participants’ names were represented by a coding system. The codes given for schools were A-E and participants were coded with numbers from 1-6 on each school. An illustration of how participants and schools were coded is presented below.

**Table 4.2.1: Illustration of coding system used for participants and schools.**

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
|  |  | Code |
|--|--|------|

|          |  |                                  |
|----------|--|----------------------------------|
| School A | Participant 1<br>Participant 2<br>Participant 3<br>Participant 4<br>Participant 5<br>Participant 6 | A1<br>A2<br>A3<br>A4<br>A5<br>A6 |
| School B | Participant 1<br>Participant 2<br>Participant 3<br>Participant 4<br>Participant 5<br>Participant 6 | B1<br>B2<br>B3<br>B4<br>B5<br>B6 |
| School C | Participant 1<br>Participant 2<br>Participant 3<br>Participant 4<br>Participant 5<br>Participant 6 | C1<br>C2<br>C3<br>C4<br>C5<br>C6 |
| School D | Participant 1<br>Participant 2<br>Participant 3  | D1<br>D2<br>D3                   |

|          |               |    |
|----------|---------------|----|
|          | Participant 4 | D4 |
|          | Participant 5 | D5 |
|          | Participant 6 | D6 |
| School E | Participant 1 | E1 |
|          | Participant 2 | E2 |
|          | Participant 3 | E3 |
|          | Participant 4 | E4 |
|          | Participant 5 | E5 |
|          | Participant 6 | E6 |

The researcher anticipated a total of 30 participants and achieved a 100% participation rate. Data saturation was therefore achieved with this participation rate.

### 4.3 Thematic analysis

As discussed in chapter 3, the researcher uses thematic analysis to analyse data. This was done using a deductive thematic analysis approach. In using the deductive thematic analysis approach to analyse data, the researcher generated themes based on the study's research objectives, research questions and existing literature. This meant that the questions asked in the questionnaire were also determined by the objectives of the study and research questions. The themes that emerged were:

- 1) Language-in-education policy
- 2) Implementation of the language in education policy
- 3) Challenges to implementation
- 4) Perceptions of educators on mother-tongue education.

For the analysis, the researcher went through the questionnaires and familiarized herself with the data by actively reading the answers provided in the questionnaire multiple times, noting items of interest and organizing responses according to the themes. This method was effective because it allowed the researcher to grasp the overall ideas of the participants and therefore interpret the data more effectively.

Data analysis in this study was also influenced by the theoretical framework that drives the study. The researcher adopts Biesta and Tedder's Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency (Biesta and Tedder 2006) as the theoretical framework that drives this study. Their theory views teacher agency as something that is achieved rather than possessed by the teacher. This implies that a teacher's ability to exert influence depends on certain factors that shape their particular ecologies. This means that teachers make decisions based on their individual knowledge and beliefs, the environment they are in and how the education system is set up. These factors shape the teacher's agency during the lesson.

## **4.4 Analysis of the findings**

This section focuses on the presentation and analysis of the findings that came out of the responses of the participants. These findings are organized according to the themes underpinning the analysis of the data.

### **4.4.1 Language-in-education policy**

The researcher asked participants if they thought that the 3-year language policy had good educational benefits for the learners. The importance of this question is that the researcher wanted to find out what educators think of the language-in-education policy put in place for them to implement since the Constitution of South Africa offers all learners the right to receive education in their mother tongue. 60% of the educators agreed that the policy was beneficial while 40% disagreed. This means that while most educators believe that mother-tongue education has benefits for learners, a significant portion of them do not share the same view. Those who responded positively to the policy expressed the view that children learn more and learn easily because they learn in a language that is not foreign to them. This is in line with studies that have shown that using the appropriate and familiar language for teaching and learning ensures that learners receive quality education as it is administered in a language that they understand so they grasp content more readily. A case in point is participant C6 who said

that, *“The language policy in place right now helps children learn more because they learn in a language that they understand.”*

It is however important to note that not all participants share the same sentiments on the matter. Some of them believe that it is unnecessary and does more harm than good. For example, participant A6 said:

*This policy of language means that there can be no diversity in schools. It takes us back to apartheid where learners were separated and children could not attend any school that they wanted. It is fine being implemented in the first 3 grades because they need English since it is used as a global language.*

The response of the above participant highlights the implications of the language-in-education policy during the years of apartheid, and how the need to address past injustices to continue to influence policy decisions in present day South Africa. This is why the issue of the language of teaching and learning in schools remains a sensitive topic in South African history as memories of the 1976 Soweto Uprising where students protested against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in local schools remain fresh in the minds of South Africans.

The language-in-education policy had to change when South Africa gained its freedom in 1994. The new government needed to make changes that would accommodate all South Africans and the language policy had to be one of those changes. The South African Constitution now provides for the protection and promotion of the country's 11 official languages. Therefore, it is stipulated in Section 6.4 of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that “all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably”. As a result, the education sector also had to develop a language policy that was going to ensure that all these official languages are integrated into the education system. Section 29(2) of The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) asserts that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where education in that language is reasonably practicable. This means that all learners are afforded the right to learn in a language that they prefer to ensure that they receive quality education because it is believed that learners learn best when they learn in a language that they know and understand. However, when asked to express their thoughts about the policy, some participants expressed the idea that black learners are still at a disadvantage when it comes to the mother-tongue education policy, as compared to their English-speaking counterparts.



Most of the participants felt that the past injustice of marginalizing African languages has not been sufficiently addressed, as black children still do not have the possibility to study in their mother tongue at all levels of education. In this regard, participant D1 indicated that:

*Our children are really in a disadvantaged position because they only get to use their languages during the first three years of school while other races get taught in their language from day 1 to university.*

This participant's response touches on the issue of linguistic inequality of the education system in South Africa, highlighting that African learners only use their own languages as languages of teaching and learning at the foundation level while English-speaking learners use their language throughout their schooling career. This is in line with Alexander's argument (2003:15) that only native speakers of English and Afrikaans enjoy the advantage of studying in their mother tongue at all levels of the educational system.

The responses from the participants also revealed that the majority of educators recognise the benefits of this policy for their learners, as 60% of the participants agreed that the current 3-year mother-tongue education policy had educational benefits for learners. The participants added that the policy was beneficial because it also helped the learners when they had to transition to English as a language of instruction in Grade Four, because the teachers usually used the mother tongue to explain concepts at the initial stage of the transition, so as to make the transition smoother and less disruptive to the learners. In this regard, Participant E3 indicated that "Mother-tongue education helps children learn better because they learn in a familiar language". Participant B3 also highlighted the fact that "*Mother-tongue education plays a huge role in introducing the child to the world of learning. It helps the child transition well from home environment to school environment.*"

Other participants did not however see any benefits in this policy and instead believed that the policy would put learners at a disadvantage when they would have to compete with English-speaking learners later in life. According to Participant C3:

*mother-tongue education delays children with regards to learning English because eventually they switch to English instruction anyway, plus it means that the child is losing out on 3 years of using English as language of instruction so this policy is a waste of their time.*

The above response is a clear indication that opinions on the topic of mother-tongue education are still divided, even among educators who are supposed to implement the policy. It could therefore be argued that the lack of effective implementation of the policy could be because some educators who implement the policy do not believe in the benefits of the said policy. It is for this reason that this researcher believes that educators need to be consulted for their opinions during the conceptualization of mother-tongue education policies.

Considering the amount of studies that have indicated the importance of mother-tongue education, the researcher saw it fit to ask educators whether the promotion of this policy was sufficiently done. 27% of them indicated that they were not sure of whether the policy was well promoted or not, while 73% indicated that the policy had not been well promoted. It is interesting to note that not even a single participant admitted that the policy had been sufficiently promoted. This goes to show that the dialogue on this policy has been very limited, and there is need for this to change because for a country that was subjected to apartheid and segregation, active promotion of indigenous languages as a language of education is just as important as affording them an official status. This could involve public information campaigns to educate teacher, parents, students, and other stakeholders on the benefits of the policy and dispel any misconceptions/misinformation about its value (Pinnock 2009; UNESCO UIL & ADEA 2011; Clegg 2005; Erling et al. 2016 cited in Boateng 2019:10).

Another question that participants were asked in the questionnaire was on the possibility of extending the mother-tongue education policy beyond Grade 3 and even continuing to tertiary studies. In their responses, 60% of the educators were not in favour of the policy extending beyond Grade Three, 27% were in favour and 13% were not sure. This indicates that most teachers do not agree with the idea of all learners receiving education in their mother tongue. Those who were against the extension of the policy indicated that they thought it should remain at the Foundation Phase because they believed that South African languages are not developed enough to provide quality education in these languages. In this regard, Participant A4 said:

*Teaching in IsiZulu is hard because it is underdeveloped and I feel that in these times of civilization, children should learn in a language that is recognized around the world. Mother-tongue education helps children in introducing them to the education system and to sort of break the ice. It is only good for foundation phase.*

The response of this participant is in line with Stoop's (2017: 21) assertion that children should learn in their mother tongue at the initial stage of schooling because it provides a bridge that eases the transition from the home to the school environment.

It is significant to note that while the majority of the educators who participated in the study indicated that mother-tongue education was beneficial for learners, an even higher majority were not in favour of extending this policy beyond the foundation phase of education. It could therefore be argued that even though the policy is beneficial, its implementation may not have been done satisfactorily, thereby raising doubts about the effectiveness of the policy. Another reason could be the absence of policy provisions for a smooth transition from the mother tongue medium foundation phase to the English medium senior phase of primary education. This leaves the teachers to devise measures such as code-switching in class in order to help the learners to transition smoothly. It is for this reason that this researcher believes that educators have an important role to play in advising on how best to design and implement mother-tongue education.

#### **4.4.2 Implementation of the Language-in-education policy**

The researcher sought to know what educators thought of the way the mother-tongue education policy was being implemented. This was because effective implementation is necessary for the success of a language policy. The questions on the implementation of the policy focused on the role of the government and that of the schools in the implementation of the policy.

##### **4.4.2.1 The role of government in implementing the language-in-education policy**

The researcher asked participants what they think could be done to improve the implementation of the language-in-education policy and more educators indicated that the government could put more effort in developing Africa languages into languages of higher function. After 1994, the South African government decided to form The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) to promote multilingualism in South Africa by taking the responsibility to construct the conditions for the development of and the equal use of all official languages, to initiate and implement projects that promote languages, to set primary standardization processes in place and to set primary terminology development processes in place among other strategies of addressing language inequality in South Africa. This was a positive initiative towards the

implementation of language policy and the development of African languages, especially for education.

PanSALB works on developing the nine indigenous languages by developing dictionaries in these languages, standardizing them by means of developing rules and standards, spelling and orthography, developing terminology and popularizing the new terms, promoting the development of literature in these languages and providing support to the teaching and learning of these languages by translating and providing learning materials in the nine indigenous languages. This indicates that the government has been working on the development of previously marginalized languages in South Africa. However, while this language board is doing so much for the development of these languages, data collected for this study indicated that it was not enough because teachers still talked about lack of appropriate terms for particular subjects. This indicates a gap between terminology development and dissemination of the new terminology, especially in the education sector. PanSALB therefore needs to do more in ensuring that terminology that is developed is disseminated expeditiously so that it gets into textbooks and the classroom early enough.

The researcher also sought to know whether government had made resources available for teaching and learning in the mother tongue. This is because this researcher believes that the government has the responsibility to provide resources for educators and for learners in order to facilitate learning. This includes teaching materials such as textbooks, teacher and student guides and also to host workshops regularly to ensure that educators are trained to teach in the mother tongue. Participants admitted to being provided with textbooks that present subject matter in the mother tongue. This marks some form of progress for the implementation of mother-tongue education as this means that learners have the learning materials that they need to learn. However, the participants also emphasised the language limitations in these textbooks, especially regarding the fact that the terminology is not adapted to the language realities of the learners. According to Participant C5, *“The IsiZulu terms used in textbooks are not the usual words that children are used to, I feel that it is like learning the language all over again, even for me as a teacher.”*

This raises concerns as languages are subjected to change over the years as they are transmitted from one generation to the next and new terminology is needed by educators. Words are borrowed, new pronunciations emerge and this requires continuous development from the language boards and adequate dissemination of terminology developed for

educational purposes. The terminology developed should be put in the hands of the teachers so as to assist them in using the mother tongue as a language of teaching and learning.

#### **4.4.2.2 The role of schools in implementing the language-in-education policy**

The schools have a role to play in the implementation of language policies. During the course of this study, this researcher identified that the participating schools had been making efforts to implement the language-in-education policy by actively selecting an African language as the language of teaching and learning in the foundation phase and that teachers had been exercising their agency to overcome challenges that they come across when using the mother tongue as a language of instruction. This will be discussed below.

##### **4.4.2.2.1 Selection of African languages as media of instruction**

It is worth noting that primary schools, especially in rural areas have been using IsiZulu as the medium of instruction in their schools. Participants indicated that IsiZulu is being used at Foundation Phase. This is a positive step towards implementation of the language-in-education policy. However, they did indicate that it does not come without challenges which often means that they have to improvise so as to ensure that they reach the learning outcomes for their learners. It is also worth remembering that the government provides a choice to use any official language in schools and by choosing an African language as their medium of instruction, these schools are making an effort to implement the language-in-education policy and to ensure that they do not infringe on their learners' right to receive education in their mother tongue.

##### **4.4.2.2.2 Teacher Autonomy**

When it comes to teaching in the mother tongue, it is important to note that teachers play a significant role which often requires some degree of teacher autonomy. These educators admitted to making certain autonomous decisions with regards to how they teach in the mother tongue. They code-switch, which is not allowed but they say that because of the conditions they teach under, they are forced to use borrowed words or sometimes English words. This is where

the teachers exert their agency to ensure that their learners understand the subject matter. According to The Glossary of Education Reform (2014),

...the concept of teacher autonomy refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it.

This definition underscores the influence of the teacher as an agent of the education system. It highlights the freedom to make decisions on how to teach, which in this case is which language they can use to get through to their learners. Teachers in South African schools are not fully autonomous in the sense that they are supervised especially regarding the curriculum and language of teaching and learning. However, during the course of this study, the researcher learned that teachers do make decisions on how they teach their learners which indicates that they do enjoy some form of autonomy albeit unofficial. It is in this regard that Cray (1997:36) has asserted that:

Language policies are most commonly developed and implemented by individuals far removed from the classroom; at the classroom level, language policy is realized in different ways depending on teachers' perceptions and understanding of the policy and the local conditions of implementation.

The reality of implementing mother-tongue education policies lies with the educators and their agency is usually instrumental for them to succeed. In this regard, Participant B3 said, *"The most common challenge is terminology. There is not enough IsiZulu words to teach all subjects smoothly, we always have to code-switch."*

Educators who participated in this study admitted to deviating from the language of teaching and learning because of the challenges that they face during their lessons by using a method called code-switching. This is due to the fact that the challenges they face in class require them to make such decisions in order to ensure that they get through to their learners and that learning outcomes are achieved. This shows how the agency of teachers manifests itself in the specific ecologies within which the teachers operate.

The majority of these educators seem to have the same method of addressing the language discrepancies of the resources at their disposal. This indicates a major problem in the full implementation of this language policy as it means that the language that teachers use to teach has been influenced by available resources. Considering this finding, it is quite safe to say that

implementation of the language policy in these schools is hindered by environmental factors and resources at their disposal, which has to be brought to the attention of language policy stakeholders by including educators in policy making so as to know what exactly works and does not work in the classroom and that can only be done by including the agents of the education system.

#### **4.4.3 Challenges of mother-tongue education**

The researcher asked the participants whether there were challenges in the implementation of the language-in-education policy and an alarming 100% of responses agreed to having challenges. This is in line with Foley's (2015) findings where he revealed that mother-tongue education has been met with difficulty when it comes to implementation. Participants mentioned challenges such as language development, teacher training, society attitudes, lack of resources and curriculum development. It is important to note that languages do not develop incidentally, they require planning. It is in this regard that Reagan 2002 (cited in Mohohlwane 2020: 4) has argued that:

A good language planning policy or approach should apply four criteria: firstly, desirability, whether the community believes in the policy goal; secondly, justness, whether the policy is fair and equitable; thirdly, effectiveness, whether the policy achieves its objectives; and lastly, tolerability, whether the policy is resource-sensitive or viable within its context.

Thorough planning is therefore necessary for the effective implementation of a language-in-education policy. For this study, the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education in UThungulu district identified by the participants included the problem of terminology, the negative attitude of the community, the lack of training and the lack of adequate resources.

##### **4.4.3.1 Ill-adapted terminology for mother tongue teaching**

The main challenge that the participants of this study mentioned was language development. These educators complained about the level of isiZulu that teacher guides and textbooks were written in. Participant D2 said:

*The IsiZulu that we teach these children is not the same as normal, everyday IsiZulu that they will use at home, which makes school a totally different environment and it makes the job harder for us because you still have to translate the content into normal, modern IsiZulu.*

Similarly, participant E1 said, *“The challenge is teaching everything is IsiZulu when there are not enough words to help the child understand. We often have to use English here and there.”*

These responses indicate that African languages have not been developed enough to carry academic matter, even in the Foundation Phase. The participants mentioned the fact that they had to resort to English or use borrowed words for learners to understand because the standard written forms of isiZulu do not fully accommodate teaching and learning.

Other educators indicated that the textbooks in IsiZulu contained words that were mostly used a long time ago, and learners do not understand them. This means that there is a need for the language to be modernized into regular, everyday language so as to help learners understand what they are being taught. In this regard, Participant C5 said that, *“The IsiZulu terms used in textbooks are not the usual words that children are used to, I feel that it is like learning the language all over again, even for me as a teacher.”* In the same light, Participant A2 indicated that *“Lack of appropriate terms is a problem because the words that are used are not everyday conversation words, it is just dictionary IsiZulu, which confuses the children.”*

The above responses are a clear indication that language developers are out of touch with the speech communities of these indigenous languages, which is why such problems occur in the classroom. Cekiso et al. (2019) conducted a similar study on IsiXhosa as a medium of instruction at Foundation Phase and found that teachers who used material written in IsiXhosa complained that the vocabulary used was not user friendly to learners. They define it as old, deep and traditional as compared to the modern IsiXhosa that is now mixed with words from other languages. This is also the reality for the IsiZulu language. Words that are used in textbooks are unfamiliar to the children and to teachers as well. This will help save teachers from confusing learners with IsiZulu and English, given the fact that these learners are not yet proficient in the English language.

It is worth mentioning that the standard forms of most African languages were developed in many cases by 19th century European missionaries (Krause 2018 cited in Sibanda 2019), and



there is need for these languages to be constantly modernized in order to reflect the modern speakers. Foley (2015: 1) has also argued that the standard written forms of the nine indigenous official languages as they exist cannot fully function as languages of teaching and learning and should therefore be modernized, regularized, codified and elaborated.

In order to overcome these linguistic challenges, the participants indicated that they resort to code-switching between English and isiZulu so as to facilitate understanding. Participant E4 indicated that:

*It is difficult to conduct a lesson purely in IsiZulu, especially when it comes to Mathematics. Children learn to count in English before they come to school and that is how everyone in the community counts, now we have to teach learners to count in IsiZulu and know the months of the year in IsiZulu when they will not even use that at home.*

In the same light, Participant B3 said, *“The most common challenge is terminology. There is not enough IsiZulu words to teach all subjects smoothly, we always have to code-switch.”*

What this implies is that due to the absence of some terms in IsiZulu, teachers had to make use of English words to make sure that learners understand the content, especially for mathematics and technology subjects. These are problems that policy stakeholders may not be aware of because they do not deal with the challenging task of day-to-day implementation of the policy. It is for this very reason that this researcher argues for the inclusion of educators during policy making processes to ensure that they come up with effective strategies to address these challenges.

The use of code-switching, which is the alternate use of two languages or two varieties of the same language in one conversation (Webb et al. 2008:32), to resolve linguistic challenges during teaching in the mother tongue underscores the agency of educators in the classroom. In other words, when faced with a teaching problem that is peculiar to a specific socio-cultural context, teachers initiate strategies, which are not contained in the mainstream teaching strategies, to solve the problem. It is this phenomenon that Biesta and Tedder (2006) refer to as ecological agency, given that the teacher’s agency is the result of contextual factors which are peculiar to his or her environment of practice. It is for this reason that this researcher adopted the ecological agency theory for this study, as she believes that it is a valuable tool with which to understand the role of educators in implementing education policies.

#### 4.4.3.2 Negative attitude from the community

Another challenge that educators identified as hindering the success of mother-tongue education was the attitude of the community towards mother-tongue education. All the participants indicated that the rural community was not in favour of the policy. They mentioned that society had no confidence in the future of African languages when it came to learners' progress in life. They believed that these learners needed a good command of the English language because it is a universal language that would open success doors for them. Participant B6 indicated that *“Society does not value mother-tongue education. They prefer English because they believe it guarantees a better future for their children”*. In a similar light, Participant E2 said that:

*Society is in favor of the English instruction for learners since it is a language that is used in the world of work. They believe that English ensures that learners have a fighting chance in surviving after high school.*

By looking at these responses, it is clear that parents in the rural areas are still attached to the idea of English being superior to African languages. This is in line with what some studies have revealed. Mohohlwane (2020:1) asserts that when asked in the South African Social Attitudes Survey which language should be the main language of instruction in the first three years of school, participants have increasingly favored English, which is a problem for the provision of mother-tongue education because the government cannot force the public to take what they do not want. On the other hand, this poses a threat to the development of African languages. Similarly, Crystal (2003 cited in Reilly 2019:2) contends that:

Mother tongues and local languages are often viewed as having value as languages of cultural identity whereas international languages such as English are perceived as being valuable for social and economic mobility.

This means that indigenous languages are not considered valuable enough for high-function settings such as education, economics and technology.

Parents in the rural areas send their children to public schools because they cannot afford to pay fees for them and in these public schools, they learn in their own languages for the first three grades. Although some studies have shown that a good command of the mother tongue allows for better acquisition of a second language, society is still worried that mother-tongue education would mean that learners get less exposure to the language which would propel them

further in life. This is in line with Awung and Makhubu's (2016:9) argument that the dominance of English in the South African economic sector has led to the belief that fluency in the language is a guarantor of economic success. This is quite concerning because the responsibility of choosing a language of teaching and learning in a school is the School Governing Board, the same body which is made up of parents and educators of that particular school. If parents are skeptical of the success of mother-tongue education, there is a likelihood that their skepticism would influence the actions of the School Governing Board when it comes to language policy matters. The participants of this study attributed the negative attitudes of parents to the society's lack of awareness of the benefits of mother-tongue education.

#### **4.4.3.3 Lack of training for teaching in the mother tongue**

The importance of teacher training for teaching in the mother tongue cannot be stressed enough. Training provides teachers the skills necessary to overcome challenges in the classroom and ensure that learners receive quality education. The researcher asked these participants if they get training for teaching in the mother tongue. They indicated that they did not get sufficient training in their colleges and universities when it came to teaching in the mother tongue. They mentioned that they were taught how to teach African languages as a subject but not how to use an African language as a medium of instruction. In this regard, Participant D6 said, *"We are trained to teach home languages as subjects and not how to use these languages as languages of instruction, that part you figure out yourself."* Similarly, participant E2 says, *"Teachers do not get trained to use their mother tongue to teach. There is no module that teaches how to use mother tongue for every subject."*

From these responses it is evident that teacher training is a challenge for the effective implementation of mother-tongue education. This is in line with Foley's (2015) observation that "the problem is not with teachers of African languages but rather the ability to teach all subjects in African languages". The lack of sufficient teacher training for teaching in the mother tongue has serious implications for the end goal of this policy which is to provide quality education for all. It means that there is a shortage of skilled teachers in the education system, which results in poor quality education for black learners in the country. For a country that is battling with equal education, teacher training should be taken seriously, especially with the consideration that black South Africans were marginalized in terms of quality education during the apartheid era which resulted in the majority of the black community becoming unskilled workers who earn

less than they need to survive. This helps to plunge the black community into poverty and stretches the arms of economic inequality. A lack of quality education means that the next generation will be further plunged into poverty and frustration because they will not understand why their education cannot work for them in their fight to alleviate poverty.

The lack of training makes it challenging for educators to effectively teach in the mother tongue. As a result, they exercise their agency by coming up with their own strategies to ensure that learners understand the subject matter. As it has already been revealed, code-switching and content translation are some of the strategies used by these teachers to overcome linguistic challenges in the classroom. While it is important to note that these teachers are not qualified translators and their actions may lead to poor translation which may adversely affect the quality of learning, their actions underscore the importance of teacher agency in mother-tongue education. It is for this reason that this researcher argues that educators be included in the formulation of policies from the start because they know better about what the learners and teachers need to facilitate teaching and learning in the mother tongue.

#### **4.4.3.4 Lack of resources**

The participants also indicated in their responses that the lack of resources was a major impediment to mother-tongue education. According to Participant E4,

*The school caters for most of the children in our village and we usually have a large number of students in each class but the textbooks we have are not enough for all children. This means that they have to share these books.*

This participant highlighted the implications of the poor supply of sufficient resources in schools which is a huge problem in the educational system. Having to share textbooks has implications on how and when learners can use the textbooks. Hartley (2016:1) asserts that the shortage of books for learners in South African school is a cause for concern as this affects the learners' ability to study at home. Learning is an ongoing process which means that learners also need to study when they get home and this is something that they cannot do if they have to share books. This means that there is a disconnect from school life to home life because less textbooks means that the teachers keep these books in school for the learners to share when they get to school. This is particularly troubling because learners whose mother tongue is either English or Afrikaans do not have this problem. This implies that the problem affects mostly black learners in a country that is still struggling to right the educational injustices of the apartheid

system. The government therefore needs to do more to ensure that black learners who are studying in their mother tongue are not getting an inferior education when compared to their white counterparts.

#### **4.4.4 Educators' perceptions of mother-tongue education**

The researcher asked these participants what they thought of mother-tongue education in South Africa. This was relevant because the researcher believes that teachers' opinions are of crucial importance since they are the ones on the ground as agents of the implementation of this policy. They are also products of the same education system, so they know what worked for them and what would work better for the younger generation of learners that they were teaching. Their opinions are presented below.

##### **4.4.4.1 It is good for the foundation phase of education**

Among the 57% that is in favour of mother-tongue education, one of the common responses were on the lines of the policy being only good for introducing learners to the schooling career; most of these educators indicated that it was good for the transition into a learning environment because these children came into school speaking their mother tongue so it would be nearly impossible for them to grasp subject matter in a language that they were not familiar with. When asked if they thought mother-tongue education would yield better results, the majority of the participants agreed that the policy was yielding good results because children learn faster and better when they use their mother tongue, which is easier for them to understand.

A majority of these participants who thought the policy was beneficial however thought that it should not be extended beyond Grade Three because it was only good for the foundation stage of primary education. This means that even though a large number of educators think mother-tongue education is good for learners, some of them disagree and those that do agree also think that it is only good for the foundation phase. For example, Participant D6 said that, *"Mother-tongue education is only good for the foundation phase because it introduces the child to the world of learning. It should be left as it is"*.

These educators therefore acknowledged the benefits of using a learner's mother tongue at foundation phase because they observed that it acts as a bridge from what the learners learn

at home to what they are taught at school. This means that learners do not see school as a foreign place and unpleasant place to be at, and this helps them to learn faster and better. Using their own language helps them to grasp the subject matter while learning the second language only as a subject. All the participants agreed that learners responded well to mother-tongue education, highlighting the fact that it introduces learners to the schooling system and also breaks the ice because they use a language familiar to them. They equally indicated that learners learn faster because of the familiarity of the language as they are comfortable in class and ultimately perform better. Education is offered in the mother tongue in the first three grades and then the switch to English comes at grade four. This means that education in the mother tongue becomes the bridge between the known and the unknown and this is beneficial for the children. This is in line with the popular research finding and conclusion by many researchers and organizations which have shown that children learn better in their own language (Ball 2014; Stoop 2017; Their World 2018; Savage 2019)

#### **4.4.4.2 It may lead to linguistic segregation**

One of the interesting responses from these participants was that of their worry of linguistic segregation that might come with mother-tongue education, and they thought it was wrong for a nation recovering from apartheid. Some participants revealed that the idea of mother-tongue education promoted linguistic segregation and would take the nation back because it meant that an IsiZulu speaking learner could not go to an IsiXhosa medium school, and this would not promote unity in the country's diverse context. In the same light, Nyika (2014: 3) has argued that:

The use of local vernacular languages as the medium of instruction in particular geographical or political regions of a country or continent could inadvertently increase the risk of discrimination along ethnic or racial lines because vernacular languages are generally specific to particular ethnic or racial groups.

This indicates that mother-tongue education comes with the risk of division in the country, especially since South Africa has 11 official languages, would mean that society would be divided into 11 linguistic and ethnic groups.

It was also the fear of linguistic segregation that made some of the participants to say that it would not be good for the policy to be extended beyond the foundation phase. They indicated

that continuing the policy to higher education would mean that learners would only go to schools, universities and colleges that offered education in their mother tongue, and this was likely going to further divide the country. According to Participant D1:

*continuing with mother tongue up to higher education means South Africa is moving back to segregation because this means that a child who speaks IsiXhosa cannot go to an IsiZulu medium school and that promotes linguistic segregation.*

Similarly, participant A6 said:

*Mother-tongue education means that there cannot be diversity in schools. It takes us back to apartheid where learners were separated according to their language and race groups and could not learn in any school.*

In the same light, participant C6 said:

*Mother-tongue education keeps learners locked in their linguistic groups as it means that they have to go to specific schools that offer education in their own languages, which promoted racial and ethnic segregation.*

These responses clearly indicate that the ugly memories of apartheid and its policies of segregation are still present in people's minds, and these participants were worried that educational policies along language lines might take the country back to a past it was trying to run away from. It is important to note that during the colonialism and apartheid, "language was a defining characteristic of ethnicity and partly through the process of standardization of African languages. Language was then used to set the boundaries of ethnic identities" (Henry 2017 cited in Phajane 2020: 4102). This means that the education system had to be racially and ethnically segregated for the purpose of maintaining these boundaries. Apartheid left a huge scar in the South African society, especially the black community, and this is evident in how some teachers view mother-tongue education. It is in this light that most of the educators who participated in this study thought that mother-tongue education should remain in the Foundation Phase and not be continued to higher education because it would separate the nation according to race and language, which would not be good for a country recovering from apartheid.

#### 4.4.4.3 The policy is only for political expediency

Some of these participants were of the view that the mother-tongue education policy was only a political strategy by the government to make the black majority of the country to think that indigenous languages were taken seriously, while nothing was done to promote them or to ensure that enough resources and support were made available to enable the languages to function as media of instruction. In this regard, Participant E1 said:

*It was just a way for politicians to make people think that there is equality in the country and in education. South Africans use English at work, so it is crucial for them to be fluent in the language.*

Similarly, Participant D1 said,

*The government wanted to give South Africans hope that change was coming and that everyone is recognized and valued. This was a political move to gain the trust of the black community.*

The responses of these participants touch on the issue of language policy being used as a political strategy to gain trust and following from the black community in South Africa. This shows the level of skepticism that some people have towards mother-tongue education, which may give the impression that there are no benefits in the policy. It is however this researcher's view that such perceptions do not in any way imply that mother-tongue education is a failure, but they are the results of the absence of visible commitment from the government to ensure that mother-tongue education policy succeeds. Different scholars have underscored the importance of mother-tongue education especially during the first few years of schooling. Researchers have documented the benefits of mother-tongue education which indicates that the government was taking steps in the direction of equal education for all. However, the government has been snail-walking when it comes to the promotion of the policy and ensuring that educators receive the necessary training and resources to implement the policy effectively. This has led to negative perceptions on the part of some educators, which does not augur well for the success of the policy since educators are the ones who are supposed to implement it and their total buy-in is necessary if the policy has to succeed.



#### **4.4.4.4 Lack of opportunities in the world.**

Some of the participants expressed concerns about the potentials of African languages when it came to landing opportunities in the world of work and business. Some indicated that being fluent in English gave learners a better chance of finding employment and doing well in life. This was evident in the fact that most of these participants were of the view that mother-tongue education was only good for the foundation phase because it helped the learners to transition smoothly from home to school, after which the learners should switch to English medium learning which would guarantee them a bright future. According to Participant A2:

*English opens doors for learners when they grow older and have to look for employment. English instruction helps them get a better command of English and gets them used to using English as a working language.*

In the same light, Participant D1 said, *“Children should be taught in a language that will propel them further in life.”*

These responses show that some educators have no confidence in the value of African languages in relation to success after these learners’ schooling career is over, as they believe that English is the language that would open the gates of opportunities for learners. This is in line with some research findings by different scholars who indicate that English provides better opportunities in the job market. In this light, Pandey & Pandey (2014: 95) assert that competency in English is a key to success because English skills are much sought after in the job market due to the fact that English is the dominant language of the corporate world. This is clear evidence that the value attached to African languages, especially as languages of business, education and economics, even among African language speakers is very low.

### **4.5 Discussion of the findings**

This section focuses on the discussion of the findings of the data analysis. The discussion focuses on perceptions of educators on the language-in-education policy, the implementation of mother-tongue education in UThungulu District, challenges of mother-tongue education and the agency of teachers of mother-tongue education.

When it comes to the policy that provide for the use of isiZulu as a medium of instruction, most of the educators who participated in this study believed that the policy was beneficial to the learners. This is a sign that the implementation of the policy has led to learning benefits for learners of the UThungulu District. This finding confirms what many scholars (Cooper 2017, Kioko et al. 2014, Churr 2013) have said regarding the benefits of mother-tongue education. It is however concerning that almost half of the educators who participated in the study did not believe in the benefits of the policy. This in the researcher's view risk undermining the benefits that are unarguably inherent in mother-tongue education. This researcher also believes that the teachers who expressed a negative view of mother-tongue education were influenced by the dominance of English in the job market rather than by the question of which language would enable learners to learn faster and better. It is the argument of this researcher that the fact that English has better economic advantages does not in any way cancel the fact that a child would learn faster and better in his or her mother tongue. It is for this reason that this researcher contends that mother-tongue education is best for learners in rural areas because it provides a bridge connecting what they learn from home and what they learn at school since these learners are not fully exposed to the English language outside of school premises so it is a foreign language to them. Using their mother tongue at school enhances their intellectual abilities and spares them the tedious process of trying to understand the language before understanding subject matter, which is next to impossible because they are not exposed to English at all.

The findings of the study also revealed that the mother-tongue education policy was not well implemented. One major problem of implementation that emerged from the study was the lack of adequate engagements and promotion of the policy. Educators who participated in the study indicated that the policy of teaching in indigenous languages was not well promoted and people did not have enough information on its benefits. The study equally revealed there was not enough consultation on the policy and parents and teachers are not involved in discussions around its conceptualisation and implementation. The researcher believes that this could explain why some teachers and parents were not in favour of the policy. This is even more concerning due to the fact that parents are part of the school governing bodies which make decisions on the language policies of the school. If these parents as well as the teachers are not well informed of the benefits of the policy, they would not be able to support it. This researcher therefore believes that more needs to be done by the government to promote this policy because when a policy is promoted well, it sparks conversations and discussions among the public and this means that even those who did not believe in its value get to hear the success stories and change their minds.

Another implementation problem that emerged from the findings of the study was the issue of inadequate resources for teaching and learning in isiZulu. Educators also speak of the lack of adequate resources for their learners and that is the shortage of textbooks in their schools. They are of the view that shortage of books promotes a gap between home and school for these learners because they have to share books, which means that they cannot take them home. This means that they cannot study at home with these textbooks. Shortage of resources is a serious issue in the education system and it brings challenges to the teacher because it delays the process of learning for their learners and it means that this policy's implementation is hindered. The government should therefore ensure that this is resolved to ensure that learners have reading material at school and at home to promote fluency and love for their own languages. It is important to note that for effective implementation, educators need the proper resources and support from the Department of Basic Education and that is why this study is important. The necessary authorities, curriculum developers and policy makers need to understand what happens in the classroom and what needs to be done to ensure effective implementation of the language-in-education policy, which is why this researcher argues that educators should be part of the process of making these policies.

A major finding of this study was that all the participants confirmed that the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu District was fraught with challenges. This finding confirmed what previous studies had revealed, which is that the current mother-tongue education policy in South Africa looks good on paper but its implementation has been met with challenges (Foley 2015; Stoop 2017). Educators who took part in this study identified challenges such as Language development, Language attitudes in the society, teacher training for teaching in the mother tongue and lack of resources.

Regarding the development of indigenous languages for use as media of instruction, the study found out that there are serious problems of ill-adapted subject-specific terminology. The participants of the study revealed that the language used in the textbooks is old and traditional, which is different from the IsiZulu spoken by the wider community. This confuses the learners which forces the teacher to use modern words that are easy for learners to understand. It is no secret that language is evolving because of migration and people meeting people from other places and who speak different languages. This impacts on language use because in an effort to understand each other they end up using borrowed words which changes the language structure bit by bit. Turner and Koopman (2018) and Khumalo (2017) have asserted that the

development of subject-specific terminologies in indigenous languages is important if these languages have to function as media of instruction. It is in this regard that insufficient or unfamiliar terminology has been identified as a major obstacle to the redress of past linguistic injustices in South African (Keet and Barbour 2014). It is therefore not surprising that the participants of this study admitted to having a major challenge when it came to teaching in isiZulu, because there are not enough subject-specific terms for them to effectively teach in isiZulu, which compels them to resort to code-switching and translation in order to facilitate the lessons. It has already been mentioned in this study that PanSALB has the mandate to develop terminology for the intellectualisation of South African indigenous languages. There are also other institutions involved in the development of terminology in indigenous languages (Khumalo 2017). There is however little effort to coordinate these terminology projects so as to harmonise the final product, which leads to different terms being developed for the same concepts. The researcher believes that this is dangerous as it may lead to different schools using different terminologies for the same concepts in the same language. It is therefore important that PanSALB as a government institution monitors all terminology projects in the country so as to be able to harmonise the terminology that is developed for the intellectualisation of indigenous languages.

Another challenge in the implementation of mother-tongue education that was revealed by this study is the language attitudes in the community when it comes to their own language. The study found that most people in UThungulu District still regarded isiZulu as inferior to English and they did not believe that it could be used for education, business and economics in general. The parents in the community therefore preferred their children to be taught in English and those who could afford to take their children to English-medium schools were doing so, leaving only the children of the very poor to attend schools like the ones used in this study, where the children would be taught in isiZulu at the foundation phase. It is this researcher's view that negative attitudes towards African languages remains a major obstacle to their development as intellectual Languages in south Africa. This is as a result of the fact that years of colonisation and apartheid had not only led to a relegation of African languages to insignificance status but has also resulted in the dominance of English and Africans of the educational, administrative and economic spheres (Awung and Makhubu 2016). It is for this reason that many black parents believe that English is the key to success for their children in the education and economic sectors.

This researcher also believes that the negative attitudes towards indigenous languages are compounded by the fact that learners in schools that use African languages as media of instruction in the foundation phase do not receive the same quality of education as those in English-medium schools because the former are less resourced than the latter. This does not help in building trust in mother-tongue education in indigenous languages as the community tend to associate the lower quality of education received in these schools with the language used to teach the learners. This is a mentality that will take years to unlearn but necessary measures need to be taken to educate the black community about the potential educational and economic benefits of acquiring knowledge in one's mother tongue. This will create a demand for these languages and therefore promote active developments which will include teachers in order to make them languages of teaching and learning that teachers and learners can work with.

This study also found out that the training of teachers is another obstacle to the implementation of mother-tongue education in UThungulu District. These teachers revealed that their teacher training does not prepare them to teach in African languages. They are trained on how to teach these languages as subjects but not how to use them as languages of teaching and learning. This is a serious problem because these teachers need the necessary training for this policy to be implemented well. That would also help them avoid using alternative methods when teaching because they would be trained on how to handle and overcome challenges they face when teaching. This researcher therefore believes that the Department of Basic Education needs to work with tertiary institutions that train teachers to ensure that academic programmes are developed for the training of teachers to teach using African languages as media of instruction. The study also found out that there were hardly any workshops to continuously develop or renew the capacities of teachers to use isiZulu as a medium of instruction. This is also a problem because knowledge is continuously evolving and so too are teaching methodologies. If teachers are not given the opportunities to be abreast with the latest developments in their field of practice, they would not be able to use the appropriate content and methodologies to effectively teach in indigenous languages. The Department of Basic Education therefore needs to do more in the training of Foundation Phase teachers because mother-tongue education will remain a dream if there are no trained teachers to provide it.

Another important finding of this study was the role of teacher agency in overcoming some of the challenges of mother-tongue education. This had to do specifically with situations where the teachers could not find the appropriate subject terminologies to use in class. They resorted

to using code-switching and translation as teaching strategies. It is worth mentioning that these teachers did not acquire these strategies during their training as teachers, and only devised them as solutions to the linguistic challenges they encountered when teaching in isiZulu. This is significant in that it highlights the ecological agency of these educators as their actions were influenced by the contextual factors of the specific environment in which they found themselves. It also underscores the role that teachers can play in the formulation and implementation of mother-tongue education policies, given that they deal with the day-to-day implementation of the policy and have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the policy. This researcher also believes that teachers of mother-tongue education have a contribution to make when it comes to the development of subject-specific terminologies. Terminology development projects for the intellectualisation of South African indigenous languages are mostly led by linguists and terminologists, with hardly any subject domain specialists involved (Keet and Barbour 2014). This could be the reason for some of the terminology problems that teachers of mother-tongue education face. It would therefore be beneficial to include educators in the development of terminologies because they are subject specialists and would better know which term is appropriate or not to represent a particular subject concept. Terminology development bodies such as PanSALB therefore need to incorporate educators of mother-tongue education in projects aimed at the development of terminologies for the intellectualisation of indigenous South African languages.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter set out to analyse the data provided by participants of this study. The data was analysed and the researcher found that educators do recognise the benefits of mother-tongue education. However, its implementation is met with challenges such as lack of terminology, lack of resources, insufficient teacher training and negative attitudes in society. This causes a large number of them to feel that it is only good for the foundation phase and should not be continued to higher education.

# CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to summarize the main points that were addressed and discussed in this study, revisit research objectives to outline how they were achieved in the study, as well as outline the contributions of the study. Drawing from the findings of the study, recommendations to further implement mother-tongue education will then be given for consideration by the Department of Basic Education, the teachers and the community. Finally, recommendations for future research will also be made by the researcher.

## 5.2 Summary of the study

This study was aimed at investigating perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa, with a specific target of rural schools where mother-tongue education is implemented. This study was a result of the researcher noticing that many studies have underscored the importance of mother-tongue education and that it is met with challenges in its implementation. It is for this reason that the researcher saw it fit to investigate the educators' perceptions as they are the agents of the language-in-education policy and they are in a better position to highlight the problems and suggest solutions in the policy making process because the researcher believes that it is crucial to include them in the policy making process given that they are implementers of the policies put in place.

The study has adopted Biesta and Tedder's Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency as the theoretical framework of the study (Biesta and Tedder 2006). This view of agency looks at teachers as individuals and what they are able or not able to do alongside cultures, resources, structures and relationships that shape their particular ecologies, which in this study are the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

The first chapter was an introduction of the study where the researcher explained the significance of the study, the research problem, the aims and objectives of the study. The

researcher then continued to outline the research questions including a brief overview of the literature review, research methodology and data analysis method.

In chapter two, the researcher drew on existing literature to further highlight the socio-linguistic situation in South African schools and the policies that drive language use in these schools. The researcher also looked at how previous research has underscored the importance of mother-tongue education alongside its implementation and challenges and explains the choice of Biester and Tedder's Ecological Approach to teacher agency as the theoretical framework which is an appropriate lens to look at how teachers exercise agency in their particular environment.

Chapter three explained the research approach and processes that were used in the study. It therefore outlined the purpose of the study, the research design and the processes of data collection and analysis. This chapter outlined how the study adopted a qualitative research approach which studies the human experience from general as well as individual perspectives. In this context, the aim of this study was to investigate teachers' experiences and their perspectives on the implementation of mother-tongue education. The study targeted teachers in rural areas using a purposive sampling method to select participants, which means that the researcher selected participants who were more likely to give vital information on the subject. A multiple-case study design was adopted and the researcher used questionnaires as a data collection instrument. A thematic analysis method was used to analyse data collected from educators.

Chapter four focused on the interpretation and analysis of the data collected followed, by a discussion of the finding by the researcher. The researcher used a deductive thematic analysis approach which involves generating themes from the research objectives. This means that questions from the questionnaire were formulated to address the research questions therefore making it easier to analyse data. The researcher found that teachers have different opinions when it comes to the language-in-education policy that they are meant to implement. They all admitted to facing challenges and also explained how they try to overcome those challenges.

### **5.3 Research objectives revisited**

The objectives of the study were achieved in that their experiences and perspectives on language-in-education policy, the implementation of the language-in-education policy, the



challenges to its implementation and their overall perceptions on mother-tongue education were captured.

*a) To examine the language in education policy in the UThungulu district.*

This objective was achieved in that educators confirmed that the language-in-education policy which says that children learn in their mother tongue is implemented in their schools and they also shared their opinions regarding this policy. It is interesting to note that these teachers seem to understand the benefits of this policy but they do not think that it could be continued to higher education. They highlight that this policy is good for the foundation phase because it helps introduce learners to the schooling system and acts as a good transition tool to ensure that children are smoothly integrated into their schooling career with a language that is familiar to them. It is important to note, however, that not all teachers share the same sentiments when it comes to this policy. Others seem to think that learners are being delayed from learning in an international language that they will need in future and should therefore be introduced to English from the foundation stage.

*b) To analyse the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.*

Educators expressed their views on the efforts that have been made to implement the language in education policy. They reveal that the government has put organisations in place to work on developing African languages, and they have produced reading material in the African languages. This is a positive step towards providing mother-tongue education. However, these measures have been implemented slowly and sometimes not to the full capacity. This research also revealed that schools in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal are taking mother-tongue education seriously. This indicates that implementation of this policy is really taking place in the rural primary schools of KwaZulu-Natal.

*c) To investigate the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.*

This objective was achieved in that teachers expressed that indeed they face challenges when implementing this language-in-education policy. The researcher noted that 100% of these educators confirmed that they face challenges. The challenges they outlined were on language

development, where they said that African languages are not developed enough to carry mathematical, scientific and technological content. They also indicated that the IsiZulu words used in the textbooks are not modernised to fit the communication needs of today; they are old and traditional words that no one uses anymore. Another challenge that they identified is language attitudes in society. These educators revealed that people in the community are not in favour of mother-tongue education. Most of the members of these communities are older generations who still believe that English is the best language for education. They have no confidence in African languages becoming languages of higher function.

Educators also highlighted the challenge of teacher training in universities. They indicated that more focus on teacher training is needed to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary tools to deliver all subject content in an African language. They revealed that they are not taught how to use the African language to teach all subjects. Finally, they highlighted the lack of resources as another challenge. These educators indicate that the number of books that they are provided are not enough for their students and this means that students have to share these textbooks. This then means that learners can only use these books at school because they are not enough for all of them. These challenges need be addressed for learners to receive quality mother-tongue education.

*d) To find out the perceptions of Foundation Phase educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district.*

This objective was reached in the sense that when the researcher asked for these educators' opinions on the implementation of mother-tongue education, the findings from their responses indicated a clear division in their responses with 57% giving positive answers and 43% giving negative answers. The majority of these educators indicated that this language-in-education policy is good for introducing learners to their schooling career. This underscores the importance of a smooth transition from home to school which is facilitated by the language used in school and at home. They confirmed that mother-tongue education yields better results and has good educational benefits. Some of these teachers however raised the issue of linguistic segregation. They believed that separating schools according to language promotes barriers for learners within the African communities. They expressed their concerns about learners being locked in their linguistic circle so much that they cannot learn in any school that they

choose. For example, an IsiXhosa speaking learner cannot go to an isiZulu medium school and that does not promote unity.

Some teachers also thought that the language-in-education policy was just a political strategy to influence the black community to vote for a particular party hoping that they would address the former injustices related to language use. They believe that politicians did not exactly have a solid plan as to how they are going to integrate all nine African languages into the education system before granting all learners the right to receive education in the language of their choice. They also raised issues of opportunities in the world. These educators highlighted the role of English in the world of work. They said that the language that these learners need is English more than their own languages to facilitate communication with others. This indicates that South Africa still has a long way to go when it comes to linguistic equality.

#### **5.4 Contributions of the study**

This study has contributed to a broader understanding of the concept of teacher agency by shifting the mind-set of agency being possessed by the teacher to looking at agency as something that is achieved by a teacher depending on the factors shaping their particular ecologies. The Ecological Approach to teacher agency theory by Biesta and Tedder (2006) has provided clarity on the role of teachers as individuals alongside the environmental, contextual and structural factors that shape their ecologies. This means that the teacher's ability to achieve agency depends on an interplay of individual efforts such as their own willingness and confidence to teach, the resources available to them and contextual factors, which is what people of that environment believe in and how the education system is set up. In other words, teachers exercise their agency to solve the problems that they face when teaching. The actions they take are influenced by their individual knowledge, resources available to them and contextual and structural factors of the environment they find themselves in.

This study has also contributed towards the understanding of the importance of languages in education and the policies thereof. It has done this by underscoring the importance of using mother tongue instruction for learners who are being introduced to the schooling system, highlighting the importance of a smooth transition from home to school life to ensure that learners are not confused in class.

Furthermore, this study has contributed to the understanding of the role of teachers in the policy making process. It has done this by highlighting the gap between policy makers and agents of these policies indicating that policy makers are out of touch with those implementing those policies and which means that they are unaware of the impracticalities and challenges of their policies. This study has helped to bring to light what actually happens in the classroom.

Additionally, this study has contributed to a better and clear account of the challenges of the implementation of the language-in-education policy. Teachers who participated in this study have brought to light their challenges when it comes to the implementation of mother-tongue education, and this will lead to a better attempt at addressing these challenges. It is worth noting that these challenges hinder the performance of teachers and should be taken much more seriously.

Finally, this study has contributed to the understanding of the role of educators on policy making and curriculum design. It has done this by demonstrating how the top-down approach affects the implementation of these policies and has also provided insight on what works and does not work in the classroom, which is what policy makers should draw on when making these policies and designing curriculum.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

### **5.5.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education**

Drawing on the findings of this study, the Department of Basic Education seems to be falling short on some aspects of the implementation of the language-in-education policy. This researcher recommends that the department works harder to produce and deliver learning and teaching materials to schools in the province. The department also needs to actively promote mother-tongue education and raise awareness on the issue so as to create a sense of confidence in the subject of African languages being languages of higher function. They can do that by hosting awareness campaigns in communities and providing more teacher training such as hosting workshops to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary tools to overcome challenges in their teaching. This researcher also suggests that the department gives teachers the necessary training especially for teaching in indigenous languages.

It is also recommended that more attention be given to the language situation in South African schools. The Department of Basic education should work on the development of African languages by actively promoting the use of African languages in schools and also ensure that African languages are modernised and can cater for the learners in schools. Policy makers should consider involving teachers in the process of designing the language policies in place, so as to avoid making policies that are impossible to implement in classrooms. They should also consider listening to these teachers' opinions and allowing bilingual education in schools, however, allowing codeswitching in classrooms should not mean that language development should stop. This will ensure that learners are provided quality education in both their language and a few English terms that they are familiar with and that they have picked up in the community, which makes them comfortable.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations to teachers**

This researcher recommends that teachers request further training on how to use the mother tongue to teach all subjects in the foundation phase. They should also make suggestions to the department that they be included in the policy making process to help in making policies that will work for the learners in their respective environments such as code switching. It is also recommended that teachers take an active role in contributing to sensitising the public, especially the parents on the benefits of mother-tongue education and also contribute to developing teaching and learning material such as textbooks for the learners.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations to the community**

This researcher recommends that the communities take an active role in the promotion of mother-tongue education by ensuring that their children receive support and are not discouraged by negative attitudes towards the language that they use in schools. Communities should stop putting pressure on their children to master English from a young age in order to allow them to be comfortable in their learning so as to ensure that they learn faster and they learn more. They should try to learn more about the benefits of learning in the mother tongue and actively demand that schools provide education in the mother tongue and that the government provides the necessary tools and resources. Their silence regarding this issue is

one of the main reasons for the slow implementation because the government does not feel the need to offer them something that they do not actively demand from them.

## 5.6 Suggestions for future research

Given the fact that there are limitations to what this study could cover, this researcher suggests that future research could look into the following.

- This study was conducted at rural primary schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Future research may conduct a similar study in other regions of the province and this could yield different findings than those of this particular study.
- This study's focus was on using isiZulu as a mother tongue since this is the dominant language in the province, which makes this study limited to the IsiZulu language. This implies that a similar study conducted in another language could yield different findings. This researcher suggests that future research conducts the same study but in other regions of the country, with other African indigenous languages.
- This study focused on schools that offer mother-tongue education in the rural areas where one language dominates. This means that most learners speak one language. Future research may investigate challenges of offering mother-tongue education in township schools where there is a mix of African cultures and languages.
- This study investigated teachers' perceptions on mother-tongue education; future research could look into teachers' perceptions on using English as a medium of instruction for learners in rural areas and African language speaking communities.
- This study focused on investigating educators' perceptions on mother-tongue education but findings revealed that parents also have a role to play in the selection of the languages of teaching and learning in schools and all of the information that was given about parents' attitudes towards mother-tongue education was from a teacher's point of view. It would be interesting for future research to investigate the perceptions of parents on the issue of mother-tongue education, especially in rural areas.
- During the course of this study, the researcher identified that most of these teachers admitted to using code-switching in class. This researcher suggests that future research could look into the implications of code-switching to the preservation of African languages in primary school.

## REFERENCE LIST

Agyekum, K. 2018. Linguistic imperialism and language decolonisation in Africa through documentation and preservation. In: Kandybowicz, J., Major, T., Torrence, H., and Duncan, P. T.(eds.). *African linguistics on the prairie*. 87–104. Berlin: Language Science Press. Available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1251718> (Accessed on 29 June 2020).

Alexander, M. 2018. The 11 Languages of South Africa. South Africa Gateway. Available at <https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/11-languages-south-africa/> (Accessed on 12 June 2020)

Alviator, M. G. 2014. *The Meaning and Importance of Curriculum Development*. Available at: <http://simplyeducate.me/2014/12/13/the-meaning-and-importance-of-curriculum-development> (Accessed on 12 June 2020).

Asiamah, N., Mensah, H.K. and Oteng-Abayie, E.F., 2017. General, target, and accessible population: Demystifying the concepts for effective sampling. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(6): 1607-1622.

Awung, F. and Makhubu, L., 2016. A Bourdieusian Analysis of the Status of Indigenous Languages in the South African Translation Space. *Hemispheres*, 31(3): 5-13.

Ball, J. 2014. Children learn better in their mother tongue. *Global partnership Education*. Available at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/> (Accessed on 12 June 2020).

Betts, R. F. 2012. *Decolonisation A brief history of the word*. In: *Beyond Empire and Nation*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004260443\\_004](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004260443_004) (Accessed 27 May 2021).

Bhandari P. 2020. An introduction to qualitative research. Available at <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/> (Accessed on 10 March 2021).

Biesta, G., Priestley, M. and Robinson, S., 2015. The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and teaching*, 21(6): 624-640.

Biesta, G. & Tedder M. 2007. Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39(2): 132-149. Available at:

<https://tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02660830.2007.11661545> (Accessed on 17 August 2019).

Biesta, G, and Tedder, M. 2006. How is agency possible? Towards an ecological understanding of agency-as-achievement. Available:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228644383\\_How\\_is\\_agency\\_possible\\_Towards\\_an\\_ecological\\_understanding\\_of\\_agency-as-achievement](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228644383_How_is_agency_possible_Towards_an_ecological_understanding_of_agency-as-achievement) (Accessed 29 June 2019).

Bijl, M. 2019. Language and the Decolonisation of the mind. Available at <https://medium.com/@matthijsbijl/language-and-the-decolonisation-of-the-mind-558b9cef7e79> (Accessed on 30 November 2020).

Bluemke, M. Resch, B. Lechner, C. Westerholt, R. and Kolb, J.P. 2017. *Integrating geographic information into survey research: Current applications, challenges and future avenues*. In *Survey Research Methods*, 11(3): 307-327.

Boateng, P. 2019. *Managing transitions from mother tongue instruction to English as the medium of instruction*. K4D Helpdesk Report 520. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

Bornman, E., Pauw, J.C. and Potgieter, P.H., 2014. Attitudes and opinions regarding mother-tongue education and the choice of a university: Afrikaans-speaking students at Unisa. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 54(4): 596-609.

Bostock, W.W. 2018. South Africa's evolving language policy: Educational implications. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 7(2): 27-32.

Boyatzis, R.E.1998. *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publications Incorporated, Thousand Oaks.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2019. *Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis*. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4): 589-597.

Cekiso, M., Meyiwa, T. & Mashige, M., 2019, 'Foundation Phase teachers' experiences with instruction in the mother tongue in the Eastern Cape', *South African Journal of Childhood Education* Vol 9(1): 1-10. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/> (Accessed on 20 May 2021).



Chürr, C. 2013. The right to mother-tongue education: practicable or not?. *Obiter*, 34(2): 274-304. Available at: <https://journals.co.za/content/obiter/34/2/EJC143679> (Accessed 29 August 2019).

Clarke, V. and Braun, V. 2017. Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 12(3): 297-298.

Cope, D.G. 2014. *Methods and Meanings: Credibility and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research*. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1): 89-91.

Crossman, A. 2019. Understanding Purposive Sampling: An Overview of the Method and Its Applications. Available at <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727> (Accessed 11 September 2019).

Denscombe, M. 1998. *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Endoh F.T. 2015. Democratic constitutionalism in post-apartheid South Africa: the interim constitution revisited. *Africa Review*, 7(1): 67-79. Available at <https://10.1080/09744053.2014.990769> (Accessed 10 June 2020).

Etikan, I. and Bala, K. 2017. Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6): 215-217.

Fataar, A. 2018. Decolonising Education in South Africa. Perspectives and Debates. *Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC)*, 7 (Suppl.): vi-ix.

Fauvelle, L. 2019. Qualitative research: Open and closed-ended questions. *Into The Minds: Belgium*. Available at: <https://www.intotheminds.com/blog/en/qualitativeresearch-open-andclosed-ended-questions/> (Accessed on 19 July 2020).

Firestone, W.A. 1993. Alternative arguments for generalizing from data as applied to qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 16–23.

Foley, A. 2015. Mother-tongue education in South Africa. *Teaching English today*. Available at: <https://teachenglishtoday.org/> (Accessed on 30 June 2019).

- Glossary of Education Reform. 2017. Hidden Curriculum. Available at: <http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/> (Accessed on 01 May 2020).
- Gobana, J.A., 2014. Challenges of Mother-tongue education in Primary Schools: The Case of Afan Oromo in the Eastern Hararge Zone, Oromia Reagional State, Ethiopia (Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral Thesis). University of South Africa).
- Guoyuan, S. 2020. Teacher Agency. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339899987\\_Teacher\\_Agency](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339899987_Teacher_Agency) (Accessed on 12 February 2021).
- Gustafsson, J. 2017. Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study. Available at: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064378/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (Accessed on 12 March 2021).
- Hartley, W. 2016. Shortage of school textbooks still a cause for concern, commission says. Available at <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/education/2016-06-23-shortage-of-school-textbooks-still-a-cause-for-concern-commission-says/> (Accessed on 21 April 2021).
- Jaffe, A. 2009. *Linguistic decolonisation. Concise encyclopaedia of pragmatics*, 2nd ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd.
- Johnson, D.C. 2013. What is language policy? *In Language policy*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 3-25.
- Kabir, S.M.S., 2016. Basic Guidelines for Research. An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Syed-Muhammad-Kabir/publication/325390597\\_BASIC\\_GUIDELINES\\_FOR\\_RESEARCH\\_An\\_Introductory\\_Approach\\_for\\_All\\_Disciplines/links/5b0a89094585157f8719626c/BASIC-GUIDELINES-FOR-RESEARCH-An-Introductory-Approach-for-All-Disciplines.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Syed-Muhammad-Kabir/publication/325390597_BASIC_GUIDELINES_FOR_RESEARCH_An_Introductory_Approach_for_All_Disciplines/links/5b0a89094585157f8719626c/BASIC-GUIDELINES-FOR-RESEARCH-An-Introductory-Approach-for-All-Disciplines.pdf) (Accessed on 12 May 2020).
- Kampira, A. 2021. A Brief Introduction to Thematic Analysis. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351051073\\_A\\_Brief\\_Introduction\\_to\\_Thematic\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351051073_A_Brief_Introduction_to_Thematic_Analysis) (Accessed on 12 September 2021).

- Kaplan, R.B. and Baldauf, R.B., 1997. Language planning from practice to theory. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Keet, C.M. and Barbour, G. 2014. Limitations of regular terminology development practices: The case of the isiZulu computing terminology. *Alternation*, 12.
- Khumalo, L. 2017. Intellectualization through terminology development. *Lexikos*, 27. 252-264.
- Kioko, A.N., Ndung'u, R.W., Njoroge M.C and Mutiga J. 2014. *Mother tongue and education in Africa: Publicising the reality*. *Multilingual Education*, 4 (18): 1-11.
- Lafon, M., 2009. The Impact of Language on Educational Access in South Africa. *CREATE Pathways to Access*. Research Monograph No. 24.
- Lechtenberg, U. 2013. Organizing Academic Research Papers: Limitations of the Study Available: <http://dissertation.laerd.com/how-to-structure-the-research-limitations-section-of-your-dissertation.php> (Accessed 04 September 2019).
- Lunga, V.B., 1997. *An examination of an African postcolonial experience of language, culture, and identity: Amakhosi theatre ako Bulawayo, Zimbabwe* (Doctoral dissertation, Theses (Faculty of Education)/Simon Fraser University).
- Maguire, M and Delahunt, B. 2017. Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars. *AISHE-J*, 8(3): 3351-3359.
- Marnewick, A. 2015. The Debate About Mother-tongue education: What You Should Know. Available at: <https://www.worksheetcloud.com/blog/the-debate-about-mother-tongue-education-what-you-should-know/> (Accessed 01 October 2019).
- Mbude, P. 2018. The importance of languages in decolonising education. Available at: <https://www.puku.co.za/en/the-importance-of-languages-in-decolonising-education/> (Accessed 23 March 2020).
- McGuirk, P. M. and O'Neill, P. 2016. Using questionnaires in qualitative human geography. *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 246-273.
- McLeod, S. A. 2019. Sampling methods. *Simply Psychology*. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/sampling.html> (Accessed 20 August 2019).

Metila, R. A, Pradilla, L.A. S, Williams, A. B. 2016. *The Challenge of Implementing Mother-tongue education in Linguistically Diverse Contexts: The Case of the Philippine*. 25(5-6): 781-789.

Mohohlwane, N., 2020. Language. RESEP WORKING PAPER. Available at [https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Mother\\_tongue-instruction-or-straight-for-English.-The-primary-education-policy-dilemma.docx.pdf](https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Mother_tongue-instruction-or-straight-for-English.-The-primary-education-policy-dilemma.docx.pdf) (Accessed on 14 April 2021).

Nemoto, T. and Beglar, D., 2014. Likert-scale questionnaires. In: JALT 2013 conference proceedings. 1-8.

Nordquist, R. 2016. Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms. Available at: <https://thoughtco.com/what-is-multilingualism> (Accessed on 12 July 2020).

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. and Moules, N.J., 2017. Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1): 1-13.

Nyika, A. 2015. Mother tongue as the medium of instruction at developing country universities in a global context. *South African Journal of Science*, 111(1-2): 01-05. Available at <https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2015/20140005> (Accessed on 12 November 2020).

Ohyama, M., 2018. Japanese mother tongue program in an international school: A case study (Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University).

Pandey, M. and Pandey, P., 2015. Global employability of unemployed youth through soft skills. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach & Studies*, 2(2): 73-77.

Parker, G. 2016. An ecological approach to teacher agency: *a theoretical overview*. ARECLS, 13: 1-14.

Patino, C.M. and Ferreira, J.C., 2018. Inclusion and exclusion criteria in research studies: definitions and why they matter. *Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia*, 44: 84-84.

Peterson, B.L., 2017. Thematic analysis/interpretive thematic analysis. *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods*. 1-9.

Phajane M.H. 2020. Mother Tongue Language As Medium Of Instruction And Promotion Of Multilingualism: The South African Language Policy. *JCR*, 7(14): 4098-4108 Available at <http://www.jcreview.com/?mno=136784> (Accessed on 12 June 2021).

Phatudi, N C. 2013. Perspectives of Black students on the use of the Mother tongue at higher education institutions in South Africa: *Journal of Educational Studies*, 12(1): 1-15. Available at: <https://journals.co.za/content/jeds/12/1/EJC157153> (Accessed 24 June 2019).

Reilly, C., 2019. Attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction in Malawian universities. *English Academy Review*, 36(1): 32-45.

Savage, C. 2017. Mother tongue learning. *International Teacher magazine*. Available at [https://consiliumeducation.com/itm/2017/08/20/mother\\_tongue-learning/](https://consiliumeducation.com/itm/2017/08/20/mother_tongue-learning/) (Accessed on 14 March 2020).

Savage, C. 2019. The importance of mother tongue in education. *Independent Education Today*. Available at: [https://ie-today.co.uk/comment/the-importance-of-mother\\_tongue-in-education/](https://ie-today.co.uk/comment/the-importance-of-mother_tongue-in-education/) (Accessed on 26 October 2020).

Schoch, K. W. 2016. Case study research. In Burkholder, Gary J., Cox, K. A., Crawford, L. M. (Eds.). *The Scholar-Practitioner's Guide to Research Design*. 1st Edition. 227 – 241.

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2013. *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach*. 6th Edition, Rome: Trento Srl.

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2016. *Research methods for business: a skill building approach*. 7th Edition, Wiley & Sons, West Sussex.

Shakil, H.I., Al Noman, A., Hridi, A.A. and Kabir Sharna, F., 2016. Policy Making Process in Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hedayet-> (Accessed on 12 September 2019).

Shenton, A.K. 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information* 22, January: 63-75.

Sibanda, R., 2019. Mother-tongue education in a multilingual township: Possibilities for recognising lok'shin lingua in South Africa. *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa*, 10(1): 1-10.

Snijman, L. 2019. Decolonise education – by including Afrikaans. Available: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-07-07-decolonise-education-by-including-afrikaans/amp/> (Accessed 20 March 2020).

South Africa, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996.

South Africa, Department of Education. 1997. Language in Education Policy.

South Africa, Department of Education. 2013. The Incremental Introduction of African Languages in South African Schools Draft Policy.

Ssentanda, M.E., 2014. Mother-tongue education and transition to English medium education in Uganda: Teachers perspectives and practices versus language policy and curriculum (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

Stake, R.E. 1994. Case studies in: Handbook of qualitative research, N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 236–247.

Stein, N. 2017. National language and book policies: *Language in schools – Basic Education Rights Handbook. South Africa*, Chapter 11: 206-217.

Stoop C, 2017. Children's Rights to Mother-tongue education in a Multilingual World: A Comparative Analysis between South Africa and Germany. Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal, 20:1-35. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2982292##](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2982292##) (Accessed 20 June 2019).

Their World. 2018. Watch your language! Children learn best at school in their mother tongue. Available at <https://theirworld.org/news/children-learn-best-in-mother-language-linguistic-diversity> (Accessed on 20 March 2021).

Thomas, G. 2013. How to Do Your Case Study: *A Guide for Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Treiman, D. J. 2009. Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tshotsho, B. P. 2013. Mother Tongue Debate and Language Policy in South Africa. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(13): 39-44.

Turner, N.S. and Koopman, A. 2018. Terminology development in Zulu avian nomenclature. *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics*, 32(1): 11-21.

UNESCO. 2008a. *Mother Tongue Matters: Local Language as a Key to Effective Learning*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2008b. *Mother tongue instruction in early childhood education: A selected bibliography*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2016. UNESCO Global Education Report. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2016/education-people-and-planet-creating-sustainable-futures-all> (Accessed on: 26 April 2020).

Webb, L. and Webb, P., 2008. *Introducing discussion into multilingual mathematics classrooms: An issue of code switching?* *Pythagoras*, 2008(1): 26-32.

Weybright, E.H., Caldwell, L.L., Xie, H., Wegner, L. and Smith, E.A., 2017. *Predicting secondary school dropout among South African adolescents: A survival analysis approach*. *South African journal of education*, 37(2): 1-11.

Wolff, H.E., 2018. Multilingualism, translanguaging, and linguistic superdiversity: An Africanist's perspective on 'language'. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 27(2): 21-21.

Wright, L. 2014. Implications of the National Language Policy in the South African classroom. *South Africa's Education Crisis: Views from the Eastern Cape*, 111-123.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: (KZN Department of Basic Education) Gatekeeper's permission letter



F 1479 Isiklabhu Groove

Ntuzuma Township

P. O KwaMashu

4359

28 September 2020

The Director of Curriculum Management and Development

Department of Basic Education

Private Bag X9137,

Pietermaritzburg,

3200

#### **Request for Permission to Conduct Research**

Dear Dr Mthembu

My name is Snehlanhla Khanyile, a Masters in Language Practice student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the Uhungulu District of Kwazulu-Natal.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct research at 5 Primary schools in the Uthungulu District. The schools that I have selected are Ceremony Primary School, Ntolwane Primary School, Mamba Primary School, Kwazikwakhe Primary School and Ndukuyakhe Primary School.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy



of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 064 866 4626, or email [cnehzzykhanyile@gmail.com](mailto:cnehzzykhanyile@gmail.com). Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Snenhlanhla Khanyile

Durban University of Technology

## Appendix B: Schools' Gatekeeper's permission Letter



**F 1479 Isiklabhu Groove  
Ntuzuma Township  
P. O KwaMashu  
4359**

28 September 2020

School Principal

---

### Request for Permission to Conduct Research

---

Dear Principal

My name is Snehlanhla Khanyile, a Masters in Language Practice student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the Uthungulu District of Kwazulu-Natal.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct research at your school.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 064 866 4626, or email [cnehzykhanyile@gmail.com](mailto:cnehzykhanyile@gmail.com). Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Snehlanhla Khanyile

Durban University of Technology

## Appendix C: Letter of information and Consent



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

**Title of the Research Study:** Perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the UThungulu District of Kwazulu-Natal.

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Snenhlanhla Khanyile, BTech in Language Practice

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:** Dr Felix Awung, and Dr Blaise Ngandeu

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:** This research is an investigation of perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education. This study aims to uncover perceptions by educators who are the agents of all curriculum policies in order to outline what works and what doesn't work in the classroom for better formulation of policies.

Hello. I hope that this letter finds you well. I am a Postgraduate student at DUT doing research for my Master's degree in Language Practice. I would like to invite you to participate in the research study on perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education.

**Outline of the Procedures:** The researcher has gathered that there seems to be little focus put on the educators' perceptions on mother-tongue education and this is a problem as educators are both the product and agents of this education system, therefore their input is vital in making mother-tongue education a reality. It is in this regard that this study aims to investigate primary school educators' perception on the implementation of mother-tongue education. The objectives of this study are to examine the language in education policy in the UThungulu district, to analyse the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district, to investigate the challenges of the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district and to find out the perceptions of Foundation Phase educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in the UThungulu district. This study will adopt a Qualitative Research Approach. Participants will be 30 educators from 5 primary schools in the UThungulu District. These schools must be in the rural area of the UThungulu District and offer mother-tongue education in the Foundation Phase. Participants must be Foundation Phase teachers and must have served for three (3) years or more. Due to the COVID-19 safety regulations, the researcher will send closed and open-ended questionnaires via email for you to fill in at the comfort of their homes or at work. This questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to fill

in. Upon completion, the researcher asks that you email the questionnaires back, where the researcher will begin analysing the data thematically.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you.

**Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdrawn from the Study:** There will be no adverse consequences if you choose to withdraw. You may withdraw if at any point you feel that you no longer want to be part of the study.

**Benefits:** The research can be published in journals and you will get a chance to voice out your opinions about the current language-in-education policy implementation process and also give recommendations.

**Remuneration:** No remuneration whatsoever.

**Costs of the Study:** You will not be expected to cover any costs towards the study.

**Confidentiality:** You will not be asked to disclose your identity in the research. All information will be handed over to the Supervisor and will be kept safely and is to be disposed of after the appropriate amount of time has passed.

**Findings:** The findings will be made available to those interested upon request. The findings will also be made available through the DUT library. The findings will also be made available to the principals of the schools that participated in the study as well as the Department of Basic Education.

**Research-related Injury:** No injury is foreseeable in the study.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:** The data collected will be accessible to the researcher and the supervisor. After the study, this information will be stored for five years, after which it will be permanently deleted from the storage device. Hard copy data such as printed questionnaires will be stored for 5 years in a safe facility of the Department of Media, Language and Communication, thereafter the data will be disposed of accordingly.

**Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact the researcher, Snehlanhla Khanyile on 064 866 4626 or [cnehzzykhanyile@gmail.com](mailto:cnehzzykhanyile@gmail.com), my supervisor, Dr Felix Awung on 0835824035 or [felix.awung@spu.ac.za](mailto:felix.awung@spu.ac.za), or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support, Dr L Linganiso [0313732577orresearchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:0313732577orresearchdirector@dut.ac.za).



## CONSENT

**Full Title of the Study:** Perceptions of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

**Names of Researcher/s:** Snenhlanhla Khanyile, BTech in Language Practice

**Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:**

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of researcher) about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study-Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the findings of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

|                                 |             |             |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| _____                           | _____       | _____       | _____                               |
| <b>Full Name of Participant</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Time</b> | <b>Signature / Right Thumbprint</b> |

I, (name of researcher), herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Researcher**                      **Date**                      **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Witness(If applicable)**   **Date**                      **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Legal Guardian(If applicable)** **Date**                      **Signature**

## Appendix D : Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

I am currently pursuing my Masters studies in the Department of Media, Language & Communication under the supervision of Dr F N Awung(Co-ordinator). My research is focused on: *Perception of educators on the implementation of mother-tongue education in South Africa: A case study of selected schools in the UThungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

It will be highly appreciated if you could contribute in completing the attached questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to acquire information that will provide primary data for the Master's degree in Language Practice. The study is solely for academic purposes and the answers you provide will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be provided. Participation in the study is voluntary and the findings will be made available to you and copies will be lodged in the DUT repository Lab.

Thank you for your effort and time in completing the questionnaire.

Contact details:

Snenhlanhla S Khanyile

Durban University of Technology

Department of Media, Language and Communication

Tel: 0648664626

Email: cnehzzykhanyile@gmail.com

Date -----

**SECTION A: IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION**

Please indicate the extent to which you **agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree, neither agree nor disagree** with the statements by placing an (x) in the appropriate box.

| Please answer every question by ticking (x) |  | Agree | Strongly agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree |
|---|--|-------|----------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>A1</b>                                   | The 3 year policy has good educational benefits for the learners   |       |                |          |                   |                            |
| <b>A2</b>                                   | Learners respond well to mother tongue instruction                 |       |                |          |                   |                            |
| <b>A3</b>                                   | Mother-tongue education should be continued up to higher education |       |                |          |                   |                            |
| <b>A4</b>                                   | The government does enough to promote mother-tongue education      |       |                |          |                   |                            |
| <b>A5</b>                                   | There are challenges to mother-tongue education                    |       |                |          |                   |                            |
| <b>A6</b>                                   | Society is in favour of mother                                     |       |                |          |                   |                            |



|           |   |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
|           | tongue instruction                              |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>A7</b> | Mother tongue instruction yields better results |  |  |  |  |  |

**SECTION B: OPINIONS ON MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION**

Please answer all the questions below by filling in the blank spaces.

**B8.** What are your perceptions about mother-tongue education? -----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**B9.** How does society respond to mother tongue instruction? -----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**B10.**What challenges do you encounter in the implementation of mother-tongue education? --  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**B11.** Did your teacher training involve mother tongue instruction?-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

-----  
-----  
-----

**SECTION C: SUGGESTIONS**

**C12.** What do you think can be done to eliminate challenges in the implementation of mother-tongue education?-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**D13.** What other policies can be added to improve implementation of mother-tongue education?-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**Thank you for your time and cooperation. Your opinions are highly appreciated.**

