



Language Policy and Education in Multilingual South Africa: An Ethnographic Exploration

Nkosana Khumalo^{1,2}, Loyiso Motshekga^{2,3}, Siya Ndou¹

¹ University of the Witwatersrand

² Department of Research, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

³ Durban University of Technology (DUT)

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Correspondence: nkhumalo@outlook.com

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Author notes

Nkosana Khumalo is affiliated with University of the Witwatersrand and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Loyiso Motshekga is affiliated with Department of Research, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Siya Ndou is affiliated with University of the Witwatersrand and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Abstract

Language policies in multilingual South Africa have been a subject of considerable debate, particularly given the country's diverse linguistic landscape and its constitutional commitment to protecting minority languages. The study employs qualitative research methods including participant observation, interviews, and document analysis to gather data from schools, community centers, and families in South Africa's multilingual regions. The ethnographic approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex interplay between language policies and educational practices. A key finding is that while there are significant efforts to integrate all official languages into education curricula, there remains a substantial disparity in the use of these languages across different schools and regions. For instance, English is predominantly used in urban areas, whereas African languages dominate in rural settings. The ethnographic evidence suggests that language policies can either facilitate or hinder educational equity depending on their implementation and support structures within communities. Given the findings, recommendations include enhancing teacher training programmes to ensure proficiency in multiple languages, strengthening community engagement with schools, and developing culturally sensitive curricula that respect linguistic diversity.

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Bantu-speaking, Ubuntu, Ethnography, Heritage Languages, Sociolinguistics, Oral Tradition*

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