

Critical Issues in Language and Education Planning in Twenty First Century in South Africa

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Language and education planning issues and democratic policy implementation in the post-apartheid era in South Africa encompass a range of language-related issues and dilemmas that have counterparts in many countries, within the emerging global education system. The issues in South Africa were and continue to be shaped by the historical legacy of colonial rule and apartheid. Contemporary developments present new challenges alongside persistent problems inherited from the apartheid era. Critical issues in education and language planning are reviewed in global context. These are followed by an overview of language transformation policies that created the potential for democratic multilingualism and language equity in the new South Africa. An array of critical issues for the coming decades of the 21st century, with illustrations from research and practice, provides insight into the persistent problems and new challenges facing South Africa as language issues and needs compete with a complex assemblage of crucial development issues.

Keywords: critical issues, language and education planning, democratic policy, South Africa

Introduction

South Africa experienced more than 300 years of colonial history characterized by European domination, linguistic inequality and denial of rights to non-European languages and speakers. English and Dutch/Afrikaans were the official languages. In educational policies and practices, language and educational rights of non-Europeans were subordinated to those of Europeans and multilingualism was not recognized.

The first multiracial democratic elections in 1994 were a watershed. The new multiracial government terminated Afrikaner apartheid rule and white domination. From 1994 to 1996, a new constitution was drafted and approved. A bevy of legislation installed new democratic policies in all sectors including education. Under the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994), the blueprint for the transitional years, the emphasis was on rapid installation of democratic laws and policies. Thereafter, the focus shifted to implementation mechanisms and critique of the early policies, as well as new policies designed to rectify some of the problems encountered in the first decade of democracy. While the initial legislation laid the foundation for a new multilingual society with possibilities for linguistic equity and equality for all races and groups, the question arose as to whether democratic language policies could effect lasting change, or whether the age-old patterns of status quo and domination would persist with only superficial adherence to new policies. By the early 2000s, language (and language usage in education) policies had failed to erase patterns of language domination and inequality, and new challenges emerged (Brook Napier, 2003a).

In 2004, several assessments revealed the progress made in the first decade, and the challenges remaining. Now, after 15 years of democracy, it is timely to contemplate the achievements and the challenges ahead. In this paper, the author first considers South African language and education planning issues in global context, within a suite of universal language and education issues that assume contextually peculiar forms in South Africa. Then, brief overviews of the new language provisions and policies introduced from 1994 to 1996, and subsequently in the early 2000s, provided context for reviewing developments in the first 15 years including persistent and new challenges. This paper also offers examples from research and practice for illustration. The author concludes with critical questions on the prospects for attainment of the goals related to education and language in future decades.

The Global Context

South Africa's challenges related to education and language planning fall within a global suite of issues. South Africa's issues are not unrelated to those in China, Mexico, Nigeria, and many other countries. From a theoretical standpoint, the case of South Africa illustrates many features of globalization, the global trend of countries lending and borrowing educational policies, English dominance and implications for other languages especially indigenous languages, and elements of creolization, as imported ideas are adopted and variously implemented within a country (Brook Napier, 2003a; 2005c). Also, the solutions to many of the issues in South Africa are related to strategies and solutions elsewhere, as follows.

Globalization

South Africa is embroiled in the global enterprise of education, knowledge economy, international competitiveness, international comparisons of student achievement as indicators of educational effectiveness and priorities linked to economic development that translates to emphasis on mathematics, science, technology and English. These features and their implications for education are widely discussed, for instance, Stromquist (2002) on the knowledge economy; Zajda (2005), and Zajda and Rust (2009) on general features of globalization and educational policy and research; Baker and Wiseman (2005) on global educational trends; Zajda, Daun, and Saha (2009) on aspects of nation building, identity and citizenship education within globalization contexts, and globalization influences on linguistic policy decisions (Bjork-Holmarsdottir, 2009). South Africa is one of many countries struggling to meet internal needs while also striving to become globally competitive. Participation in cross-national studies of achievement in mathematics, science, reading/literacy and citizenship has left South Africa struggling with the dilemma of being a developing country trying to compete on international measures designed for industrialized countries, with poor showings (Brook Napier, 2005c; 2009). King and McGrath (2002) described the challenges facing South Africa and other African states in developing education and training for development, under pressures of globalization, knowledge-society and English dominance.

Post-Colonial Development Dilemmas

South Africa shares development dilemmas with other post-colonial states in Africa, Asia and Latin America regarding post-colonial and post-national identity, persistent inequality and poverty, racism and language issues that impinge on education systems and realities. Dutch and British colonial rule and then Afrikaner White domination, all had language and educational implications in South Africa. Brook Napier (2003a; 2006a; 2007a) and Eastman (1990) described the manner in which issues of nationalism and identity were closely entwined with language both historically and in contemporary reform policies in South Africa,

with similarities to situations in many other countries (Schuster & Witkosky, 2007). South African language and education planning dilemmas resemble those in many countries, as illustrated in Terborg and Garcia Landa (2006) on Mexico, Colombia, the Philippines, Malaysia and the US regarding conceptualization of policy, ideology, resource competition, political pressures and policy-practice dilemmas. Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2006) presented an array of issues related to developing post-colonial education systems to overcome colonial domination in various forms, including language.

In Africa, most countries share policy-practice dilemmas regarding language and education (Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009). These include language for empowerment versus mother-tongue usage (Prah, 2009), the powerful instrumental value of instruction in foreign languages (Qosso, 2009), and how to best implement bilingual education policies for indigenous languages alongside French/English to improve the quality of basic education for all in Burkina Faso and other countries (Traore et al., 2009). Brock-Utne (2003) reported that African teachers face the dilemma of being obliged to follow the official language of instruction only, yet their pupils invariably do not understand the language and do not use it outside school, neither do teachers consequently find widespread code-switching and language mixing in the classroom, and all these are widespread in South Africa too (Bjork Holmarsdottir, 2009). Johnson (2008) offered a general overview of quality, equality and democracy issues in South Africa, Gambia, Cameroon, Namibia and Nigeria. King and McGrath (2002) noted the important intersection of language issues with skills development and technical education for African countries, including South Africa, and Mazrui and Alamin (1998) also noted the importance of language issues in the wider African development experience after independence, and Bjork Holmarsdottir (2009) pointed out that most mother tongue instruction programs in Africa remain largely at the experimental stage.

Language Issues, English Dominance, Bilingualism/Multilingualism

The dominance of English as the paramount metropolitan language and its relation to other languages, are key features of policy and concern in many countries including South Africa, China, Singapore and US. In South Africa, some English and/or Afrikaans have long been essential for employment—even among unskilled workers—and this established widespread informal bilingualism or multilingualism in practice, with English dominance. In comparison, Chi (1999) noted the importance of American English and the time spent in the US influencing the educational decisions of Chinese students. Kong, Boon, Fredriksen, and Peng (2008) argued that English is so important in Singapore that there is official concern over indigenous cultural erosion, prompting creation of bilingual policies to fend off cultural-linguistic annihilation. In China, some 55 minority nationalities and 30 minority languages compete with Mandarin and Central Chinese as well as English, and bilingual education issues in Tibet are a matter of controversy (Badeng, 2001, 2008; Postiglione, 1999). China struggles with the question of how best to educate minority students within the context of regional inequalities, rural-urban differences, global competition and the growing power of English (Xueqin & Mantimyn, 2002). In the USA, tensions exist between American English dominance legitimated by the English Language Acquisition Act of 2001 and bilingual education movement—whether transitional, two-way or another form. Over 20% of American students do not have English as the home language and barely 29.5% of teachers with LEP (limited English proficiency) students have LEP training (NCES (National Center for Education Statistics), 2008; as cited in Spring, 2009, p. 107).

South African issues of language mixing and drift have counterparts elsewhere. In Singapore, Mandarin

Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English are officially recognized but “singlish” and standard English are at odds (Quentin, 2009), while other language speakers struggle for recognition—such as the Indian community (Viniti, 2007) and the desirable roles of language in the society are debated (Gopinathan, Pakir, Kam, & Saravanan, 1998). Bjork-Holmarsdottir (2009) described issues of multilingualism in South Africa under the new LiEP (language-in-education policies) in a manner similar to those described for many other countries with much of the focus on instructional medium and English dominance, and Epstein (1999) offered a comparison case in Canada. Sierra and Padilla (2003) described issues of English language hegemony in Mexico linked to American influences, while Francis (2003) provided an overview of challenges in Latin America for bridging the language-literacy divide. English medium instruction, Western influences and educational implications are crucial components of new teacher training programs in the United Arab Emirates (Kirk & Napier, 2009). The provisions for language rights in South Africa’s Constitution of 1996 generally resemble those proposed as internationally recognized linguistic human rights within protections of cultural rights, including mother tongue recognition and the need for bilingual education if a student’s home language is not the official language (as cited in Spring, 2009, p. 141).

Global Tradition of Lending and Borrowing in Education

The trend of lending and borrowing in educational reform is well documented, for instance, in Zajda (2009), Steiner Khamsi (2004), Phillips and Ochs (2004). South Africa borrowed heavily from the US, importing OBE (outcomes based education) (Brook Napier, 2005c; Jansen, 2004), literacy programs based on the Cuban model (Brook Napier, 2006c) and ideas regarding language, instructional medium and bilingual/multilingual programs from several countries including Britain and New Zealand (Bjork Holmarsdottir, 2009). However, many unintended outcomes emerged as the imported reform components were creolized or resisted when implemented at lower levels in the system (Brook Napier, 2003b). In South Africa as elsewhere, the dialectic of the global and the local plays out at the meso- and micro- levels where policies take on locally contextualized forms (Arnové & Torres, 2007).

Lending and borrowing processes also apply to language evolution. Ponelis (1993) documented the evolution of the Afrikaans language and the manner in which its construction included many borrowings from other languages. Language mixing in South Africa has parallels in other countries, for example, in the case of “singlish” in Singapore. “Pure” versus “corrupted” language forms are part of the overall debate in South Africa and elsewhere, regarding the metropolitan languages.

Language, Skills Development and Mathematics/Science/Technology Needs

South Africa conforms to the global pattern in that mathematics, science, technology and English are considered the priority subject areas. In the early 2000s, the “skills deficit” in South Africa reached crisis proportions (Brook Napier, 2009; Bernstein, 2009). Language and vocabulary issues within the priority areas of mathematics, science, technology and skills development began to receive attention as a part of the problems, but strategies to address the language/vocabulary needs did little to promote the cause of indigenous languages.

Choices About Education, Tutoring and Language Issues

South Africa shares with many countries the challenges of inequity. Parents who can afford expensive schools and private tutoring for their children frequently demand instruction in English for mobility and advancement, widening the gap between rich and poor. While a “shadow education system” is not yet as well developed in South Africa compared to those in countries, such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and the

US (Bray, 2009; Lee, 2006), it is on the rise, and demand for tutoring in and for English tends to predominate. Balancing national needs with local and individual/family level needs raises tough questions related to language equity, instructional medium and labor market needs in South Africa, as in many other countries (Putz, 1997).

Given this global backdrop, it is prudent to suggest that South Africa does have much opportunities to learn from the experiences of other countries with similar or equivalent challenges regarding promotion of language equality and effective language in education policy. However, the record shows that true language equity remains elusive in most countries including South Africa. The following section of this paper provides a summary of the key language policy innovations in the new South Africa as context for examining issues, developments and prospects.

Democratic Language Policies in the New South Africa

In 1994, the total population of 40.65 million included 30.9 million Africans, 5.19 million whites, 3.47 million Coloureds (people of mixed race) and 1.04 million Asians. In 1993-1994, the home language distribution was Zulu 22.02%, Xhosa 18.07%, Afrikaans 15.05%, English 9%, Tswana 9.17%, Northern Sotho 9.21% and 17.47% other African languages and foreign languages. In Gauteng Province in 1994, 35.6% of residents spoke a combination of English and Afrikaans at home, 30.3% spoke English and 27.8% spoke Sotho. Conversely, in KwaZulu Natal, Zulu was the home language of 79.4% of the population in 1994 (SAIRR (South African Institute of Race Relations), 1995, p. 18). English and Afrikaans had been the official languages of the country through most of the 20th century, and under apartheid, as van den Berghe (1966) noted, recognition of indigenous languages was considered inappropriate and inefficient.

To eradicate the legacy of linguistic inequality, an equitable multiple-languages model was adopted after debate over several options (De V. Cluver, 1992; Desai, 1994; McCormick, 1994; NEPI (National Educational Policy Investigation), 1992; Reagan, 1988; Webb, 1994). It was widely agreed that linguistic equality was integral to the plan for a new multiracial democratic society (Alexander & Hough, 1999; Buthelezi, 1990; Mandela, 1994; McGurk, 1990). These ideals were articulated in the new Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Preamble states: "We, the people of South Africa, recognize the injustices of our past" (p. 1). The Founding Provisions explicate linguistic rights and the means to overcome the legacy of discrimination. Eleven official languages are listed: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Tsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu (para. 6, section 1). The State "must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use" of the indigenous languages (sections 2 and 3), and "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably" (section 4). While any of the languages may be used in government, bilingualism is recognized in that "the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages" while "municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents" (para. 6, section 3b). Recognizing multilingualism, a PANSALB (Pan South African Language Board) was established to:

Promote and create conditions for the development, use, and respect of all official languages, the Khoi, Nama and San languages, sign language and all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, and Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa. (Founding Provisions, chap. 1, para. 6, section 5)

The sweeping Bill of Rights protects against discrimination including in language (chap. 2, section 9, para. 3, p. 7), for freedom of expression and communications (section 16, p. 9), and for education in one's own language:

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 (section 29, para. 2, p. 14).

Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice. (p. 15).

The provisions in section 30 “Language and Culture” ensure that: Furthermore, section 31 protects the rights of communities to use their language and to participate in cultural, religious and linguistic associations (p. 15). Language protections are also in the right “to be tried in a language that the accused person understands” (section 35, para. 3, p. 17).

In education, legislation initially focused on eliminating the apartheid legacy by dismantling the fourfold racially segregated education systems, making all government schools officially nonracial and restructuring and expanding access to begin building a democratic universal system. Subsequent reforms also targeted issues of curriculum and language (ANC (African National Congress), 1994; DNE (Department of National Education), 1991). Legislation in 1996-1997 added ambitious provisions for language equity. Schools could choose one of the official languages as their medium of instruction. Pupils applying for admission had to indicate their language of preference (language in education policy in terms of section 3 (4) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) and the Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy published in terms of section 6 (1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996). Schools were not required to offer more than one medium of instruction, but the policy recommended that schools’ governing bodies stipulate “how multilingualism could be promoted by offering additional languages as subjects, or by other means” (as cited in SAIRR, 1998, p. 174). If fewer than 40 pupils requested instruction in another official language not offered by a school, the head of the provincial education department determined how to meet their needs. Grade-by-grade language requirements remained, but now they were not stipulated as European languages. English ceased to be a compulsory subject for grade 12 matriculation from the beginning of 1998, Afrikaans had ceased to be required previously. A national literacy initiative was announced in 1998, and many adult education programs promoted indigenous language development as well as skill development in English (Elley et al., 1996; Farrell, Homer, & Patterson, 1998; Le Roux, 1995; SAIRR, 1998, pp. 178-179).

Despite of these elements of progress, new challenges emerged, to adequately address language-related needs and policies across different societal domains, and in different subsectors of education (Granville et al., 1998). Scholarly debate centered on the issues of globalization influences, the continuing role of English, the fate of indigenous languages in South Africa and neighboring countries, and whether or not the first decade of multilingualism in South Africa was “fact or fantasy” (Joint International Conference of the Southern African Applied Linguistics Association & Linguistics Society of Southern Africa, 2004).

By the 2001 census, the home language profile showed some slight shifts over 1994: Zulu (23.8%); Xhosa (17.6%); Afrikaans(13.3%), compared to only 8.2% for English and Tswana which were less than Sepedi (9.4%); Ndebele (1.6%); Sotho(7.9%); Swati(2.7%); Venda (2.3%); Tsonga (4.4%); and other languages (0.5%). The home language profile was unlikely to change much, given projections for continued disproportionate growth of the African population. Consequently, the language issues regarding instructional medium and choice would likely prevail despite continued English dominance and the survival of Afrikaans.

In 2005, responding to the tardy progress implementing the sweeping language in education policies, then Minister of Education Pandor declared that teaching indigenous languages would be required in all schools. In reality, this had few impact (Brook Napier, 2008). In fact, in many suburban, former white schools where some indigenous languages had initially been introduced, few were still offered, many were replaced with demand

for Afrikaans for its work-related usefulness (Brook Napier, 2006b). Language inequity was widespread in schools as the equitable language-of-instruction policies proved difficult or impossible to implement owing to a dearth of teachers competent to teach indigenous languages and due to continued demands for English or Afrikaans instruction (C. Stemmet, personal communication, May 22, 2009). Consequently, the flurry of legislation and high hopes for language equity yielded meager results, leaving many crucial challenges for the coming decades.

Critical Issues and Challenges for the 21st Century

As South Africa moves ahead in transformation, language-related challenges are pervasive society overall, and in education and other sectors. In the following discussion, several cases in point illustrate the language-related dilemmas in South Africa during the last 15 years of transformation, with implications for the coming decades.

Globalization and the Importance of English

The pattern of English dominance is entrenched in South Africa. Transformation policies for democratization and development are pegged to global systems of educational standards and priorities, and in all sectors, the importance of competing in a global economy is prevalent. Participation in the knowledge economy is a high priority in South Africa as elsewhere (Bernstein, 2009; CDE (Centre for Development and Enterprise), 2009; Stromquist, 2007). The removal of censorship and introduction of cable television, coupled with advances in global communications and the Internet, further strengthened the position of English (and American English) as the international language with instrumental value for advancement. The importance of English continues to grow, enhanced by its potential as a linking language, as Van Kotze (1991) predicted. English along with science, mathematics, and technology were the “priority subjects” in the transition period and they remain so (ANC, 1994; DNE, 1991; CDE, 2009). While English is not given special attention on the National Curriculum Statement and its predecessors, and all 11 national languages have equal representation as languages learning areas (retrieved from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE>), in reality, the instrumental value of English accords it elevated status that is unlikely to change, continuing the legacy of importance of English as one of the two dominant languages under apartheid (De Beer, 1967). Some illustrations are as follows.

Many school principals in the (former) townships in Gauteng Province feel so strongly about their pupils’ need for English that they enforce a policy of “English only” at school, allowing no code switching or vernacular use (M. Kambule, July 22, 1996, personal communications; J. Van der Vyver, August 1998, personal communications). Teachers in township schools often feel doubly disadvantaged by their apartheid-era training that left them ill-equipped to compete with better trained English speaking teachers in the former white schools (Brook, 1996a, 1996b; Van der Vyver, August, 1998, personal communication). In quality assurance workshops for rural teachers and teacher trainers in the Free State in 1999 and 2000, teachers and principals described their views of the value of English for their African pupils. One principal reported that the measure of a good quality township school in the area was if the pupils left the school being able to speak, read and write English even in an area dominated by Afrikaans because “English is the ticket to opportunity” (L. Tejane, 1999, personal communication). Other workshop participants concurred, that while Afrikaans was important for pupils for local-area employment, fluency in English was even more important for pupils aiming to leave the local area. In rural mission schools, the principal contributions of American volunteer teachers were in helping students prepare for their English matriculation examinations, assisting the African teachers with business

letters (in English), and providing a link with the outside world (Brook, 1995; 1996a). Yet in remote areas, such as extreme Northeastern KwaZulu Natal, many teachers and students speak virtually no English at all and instruction is in Zulu (Brook Napier, 2005b).

Bernsten (2002) argued that the importance of English expanded at the expense of the indigenous languages, and this generated new issues with regard to English that will have to be tackled in future years (Finlayson, Calteaux, & Myers-Scotton, 1998; Goduka, 1998; Roos, 1997). These include the relationships among English, Afrikaans and the indigenous languages; language rights and the desirability of ESL (English as a second language) programs (Pierce, 1989; McDonald, 1990; Pierce & Ridge, 1997); the crucial need for teacher training and support for effective language instruction; and the need to reconcile language medium needs with scarce resources and untrained personnel, imbalances in the supply of language trained teachers, and backlogs in literacy that continue to plague the disadvantaged majority and students with special needs (Chick, 1992; de V. Cluver, 1992; Naiker, 1995; Pierce & Ridge, 1997; Penn & Reagan, 1990; Reagan & Ntshoe, 1987). Some of these issues were addressed in the National Curriculum Statement of 2001 subsequently (retrieved from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE>). Added challenges include how to reconcile the demands for English with the needs for and nature of sign language (Akach et al., 2009) and how multilingualism issues will fare in competition with English and Afrikaans (Mesthrie, 2009).

Further, the importance of culturally relevant programs in “people’s English” and varieties of spoken English need consideration, so that learners can identify with the language as a part of their learning context rather than as a part of a foreign culture (McKenzie, 1990; Pierce, 1989; Bjork Holmarsdottir, 2009). A hybridized and indigenized South African English has evolved, now increasingly answering the question “whose English” (J. Branford & W. Branford, 1991; Smith, 1993) in a new configuration of multilingualism. If “South African English” for all is to be formally recognized, it needs to replace the elitist “Queen’s English” associated with colonial domination, and indigenous languages need to be developed and promoted in all sectors of society alongside English, with equal status as part of a common heritage (Granville et al., 1998; Hartshorne, 1992, pp. 207-214; Ndebele, 1987; Bjork Holmarsdottir, 2009). For external reasons of global participation, and for internal reasons of utility and possible linking language, English-related issues are certain to remain prominent in future decades in South Africa and elsewhere.

Realities of Multilingualism, Language Mixing and Language Preferences

There has been a marked shift since the apartheid era in that multilingualism is becoming more accepted in the new South Africa (Pierce & Ridge, 1997). The old notions of bilingualism tied to white supremacy were replaced by constitutionally sanctioned flexible bilingualism in conduct of government business, and as multilingualism in reform policy and practice, news broadcasting and advertising. Language drift, language mixing and eclipsing of local languages by English are global issues seen here too. Language mixing, adaptation and code switching create the potential for inclusive “South African English” to be recognized as a linking language (Calteaux, 1996; Finlayson et al., 1998; Goduka, 1998; Granville et al., 1998). Black South African English speakers are likely to significantly impact indigenized “South African English” (Bernsten, 2002) akin to “singlish” in Singapore and “spanglish” in parts of the US. Linguistic diversity should be promoted (Reagan, 2001) and sub-varieties of South African English, such as Indian English will prevail (Mesthrie, 1993). The legacy of language mixing in practice is likely to continue, but with more acceptance of informal language use than the case under apartheid and its colonial predecessors. Moreover, given the inordinate influence of

American television, film and international news in South Africa, American English is becoming ever more prevalent in South Africa too, alongside a host of other American cultural and brand-name influences.

The Embattled Position of Afrikaners, Afrikaans Language and Heritage

The prospects for this language and cultural group are interesting to contemplate. Afrikaans enjoyed less than half a century as an official language, but through most of the 20th century, it was aggressively promoted as a metropolitan language and a pillar of Afrikaner nationalism. Gilliom (2003) provided an analysis of the Afrikaner history and lifestyle, and the religious and ideological basis for apartheid. Ponelis (1993) offered a sociohistorical analysis of the origins of Afrikaans in 17th century creolized Cape Dutch, with much borrowing from other European settlers as well as from indigenous languages. Ponelis (1993) and Van Rooyen (1994) also explained how their language was central to Afrikaner cultural identity in response to British domination and adverse social conditions. The Afrikaners' language, linked to their white supremacist cultural identity and fundamentalist nationalism, had multiple implications for education and language use for English and Afrikaans speaking whites, and for non-whites, particularly Africans who were subjugated under the Bantu education and other apartheid policies (Brook Napier, 2003b; 2006a; 2007b). As the apartheid era ended, Afrikaners feared that they might become "sondebokke" (scapegoats) for the evils of apartheid. They saw themselves as unwelcome whites in a new South Africa, anxious over the prospects for survival and official status of their language (De Klerk, 1998, pp. 412-413).

However, Afrikaans has been surprisingly resilient, as the home language of white Afrikaners and of people of mixed ancestry formerly classified as Coloureds, and it remains useful if not essential for employment. Afrikaans remains the predominant home language in the traditionally Afrikaans provinces of Northern and Eastern Cape, Free State, North West Province and Northern Province. As Alexander and Hough (1998) and Norval (1998, p. 98) argued, the Afrikaners shifted from a segregationist position to that of a minority entitled to constitutional protection, enabling Afrikaans to prevail. Jansen (2009) offered a personal account of the persistent power of the race legacy, the power of the Afrikaners and their cultural traditions that included the sport of rugby and the power of their language as a force of sustained domination.

Afrikaans medium schools still exercise their instructional medium prerogative and many operate with little change in staffing and ethos. Most have some non-white enrollments to comply with official mandates that all government schools be non-racial (J.van der Vyver, August 13, 2000, personal communication; Smith, May 27, 2009, personal communication). Afrikaans, not English, remains the second language of large numbers of Africans, and it is a subject in many African schools (SAIRR, 2002, p. 138). One principal reported that in rural Afrikaans communities, it is not uncommon to find school staff who speak very little English, particularly in cases where there has been little staff turnover (M. Claasens, June 8, 1999, personal communication). Many English medium schools have Afrikaans speaking teachers who favour teaching there, because they consider that English medium schools offer superior working conditions (C. Stemmet, May 27, 2009, personal communication).

In the period of 1993-1999, African enrollments in historically white English-medium universities doubled, those in "historically white technikons" grew by 490%, but those in historically white Afrikaans-medium campuses soared by 1,120% (SAIRR, 2002, p. 276), reflecting the demand for programs considered to be of higher quality than their counterparts in historically black institutions. The inordinate growth on Afrikaans campuses also suggests the continued importance or acceptance of Afrikaans as learning medium. Several

traditionally Afrikaans universities have skillfully survived by offering both English and Afrikaans medium courses, and draining enrollments from many historically black institutions (Jansen, 2005).

In 2008, race/language bigotry erupted anew, with global exposure. At the UFS (University of the Free State), in a backlash against forced racial integration of dormitories, white Afrikaner students produced a graphic “Video Reminder of Apartheid’s Pain” showing Afrikaner students humiliating African female students. The video reached the international media and the Internet (Brook Napier, 2008b; New York Times, 2008). Ironically, the UFS case showed that the media could be a powerful vehicle for drawing attention to needs, not just problems, related to language.

In the coming decades, the precise position of Afrikaans in the shifting language terrain is difficult to predict, but it is likely to remain a contender for a role in the multilingual society. Afrikaners as a language-cultural group retain some power, with minority rights and workforce-relevant language.

Mother Tongue Instruction, Instructional Medium Issues and Minority Languages

The issues of implementing the multiple languages model enshrined in the constitution and in subsequent legislation governing schools are likely to pose a continuing challenge in the next decades. Because there are 11 national languages, far more speakers of some such as Zulu than others, and uneven distributions of languages, the prospects of leveling the indigenous language playing field are uncertain and observance of mother tongue instruction rights poses a huge challenge. To date, recognition of indigenous languages and cultures has been more evident in theatre and the arts, and in the media. Local resistance to some mechanisms for according language rights to individuals or groups, and policy implementation shortcomings, has not helped the cause. School ethos, administration ideology and community values create local circumstances that mitigate against smooth implementation of provisions of the Schools Act and the Language Policy.

Offerings of indigenous languages as school subjects have been sporadic and minimal, especially in former white schools. In rural African schools, the dominant vernacular of the region persists alongside English or Afrikaans, and courses on indigenous languages other than the local language are largely absent from schools (L. Tejane, June 6, 1999, personal communication). In many urban township schools, indigenous language courses are largely of Zulu, Sotho or Xhosa, while the instructional medium varies from English to Afrikaans to a mixture of these and vernacular (J. van der Vyver, August 2000, personal communication).

Instructional medium issues have been particularly challenging in terms of according students own-language rights, as the following illustrations show. First, in the open schools—progressive private schools that admitted students of all races even before the fall of apartheid—English medium instruction prevailed, but the challenge for teachers was in dealing with multiple languages in the classroom as well as the lack of English skills among pupils and some teachers (Brook, 1991, 1996a; Christie, 1990; McGurk, 1990). Second, by 2008, the lack of support and training for teachers in dealing with multiple language-speakers was still reported as an endemic problem in schools (Brook Napier, 2008b).

Third, Odav, and Ndandane (1998) underscored the importance of community values in research on high schools in Afrikaans communities in Northwest province and Limpopo/Northern province where violent protests erupted over the way, in which racial integration and language medium provisions of the 1996 Schools Act were implemented, ignoring conservative Afrikaans community values, and ignoring the requests of African pupils. Eventually, the small number of African pupils in these schools won their right to be taught in English—they did not demand instruction in their home language—physically separated from Afrikaans pupils

who were taught in Afrikaans as before.

Fourth, a decade later, little had changed. In 2009, the SCA (Supreme Court of Appeal) ruled that school governing bodies—not provincial education departments—had the right to choose a school’s language policy following a 2007 case in Mpumalanga when an Ermelo school refused to teach students in English as they requested. The outcome, with appeals pending in 2009-2010, allowed this school to remain a single-medium Afrikaans school, while other court rulings added to the prevalence of English as the medium of choice (SAIRR, 2009, p. 368). Fifth, a suburban Gauteng school administrator reported that in former white schools, students for whom English was a second language frequently demand English instruction, rejecting indigenous instruction or language courses as they desired fluency in English for advancement, and many African students considered indigenous languages to be unfashionable or “not cool” anymore (C. Stemmet, May 27, 2009, personal communication). Sixth, as Bjork Holmarsdottir (2009) reported in classroom-level research, code-switching and language mixing were widespread practices among teachers who often resort to the vernacular for fuller explanations to students struggling with English/Afrikaans.

Sudden official announcements can cause language medium confusion, as in early 2008 when the government announced that recitation of the National School Pledge and the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa would be mandated for all learners in schools (retrieved from <http://www.education.pwv.gov.za/>), but left unspecified the question of which language was to be used in recitation or how students would be required to comply in schools (Brook Napier, 2008b). Sudden, top-down announcements of this type have been frequent since 1994. They precipitated resistance among teachers and they contributed to the spotty record of progress in instructional medium and mother tongue equity (Brook Napier, 2003b).

Another complicating factor is that families’ instructional medium preferences are mixed, suggesting that there will be no easy solution to resolving instructional medium issues and the manner in which constitutional language rights are accorded to minority groups and individuals. A survey conducted in 2000 for PANSALB created under the 1996 constitution showed that only 12% of the 2,160 households surveyed wanted English to be the exclusive medium of instruction in state-funded schools and universities, 39% wanted English to be taught alongside with their home language, and 37% wanted mother-tongue instruction (SAIRR, 2002, p. 277). English remains an important instructional medium, but South Africans’ divergent preferences of instructional medium reflect personal and local contextual factors. Full realization of the ideal of own-language instruction may therefore remain elusive, especially for pupils in small groups whose language of choice is not that used at the local school.

Policy Practice Issues: According Other Language Rights

In addition to the challenges to be faced in according language rights to students, and achieving more equitable representations of languages in schools, in other sectors of society, one sees similar challenges ahead for the attainment of language equality. Cases brought to PANSALB in effect demanded “language for progress” rather than “for control” as was the case in the past (Mc Cormick, 1994). Three examples follow. One appeal to PANSALB protested “inadequate use of Afrikaans and Tswana” in a speech by the premier of the Northern Cape, and “inadequate translation” of a subsequent debate. A second case hinged on the argument that the use of English for official business of the rail network Spoornet was unconstitutional. Thirdly, in 2000, the Mineworkers’ Union asserted that “the Department of Public Works had acted unconstitutionally by

conducting all communications in English” (SAIRR, 2001, p. 520). These cases suggest the difficulties involved in recognizing language rights. The challenges to exclusive use of English nonetheless indicate its continued dominance in the public sphere. It remains to be seen whether a body, such as PANSALB can be effective in dealing with language rights challenges. Additional areas of uncertainty include the prospects for sign language recognition, survival of the severely endangered languages of the Khoi, Nama, San and also religious minority and immigrant languages.

Language Planning, Cultivation of a New Nationalism

A long-term challenge is to cultivate a new sentiment of nationalism among South Africans of all races and languages, linked to notions of democratic citizenship and the “rainbow nation”. President Mandela set the tone for reconciliation in the transitional period of 1994-1999. Then the Mbeki government shifted to transformation-focused rhetoric (M. Mzamani, personal communication, January 19, 2001). Former President De Klerk characterized the challenge ahead for Afrikaners as “’n groot geestelike trek.’n nuwe begin” (a great spiritual trek... a new beginning), for all South Africans to move from “’rasgebaseerde politiek na waardegebaseerde politiek” (race-based politics to truth-based politics) toward an inclusive “oorkoopelende nasionale identiteit” (overarching national identity) (De Klerk, 1998, pp. 414-416). Pan Africanism and the concept of African Renaissance are promoted in the new South Africa, as pride in individual indigenous culture, language and heritage and as part of the continent-wide Pan-African identity in which South Africa seeks to exercise leadership to strengthen the position of South Africa and the continent in the global arena (Mbeki, 1998, pp. 195-239; Brook Napier, 2008a).

However, widespread use of the prefix “former” (former white schools, people formerly classified as Coloureds, former townships and homelands, etc.) underscores the irony that, having officially eradicated apartheid, South Africans seem to be trapped in a legacy of racially defined thinking regardless (Brook Napier, Lebeta, & Zungu, 2000). Kane-Berman (2010) argued that we have actually regressed considerably in 15 years, that the ruling party’s obsession with race and compensatory policies promoting BEE (black economic empowerment) reify anew race classifications. While the challenges here are more ephemeral than several of those mentioned previously, they are also indicators of the track record in creating a multiracial, multilingual South Africa. As Jansen (2009) noted, legacies of race, ideology and language are hard to eradicate in South Africa. But here too, many countries struggle with these post-national and post-colonial identity dilemmas.

Old, and New Problems: Resurgent Racism and Resentment, and a Host of Human Resources Challenges

Language issues exist in a volatile landscape in the current period. Although language issues cannot be separated from the larger picture, they too often fall off the radar. In the government’s ten-year report assessing progress made under the RDP since 1994, and identifying the challenges for the second decade, language issues were not specifically mentioned (retrieved from <http://www.10years.gov.za/review/documents/htm>). In reviews after 15 years, the list of problems was even longer, and language issues only featured as a footnote regarding education (Kane-Berman, 2009; SAIRR, 2009a). President Mbeki argued that despite of the progress, South Africa remained a land of two nations: one is white and prosperous first-world, and the other is black and impoverished third-world (Mbeki, 1998, p. 61; 2008). In a survey of South Africans’ views of the most serious problems not resolved since 1994, white Afrikaans speakers had the highest levels of dissatisfaction with personal progress, invoking “race discrimination”, “affirmative action” and “equity policy”. Problems of racism

were perceived as most acute by white Afrikaans speakers (87%), followed by white English speakers (68%), Coloureds (67%), Indians (66%), then Africans (54%) (Schlemmer, 2001). Affirmative action policies eradicated white privilege. For Afrikaners, this brought their history full circle since subjugation by the British was at the core of their historical struggle for power (Gilliomee, 2003). So language issues permeate the dominant race-culture-inequity scenarios. However, for South Africans in general, problems of race were noted as less serious than unemployment, crime and violence, housing and shelter, water and sanitation. Educational differences, not race or poverty, were identified as the dominant cause of inequality (Schlemmer, 2001). Language issues were an undercurrent in all of these.

Language issues constantly compete with national issues. For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was criticized for not meeting out sufficient justice on many apartheid-era criminals, and for insufficient compensation to victims (SAIRR, 2005), prompting debate about the desirability of forgiveness versus revenge (Economist, 2004, pp. 44-45). The list of problems facing the country in the 2000s included: (1) slowed economic growth; (2) rising inflation, particularly in food and oil prices; (3) emigration and loss of skilled labor; (4) crime and criminal justice system problems; (5) housing, poverty, children's issues; (6) water supply, infrastructure and utility service delivery deficiencies; (7) corruption scandals; (8) HIV/AIDS and other disease impacts; and (9) even controversy over huge expenditures to host the 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup (SAIRR, 2009b). In 1998, xenophobic attacks on immigrants and "foreigners" erupted, creating a national crisis and renewing concerns over the prospects for resolving deep-seated racial divisions and prejudices (Hassim, Kupe, & Worby, 2009; McFarlane, 2008).

Even in education, language issues competed in a crowded agenda of issues including declining matriculation rates and increased dropout rates; loss of teachers; untrained teachers and poor quality teaching; decreased participation in early childhood programs; needs for female students including maternity leave and protection from sexual abuse; the exodus from township schools to former white schools; implementation issues with the new National Curriculum Statement; impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on teachers and students; and free schooling legislation (Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005) policy implementation problems prevailed in a consistent pattern (Brook Napier, 1996b; 2008b). Nonetheless, the South African Human Rights Commission Report in 2006 pointed to language inequity as a pervasive undercurrent in inequitable schooling, as follows: A two-tier system of public schools exists in South Africa, of former white Model C schools, and impoverished black schools. Some 42% of learners cannot understand their teachers due to instructional medium issues and language inequity. Mother-tongue instruction is largely not occurring and few schools offer indigenous language courses. The conclusion was that the South African Schools Act of 2006 be revisited, that "basic education" and the right of access be defined properly (SAIRR, 2007, pp. 259-312). The danger is that language issues will continue to be lost in the swarm of needs, priorities and other issues both in education and on the national agenda.

In the 2000s, the so-called "skills crisis", "skills deficit" or "skills black hole" began to attract significant attention as it adversely impacted all forms of public sector service delivery including education, healthcare, local government, emergency fire services, electricity, crime prevention and justice and defense (Roodt & Eddy, 2010). The problems include severe brain drain (due to emigration and retirements), inadequate levels of training of high need workers such as doctors and engineers; widespread middle level post vacancies; patronage and corruption resulting in appointments of unqualified persons to senior posts; and inadequate teaching and learning in the priority areas of mathematics, science, technology and English (Roodt & Eddy, 2010; CDE, 2004, 2009;

Brook Napier, 2007b, 2009). The significance of language training for employment had been noted decades earlier by Gxilishe and van der Vyver (1987), but now it was recognized that one feature of the current “crisis in science and mathematics” is that deficiencies in language and vocabulary, especially in English, adversely impact students as well as workers (Bernstein, 2009; CDE, 2004). While the attention accorded this skills crisis, and the urgency of promoting mathematics and science might well serve language learning needs indirectly, they are most likely to further the cause of English and Afrikaans rather than other languages (Brook Napier, 2009).

Multilingualism Myth or Reality: Superficial Adherence or Real Progress

Finally, one might question the real status of multilingualism after 15 years of transformation. In the country today, it is fashionable to use vernacular sayings as catchy race-free slogans or South Africanisms. The new national anthem “Nkosi Sikelel i Africa” (God bless Africa), “hamba kahle” (go safely) and “sawubona” (hello, singular) often appear in advertizing, the media, and in speeches by public officials (Townsend, 1996). One might easily dismiss these as superficial signs of a new multilingualism (Brook Napier, 2004; 2005a; 2006a; 2008). In the illustrations and cases provided in this paper, one sees evidence of progress but also of contradictions and conflicts that impede progress. The verdict is yet premature. After only a decade and a half of transformation, it is likely that several more decades even generations might pass before we can assess the language equity record more definitively, given the mixed results to date.

Conclusions

After 15 years of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, the record reveals some progress but the persistence of long-term patterns, and new problems that are likely to raise the stakes for language issues. In the period 1994-2008, the slow and erratic progress in language-related transformation was colored by intense competition from other education priorities, and by recurring and new issues on the national radar. Top-down interventions to enforce language equity have been ineffective and some have inadvertently strengthened English and Afrikaans. The hegemony of English seems unshakeable, despite of its being the home language of a small minority of the population. Worse, racial animosity and the staying power of the apartheid legacy might have been underestimated. Next-generation issues, among disgruntled Afrikaners and among those prejudiced against “foreigners”, bring new rounds of uncertainty and conflict. It appears that concerted, micro-level grassroots actions will be needed to demand own-language instruction and indigenous language courses, community mobilization and activism will be needed for the exercise of individual and group language rights, and language issues will continue to compete with an already crowded hierarchical agenda of crises and needs.

Most of the critical language issues are likely to persist, conforming to the global suite of language and education-related development dilemmas that South Africa shares with many countries, and given that global influences are hardly likely to wane. Six large questions emerge: (1) Will the coming decades see further tinkering with language and education policies to overcome implementation problems, or will radically new policies emerge?; (2) What forms will the evolving language hierarchy take as the different racial/population groups and language speakers re-orient themselves in the society and power structure (and will severely endangered languages even survive)?; (3) Will English indeed continue to dominate in the tug-of-war with linguistic rights and multilingualism, given tensions between global influences and internal needs, and will Afrikaans continue to be tenacious?; (4) How will true linguistic equality be attained through the reconciling of all language rights for all South Africans, own-language instruction requests, and protection for endangered

languages?; (5) Will language rights and issues manage to compete with the host of resurgent problems and crises on the human resources development agenda or might they be more profitably addressed as needs co-opted to larger “crises” such as the skills deficit?; and (6) Will resources be allotted to training and support of teachers to help address classroom- and school- level needs in teaching other languages or in meeting instructional medium demands? In South Africa, as in other countries struggling to reconcile internal needs, competing agendas and global influences, language and education planning issues are likely to remain beset by arduous challenges in the coming decades.

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