

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the past the teaching of the then marginalised languages in South Africa, such as isiNdebele (Southern NDEBELE), gave the education authorities like the former Department of Education and Training (DET)<sup>1</sup> and the former KwaNdebele Government, much cause for concern, because of discriminatory policies such as the Mother-Tongue policy in African Schools. The education policies were that of the apartheid dispensation, characterised by the dominance of English and Afrikaans.

The Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1993) , and the final Constitution (RSA 1996a), had to effect an evolutionary transition to the birth of a new democratic South Africa which brought with it, besides political changes, language and cultural rights, as cornerstones of this new South Africa.

The protection of fundamental rights is also evident, in the democratic language dispensation clearly stipulated in the Constitution (RSA 1996a):

Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.  
(RSA 1996a 1, 6(2))

The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and

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<sup>1</sup>Under the Apartheid policy DET was the Department of Education specifically for Africans living in the areas classified as “South Africa” as opposed to the homelands and self-governing territories.

other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages. Without detracting from the provisions of Subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably. (RSA 1996a 1, 6(4))

Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language of their choice in public institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account -

- (a) equity
- (b) practicability; and
- (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices. (RSA 1996a 2, 29(2))

Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights. (RSA 1996a 2, 30)

The Constitution therefore makes it clear that language is one of the fundamental rights of a human being. Indeed, in the new dispensation, the constitutional provision warrants state budget and expenditure on the development of the official African languages.

Currently, the nine African languages, have been granted official status, equal to that of English and Afrikaans, the previous official languages. The Constitution stipulates that eleven languages will now be official languages of the country at national level, namely, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, isiSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu. In strengthening the official status of the eleven languages, it was further stipulated that conditions for the development and for the promotion of the equal use and enjoyment of all official languages must be created (RSA 1996a: 1, 6(2) & (4)). It is a transition period and difficulties are bound to be there. Mutasa (1999:83), says South Africa, an emerging nation, has chosen a multilingual approach as its language policy. In essence, for the first time in the history of language

policies, here is a challenge, and even a question, whether it will be possible for all African languages, to develop and reach modernity as they are behind in development with regard to technical terminology compared to English and Afrikaans, languages with a tradition of scientific and technical literature. It is against this background of the development and the promotion of the equal use and enjoyment of all official languages, that the researcher decided to investigate the didactic and linguistic constraints pertaining to the teaching of isiNdebele. This African language, which is currently one of the official languages of the country, was formerly the most marginalised language. IsiNdebele has been a spoken language under the leadership of traditional kings (Ngwenyamas), Makhosoke II and Mayitjha III 200 years ago. The majority of isiNdebele or isiKhethu speakers reside in the north-western part of Mpumalanga Province, not very far from Pretoria, and close to the borders of the Limpopo and North West Provinces. P.B. Skhosana in his unpublished paper, "The Historical Survey of isiNdebele Literary Art," Department of African Languages, University of Pretoria, February 2002, confirms that the language became a formally written one in 1985, when it was introduced in schools for the first time. Almost two decades later it still does not at all compare well with its counterparts when it comes to development. Some of the fundamental issues still to be considered and availed are: careful language planning, material resources, qualified fieldworkers and developers, and even financial resources.

## 1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher chose this topic after he realised that isiNdebele had never had tangible language planning, in terms of the scientific development of linguistics, objectives, and strategies to change the way in which a language is used in a community. This involves among other things, some intervention of 'social Engineering of language' (Drapeau, 1995:7). The investigator was urged by writings by language scholars and activists, and pronouncements like this one by Herskovits (1964:12), that, "without language, the communication of knowledge that sets human beings apart from other species could not have developed".

Generally speaking, the objective of developing African languages, including isiNdebele, and empowering the people through these languages up to date, has just been a mere lip service. As Bamgbose (1991:111) rightly observed, language policies in Africa, no matter how good they are, are characterised by among other aspects, “a declaration without implementation”. Indeed in South Africa the recognition of the indigenous languages as official on the national level might be declared as a goal of the policy but from observation, most linguistic communication in domains of national significance remains in English and to a lesser extent Afrikaans.

The investigator became impelled by the fact that when South Africa became an officially multilingual country, isiNdebele had not fully developed lexically and in the technical sense. The researcher believed that with the status of being an official language, accorded all the indigenous languages, isiNdebele would rise to the challenge, even though it is still one of the underrated languages. As one of the African languages, it therefore meant that isiNdebele would always be a few steps behind English in terms of the economic sector, and as such, English and Afrikaans would keep on dominating. The researcher feels isiNdebele could be developed such that it could function beyond the traditional domains, such as home. The investigator hopes that the isiNdebele-speaking intelligentsia would recognise, and take up, the challenge of developing isiNdebele language towards equity status in this multilingualism dispensation. This would further expose the need for isiNdebele to be elevated to the level of the other African languages like isiXhosa and isiZulu, and ultimately the required status of South African official languages like English and Afrikaans and form part of the highly recognised languages within the educational circles, and economical spheres world-wide. This prompted the researcher to investigate the problems pertaining to the teaching and development of isiNdebele, and that which might hamper or tamper with its progress and modernisation.

### 1.3 RESEARCH PURPOSES AND GOALS

The objective of the current study is to manifest isiNdebele as a written language and to advocate up to date development of this language, wherein much academic research is encouraged. IsiNdebele is a formerly marginalised language and consequently, never featured in the school curriculum, as it was a mere oral language and a vehicle, through which a philosophy of life of the Ndebeles was conveyed to the 'not yet adult members' of its society. Luthuli (1982:1-22) says, "Language is an index of a people's thought about life and the future." Thus the investigator is concerned about the future of isiNdebele as a spoken and written language.

The researcher intends to conscientise the young literate Ndebeles to have confidence in speaking and writing their language. The expectation is that this could have a positive impact on their personal and collective self-esteem, identity, and, mostly, sense of cultural and personal belonging (Assembly of First Nations 1992:14). Through this document the researcher hopes to inform the relevant learners and practitioners about the constraints that exist in developing isiNdebele. They need to know how to use their mother-tongue creatively and to dispel the myth that African languages are not viable in the work industry. Young literates having acknowledged the challenges facing isiNdebele, would then realise that isiNdebele is as vibrant as other official languages, and that it is for them to be proud of, and to develop, their mother-tongue to the full.

The researcher advocates quality research in isiNdebele involving issues for the creation of new vocabularies and their standardisation, as this would involve the creation and the standardisation of a writing system for the language. Even though this language is relatively a newly-written language, it is important for the literates to associate with people who have studied the "contact of languages, and the phenomena of language shift and language death" (Drapeau, 1995:16), as this would enable them to acquire language revitalisation strategies. The researcher cherishes a hope that with such associations, these young literates would recognise the importance of maintaining this indigenous language, as many have pointed out, that isiNdebele language expresses and reflects the original culture in ways English simply cannot, and expresses cultural

knowledge, world views, human and spiritual connections. Indeed, Ndebeles use their language for practical purposes to speak to one another; to ask for, and give, information; to express feelings, wants and dislikes; and further, to express themselves in everyday life and in ceremony, at home, in public and in all other walks of life. What they need is development and modernisation of their language.

The investigation is focused on the obstacles which hamper the elaborating and modernising of isiNdebele. It is also looking into any successful and tangible steps towards resolving those constraints and the promotion of the equal use and enjoyment of all official languages, with special reference to African languages, and especially isiNdebele. South Africa's Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) (RSA1997), as compiled and published by the Department of National Education, language clause (Section 3) was intended to promote the development of the African languages, with regard to elaboration and modernising, so that they can function beyond the traditional domains of the home, "in domains such as the factory, government offices ... libraries and information centres, the media and the education system" (Cluver, 1976:69-70). The LiEP "is conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa" (RSA 1997:4.1.3), as expressed in the country's Constitution.

In line with South Africa's post-1994 language rights, the brochure compiled and published by the Department of National Education (RSA 1996c) recognises the reality of the linguistic diversity of South Africa. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (RSA 1996b: 3.(1); 4.(a) (v), (viii) ) confirms that the Minister of Education would "determine national education policy in accordance with the provisions of the Consitution and [the NEPA]" ..."toward the advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person ... " including the right "of every student to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable;" and "of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution," hence the LiEP (RSA 1997). In terms of Section 3 (4) (m) of the NEPA, the LiEP was then established, and it states:

The new language in education policy is ... meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged. (RSA 1997: 4.1.3)

As such it assumes that the learning of more than one language should be general practice and principle in our society. That is to say, being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African. (RSA 1997: 4.1.4)

The argument is that the Constitution's emphasis on fundamental human rights is in its linguistic practice. That is why the study also looks at what degree the use of isiNdebele would be promoted even in the private sector, and also establishes whether there are strategies in place to acknowledge achievements of isiNdebele in the market. Further, how would the usefulness of isiNdebele be acknowledged? This would ensure that isiNdebele is a useful and effective means of communication available to its speakers. Accordingly, it should be noted that human fitness to survive means the ability to talk, write, listen and read in ways that increase the chances for you and fellow members of your species to survive together. This would be a stage whereby grassroots participation in language development has been promoted and has reached maturity, for instance, in encouraging schools, universities, newspapers, local administrations and many others to send in new terminology creations to the National Terminology Services for the enhancement of isiNdebele terminology.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of the study are:

- 1.4.1 What do the isiNdebele teachers perceive to be constraints in teaching isiNdebele?
- 1.4.2 What limitations do developers of isiNdebele experience?
- 1.4.3 What mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure effective teaching of isiNdebele and elevating its status?

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is qualitative and is based on a naturalistic phenomenological philosophy which views reality as “interactive and a shared social experience” (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993:372). Data were collected through written questionnaires and focus groups. This qualitative investigation is very appropriate in this research as it allowed the researcher close proximity to the researched subjects. It is easy for the investigator to construct meaning from the participants and their interpretation of their experiences, gather data first hand, and to conduct research whose aim and emphasis were on seeing teaching as teachers do.

The interviews and questionnaires were for convenience sake administered to relevant stakeholders, of diverse backgrounds, residing in “Mokobola Kwa-Mhlanga Magisterial District”. The major issues at stake were the pros and cons pertaining to the new language policy and the problem of implementing the policy, as a result of the co-existence of African languages with English as a language of wide communication. Participants were learners, teachers, principals, inspectors, and members of School Governing Bodies. The major participants were teachers, who were expected to speak about their experiences and collaborate with the researcher in the analysis of their experiences. That would of course help teachers to reflect on their unconscious contributions to their teaching experiences.

## 1.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

With the ongoing changes in the Republic of South Africa (RSA), and the education system and multilingualism being in the forefront, the need arises for research into language in education. Furthermore, in the RSA, where a language of wider communication is English, the constitutional provision makes all languages equal while some were already advanced far more than others.



IsiNdebele was only nine years old in its written form, when the old South Africa ceased to exist in 1994. It is important to undertake a research into the linguistic situation of isiNdebele, as the current information is inadequate.

Experience indicates that human beings are born and bred into certain cultural and language groups, and have to learn their home language and communication among different persons. So, language plays a vital part in the growth of the child's thoughts. If teachers in the schools could realise this fact, it would definitely ensure them much success in the classroom. Mackey (1982:38), states that:

Parents have expressed a desire for oral and written storehouse of local lore, the traditional customs, the literature of their people, the right of families to hand down to children, their own cultural heritage and above all, their languages.

Following in the footsteps of English and Afrikaans would benefit isiNdebele in terms of language planning which would involve some intervention or social engineering of language use (Drapeau, 1995:7). Of course, such language planning involves both status and corpus planning. That act would place isiNdebele on par with the other already developed African official languages, English and Afrikaans. Such enhancement would be in line with the constitution adopted by the country's first democratic government (RSA 1996a). The Bill of Rights regarding language policy published in terms of Section 6 of the *South Africa Schools Act, 1996* (RSA 1996d: 6 (1) - (4)) affirms the use of language as a basic right and reiterates the primacy of language development, in our country.

The problem of lack of editorial and production skills in isiNdebele should not be overlooked by the state. This research urges the Department of Education to note that underdeveloped languages like isiNdebele urgently need some form of support to fast-track them so that they could move twice as fast as the well-developed languages. That would definitely mean effective financing of the developing languages, and non-government institutions are invited indirectly to join hands and give their financial support

for isiNdebele as the youngest language in the development process in the RSA.

The study investigates the imbalances and inequalities that still lurk in the development and modernisation processes of isiNdebele, as it has been declared one of the 11 official languages of the country. Such constraints hamper the progress of development in this language. The LiEP necessitates the development of the African languages, isiNdebele inclusive, with regard to elaboration and modernising (Cluver, 1996:69-70).

The investigation exposes the still existing inequalities to recommend to the Ndebele intellectuals and educationists, for them to challenge that non-progressive situation, by striving to elevate the status of isiNdebele. This would bring to an end the current situation in which there is resistance against the use of isiNdebele as a first language of learning and teaching, in subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Technology. This research calls for developing new outlets in isiNdebele to address the imbalances of the past. In this manner, the investigation tries to reveal, and at the same time discourage, the created negative attitudes towards the use of isiNdebele in formal environments, a legacy which the constitution of 1996 requires the government to rectify.

The researcher also draws the attention of Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) to the urgency and responsibility for driving the development of languages throughout the country. The state's resources should indeed be deployed according to the principle of equity. The investigator hints further that without isiNdebele, Ndebeles would be less than what they are today. Of course, according to the Department of Education (RSA 1994), this is an inescapable duty upon government, in the light of this country's history and its legacy of inequality. This would impel Ndebeles, and enable them, to retain and revitalise their roots and identity. Truly, there is a great need for research relating to the use of isiNdebele for educational purposes, and a great need for a more functionally oriented type of linguistic training in isiNdebele at Universities (Cluver, (1996:81).

## 1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- 1.7.1 **IsiNdebele** (affectionately referred to as “isiKhethu” by its speakers), refers to the language formerly called Southern Transvaal Ndebele. It should not be confused with Zimbabwean Ndebele or Northern Transvaal Ndebele from which it differs linguistically. It is one of the eleven official languages of the Republic of South Africa.

The stem ‘**Ndebele**’ in this context is also used to refer to someone born and bred in the former homeland of KwaNdebele, of Ndebele parents and whose home language is isiNdebele. A Ndebele person speaks isiNdebele or isiKhethu.

- 1.7.2 The word ‘**Policy**’ is defined in the Universal Dictionary (1987) as: “Any overall plan or course of action adopted, as by a government, political party, or business organisation, designed to influence and determine immediate and long-term decisions or actions, foreign policy, [and] company personnel policy.” Actually, a policy is a brief document compiled collaboratively by the staff of a school, and possibly by other members of the staff who give their assent and commitment. Language policies across the curriculum are viewed by a growing number of educationists as an integral and necessary part of the administrative and curriculum practices of modern schools.

In this investigation the word policy is used to refer mostly to the ‘Language-in-Education Policy’, which is seen as part of a continuous process of developing a national language plan encompassing all sectors of society. The Language-in-Education Policy operates within the paradigm that in terms of the Constitution of the RSA (RSA 1996a), the Department of Education recognises that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, amongst other things,

to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country.

1.7.3 **Didactics** : Duminy (1975:2-3) describes didactics as a discipline which deals with what we teach, why we teach in a specific way, and how we teach.

1.7.4 **Linguistics** in this study refers to the study of language.

1.7.5 The word **Constraints** implies a limitation on action.

## 1.8 **Organisation of the study**

**Chapter 1** outlines the topic, its background (how the study came about historically and contextually), the rationale, the research problem, research objectives, research methodology, importance of the study, definition of terms, and organisation of study.

**Chapter 2** deals with the literature review. Policy documents and other literature on language and language policies, are reviewed.

**Chapter 3** is a discussion of research methodology, including the research approach chosen, namely, qualitative, and research design.

**Chapter 4** focuses, in detail, on data presentation and data analysis.

**Chapter 5**: In this chapter conclusions are drawn from the findings and analysis, and recommendations are made.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 LANGUAGE EQUITY IN SOCIETY

In South Africa the subcommittee of **The Language Plan Task Group** (LANGTAG) accepted the definition of equality in language as “fairness and justness in the treatment of all South African languages” (RSA 1996e:18). South Africa with its heterogeneous population, many languages and cultural differences is reported to observe equity (Mtuzze, 1992).

According to Alexander (1998:17), in his paper, ‘English Unassailable but Unattainable’, the languages of Europe, especially Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English and French, became languages of power on the African continent, during the colonial period. “With very few exceptions, there were no systematic attempts during the Colonial era to use any African language in high status functions, not even in domains such as secondary and tertiary education” (Coulmas, 1992:149). The domination of a people’s languages by the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the marital universe of the colonised, said Ngugi (1994:16) as reported in Alexander’s paper. The only option was to accept and continue using the colonial language which, at the very least, was accepted by everyone and would not facilitate disruption and discontinuity in the community.

From the South African perspective, English, for instance, having been the language of the oppressor, became glorified as language of national unity and superior to the indigenous languages. It already had, ‘a language infrastructure and a pool of skills in

the form of appropriate books, dictionaries, registers, publishers, printers, trained professionals of all kinds as well as discourses and traditions, which would be both costly and unnecessary to imitate and duplicate in any of the languages' (Alexander, 1998:09).

There has never been any true parity between colonial languages and the indigenous languages in the whole continent of Africa. This was stated in blueprint drawn by the Christian National Institute that "... education for Africans be of 'special kind' in their mother-tongue ... not to be paid for at the expenses of White Education" ( Tabata, 1959:18). Within the South African language context, to attain equity has been a very controversial issue. The Colonial and Apartheid language policies, in concert with socio-economic and socio-political policies, did give rise to a hierarchy of unequal languages, reflecting structures of racial and class inequality that still characterise some isolated sections of South African society presently (RSA, 1996e: 8). The new policies are giving hope that South Africa with its heterogeneous population has a chance of attaining equity for the various languages.

The inequality stance led to the point of dominance by English and later of Afrikaans which was sustained systematically in order to reinforce other structures of domination. As such these practices engendered the corollary low status of the individual languages and varieties of the African people, and of the marginalised groups. These language attitudes which entailed undesirable practices befell even many other African countries in the post-Colonial period (RSA, 1996e:9). As the years went by there emerged in the minds of some critics, questions on how language equity could be improved in South Africa. The limitations of African languages suggested challenges facing African languages in trying to achieve equality. Actually the criticisms that were directed at the language policies of the day, were justifiable in many ways. At the conference on 'Language Planning in a Post-apartheid South Africa,' 1991, at the University of Pretoria, participants agreed that all South African Languages must be accorded full respect and that there was a need to enhance the status of the indigenous languages (Press Statement released on 7 April 1991 in *Sunday Express*).

Reagan (1990:179) states that "... it was important to emphasise that regardless of future political change in South Africa, it was vitally assured that linguistic diversity would remain a feature of social life for generations to come, and that bilingualism and multilingualism would remain common for many South Africans well into the next century". Of importance to those concerned with language equity was that the demise of apartheid rule in South Africa, and the transfer to democratic rule, had positive implications for the various languages in South Africa that were previously oppressed together with their speakers. So, the linguistic situation which was previously characterised by the dominance of English and Afrikaans could not be immune to the process of change. The African languages which were previously left out were brought into the linguistic scenario (Mtuzze, 1992:47).

Mateene (1998:12-13) thanked and congratulated the RSA for being the first member state of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), to put in a constitution, and look for, the best way of implementing a language policy that was very similar to the one proposed by the OAU. He further remarked that South Africa might be the last to join the OAU, but it had given a lesson of democracy, which all the others still had to take and apply. The Langtag Subcommittee on Language in Education (LANGED) commented that, while the officialisation of the nine African languages used in South Africa was a great step forward, it was not enough. The committee advised that those African languages must be equally used in high status functions such as parliamentary debates, languages of learning, and teaching in all phases of education, from pre-school up to the Universities, and the Technikons, in the print and electronic media and for domestic (national, regional and local) business transactions. Such a step forward would spell language equity to some extent, which counteracts the dominant monolingualism, that was rejected as undemocratic.

In the Language policy documents, the word equity suits appropriately the positive move towards multilingualism by South Africans and the world. The importance of having language equity, is a challenge to the hegemony of English and to a lesser extent of Afrikaans, by circumscribing its gate-keeping functions in our society, while at the same

time eliminating the negative stereotypes of the African languages, which were held not only by English-speakers and Afrikaans-speakers but even, by many of the speakers of the African languages themselves (RSA, 1996e:9). As quoted by Langtag (RSA, 1996e:9), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994) said that "changing the existing attitudes and decolonising the mind ... are, essential for progress towards realising the goal of an equitable language dispensation in South Africa". In fact such a general orientation has to be one of the functions of multilingualism, to actualise the social transformation, but not in the sense of a diglossic situation, where the languages were forever doomed to be used in certain domains only. This was an open-ended functional approach, that as languages became usable in any domain, their users be entitled constitutionally to use them in practice. The South African population has been anxiously looking forward to fulfil its constitutional obligation of implementing its language policy fully and have equity accomplished.

Seemingly the South African society is currently committed to a policy of promoting multilingualism and modernising the African languages. In doing so, the society is in fact reviving the OAU Language Plan of Action of Africa, written as early as 1986. In the RSA, multilingualism's constraints were firstly, caused by lack of the implementation of the policies. From Langtag's point of view (RSA, 1996e:17), languages as reviewed in the light of current development in the South African context, appear to demand revitalised efforts to cope with the changes in language policy. There were some negative attitudes, from many speakers of African languages, who looked down upon the status of African languages in regard towards equity.

The feeling was that, the new dispensation was, on paper, very favourable to language equity, but in practice, there were many constraints of a material, as well as a political and socio- psychological, nature, which limit the possibility of realising a policy, based on the principle of equity. In this regard, Langtag's challenge was: 'Would African Languages be developed to the extent, that they can be used for intercommunity communication nationally, and not only within distinct provinces?' (RSA,1996e:17).



Kashioki (1993), when referring to the issue of language parity, and South Africa's policy of multilingualism, pointed out that "... like in many African countries, where the rise and development of African nationalism, created the impression that African languages would be the basis for the standard national languages, the policy seemed not to be working." It was mostly eclipsed, by the pressure of domination from the colonial powers.

The above scenario appeared to illustrate a very painful and slow process of development. Of course, history has shown that the same rate, was also noticed in some African states, which had made as one of their declarations (of intent), a commitment to a multilingual approach with the objective of developing African languages, and empowering people. Actually what these people accomplished was viewed by Bamgbose (1991:111) as, "hardly more than a label, without legal implications or as all lip service." He further remarked that language policies in Africa, no matter how good they were; were characterised by among other aspects, "... lack of implementation".

That points to the fact that there were odds against the implementation of those policies vis-a-vis the African languages. Mutasa (1999: 83) confirmed that "... in South Africa the recognition of the indigenous languages might be the declared goal of the policy but, from observation, most linguistic communication in domains of national significance, remained English and to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. The people do not see much value in African languages."

According to readers' views expressed in the *Citizen* newspaper, 1998 September 30, it was increasingly difficult for an African language, to do all that was done by English, a language of wider communication; yet many view the language policy as a noble one, but consider its application as impractical. In the same newspaper, the Citizen, the Pan South African Language Board also noted with regret, that English appeared to dominate (in domains of national significance), to the detriment of the country's 10 other official languages. Furthermore, Harry Baker in his article (*Citizen*, 1998, September 30), paints a gloomy picture when he says, "... the expectation that the lesser-known indigenous African languages would enjoy parity of esteem with a world language, was surely destined to be merely a pious hope". In that regard, the language policy was considered to be a pie in the sky, as the stance defeated the purpose and goal of the new language policy. So far English appears to be still, a dominant language in the race for language equity or parity in South Africa (Reagan, 1990:180). People's perceptions have not yet changed, as they still view and revere English as a language, with far-reaching socio-economic implications for nations. Indeed, English has established itself in all significant domains. It has in fact tendered to be the major impediment, a brake or constraint, on the promotion and implementation of the multilingual policy. Mutasa (1999:97) felt that, at "present it was appropriate to speak more abstractly of language equity as ideology, an idea in the mind, rather than a reality to which actual usage or implementation might confirm."

## 2.2 LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION

The Language-in-Education Policy was announced in 1997, July, by the then Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu. In doing so, he said, among other things, the new language in education policy was, "... conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa" (Bengu, 1997:38). It was meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment, in which respect for languages other than one's own, would be encouraged. That approach was in line

with the fact that both societal and individual multilingualism, are the global norm today, especially on the African continent. As such, it is assumed that the learning of two or more languages, should be general practice and principle in our society, which would certainly counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through labour skills or expertise. The implication was that being multilingual would be the defining characteristic of being South African. In actual fact, by so doing Bengu was locating the new Language in Education Policy (LiEP), squarely within the most progressive tradition, of the post-colonial African intelligentsia, as it was enshrined in the OAU resolution of July 1986, which was called, the Language Plan of Action for Africa.

According to Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:212), the Department of Education saw the monitoring of the implementation of its LiEP as a constitutional obligation, and had proposed an implementation plan, to be monitored by the provinces, but was not much successful. It should be noted that in designing and implementing a LiEP, the primary aim was to promote the interests of the child, and not the secondary socio-political and/or language imperialistic aims of some of the stakeholders. So, the implementation plan in the LiEP (RSA 1997:17), stated that as the language situation in schools developed away from monolingual teaching, teachers should be trained to use more than one language of learning and teaching. It was necessary that multilingualism policies, should not at all be abandoned. In fact the lingua franca, and multilingualism, ought to remain standing side by side as two shutters, of a common language policy (European Cultural Foundation, 1999:8). This is the goal of the UCT-based Project for the study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA). The principles used here are that, reading in one language supports reading in another, and that it is more valuable that children learn to express themselves in writing than that they are to always write correctly” (Nick Taylor & Penny Vinjevold, 1999:212).

The LiEP actually made a strong case for fostering a multilingual society, to celebrate cultural diversity and to facilitate communication across barriers. In terms of the policy, all South Africa’s official languages were granted equal respect and acceptance, and would be promoted and developed. It was just unfortunate that progress has been slow, in translating it into an implementation strategy at provincial level.

### **2.2.1 How could the Language in Education Policy promote multilingualism in classroom?**

To concretise promoting of multilingualism in schools, some educationists advocate that parents should be made aware that learning takes longer when done through a foreign language than through mother-tongue, which means that African languages ensure linguistic accessibility to studied material, help develop critical thinking, and foster effective communication faster. Zinn (1999:4) says:

to some extent there is practically in schools, a growing opposition to the promotion of multilingualism, the reason being that, English is still regarded as the language of power and socio-economic mobility, by parents and teachers alike.

English continues to be the language which predominates in all our media, from television to radio, to newspapers, and to the electronic media. From observation, it would seem that the different speakers of the African languages favour English as medium of intercultural communication. In so doing, they are in fact neglecting their individual languages, unlike the Afrikaners, who demonstrate, through the media and other platforms, pride in their linguistic heritage, loyalty to their language, and intent to develop it further.

According to the Provincial Director in the Department of Education in Gauteng, in August 1998, "... the problem is not the language policy but parents' perceptions of languages" (*Sowetan Newspaper*, 29 September 1996). The Director lamented the situation where African parents and African teachers, who teach in townships, send their children to English medium schools - formerly white schools - where African languages are not taught. That is a draw-back in implementing multilingualism. What that implied is that English would continue to dominate as medium of instruction, as parents continue to prefer English medium schools. The director suggested that, the way forward is for

people to demand to be taught in their own languages, otherwise no equity could be seen materialising.

Professor Prah (1996) of the University of the Western Cape also observed that children, were now sent to English medium schools and that, in some families, both parents communicate in their indigenous language, but insist that the children should be spoken to in English. Prah castigated such African parents, who allow their language to die. He encouraged Africa to follow the example of Asia, where indigenous languages are used in education. In the same *Sowetan Newspaper (29 September 1996)*, it was cited that the current trend seems to continue to undermine the government's declared goal of multilingualism. In many spheres of life English still plays a pivotal role. This creates the impression that multilingualism dreams of South Africa could be achieved but with difficulty. Mtuzi (1992:48) felt that "... if these Africans want to demand equal language rights, they should obviously have to develop their languages terminologically, failing which, these languages would dwindle to insignificance as medium of meaningful communication in technical discourse". For these languages to be meaningfully employed in the training of translators and interpreters, they would have to achieve a level of terminological development akin to that of Afrikaans and English. That would be another way of developing and concretising, and even promoting multilingualism and equity.

### 2.3 MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION

The principle of mother-tongue instruction is based on the fact that the most crucial cognitive development of any learner occurred in the mother-tongue, and the proper mastering of the basic learning skills and concepts in the mother-tongue is essential before a second language could be gradually introduced as a subject and not as second medium of teaching and learning. It has been stated (King, 1979:411) that, "in mixed linguistic groups it is often an important principle that children should be given primary instruction in their mother-tongue, and proceed to instruction in a major regional language later." On the one hand, there is a perception which suggests that mother-

tongue instruction is important as a counterbalance to Western cultural and linguistic imperialism and that children do learn better in their mother-tongue than in a foreign language. In fact Mwamwenda (1995:170) affirms that studying a mother-tongue and using it as a medium of instruction is more than a simple act of language mastery. For current writers the mother-tongue education facilitates cultural transmission of cognitive development and communicative abilities that emphasise the necessity of mother-tongue isiNdebele used as first language and medium of instruction, at low levels of schooling.

In the core of the new education dispensation in South Africa, mother-tongue development, and learning of an additional language play a leading role.

Mother-tongue instruction is not only in the best interest of the child's cognitive development, but it would also contribute to the rapid development of the disadvantaged languages, such as isiNdebele and Khoisan. The multilingualism process suggests that the highly successful monolingual medium of mother-tongue instruction, with additional language(s) as optional subject(s), that has been part of the education of English and Afrikaans speaking learners for the better part of the last century, should be expanded to the other nine official languages. That would have implications whereby parental perceptions about mother-tongue education would change, so that learners could write the matric and tertiary examinations in their mother tongues.

There is also a feeling that in this country of ours, there are teachers, academics, translators and publishers waiting for the green light to write and translate textbooks, that would within a decade put all previously disadvantaged languages on the same level as English and Afrikaans. Specific provinces would translate examination papers and appoint markers in all official languages applicable to the provinces, as that would be a cost-efficient system, as the adaptable single medium and double parallel medium schools have been researched and perfected in South Africa since the late 1900's. IsiNdebele is also looking forward to such a way forward, to enhance its capacity to work and create consciousness among the literates.

According to Vinjevold (1999:213), it is safe to assume however, that in the absence of a concerted implementation strategy on the part of Provincial education authorities together with NGOs to empower governing bodies, no success would be easily accomplished. As it is, the drive for English as the language of learning and teaching remains. The continuing preference for English as the language of learning and teaching, is evidence of the negative impact of the Apartheid era Bantu Education and Mother-Tongue Policy which remains a strong counter to choosing any other mother-tongue as medium of instruction (Zinn, 1994:4).

What cannot be refuted, in English's favour, is that English is the language we hear our politicians speak. Most institutions of higher learning use English as the medium of instruction. As the preferred language of commerce and business, English allows smoother access to the global village. So, because education plays an important part in employment and in gaining access to political power, mother-tongue education or its denial is one of the most crucial issues in language policy and language education. Accordingly, in the RSA, there is an urgent need for policy makers to rethink their language policies in education with a view to revitalising mother-tongue education for the betterment of the masses, as mother-tongue education is the surest way to reach a large number of people and integrate them into the national and democratic processes. It is also argued that for the masses to accept mother-tongue education as an alternative to the current education given in a foreign language, African governments must vest mother-tongue with the kind of prestige and material gains associated with International or European languages such as English and French (Tollesfson, 1991:43).

Mother-tongue education has been a thorny issue in the language policies of many African countries since the early 1960s, with some supporting and others opposing it, for example, in UNESCO 1951. There were those who supported the idea to solicit funds for the maintenance, development and expansion of the existing provision of African language teaching (UNESCO Report in Fishman, 1968). As reported by Skutnabb-Kangas (1995), mother-tongue education never received good support from linguicism,

due to the perception that, it was not resourceful. The argument has been that introduction of more home languages would bring conflict, be divisive, and lead to inequalities, whereas English was an international language that could unite.

In South Africa everyone has the right to receive education in the official language of their choice, though there are still no clear measures established to monitor the enforcement and implementation of the multilingualism. The decision on language of learning and languages offered as subjects is being left to the schools' governing bodies (SGBs), who, in fact, may not share, or understand the vision articulated in the LiEP.

## 2.4 ISINDEBELE AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

The South African LiEP has multilingualism, as the centre of the policy. The policy encourages the study of home languages while providing access to additional languages (*Sowetan*, May 2001:14). That might help to improve the teaching conditions for isiNdebele. IsiNdebele (Southern Ndebele) is one mother-tongue that seems to be fraught with didactical and linguistic constraints. In the first place, Wilkes, in his research paper "Language Contact and Language Change" (1996:75), reported that Southern Transvaal Ndebele (isiNdebele) is one of the four officially recognised Nguni languages spoken in South Africa but which differs from the other Nguni languages in that, it incorporates several atypical Nguni features in its lexicon, sound and grammatical system. This tended to be a major problem facing isiNdebele teachers, who, even though they might be isiNdebele first language speakers, would have been educated in a language other than isiNdebele, and qualified to teach the other language(s), not isiNdebele. As a result, it seems most of the teachers do not qualify to teach this language at school.

In addition to isiNdebele being a late-comer in the arena of written languages, like all languages, it has been changing. To support this finding, Wilkes, quotes linguists who acknowledge it as a universal fact that languages do change. He quotes Langacker (1967:179) remarking about language change thus:



Living languages never hold still. Every language is the product of change and continues to change as long as it is spoken.

Wilkes also refers to linguists such as Robins (1967:299) and Aitchison and others (1991:106) who believed that one of the prime external motivators of language change is contact. Wilkes found that linguistic changes are a result of 'Areal contact.' Wilke's argument was on areal contact between languages belonging to separate language groups. This is true for isiNdebele which is a Nguni language, which has had close areal contact with Sepedi and Setswana, both of which are members of the Sotho language group. Language contact and the resultant language change in isiNdebele could be taken as one of the factors leading to constraints in the teaching situation of isiNdebele and its linguistic study. The process of language contact is believed to have affected the isiNdebele lexicography and put many teachers at a loss in the teaching of this language.

The affected vocabulary and orthography contribute as constraints. The result is that a number of isiNdebele words and concepts are similar or closer to the Sotho languages than the Nguni languages to which isiNdebele belongs. For instance, the word "nation" in isiNdebele = Isitjhaba; in Sepedi and Setswana = setšhaba; while in isiXhosa and isiZulu = isizwe.

In support of the lexicographic issue, Skhosana (1996), a university lecturer in isiNdebele, called for attention to lexicographic needs of isiNdebele, at a seminar held at the University of Pretoria. The implication was that isiNdebele was not on par with the other official African languages. According to Skhosana (2002:6-8) in his unpublished document, some of the constraints to teaching isiNdebele are:

- (a) the dialectical debates and arguments over different lexical items with the same meaning, between isiNala and isiNzunza clans, for example:

<b>IsiNala</b>	<b>IsiNzunza</b>	<b>English</b>
otanga	umgade	pumpkin

isiKhundla

isiRurhu

where the hen lays eggs.

These are two dialects of isiNdebele which need to be unified, and form one standardised language to facilitate smooth teaching and learning. Otherwise it confounds teachers and learners. Each dialect has its own name for the same item; and

- (b) lack of sufficient reference materials such as dictionaries, language books (grammar books) and traditional publications. These were totally not available particularly to isiNdebele teachers. These concerns, caused teacher organisations and some principals to implement various protesting strategies such as the reluctance and resistance by certain school principals to introduce isiNdebele at their schools, intimidating parents and learners that isiNdebele was an unpassable subject since it was a new language and therefore not to be introduced at schools. There was a call for the withdrawal or the suspension of the use of isiNdebele language until such time that the government has addressed the problem. There was a complaint about the incorrect or insufficient ordering of isiNdebele school learning material. All these were revealed by Skhosana as were reflected in the Southern Ndebele Language Board minutes dated 17 March 1993.

The above assertion could be viewed as authentic in reflecting some didactic and linguistic constraints in the teaching of isiNdebele. Only in 1995 was the isiNdebele language's first terminology glossary or lexicon which was started in 1983, completed. IsiNdebele finally has a bilingual dictionary (English-Ndebele) with 1800 entries. It is a challenge to the Ndebele linguists to modernise and develop the monolingual and multilingual lexicons to equity. There is a strong belief that language centres should be established nationally in order that the language equity and multilingualism might be strengthened and improved through the help of PANSALB.

The teaching of isiNdebele has not been thoroughly researched as yet. The isiNdebele publications done from 1990-2000 are some few novels, short stories, dramas, poetries and folklores. Skhosana (2002) in his unpublished paper "The Historical Survey of

isiNdebele Literacy Art”, urges for more isiNdebele publications and researches.

At the time of the study, the teaching of isiNdebele had not yet been affected by the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach, with its focus on communicative outcomes, even though the approach was being implemented in teaching of all subjects (now known as learning areas) in South African schools. The process provides a critical context with which re-examination could take place. Accordingly the process of OBE requires a shift towards measurable outcomes in the teaching and learning context.

Regarding the new challenges imposed by OBE, isiNdebele teachers will most likely be placed in a more serious predicament and face more constraints than the language teachers of more developed languages in South Africa. The reason for this is that the context of OBE necessitates not only a review of the status and role of grammar in language teaching, but also whether language teachers are adequately equipped to teach languages in such a daunting system which lacks facilities and resources to teach in. When the researcher thought of the position of isiNdebele he bewailed because OBE is a demanding approach which requires highly competent teachers and enough resources.

The Constitutional provision, the urgent need to develop and upgrade African languages, and the constraints identified above, convinced this researcher of how rewarding dissemination of the results of this study and related ones would be to those concerned about, and devoted to, promotion of isiNdebele.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The chosen research approach is qualitative as the study necessitates such an investigation. Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372) maintain that:

... qualitative research is based on a naturalistic phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multilayered, interactive and a shared social experience.

This researcher views the qualitative research approach, as a way of approaching the empirical world, appropriate for this study. This approach produces descriptive data based on people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour.

##### **3.1.1 Characteristics of qualitative research**

Purists in research believe that qualitative methodologies share three assumptions, namely, a holistic view, an inductive approach and naturalistic inquiry. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is frequently compared and contrasted with the quantitative approach. Purists suggest that quantitative and qualitative research methods are based on different assumptions about the world we live in, and on differences in the relationship between the researcher and the subject being researched, the possibility of generalisation, the role of values and in the research methods (Booyse, 1997:52).

Qualitative researchers visit the settings of the subject(s) under study because they are concerned with context. They usually prefer fairly lengthy and deep involvement in the natural setting. They believe an action can best be understood where it occurs. It is necessary to know where, how, and under what circumstances data produced by subjects came into being. History is important in this connection. The assumption is that behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs (Hammersly et al. 1994:50-52).

Qualitative researchers are interested in how understandings are formed, how meanings are negotiated and how roles are developed. They want to know, for example, how a curriculum works, how a policy is formulated and implemented, and how a learner becomes deviant. The researcher attempts to penetrate layers of meaning and to uncover and identify the range and depth of situations, and perspectives that apply in the area under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:31).

All methods associated with qualitative research are characterised by their flexibility. As a consequence, researchers can formulate and reformulate their work, and may be less committed to perspectives which may have been misconceptualised at the beginning of the project. Researchers may wish to modify concepts as the collection and analysis of data proceed (Burgess, 1985:8).

In qualitative studies the researcher is the instrument and much depends on what she or he sees and hears, and much rests on her/his powers of observation and listening. Skills are needed for interviewing, showing understanding of and empathy with the interviewee, active listening, checking and identifying. As such, the researcher is a finely tuned instrument with considerable skills, but is a person, no less, with values, beliefs and a self (Hammersly et al. 1994:59).

As meaning is of essential concern, the qualitative researcher is interested in the ways different people make sense of their lives, that is, participant perspectives. The

emphasis continually is on how the subjects experience, feel, interpret and structure their own world. The qualitative research therefore reflects a kind of dialogue or interplay between researchers and their subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:32-33).

The researchers interact with their subjects in a natural and unobstructive manner. Actually they try to grasp an understanding of a setting. As they study, qualitative researchers are constantly aware of the fact that they may have an effect on the people they study, and that they have to minimise these effects or at least to understand them when interpreting the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:6).

In qualitative research the emphasis is on description and not on testing the hypothesis as in quantitative research, according to Glesne and Peshkin (1992:5). Other researchers say the most obvious distinction between qualitative and quantitative researchers is the form of data presentation. Quantitative data are usually presented and interpreted by means of statistics, that is, in the form of numbers, whereas data in the qualitative inquiry are reduced to themes. It should be noted that qualitative researchers present facts in narrative methods rather than statistical ones.

In his paper “Qualitative Research: Rationale, Methods and Challenges”, prepared for the seminar for M.Ed and D.Ed students (Unisa 1997:52), Booyse remarked that “the above distinctions are not absolute, and are useful to describe and understand the various approaches to research and corresponding research methods”. He further remarked that when we speak of quantitative or qualitative methodologies, we are speaking of the final analysis of an interrelated set of assumptions about the social world, which have a strong philosophical, ideological and epistemological dimension of it. They encompass more than techniques of data collection or presentation.

### **3.1.2 Why is this approach suited for my research?**

The qualitative approach is suitable for this researcher’s investigation because his aim is not to find the truth or morality, but to understand other people’s perspectives regarding

the development of isiNdebele language, the former marginalised language. The approach enables the researcher to present the collected data in narrative form and in a descriptive format. The researcher wants to find out how isiNdebele curriculum is experienced by participants. The research, therefore, attempts to uncover and identify the range and depth of situations, and even perspectives that apply to the area under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:31). This is a way to understand the physical reality of the environment.

The qualitative approach also proved to be the most appropriate one, later, as the researcher constantly became aware that he had an effect on the subjects he studied, and that he had to minimise those effects or at least try to understand them when interpreting the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:6). He made face to face interviews, to reflect a form of dialogue between the researcher and his subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:32-33).

The qualitative approach suits this approach, as data are easily reduced to themes and not presented by means of statistics as in quantitative approach. The emphasis is based on description and not testing the hypothesis as in quantitative research (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992:5). Of course the facts are presented in a descriptive form rather than a statistical one. The researcher interacted with the research subjects in a natural and unobtrusive manner. The qualitative approach is more appropriate in data collection for this study than the quantitative approach. In this research the researcher agrees that people describe the events as they experience them. He accepts that although qualitative research is subjective, it is still regarded as reliable and valid.

The researcher in this investigation accepts that reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the data need to be ensured. While rigour is necessary, the qualitative research methods are also characterised by their flexibility, and that element of flexibility helped facilitate data collection in the study. The methods were designed to ensure a close fit between data and what people actually said and did. This researcher also accepted that

the qualitative methodology was more suitable for the assumptions he holds about the social world.

Actually, the investigator realized that qualitative methodology would be more suitable, as it produces descriptive data that include people's own written or spoken words, and observed behaviour and, it is a way through which the researcher approached the empirical world. The researcher and research subjects influenced one another and were inseparably interconnected. These methods used in this study are very flexible. As such the researcher used an emergent design, and made decisions about the data collection strategies during the study.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.2.1 Research purpose

The objective of the study was to manifest isiNdebele, a formerly marginalised language, as a written, and official language. Thus the investigator was concerned about the future of isiNdebele as a spoken and written language. The investigation focused on the obstacles which hamper the elaborating and modernising of isiNdebele. It also looked into any successful and tangible steps towards removing those constraints and the promotion of the equal use and enjoyment of all official languages, with special reference to African languages, and especially isiNdebele.

The RSA Constitution and LiEP recognise the reality of the linguistic diversity of South Africa. The argument is that the Constitution's emphasis on fundamental human rights is in its linguistic practice. That is why the study also looks at what degree the use of isiNdebele would be promoted even in the private sector, and also establishes whether there are strategies in place to acknowledge achievements of isiNdebele in the market.

The researcher hopes that through the influence of his research, mechanisms will be



developed and put in place to ensure effective teaching of isiNdebele and elevating its status. This would mean that replacement of the dominant languages, English and Afrikaans, by isiNdebele language, as a language of learning in isiNdebele-speaking learning contexts, would materialise. It is hoped that isiNdebele teachers would no longer experience constraints in teaching of this language, as the integration of isiNdebele into the workplace would enhance the development of the language. It would be an achievement if this language would be integrated into the domain of government services, especially those that are in direct contact with the majority of poor citizens with limited literacy, and to eliminate the dissatisfaction of teachers as the focus on equality of languages would be based on the concept of fairness.

With these goals in mind, the researcher identified primary classrooms of isiNdebele learners, as the place to focus the investigation on. Two research assistants were appointed by the researcher. The two were taken through the process of data collection as the researcher preferred it done, for uniformity sake.

### **3.2.2 Research questions**

The research questions that were posed through this study were:

1. What do the isiNdebele teachers perceive to be constraints in teaching isiNdebele?
2. What limitations do developers of isiNdebele language experience?
3. What mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure effective teaching of isiNdebele and relating its status?

### **3.2.3 Sampling method**

The investigation took place in KwaNdebele when the area comprised four circuits with eleven primary schools that include foundation phase levels. This area has been developed to become a focal point for commercial activities such as banks, post offices, police, semi-industries, and stations. The schools selected for research are in the villages of Leeufontein, Vaalbank,

Kwaggafontein, Tweefontein and KwaMhlanga. This was an area under the former KwaNdebele homeland, which is presently part of Mpumalanga Province, where there is a high concentration of isiNdebele-speakers. The new name embracing the four circuits is ‘THEMBISILE MUNICIPALITY’. While this area consists of heterogeneous ethnic groups which are Ndebeles, Zulus, Swazis, Pedis, and Tswanas, isiZulu language dominates and prevails as medium of instruction. The area consists of four circuits from which a sample of eight primary schools was selected from eleven primary schools. The official total population for each of the four different groups of respondents, namely, teachers, principals, SGBs, and inspectors was not available at the time of the fieldwork. However, the study would focus on the four identified groups.

#### 3.2.3.1 *Selection of schools*

The names of the eight schools selected were Phanagela, Edwaleni, Musi, Thokozani, Bambanani, Vukuzenzele, Sijabule and Khuthalani. Through interviews with circuit inspectors on focused issues, the circuit office advised the researcher to choose the principals of these schools, as they were hardworking, well organised and in fact were the best in administration in the area. Those were criteria used to choose them. It was important to the researcher to investigate constraints experienced in fairly stable teaching environments. The brief profiles of the schools that were chosen are given below:

- Bambanani Primary under the principal C J Mahlangu with a roll of 496 learners and 15 educators. The school was noted for cooperation and a good working together spirit.
- Vukuzenzele combined under principal P Mtsweni with a roll of 465 learners and 21 educators. It was clean and nicely decorated with Ndebele art decorations.
- Phanagela combined under principal M F Kekana with a roll of 532 learners and 19 educators. It was noted for good athletes and singing.
- Thokozani primary under principal A K Mahlangu with a roll of 455 learners and 18 educators. It was noted for doing well in elocution competitions.
- Sijabule Primary under principal Ms E Mahlangu with a roll of 562 learners and 17 educators.
- Khuthalani Primary under principal Ms T S Skhosana with a roll of 692 learners and 18 educators. The principal was the secretary of isiNdebele Language Committee and role

model in teaching isiNdebele language.

- Edwaleni Primary under principal Mrs M J Mamabolo with a roll of 600 learners and 17 educators. The principal was hard working and produced the best results, in the final classes of Grade 3. Many other schools visited the School for Guidance Teaching.
- Musi Primary under principal L Chuene with a roll of 574 and 19 educators. Four of his teachers were writers in isiNdebele.

### 3.2.3.2 *Teachers*

The sample of teachers was selected according to the purposeful sampling which is a qualitative inquiry that typically “focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, . . . selected purposefully” (Patton, 1990:169). Patton (1990:169) further states that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting cases that are information-rich from which can be learnt a great deal about issues of central importance

to the purpose of the research, hence the term purposeful sampling. The selection was made on recommendation of principals and inspectors, on the basis of the profile of the teacher necessary for participation, and, therefore, participants who represented this population. The study focused on teachers who had been teaching for more than five years and have taught isiNdebele for not less than three years. Because of their involvement in the actual teaching, they were to provide information about constraints experienced with regard to text books and other related problems. Like the principals, the sample size for teachers was eight, that is, one teacher from each primary school, because of financial constraints and time factor.

### 3.2.3.3 *Principals*

Eight principals participated in the study. Three are female and five are male. As the total sample of principals is eight, it means that one principal was representing each primary school that was selected. The selected principals’ role was to assist with the information regarding available resources at their schools and information on the teachers. Even though the principals were not expected to be involved in the actual teaching in the classroom, they were expected to have some insight into curriculum issues, subject choices, and the issues at hand. They could also contribute what they knew about teachers’ experiences with teaching isiNdebele.

#### 3.2.3.4 *School Governing Bodies (SGB)*

With regard to SGB members, the researcher decided to have one member of the SGB from each of the identified primary schools. With the advice and consent of the school inspector, it was arranged that the 8 chairpersons of the SGBs of the sampled schools would form a distinct sample representing the parents. As parents' representatives and residents of the villages in which the schools are located, they would provide information about the usage of isiNdebele in the village. Besides, they were also expected to comment on the language issue at their schools as relevant stakeholders in this matter.

#### 3.2.3.5 *Inspectors*

Unlike principals and teachers, only two inspectors were selected to constitute a sample of departmental officials. This was partly due to their proximity to the schools that were selected, and mainly because of the commitment of other inspectors that made it difficult for them to take part in the interview sessions. Time constraints would not allow the researcher to postpone the appointments since some inspectors were always committed. The two sampled inspectors were to assist with the information about support services provided by the circuit to the identified schools. They were also requested to help with the information about the type of constraints they experienced. Their participation was regarded as important as it would shed light on the importance, or lack of, the officials placed on the teaching and promotion of isiNdebele language in schools.

#### 3.2.3.6 *Learners*

A total number of 80 learners, that is 40 males and 40 females, all in grade 3, were nominated by the Council of Principals, and special teachers in the presence of the researcher and his assistants. The nomination was done from the 8 sampled schools through observing the principle of gender equity. The nominated learners' home language is isiNdebele. These chosen learners were of information-rich cases caliber. They were good performers in various school activities. The learners were disciplined and co-operated well. The experienced grade 3 teachers were asked to administer the questionnaires to this group. The researcher, however, decided at the stage of data

analysis, to exclude data from learners because of their young age. It was realised that their ages, knowledge, and academic backgrounds, made it difficult for them to respond to any of the research questions, especially constraints in the teaching and learning processes. Given this background, the data from this stakeholder group were not usable in answering the research questions. The data from learners included the data obtained from conversations the researcher had with them.

#### **3.2.4 Gaining entry**

Before undertaking the field investigation, permission had to be secured from the provincial offices of the Department of Education (DoE) in Mpumalanga. A letter endorsed by the Circuit Office, requesting permission to conduct research, together with a copy of research design were personally handed over to the offices of the Executive Member of Council for Education (MEC). Permission was granted on condition that information pertaining to the project would be made available to the office at a later date.

Having obtained that permission, the next step was to secure permission of the circuit manager to contact school principals of the sampled schools. Having obtained permission from the circuit inspector, the researcher contacted individual principals who in turn allowed the researcher to have access to all relevant stakeholders such as teachers, learners and SGB members.

#### **3.2.5 Data collection methods**

The researcher felt a survey could help identify issues that one could pursue further. According to Orlich (1978:8), both interviews and written questionnaires are used to collect data for surveys. For this study, interviews were seen to be more appropriate as the researcher needed to hear what the participants said, and ask for explanations where necessary. This study is a descriptive survey using the logic of purposeful sampling with the different strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases.

For this study, the researcher utilised a triangulation of data collection methods, as well as researchers, and sources, in studying the same phenomenon. The purpose was to assess demonstrable success in the use of isiNdebele language as a medium of instruction. Triangulation is one way to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness of a study. Written questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and observation were decided upon. Focus groups and interviews ended up being the data collection methods whose data were usable.

#### 3.2.5.1 *The role of literature review in data collection*

Available library secondary sources were identified and studied. The relevant sources were about the teaching and learning of languages from different socio-economic backgrounds. They also included sources about curricula matters in language teaching and policy documents pertaining to the medium of instruction at schools at different levels. The purpose was to gain insight on the teaching and learning of languages from different countries. Of particular interest was the focus on constraints experienced by different countries in the teaching process and how such constraints were addressed. This would help the researcher to see the difference and significance, as well as relevance, of this study when compared with others.

#### 3.2.5.2 *Questionnaires*

In drafting questionnaires, considerable attention is paid to the design of the questionnaires. The following received major attention: content of the questions, response as well as format, and presentation of the questionnaire (Behr, 1978:151). Furthermore, the language in each questionnaire instrument, was adjusted both to the level of the groups to which it would be administered, and the precision of the data needed (Helmstadter, 1970:73). For instance, the language and level used on learner questionnaire, was lower than that of the principals' questionnaire. Three sets of questionnaires were designed for learners, educators and principals respectively. The

teachers' questionnaire was designed as a device to cross-check answers given by learners in general. This would be used to confirm certain items of the responses of the learners (Behr 1978:157).

The written questionnaire was selected so it would provide a vehicle for expression without fear of embarrassment to the respondents. This is especially the case if the respondents are assured that their answers would be kept confidential.

This was the procedure followed in administration of questionnaires:

- The respondents received identical instructions (Ary, 1979:174). This would reduce bias of the investigator.
- The respondents, such as principals and teachers would be in a position to respond at their convenience.
- In the case of principals and teachers, questionnaires were handed over to those participants on the day the researcher arrived at Phanagela Primary school to request permission to conduct research, as advised by the Circuit Office, as the school was chosen as a venue for all the participating schools' activities. It was agreed that they would be collected on the days the researcher would administer questionnaires to the learners, and interviews to principals, teachers, SGBs and inspectors, respectively.
- The learners' questionnaires were administered face-to-face to the respondents. The eight teacher guides did the reading of questions to the learners, in the presence of learners and assistant researchers, imitating what the researcher had demonstrated to the teachers prior to administration of questionnaires to learners. Firstly, each question was read slowly and explained by the researcher before learners had to respond. Questions were treated one by one. The learners were requested to pay special attention when the researcher read and explained each question on the questionnaire.

These questions pertained to isiNdebele as medium of instruction and the mechanisms to be used in teaching this mother-tongue. The items and instructions were simple, straight forward and unambiguous. Learners were requested to put ticks on the correct answers in the drawn columns. The researcher and his assistants checked whether learners were putting crosses in the appropriate columns. The following items were emphasised: accuracy and readiness when answering, that information would be kept confidential, therefore learners were told to be truthful and honest when answering questions. After the explanations the guide teachers departed, leaving the participant learners with the researcher and his assistants, in order to promote frank and spontaneous responses. Learners were to do their questions under the guidance of the researcher and his assistants.

### 3.2.5.3 *Interviews*

The researcher viewed mixing purposeful samples and other multiple perspectives as a way of combining different information-rich cases, to illuminate questions under study. The interviewee groups consisted of a sample of eight principals, eight teachers, eight SGB members and two inspectors. After permission from the Department of Education had been granted to undertake this research study at identified schools, appointments were made with different groups that constituted the sample. The respondents were interviewed at their respective centres, that is, schools and local circuit offices. Each member of the educator component and parent component (SGB) was interviewed at his/her institution. This was done in all the eight primary schools for teachers, principals and SGB members, to get information about constraints, resources, curricula matters and teaching personnel as well as the usage of isiNdebele as one of the official languages in the RSA. All the respondents but one inspector honoured the appointments. For the teachers, individual interviews were done with a few teachers, as a follow-up, after a focus group discussion had been held with the group of eight teachers. This was because there were some issues that were not clear during data



analysis.

The researcher used informal conversational interviews which rely entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions, in the natural flow of an interaction. This fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing, provides a framework within which respondents, can express their own understanding in their own terms. The researcher prefers interviewing in such a way that, when a person is being interviewed, they should respond, in their own words to express their own personal perspectives.

During the interview a tape recorder was used while noting some of the important points. The open and closed ended questions were used in the interview schedule for each group. Given the number of respondents to be interviewed, it was indeed a tedious task and time consuming.

#### 3.2.5.4 *Focus groups*

As qualitative inquiry focuses on small samples, the researcher chose the homogeneous sampling strategy (Patton, 1990:173) of picking small groups, the purpose being to describe the particular subgroup in-depth. The point here is that focus group interviews are typically based on homogeneous groups, where, people of similar educational backgrounds and experiences are brought together, to participate in group interviews about major common educational issues that affect them. One of the advantages of this method is that focus groups typically involve bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences to participate. These groups represent the needs, interests, and beliefs of the large number of the main population, for example, all primary school teachers of isiNdebele language, who might have not been reached, for standardised information.

The strategy selected fits the purpose of the study, the questions which were asked, and the resources (time and money) available to the researcher.

A focus group of the teachers was formed during the first round of data collection. The meeting was held at Phanagela Primary School. When the researcher first met the interviewees, he started by pointing out the purpose of the study. It was to collect the information, which would be used solely for research and advancement of isiNdebele one of the formerly marginalised languages. This was an open-ended interview comprising 8 members. The focus group discussion took 3½ hours and notes were taken down by the research team. As this was a sample of the relevant information-rich case, this brought to the fore issues such as problems encountered by teachers in the teaching situation. They also talked about the status of this language, isiNdebele, and its weak corpus planning. The teachers also wanted to know some of the constraints their colleagues faced in the education of their learners.

### 3.3 CREDIBILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA

The 8 chosen schools' staff morale issue, was given a high consideration at the start of the investigation. It was found that these schools were the best performing and well administered ones, as recommended by the circuit office in the area. Through in-depth interviews with the staff, to describe what schools were like for them, what they do in school, how they typically spend their time, during school hours, what their family life is like, how they approach academic tasks, their views about health and their behaviours, and also attitudes with regard to deviant learners, or even delinquent criminal activities, the researcher ascertained that the contributions of these participants could be trusted. It was also important for the schools to be stable, and relatively successful in academic achievements, so that the constraints could be fairly universal didactic constraints, not constraints caused by the unstable environments.

All the questionnaires which were received were first checked to ascertain whether all items had been attended to by the respondents. The assistant researchers, principals,

officials and educators together with their learners and lastly, the parents jointly, through their responsibility and integrity enabled the researcher to attain credible data in his investigation.

Triangulating data collection methods, sources, and researchers, contributed to the trustworthiness of the data. The main researcher was a member of this community, had been a teacher and an Education official in the Education Department, and therefore very familiar with the context of teaching isiNdebele. As a member of this community, he could not be easily misled about issues.

The SGB members were interviewed, and even those who were working had to avail themselves at Phanagela Primary for such interviews. The percentage of participation by those who had been selected was 100 percent. The interviews with the representative of the inspectorate was also a success.

The researcher also kept referring to the research questions, to ensure that the study investigated what it had intended investigating. The researcher also monitored himself to be truthful at all times and not to let his views colour the interpretation of the data.

### 3.4 LIMITATIONS

Although it was the intention of the researcher to pre-visit each school to observe the type and nature of infrastructure available, this was constrained by insufficient funds and the time-factor. This served as a limiting aspect because the research through observation could have had more information and even make follow-ups on interviews made. The procedures followed in data collection, however, (discussed under 3.3) ensured the reliability and trustworthiness of the data.

### 3.5 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In the next chapter data are presented and analysed. The data were analysed according to identified themes.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

It was stated earlier that the actual aim of the study is to manifest isiNdebele as a written language, its development and modernisation up to the present time as it has been declared one of the 11 official languages of the country. This is of historical significance for isiNdebele language and other newly developing languages, under the Republic of South Africa multilingualism concept. The aims of this investigation were:

- to conscientise the relevant learners and practitioners about the need to know how to use their mother-tongue creatively and to dispel the myth that African languages are not viable in the work industry;

- to conscientise the young literate Ndebeles to have confidence in speaking and writing their language. The expectation is that this could have a positive impact on their personal and collective self-esteem, identity, and, mostly, sense of cultural and personal belonging;
- to conscientise the researchers in this language, having acknowledged the challenges facing isiNdebele, to realise that isiNdebele is as vibrant as other official languages, and that it is for them to be proud of the language and to develop their mother-tongue to the full; and
- to advocate quality research in isiNdebele involving issues for the creation of new vocabularies and their standardisation, as this would involve the creation and the standardisation of a writing system for the language.

To achieve the goal, a literature review of the relevant material was done, and an investigation using a qualitative approach was conducted.

## 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

To address the research problem, the following research questions were formulated, to guide the investigation.

### 4.2.1 The Research Questions

- What do the isiNdebele teachers perceive to be constraints in teaching isiNdebele?
- What limitations do developers of isiNdebele experience?
- What mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure effective teaching of isiNdebele and elevating its status?

#### **4.2.2 Collecting Data**

To answer the above research questions, and to achieve the goal of this investigation, the various stakeholders involved in the teaching of isiNdebele, were identified. These were learners, teachers of the isiNdebele language, principals, inspectors, and members of School Governing Bodies, the latter representing the parents' stakeholder group. The following data collection methods were chosen for this investigation: interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. The researcher had two assistant researchers who helped in collecting data. The assistants helped mainly with administration of questionnaires, which they did in the absence of the main researcher, and assisted the main researcher during the focus group discussion. Since the data collection process had been discussed with the assistants, they knew how to take notes and which notes to take during the discussion.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' RESPONSES ON THE TEACHING OF ISINDEBELE**

#### **4.3.1 Personal details - Implications**

With regard to home language the result shows that isiZulu was the predominantly spoken language by the teachers. This was followed by Setswana and Sepedi respectively. IsiNdebele seemed to be rarely spoken although there were Ndebele-speakers among this group. This is because the language is overshadowed by the isiZulu language in this area.

#### **4.3.2 Educational status of teachers**

#### 4.3.2.1 *Teachers' Academic Status*

With regard to the teachers' educational status, the results show that all educators had passed matric (Grade 12). This was a positive step that would enhance good quality education as it enables them to enrol with tertiary institutions for further learning. However, the results show that none of them had done isiNdebele language at any formal and official educational institution. This is a devastating blow towards the development of the language. Nevertheless, some indicated an interest in studying the language should it be introduced at institutions of higher learning.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Teachers' professional status*

The results of teachers on professional qualifications show that most had a teaching certificate. However, no one of them had done isiNdebele at any teacher training college or university. This showed that isiNdebele has not been taught previously at any schools or colleges of education.

Although the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of our schools depend to a large extent on the nature and success of our teacher education programmes, isiNdebele has been seriously constrained by this factor. South Africa came into the democratic arena with several different systems for preparing teachers. This shows that within the languages domain, particularly with isiNdebele, teacher education was inadequate both in quality and quantity.

The results on the teaching corps also showed that the primary schools had too few teachers to meet the needs of the teaching of isiNdebele. Again, there were too many of the current teachers that had not had adequate preparation for the tasks assigned to them in the teaching of isiNdebele. This implies that more than half of the teachers had not attained the credentials required for their positions. Such a teaching corps could surely not support the educational system's commitment to multilingualism. Given this scenario, it is necessary that several initiatives should begin inside and outside the

educational system to develop new approaches to teacher education as they are currently too limited.

### **4.3.3 Introduction and Constraints in teaching isiNdebele**

Questions that were posed to the teachers pertained to availability of subject courses, attendance of such courses, subject and professional support, resources in teaching the subject, general constraints in teaching isiNdebele that the teachers could think of, and what solutions they proposed. These were asked through the written questionnaires, focus group, and the follow-up interviews with some teachers.

The results about the introduction of isiNdebele show that the language was introduced at different time frames. Only three members of the group were optimistic about the language. Most indicated that there were serious problems, problems whose roots lay in children's homes, for example, lack of support from parents especially with regard to reading books, and telling stories in isiNdebele language. They also indicated that there were factors linked to curriculum and instruction, for example, teachers with little or no professional preparation.

The respondents also indicated that there was limited in-service upgrading, support, and supervision of teachers. In addition to this, seven respondents from all participants, stated that there was generally inappropriate or otherwise unsuitable curriculum, insufficient textbooks and instructional materials. They finally stated that there were factors that had to do with the physical learning environments being inadequate, poorly maintained and often overcrowded physical facilities. Given these contextual factors, teachers rated themselves fairly well as they were doing their best to teach the learning area.



It emerged that as the youngest written language in South Africa, isiNdebele did not have sufficient or rich literature. Teachers depended on translations from older languages, particularly English and Afrikaans, into isiNdebele. The language lexicon still needed a lot of vocabulary. Teachers did not and could not enjoy their language while the development of the linguistic section was poor.

The educators felt that when they had taught isiZulu, prior to the introduction of isiNdebele, they had not faced such difficulties. The kinds of linguistic problems they experienced in teaching isiNdebele, either did not exist when they taught isiZulu, or isiZulu had long progressed from them.

It was suggested that a revision of teaching methods should be intensified. The teachers concerned needed to be committed to the language and to urge learners to love the language as their mother tongue.

#### 4.4 ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES

As indicated before, even though the principals were not expected to actually teach the language, their participation, as managers of teaching and learning in the schools, was crucial. It was also important to find out what insight they had into the opportunities and constraints facing the teachers of the language under study. Questions posed to principals covered the areas of the library, other resources for language teachers, support provided by the schools to the language teachers, constraints they were aware of in teaching isiNdebele, and the measures that were put in place to address the constraints.

##### 4.4.1 Resources

#### *4.4.1.1 Provision of infrastructure*

In response to the availability of libraries, the respondents indicated that they did not have libraries. They instead used classrooms as store rooms for written off books. None of the schools had library facilities such as chairs, tables and library charts or even magazines and newspapers. According to the respondents, that was attributed to the lack of funding and infrastructure. However, the salient feature of the provision of resources within the study area was differential pattern of educational development of the different primary schools, for instance, while four respondents indicated that they had enough classes, others needed additional classrooms to meet the schools' requirements.

Poor socio-economic status of parents was cited as a contributory factor towards unfavourable resource provision. Consequently, many of the expectations in primary schools, especially language teaching, could not be realised. They were not realised especially because the infrastructural and financing resources were not properly developed. This resulted in a widening imbalance between the teaching of isiNdebele and other languages such as English, Afrikaans and isiZulu. Although the respondents indicated that there had been some prospects of classroom provision in the secondary schools, there seemed to be no trickling down of the benefits of the new democratic era to the primary school sector. The process of resource provision had instead shifted the benefits in favour of new and very old secondary schools. The dynamics of resource provision appeared to work against the rural and poor primary schools.

#### *4.4.1.2 Provision of textbooks*

With regard to the provision of isiNdebele books, the respondents indicated that text books were provided by the Department. However, there was no proper and sufficient supply of isiNdebele books. All the respondents, except two, indicated that they had problems in locating publishers for isiNdebele sources. They further stated that there seemed to be very few authors of books especially for their grades. They therefore depended on the English teachers, although they had a limited knowledge of the language. Though the availability of books has a constantly positive effect on the achievement of learners, in primary schools, learners either lacked books altogether or had to share some books with other learners.

The participants' responses above indicated that the supply of isiNdebele books was not adequately monitored and controlled. According to one respondent, the failure to monitor this process might be attributed to a lack of management skills and capacity from circuit officials. This had contributed to the ongoing crisis in the teaching of isiNdebele. The respondent further stated that the situation was aggravated by the isiZulu-isiNdebele dichotomy. With regard to the isiZulu language, the learning environment was conducive, with proper learning and teaching sources. By contrast, learners in isiNdebele classes were faced with poorly developed and ill-equipped educators. The result was a probably predictable and large-scale reduction of enrolment for isiNdebele language because of the provision of poor and inadequate facilities.

All the respondents nevertheless indicated that isiNdebele had been introduced towards the dawn of the new political era. Given the limited resources such as books, they indicated that teachers were working in clusters within the schools to assist one another in the language.

#### **4.4.2 Educators**

With regard to the provision of educators, none of the primary schools had adequately qualified teachers in isiNdebele language. The respondents indicated that the overall teacher stock for their schools was distributed according to the previously established languages, that is, English, isiZulu and Afrikaans.

Although an adequate implementation of the curriculum, in this case teaching isiNdebele, depends on the teachers' mastery of content, there seemed to have been no such training that aimed at producing satisfactory qualified isiNdebele teachers. The respondents also stated that although the distribution of the teaching force was inclined towards the languages, as cited above, the quality of this force, in terms of professional qualifications, left much to be desired as they were not improving their previous professional credentials.

All the respondents were grateful for the introduction of isiNdebele at their schools. They stated that although there were still contextual factors, as indicated above, positive strides had been made catering for the isiNdebele community. They were all satisfied with the progress achieved so far, given the constraints such as inadequate supply of books, inadequately qualified educators and teacher-learner ratios that were impacting negatively on the general progress. The responses also indicated that management was busy trying to link the schools that had introduced isiNdebele.

In doing that the respondents stated that they hoped that the constraints would be reduced. This was because they would share and exchange facilities and support services, and even swop teachers as part of a continuous process for the improvement and efficient professional skills development. Sharing resources offered an opportunity to identify the more effective use of human and material resources thereby improving learners' performance. The process would assist the school in achieving its objective of high pass rate of learners in isiNdebele. This would finally enable teachers to be more

skilled, flexible and knowledgeable and be able to improve the achievement of learners.

#### 4.5 ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF SGB

The role of this group in this research was to illuminate the issue of isiNdebele language teaching and learning as viewed by parents. They had to report on their preparation for the position of School governing, voice their views on the role of their language, and their interest and involvement in the teaching and promotion of the language in their schools. The questions posed focused on these issues.

##### 4.5.1 Educational Background

According to the results of the respondents, none of the SGB members had attained a matriculation certificate. Their educational qualifications ranged from grade seven to grade 12. Such educational qualifications had, however, been obtained during the then apartheid regime.

This low educational profile of the SGB impacted negatively on their ability and capacity to execute their roles. This is because most of the SGB documents which must be read, were written in English. Their low level of efficiency in the language would retard their acquisition of prerequisite knowledge. Although the principals might try to interpret such policy documents and other documents, it was doubtful whether there was enough time to do that. With the introduction of ABET centres in many areas, they might enrol to upgrade their knowledge.

#### **4.5.2 Background of the village**

Asked about the predominantly spoken language, the SGB component stated that isiZulu and Sepedi were the predominantly spoken languages in the area. Although isiNdebele was spoken, the frequency of the usage was rather low. Regrettably when spoken, it was very often than not combined with isiZulu. The respondents stated that the major vocabulary seemed to be drawn from isiZulu and siSwati languages.

Although the acquisition and usage of different languages was encouraged by the Constitution, in this case, it had a detrimental effect on the new language, isiNdebele. The Ndebele children were deprived of the development of their language. To aggravate matters, the respondents stated that the children (learners at respective schools in the survey) rarely spoke isiNdebele per se at their homes. This lack of continuity and consistency in the usage of isiNdebele would impact negatively on their vocabulary of the language. The parents should therefore be approached and enlightened on the significance of their language and even encouraged to use it as regularly as possible.

#### **4.5.3 SGBs' role in education**

The results of the respondents about the orientation reveal that the orientation had indeed been done. However, they stated that the main emphasis had been on their being inaugurated. Little about their role was said. They however, indicated that apart from the orientation session, they attended few meetings in which they were briefed about their roles and documents that they should use. They however, indicated that the

type of sources available to equip them were written in English and not readily and always accessible, and within their comprehension. It was nevertheless, encouraging to note from the respondents that meetings were held and discussions about their roles highlighted even if the problem of the medium of instruction in the documents seemed to be a constraint.

#### **4.5.4 Knowledge about Curriculum**

Asked about any workshop on curriculum matters, none of the respondents had attended a workshop on the development of the curriculum. They stated that it was only stated in the orientation session that it was their role to develop the curriculum of the school. They stated that they attended regular workshops on financial management.

With regard to the introduction of isiNdebele they all acceded to the fact that their principals did inform them. Since then little contact and communication concerning isiNdebele took place. This lack of participation of the SGB in the development of the curriculum would isolate the school as a management tool. The governance section, as part of its competence, should play a pivotal role and even spear head the involvement of parents.

The respondents indicated that they were grateful for the recognition of isiNdebele as one of the official languages within the educational circles. They however, indicated that they did not understand the role they should play in this regard. As one of the important stakeholders in education, principals should therefore be urged to involve and utilise the knowledge, skills and expertise of the SGB so that they should feel as equal partners in education.

With regard to the role played by parents in the teaching of isiNdebele, they all expressed great disappointment. According to the responds, parents failed to attend meetings convened by the school. They stated that it was increasingly becoming difficult for the school management to discuss matters of common concern with parents. They stated that although some parents did avail themselves, the majority of them just did not come. With regard to the role played by parents in the teaching of isiNdebele, they all expressed great disappointment. According to the responses, parents failed to attend meetings convened by the school.

Given this failure of parents to support the schools, campaigns should be made to mobilise them. Besides, alternative strategies should be found to involve them such as identifying prominent figures in the community, business people and influential members of the community to come on board. Such bodies, groups or individuals could help to stabilise the educational system, thereby overthrowing the culture of ignorance. Their involvement in education of their children would not only motivate the learners but even make them feel that they owned the school.

#### 4.6 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTORS' RESPONSES

The questions to the inspectors centred on the introduction of isiNdebele as a taught subject, the language development programme, and the support services for isiNdebele language teachers. They were also expected to refer to constraints in teaching the language that they were aware of.

##### 4.6.1 Introduction of isiNdebele in the area schools



One inspector reported that schools had applied to introduce isiNdebele language at their respective centres. According to the inspector this had been prompted by the Constitution that had broadened the scope of official languages in South Africa. As a response to this and in tandem with the language policy, isiNdebele, which had previously been marginalised, came to the fore. The management within the circuit using the criterion of a minimum number of learners to pursue the language, processed their applications.

According to the inspector the introduction of isiNdebele at schools was a positive move. The respondent stated that this would help them to develop both culturally and academically, and not only their cultural heritage would be developed but new authors, poets and other career paths would be developed to meet the demand of various resources within the language. This would even reconfirm multiplicity of languages in South Africa thereby acknowledging its rainbow status.

The respondent stated, however, that within the circuit there were no qualified subject or curriculum advisors in isiNdebele. They were only utilising the services of the existing language curriculum advisors from the Province to help in the development of approaches and adequate as well as relevant sources.

#### **4.6.2 Support services**

With regard to the provision of support services, the respondent indicated that short orientation courses for untrained teachers in isiNdebele were provided. None of these courses, however, lead to qualified teacher status. The purpose of this technical support was to find an alternative means of preparing and empowering serving teachers to meet

the demand of the new language and improve the efficiency of teachers for better performance.

It was stated that the major focus was on teaching and learning in classrooms. They also provide follow-ups in the school but the support team is not adequately staffed. One respondent stated that they have too many schools to visit so regularly and as such their interventions are minimal. However, the courses are based on a holistic approach to solving the context specific needs of teachers and schools. The approach serves as an enabling strategy to improve the shortcomings of both the teacher and management. This process offers opportunities to discuss problems at appraisal interviews and also presents expectations for support, particularly when facing difficulties.

The respondents has indicated that in the clusters that they established, they identified such shortcomings. Based on the approaches of teaching languages and available programmes, they designed their local work sheets to target specific problem areas as indicated. So far the progress is promising and the involvement as well as participation of all affected is promising.

Such clusters, which were attended by teachers offering isiNdebele, were commissioned to look into problem areas. Through their executive committees, the respondents states that they appointed school-based learning area co-ordinators to keep track of all developments and constraints.

The respondent stated that the major constraint experienced by such structures is travelling to a common venue. The lack of funding from schools retarded the organisation of transport. Insufficient cars at the circuit was also a constraining factor. Given these challenges, they did not meet very often, in order to reduce the travelling

costs. Despite these constraints, there were many expectations that were raised for improvement.

#### 4.7 A SUMMARY OF PERSPECTIVES ON THE TEACHING OF ISINDEBELE

It has been evident from the above discussion that isiNdebele language had been introduced at the primary schools. However, teachers who were responsible for the teaching of the language had limited knowledge as they did not study the language at their tertiary institutions or matriculation level. Moreover, there were insufficient sources such as books and this made it difficult for them to be efficient and develop the language. As a result, this impacted negatively on the learners.

On the other hand, principals complained that their schools were not adequately and properly staffed. This implied that available educators could not match the curricular needs of the school sufficiently. Insufficient infrastructure at schools was another constraint. As a result, the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system, with particular reference to the teaching of isiNdebele, could hardly be upheld.

Although the SGB was expected to play a pivotal role in the provision of infrastructure, they had little educational background. Their limited capacity and ability to support the school resulted in them failing to carry out their mandate within the Governance Section. Besides, the Circuit Management that ought to support them suffered from insufficient staff and lack of qualified curriculum advisors.

The overall picture in this chapter is that although the constitutional imperative and the needs of the people were being addressed, challenges still existed. Since the willingness to continue existed, the need to strengthen co-operation was essential.

To succeed or attempt to overcome problems or constraints in the teaching of African languages, it is necessary to foster the teaching of isiNdebele language, rather than focus on the attainment of competence in English. IsiNdebele speakers needed to rediscover the language of their heritage. They could, on the other hand, learn a second language, but not at the expense of their home language. Support programmes to confirm legitimacy of isiNdebele language and dialects, and to ensure the proficiency in one's mother tongue, should not be lost. Such a step would enable easy provision of resources to isiNdebele language learners, to achieve oral and literate competence in English, the language of wider communication.

In conclusion of this section, the theme that emerged loudly and clearly, is "inadequacy." This pertains to teacher training, teacher resources, language resources, scholars and researchers of this language, qualifications held by teachers and SGBs, and the will to make equality of this language with other South African languages a reality. The language structure, and the inconsistencies in the language writing and vocabulary, do not seem to pose that much of a problem. The data, therefore, seem to suggest a great need for development in the various areas.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

Since the investigation in this study is about the development and modernisation of

isiNdebele language, the researcher found that isiNdebele is still below par as compared to English, Afrikaans and other older African languages. IsiNdebele language is still struggling to reach development, modernisation and parity.

It has been realised that the problems of teaching of this language, originated from the apartheid education system, as the teachers or educators are all the products of the system. According to Mda (2000:166):

The colleges of education which trained most South African teachers, were mainly ethnically-based. The fact was that in the institutions where teachers of all races and ethnic groups were trained together, the methodologies for teaching different languages were separate, so that there was, for example, an Afrikaans method, an isiXhosa method and isiNdebele method.

These methodologies differed, as the teachers from them were of different levels and qualities. The teachers trained from the ethnic-based institutions, were, in most instances, characterised by their poor teaching abilities, and lack of knowledge of suitable and recent teaching methods. These could be attributed to the inadequacies in their training.

### **5.1.1 Findings**

The researcher utilised the following three questions in the investigation on the development of the isiNdebele language.

5.1.1.1 *What do the isiNdebele teachers perceive to be constraints in teaching*

### *isiNdebele?*

In the interviews conducted on the teachers, it was found that their lack of tertiary qualifications on the language, and the fact that the language was not offered in any institution of higher learning, constituted constraints in the teaching and development of the language. It was also indicated that the lack of proper resources, primary funding and infrastructure, created a situation which was not conducive to proper learning, modernisation, and development. The researcher applauds so far, the milestone reached by isiNdebele language in this democratic South Africa.

The way forward to be considered in this regard, is to produce competent writers in isiNdebele language. Let there be further and intensive researches conducted as this is how all other elevated languages emanated and became recorded.

The opening of doors for the development of Ndebele language at tertiary level, mainly at the Universities of Pretoria and Zululand is a boon. As a matter of fact, their interest will be to address the issue of the lexicographic needs of isiNdebele language. IsiNdebele language requires careful language planning, qualified field workers, sufficient human and material resources and even financial resources to develop well. If the Mpumalanga Province was to implement plans that could bring about school effectiveness, organisational effectiveness and educator professionalism, then the isiNdebele language could compare favourably with the other languages.

#### *5.1.1.2 What limitations do developers of isiNdebele experience?*

The experience of those charged with developing the language differed because the language was introduced to schools at different times and the scales of development

differed among the schools. There were those who were optimistic and those that indicated the presence of serious problems in the development of the language. The majority blamed the problems on the children's home, for example, on the lack of support for the children from the parents with regard to reading them books in their language, telling them stories in isiNdebele and about the Ndebeles, encouraging them to communicate in isiNdebele and general lack of interest in the language.

The respondents also indicated that there was very limited in-service upgrading, support, and supervision of teachers. There was also generally inappropriate or otherwise, unsuitable curriculum, insufficient textbooks and instructional material. Also, what they experienced had to do with inadequate, poorly maintained and often, overcrowded physical classroom facilities.

#### *5.1.1.3 What mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure effective teaching of isiNdebele and elevating its status?*

The respondents' responses were that improved funding and infrastructure would go a long way to elevate the status of the language. The lack of resources in the form of reading materials, or even newspapers and magazines written in isiNdebele language, impacted negatively on its development. They indicated further that there were very few authors who wrote in isiNdebele especially for their grades, and therefore, the students depended on the teachers, even though such teachers also had limited knowledge of the language.

Increasing the number of qualified educators and further training for less qualified teachers is thought to be another way to elevate the language. Management indicated that they were busy trying to link the schools that had introduced



isiNdebele. This is done in order to facilitate the sharing of facilities and swapping of teachers to exchange their support services, as part of a continuous process, for the improvement and efficient professional skills development.

#### *5.1.1.4 General findings and observations*

So far, isiNdebele as a medium of instruction does not have the scientific and technical terminology and vocabulary required by modern society. We nevertheless, need to see in the Province of Mpumalanga, isiNdebele language and other African languages functioning in many spheres. It is believed that such a performance could take place, once concretisation and implementation of the multilingualism, as expressed in the Constitution, the Schools Act and LiEP, in our wider society, has been accomplished.

The study shows that the teaching corps comprised underqualified personalities, who could not promote isiNdebele language to the level of English and Afrikaans. The fact is, there was never an intention to develop African languages, including isiNdebele language, to the level of English, for instance. The Missionaries who were instrumental in the writing of African languages in South Africa, did so, so that Africans could read the Bible (Mda, 1997). IsiNdebele, however, was not developed even for that purpose.

It has also been noted that the scarcity of qualified teachers, as raised frequently by principals, teachers, and inspector, during the various interviews, has been a thorn in the flesh of many Ndebeles whose children attended farm schools to receive low and poor quality of education, while most of the time they were being prepared for farm labour and to respect their masters, by being made to calling the young ones 'klein

bossies', meaning the young master.

Furthermore, it has emerged from the study that the teachers, principals, SGBs and even inspectors are faced by some odds in the community. They, however, should realise that the community requires effective organisers who can combine the efforts of parents, children, youth, elders and even politicians who can help in implementing practical policies and strategies. This would upgrade and enhance the importance and uses of isiNdebele language as they are currently lacking.

It is therefore important to note that the isiNdebele language speaking citizens recognise the significance of elevation of the status of this language, and that this language is indeed a tool of communication to them. Literacy should complement and provide further tools for writing and speaking the language as a priority.

The study shows that isiNdebele never got equal treatment regarding its development, equity and modernisation. Measures to promote the quality of isiNdebele and to ensure redress in the light of historical discrimination are not at all imminently ready for implementation. This language's development and modernisation are still neglected, even though it has been proclaimed one of the eleven official languages of the Republic of South Africa. The researcher has noted that the mechanism of in-service training (NSET) is implemented very poorly.

The researcher also discovered that the anticipated elimination of inequality among the languages, especially between isiNdebele and other languages, is still very remote, unless the Provincial Department of Education employs new and enlightened officials, who could assume a culture to support the weight of a civilisation in the Ndebele community. On the other hand, attempts are already

being made to introduce isiNdebele new centres in the rural areas to reinforce and revive the existing recognition of the connection between isiNdebele language, culture and identity.

Language is a primary condition for the development of a child because it is a means through which his/her intellectual functions, find expression and social life develops. It is a pity then that the language teachers, particularly African language teachers, were trained through separate methodologies that were in fact ethnically-based, and were even poor and low in quality.

It is indeed true that the quality of the African teaching force was marginalised and neglected by the apartheid regime. This is an apparent cause for the shortage of qualified teachers in isiNdebele, and an obstacle in the way towards parity in all languages.

Although educationists still maintain that the quality of teachers produced by the African colleges is well below that of the White teachers, it is unfortunate that statistics of the preceding sections give no indication of the level of training provided to teachers of different races. Regardless of the lack of figures, educationists insist that the poor quality of the African teaching force is a great block to equality than the backlog in teacher numbers.

Since the investigator was concerned about the future of isiNdebele language, as it never had tangible language planning, that would entail scientific development of linguistics, and a mechanism to change the way a language is used in a community, the researcher looks forward to isiNdebele language being used as an instrument of social integration and economic development, to achieve functional literacy, like in

other South African communities. Such an effective economic mechanism would have embraced in isiNdebele, some form of 'social engineering' of language use.

It is therefore important to co-opt effective elderly organisers into our midst, with whom we can combine the efforts, in important functions where we use isiNdebele language. Furthermore, it is noteworthy, to realise that the use of isiNdebele language nowadays, at social occasions, especially when propagated by African language speakers, is no longer a curse or demeaning or an evidence of lower status, instead it is regarded as an asset. This is exactly the problem the researcher wanted be resolved amongst the Ndebeles.

In the light of the current developments going on with the South African languages, it is important to look to the role of language and education, in the process of national development, to benefit all the people of South Africa. This would be due to the co-existence of the principles of freedom, tolerance, equity, caring, democratic participation, and so, isiNdebele language, would also develop into one of the world class languages.

This presentation analysis is based upon the lack of advancement, development, and modernisation of isiNdebele language and its literature, in the current dispensation, which tends to be an interesting experience on the researcher.

The outcome of the research indicates that a lot still needs to be done. The implication is that much work in this field of study warrants research. The researcher, appeals to the Ndebele literary scholars, to explore more literary genres, such as drama, poetry, novels and folklore, to embrace all life's point of view.

## 5.2 SUMMARY

To succeed or attempt to overcome problems or constraints in the teaching of African languages, it is necessary to foster the teaching of isiNdebele language other than English, so that even isiNdebele speakers of English, would rediscover the language of their heritage. They can on the other hand learn a second language. Support programmes to the legitimacy of isiNdebele language and dialects, to ensure the proficiency in one's mother-tongue, must not be lost. Such a step would, on the one hand, enable easy provision of resources to isiNdebele language learners, to achieve oral and literate competence in English, the language of wider communication.

In South Africa, the National Language Policy, recognises the historical reality that, even though English has become the language of wider communication, we are a multilingual society. If ever the Provincial or National Government uses a language other than English, it is for the benefit of the entire society.

As the former marginalised languages such as isiNdebele are now being assigned specific purposes in society, they could be of value to our communities. It is because our culture worships the performance and credibility of the written word. Of course, as for language preservation we belong to the millions of people of the globe, who are often pondering over the difficult choice, between ethnic survival and cultural freedom. The Ndebeles' concern is to narrow the gap between policy formation and the implementation thereof.

This work embraces the findings from the problems of language marginality of the previous regime. The researcher views isiNdebele as part and parcel of the South African notion of functional multilingualism. Being in the policy of multilingualism does not imply that all languages have to be used for all functions, but rather, different languages may be appropriate for different functions. Ndebeles are no longer at a disadvantage as they now have their language to speak, write and read. This language enables them to take control of their own lives as they can speak the language they prefer.

Of course, by western standards the linguistic diversity present in South Africa, is somehow daunting to say the least. The languages in RSA are characterised not only by the variety of African, Indian, Asian and European languages that co-exist, but by developing varieties of these languages, including the Koine languages of the townships, Afrikaans of the so-called 'Coloured' population and several non-native varieties of South African English (Reagan, 1990:179). It is therefore imperative for Ndebeles to see that isiNdebele language does not end up in oblivion. IsiNdebele is truly at the threshold of promising translation and interpreting boom. Implications of such a change in this language will be felt far and wide in linguistic circles. It should indeed be accorded higher status to challenge English and Afrikaans and even developed indigenous languages.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

As a recently introduced language into the group of written African languages, isiNdebele language has weak status planning and poor corpus planning. It is

recommended that the DoE should prioritise these processes of planning, as they involve creation of new vocabularies and their standardisation.

It is recommended that principals of schools and SGBs should take cognisance of the need to appoint qualified teachers, who would ascertain that the development of isiNdebele language, is regarded as an integral part of the teaching of all subjects in the curriculum.

Teachers who use isiNdebele as a language of instruction are required to get learners to write and publish articles, newsletters, and also encourage them to participate in isiNdebele activities, such as debates, dramas and elocution. All these would increase their awareness of the role that isiNdebele plays in the school curriculum and in their classrooms.

IsiNdebele language comprises two dialects, namely, isiNala and isiNzunza. Although they both constitute the isiNdebele language there are differences that exist amongst them. It is recommended that the two dialects be merged and jointly become one standardised isiNdebele language through which a suitable core syllabus can be introduced to schools as first language. Such a step would be conceived of as an instrument for social interaction between community members.

It is recommended that a realistic budget be voted for training isiNdebele teachers, buying equipments for schools, and to appreciate the value of moving from a narrow orthodox view of teaching, to a more enlightened approach.

A community relationship is recommended among the parents, teachers and learners

as that would ensure Ndebele culture preservation, particularly when isiNdebele language is retained, as the medium of community communication. This is in a way to promote the elaboration and modernisation of the African languages, isiNdebele language inclusive.

It is recommended that once the participatory functions of isiNdebele language are clearly determined and completely defined, a recognition of this nature forms part and parcel of an African community, which would unite the community members positively towards the development of a progressive and peaceful African society.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

#### A. Resources

1. Does your school have a library?
  - 1.1 If yes, which books are in short supply?
  - 1.2 If no, what steps are taken to improve the situation?
2. When was isiNdebele introduced at your school?
  - 2.1 Does the school have enough sources in isiNdebele?
    - 2.1.1 If no, how is the learning area taught without sufficient books?

#### B. Educators

3. Does your school have adequately qualified teachers in isiNdebele?
  - 3.1 What is your opinion about the teachers who offer isiNdebele?
  - 3.2 How does the management of the school assist them in teaching the subject?
4. What constraints have been reported by teachers offering isiNdebele?
  - 4.1 What is your opinion about the progress made in addressing such constraints?

Thank you

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

#### **A. Personal Details**

1. Gender: Indicates whether male or female
  - 1.1 Male
  - 1.2 Female
2. Home language:
  - 2.1 What is your home language?

#### **B. Educational Background**

1. Academic qualification
  - 1.2 What is your highest academic qualification?
  - 1.2 What is your highest standard in isiNdebele?
2. Professional qualification
  - 2.1 Which professional qualification have you attained?
  - 2.2 What has been your field of specialisation?
  - 2.3 Did you take isiNdebele as one of your major or minor courses at college or University?
    - 2.3.1 If yes, up to which level?

#### **C. Teaching experience**

1. When was isiNdebele introduced at your school?

2. What is your opinion about the teaching of isiNdebele?
3. How often do you attend isiNdebele courses?
4. How are such courses organised?
5. Who organise such courses?
6. In what way are such courses useful?
7. Are there any follow-ups after attending such courses?
  
8. Does your subject/curriculum advisor or H.O.D. assist you in problems about the learning area?
9. If yes, how does he/she assist you?
10. Do you have sufficient books about the subject?
11. If no, what do you do to supplement the shortage?
12. How would you rate your performance when utilising such sources/books, compared with your performance without them?
13. What constraints are you presently experiencing in the teaching of isiNdebele?
14. How do you solve such problems?

Thank you

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SGBs

#### A. Educational Background

1. What is your highest educational standard?

#### B. Background of the area

3. Which language is predominantly spoken in the village?
3. Are the children of this school speaking isiNdebele at their respective homes?

#### C. SGBs' role in education

4. Did you receive any orientation after being elected as SGB member?
5. Were you ever workshopped about curriculum matters?
  - 5.1 If yes, how long did the workshop take?
6. Did the management of the school inform the SGB about the introduction of isiNdebele?
7. What is your opinion about the introduction of isiNdebele here?
8. What role is played by the parents in the teaching of the language?

Thank you

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INSPECTORS

#### A. Background information

1. What prompted the introduction of isiNdebele in your area/circuit?
2. What is your opinion about the introduction of the language?
3. Does your circuit have adequate qualified curriculum advisors in isiNdebele?
  - 3.1 If no, how do you cope without staff?

#### B. Support service

4. How often does your circuit run workshops especially for isiNdebele?
  - 4.1 What are the major areas of focus in such workshops?
  - 4.2 How are such problem areas identified by the circuit?
5. What is your opinion about the progress made in the development and teaching of the language in your circuit?
6. Did your circuit establish learning area committees for isiNdebele?
  - 6.1 If yes, how were they established?
  - 6.2 What is their main function?
7. Did the circuit give such Committees any syllabus or work programme to refer to?
  - 7.1 If yes, who developed such a syllabi or work programme?
8. So far, what constraints have been experienced in the teaching of isiNdebele?

Thank you.