

**THE CHALLENGES THAT IMPEDE MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION  
IN THE SCHOOLS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTHERN  
SOTHO**

**BY**

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**THE CHALLENGES THAT IMPEDE MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION**

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**IN THE SCHOOLS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTHERN  
SOTHO**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of the mother tongue (MT) as a medium of instruction in schools is still a problematic subject of debate in South Africa and the continent at large. In most African countries, English remains the medium of instruction (Mol). This structured research sought to highlight the pros and cons of using mother tongue instruction in schools, specifically Northern Sotho, which is spoken by one of the ethnic groups in South Africa. Currently, in South Africa, children receive mother tongue education from grade one to three. In this study, the researcher argues that mother tongue should be used from grade one to twelve. For this study, the researcher relied on extant literature on mother tongue education. The concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) by Cummins (2001) was used to guide this study. The argument for mother tongue education is premised on the fact that it is crucial for the success and progress of children at school. As an example, studies have shown that children who are taught in their mother tongue such as Afrikaans and English, which remain the *defacto* mediums of instruction in the schools in South Africa, and French, German, Mandarin, etc. in other countries, excel in school and understand subjects such as Maths and Science better.

## **SENAGANWA**

Ngangišano ya tšhomišo ya polelo ya gae bjalo ka polelo yeo e šomišwago go ruta dikolong e sa le taba ye bothata dinageng tše ntši le mo Afrika Borwa. Dikolong tše ntši mo dinageng tše, Seisemane ke leleme leo le sa šomišwago bjalo ka leleme la go ruta. Tlhamo ya nyakišišo ye e nyaka go gateletša bohlokwa bja go šomiša polelo ya gae bjalo ka polelo yeo e ka šomišwago dikolong, kudukudu Northern Sotho yeo e bolelwago ke ye nngwe ya dihlopha tša MaAfrika Borwa. Gonabjale mo Afrika Borwa, bana ba rutwa ka leleme la gae go tloga go mphato wa 1-3. Mo thutong ye, monyakišiši o nganga gore polelo ya gae e swanetše go šomišwa go tloga go mphato wa pele go fihlela go wa masomepedi. Thutong ye, monyakišiši o ipotile ka dingwalo tše di ngwadilwego ka ga thuto ya polelo ya gae. Kakanyo ya “Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)” yeo e tilego ka Cummins (2001) e tla šomišwa go tlhahla thuto ye. Ngangišano ka ga thuto ya leleme la gae e theilwe godimo ga nnete ya gore le bohlokwa kudukudu go katlego le tšwelopele ya bana sekolong. Bjalo ka mohlala, dithuto di bontšhitše gore bana bao ba rutwago ka leleme la gae bjalo ka leleme la SeAfrikaanse le Seisemane, ao e sa lego maleme a thuto dikolong mo Afrika Borwa, SeForentšhe, Sejeremane, SeMandarini bjalobjalo kua dinageng tše dingwe, ba dira mošomo wo mobotse sekolong gomme ba kwešiša dithuto tša go swana le Thutadipalo le Saense bokaone.

## **KEYWORDS**

Mother tongue education; African languages; Northern Sotho; medium of instruction; school; feasibility; challenges.

## **DEDICATION**

To my mother Nnana Magdeline Mnisi who valued education and encouraged us all five siblings to go to school. My two lovely daughters who are my inspiration, Ofentse Magdeline and Antoinette Malekgoloane Ndlovu.

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# **1 CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

For many years South Africa was regarded as a bilingual country, first with English and Afrikaans and later with Afrikaans and English as the two official languages of the country. English-Afrikaans bilingualism dominated the period 1795-1948, during which the British ruled South Africa; whereas Afrikaans-English bilingualism dominated the period 1948-1994 when the Afrikaners had the reins of government (Kamwangamalu, 1998: iii).

In education, the apartheid government introduced the Bantu Education Act in 1953. This act was aimed at reducing the influence of English in black schools, enforcing the use of both English and Afrikaans on an equal basis as mediums of instruction. African languages were only used as a subject in higher grades. The Apartheid regime placed prominence on a divide and rule policy. The Apartheid policy governed relations between South Africa's white minority and non-white majority and sanctioned racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against non-whites. The South African citizenry was segregated along racial lines that entrenched political and economic discrimination against non-whites. This legislation had serious implications for languages of learning and teaching in black schools. In order for black children to pass grade twelve or what was known then as Matric, they had to obtain a pass symbol in English and Afrikaans. Their language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was Afrikaans or English and African language at primary schools while their white counterparts could either choose to be taught English at English speaking schools or Afrikaans at Afrikaans speaking schools. The 1976 student uprising in Soweto elevated the status of English and marked the decline of Afrikaans dominance (Mabule, 2011:3).

The other important document is the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) issued by the Minister of Education in 1996. The underlying principle in this document is to retain the learner's home language for learning and teaching, and also to encourage learners to acquire additional languages (Mesthrie, 2006).

Mother tongue education continues to be a thorny issue in Africa and in some parts of the world. It is believed that colonialism led to the type of education that produces incompetent

graduates that are not employable or can be automatically absorbed in the field of work. Presently, English is still the language of choice as a medium of instruction in most South African schools. This phenomenon is not only unique to South Africa, prevalent the world over, especially in Africa. Consequently, English and Afrikaans are the most dominant languages of education in South Africa. Prior to 1994 in South Africa, the regime's language policy bound students whose mother tongue was neither English nor Afrikaans, to be taught in the language which they regarded as the third language i.e., Afrikaans. As mentioned earlier, this led to the 1976 Soweto uprising by students against Afrikaans as a LoLT in schools around Gauteng. After the 1994 elections, the government rehabilitated all the nine indigenous African languages by uplifting their status to official languages entrenching them into the 1996 Constitution, as follows: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, SiSwati, XiTsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu. According to Spolsky (2009: 1), language policy is all about choices regimes make on behalf of their citizens in their Language planning. He further argues that if you are bilingual or plurilingual, you must choose which language to use and be educated in. Madiba (2007: 11) states that the government has an important role to play, from policy level to its implementation. Nekvapil and Sherman (2015: 1) concur with Madiba by also concluding that various actors, such as politicians, government officials or experts appointed to solve language problems, can initiate change. Teaching in the medium of English to learners whose mother tongues are languages such as Northern Sotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa, etc. may lead to high failure and dropout rates. This statement is supported by Gora (2014: 48) who warns that there are frequently high repeat and dropout rates due to poor performance in English and subjects where English is used as a medium of instruction, hence calling for a radical change of language education in Africa. Skutnabb-Kangas (2013: 98) concurs with the notion that "... there are disastrous results of English medium education around the globe."

Subsequently, this research focused on high schools around the Pretoria area (that is, Mamelodi and Atteridgeville) where Northern Sotho is one of the African languages that is taught to the grade 8-12 learners as an additional language. This research investigated whether it was feasible for Northern Sotho to be used as a language of teaching and learning. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2013:83), multilingual education (MLE) and home language maintenance provide a springboard for

strengthening the learning of English as a second or foreign language. Subsequently, when children master their mother tongue, they will learn better and understand faster. This is a notion that is also espoused by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which further recommended that the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible that pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue. This practice of learners beginning their school life in their mother tongue will make learners understand better and ultimately perform better at school.

The reasons for children to learn in their own mother tongue are to develop their cognitive skills; improve their self-esteem; maintain and respect their heritage, culture and home community. Phillipson (2000: 11) concurs with the idea that mother tongue is needed for psychological, cognitive and spiritual survival as a cultural right.

This research is different from other studies that have already been conducted in that no research has investigated Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction in the schools. However, there is no political will by the Government of South Africa to implement its own clause in the Constitution of mother tongue education. The significance of this research lies in it being an attempt to change the attitude of parents and politicians regarding the use of mother tongue in schools. The study is also a way of advocating for a political will by the government and making them aware of the crucial role mother tongue education could play in South African schools and how they could be involved in the speedy implementation thereof. There is strong resistance from parents toward mother tongue education. It appears that parents generally feel that a good command of English is so essential for their children's success in the modern world. Parents use every opportunity to expose their children to the English language. They seem to have a negative attitude towards mother tongue education. To them, education in the medium of English is still suitable for their children.

Teachers prefer to teach subjects that are taught in the medium of English and yet they themselves are not adequately proficient to teach in English. Teachers who teach Northern Sotho or any other African language as a subject are looked down upon by both colleagues and learners in the schools. To compound the problem even further, the Republic of South Africa has put in place mechanisms and Chapter 9 Institutions (such as PanSALB) to monitor and advocate for a commitment towards the

development of the African languages and its policies and the Bill of Rights, however, implementation of these positive government policies and strategies seems to be a distant and fading prospect.

The researcher is of the view that the implementation and the advocacy of language planning and policy in schools remain the prerogative of the South African government. Parents, teachers and learners need to be enlightened about the use of mother tongues as languages of teaching and learning in the high schools.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Mother tongue education in African languages is not given the importance that these languages deserve. English continues to be the dominant and recognised medium of instruction in the schools. Currently, in South African schools where children are taught in their mother tongue (Afrikaans/English), learners in these schools produce outstanding results, including distinctions in different subjects in Grade twelve. This is because they are taught in a language that they learned from home. This research attempts to find out what impedes mother tongue education in African languages, Northern Sotho specifically in the high schools. The research also attempts to argue that if children are taught in their mother tongues, they will perform better in their school subjects.

There is still a huge failure rate and dropout rate because of non-mastery of the language of instruction i.e. LoLT, which in this case is the English language. The research suggests that children of a certain age should first master their mother tongue by learning the languages thoroughly beginning from grade tripple zero to grade three before the LOLT could be introduced to them. Moyo (2002: 150) who conducted his study in South Africa suggests that African languages could thus be used in early education as media of instruction.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

The main aim of this study is to explore whether it is feasible for Northern Sotho to be used as a language of teaching and learning (LoLT) in high schools around Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas. The researcher also investigated whether the

atmosphere in the schools is conducive for mother tongue education in South African schools.

### **1.3.1 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- Establish factors that impede mother tongue instruction as a language of teaching and learning (LoLT).
- Establish ways of introducing the Northern Sotho language as a medium of instruction in high schools.
- Change attitudes of Northern Sotho speakers towards the use of Northern Sotho in high schools as a medium of instruction by highlighting the importance of mother tongues.
- Establish ways of changing the mindset of Northern Sotho speakers regarding their language.

### **1.3.2 Research questions**

- What are the factors that impede mother tongue instruction as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) in South African schools?
- What ways could be used for the Northern Sotho language to be introduced as a medium of instruction in high schools?
- What are the ways of changing the attitudes of Northern Sotho speakers towards the use of Northern Sotho in high schools as a medium of instruction?
- What are the possible ways or strategies of changing the mindset of the Northern Sotho speakers regarding their language?

### **1.4 Justification/ Significance of research**

The significance of this research study is to investigate the possibility of the implementation of mother tongue teaching with reference to Northern Sotho as a language of teaching and learning (LoLT) in high schools. Failure rate and dropouts are assumed to be caused by non-mastery of the present LoLT, which is English.

Phaahla (2014: 34) states that learning is very effective when instruction is received in the language that the learner knows best. English and Afrikaans are still the mediums of instruction in South African schools. Learners, whose language as medium of teaching and learning is Afrikaans, seem to perform better at school and even produce distinctions in their Grade twelve examinations. This research is important for the upliftment of indigenous languages of South Africa. African languages are perceived to be gradually dying because they are not fully recognised and utilised like English and Afrikaans. It is best to teach children in the language that they are familiar with since they speak it at home and with peers and school mates and it is the language that they understand best. Cummins (2000: 57) asserts that proficiency will interact with the instructions that students receive. Meaning that, if the learners understand the language well, then they will understand their subjects better. He further maintains that academic language proficiency is what schools focus on in endeavour. Children must master their mother tongue language before they can learn the English language. There is therefore a great need for academic reconstruction.

## 1.5 Definition of terms

**Attitude:** According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2013, 89), attitude is a feeling or opinion about something or someone.

**Language planning:** According to Haugen (1966: 68), language planning is the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community. He further states that planning implies an attempt to guide the development of a language in a direction desired by the planners. On the other hand, Cooper (1979: 26) asserts that language planning can be viewed as an attempt to win or block acceptance for changes in language structure or use.

**Language policy:** This term refers to what the government does to determine how languages are used in a country. Every country has a language policy. According to Spolsky (2009: 1), language policy is all about choices. He further argues that if you are bilingual or plurilingual, you must choose which language to use. He continues to maintain that even if you speak only one language, you have choices of dialects and styles. He further states that language policy is a regulation that prescribes how languages are supposed to be used within a country (Spolsky, 2009).

**Language rights:** Every citizen in the Republic of South Africa has the right to their own language. According to the constitution, the official languages of the Republic of South Africa are: Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu and isiNdebele. Skutnabb-Kangas (1999: 6), maintains that the governments are violating human and linguistic rights by making the wrong choice of medium of education.

**LiEP:** An abbreviation of Language in Education Policy.

**LoLT-** Language of Learning and Teaching. It is also regarded as Medium of Instruction (Mol).

**Medium of instruction:** Medium of instruction is the language used to teach different subjects. The language may be an official language such as English or Afrikaans or an African language. **LoLT-** Language of Learning and Teaching is also regarded as the medium of instruction.

**MLE:** Multilingual education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 83). Multilingual education means schooling which begins with mother tongue language and then switches to another language as the medium of instruction at a later stage.

**Mother tongue education:** This refers to education in the mother tongue language, which is a language that is first spoken by a person. Each child has the right to be taught in this type of language.

**Mother tongue language:** This refers to a language that is first spoken by an individual or person. It is a language that a person learns to speak first. If Northern Sotho is a child's mother tongue, then this is the language that he or she will learn first.

**Northern Sotho:** This South African language is also known as Sesotho sa Leboa or Sepedi (which is strictly speaking a wrong designation as Sepedi is but one of the many dialects of Northern Sotho). Sesotho sa Leboa is more inclusive of all the dialects. Hence the name "Sepedi" is listed in the constitution as one of the 11 official languages of South Africa.

**PanSALB:** Pan South African Language Board. It is a Board that supports the Gauteng language battle. This language Board has been put in place to monitor and

advocate for a commitment towards developed language policies and the Bill of Rights.

**Right to mother tongue language:** This refers to every person's right to choose a language of communication, education, legal, etc. It also alludes to the right of each language to exist in a society. According to Prinsloo (2007: 35), everyone has the right to speak and be educated in their mother tongue. Prinsloo argues that children have the right to receive education in a language of choice.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework underpinning this research is that of Cummins (2001) who advocated the concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Vygotsky (1962) who advocated the theory of language and thought. The theories foreground the notion that a child will grasp appropriate concepts if they understand a language better. They provide a theoretical underpinning which is an educationally significant point of view regarding the relationship between language and learning at all levels of education, especially at primary schools. This means that there is a strong relationship between the languages that the learners are taught in. If they understand the language, then it will be easier for them to understand the educational concepts that they will be learning.

The two scholars are the proponents of language acquisition and proficiency in the mother tongue. Cummins (2001:16) suggests that if children have strongly developed their mother tongue, then this is a strong predictor of their second language development. This means that if children have mastered their mother tongue language it will be easier for them to learn the second language. He further suggests that children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue will develop stronger literacy abilities in their school language, e.g. English.

Cummins (2001: 16-17) further states that when parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) can spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children

come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. He observes that mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children`s abilities in the majority school language. This means that if children have mastered their own mother tongue thoroughly, then they will learn English better.

However, most of the parents and some teachers are worried about mother tongue education because they still believe that it is better for their children to be taught in the English language as this will open doors of opportunities for them. Cummins suggests that when children are learning through their mother tongue languages, they are not only learning this language in a narrow sense. Instead, they are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the second language (English). African languages' medium of instruction in the schools is still a bone of contention in South Africa. This important issue will take years to be resolved. It is indeed a myth to believe that learning in the medium of Northern Sotho or any other non-English language is a waste of time.

## **1.7 Research Methods**

The research employed in this study is qualitative in nature and character. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), qualitative research designs emphasise gathering data on what is really happening in society. A qualitative research design is descriptive and explorative in nature, unlike the quantitative design which in most cases data collected are interpreted in numbers. A qualitative research design or approach is concerned with establishing answers to the whys and hows of the phenomenon in question and in turn understanding the meaning of individuals or groups' dynamics ascribe to a social or human problem. The methods used in the qualitative design are also distinct from those used in quantitative research designs (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014: 31). Borden and Abbot (2011: 38) maintain that the quantitative theory defines the relationships between its variables. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 189) concur with Borden and Abbot in saying that the quantitative research method uses some type of instrument or device to obtain indices that correspond to characteristics of the results of the study. Creswell (2014: 4) on the other hand, maintains that quantitative research is an approach for testing objective

theories by examining the relationship among variables. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 12), a research tool is a specific mechanism or strategy the researcher uses to collect, manipulate, or interpret data. Through the qualitative method, the researcher actively selected the most productive sample to answer the research questions during interviews. The researcher selected 40 grade eleven and twelve learners who are Northern Sotho speakers and taking this language as a learning subject in the high schools of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas. Twenty teachers who are teaching Northern Sotho in these selected high schools were also chosen. A further 20 learners were also selected for a focus group interview.

Questionnaires, interviews and observation were used as tools to gather data and find answers. Focus group interviews were undertaken in order to get their responses to the questions asked. A focus group involves a small group of people with common characteristics and/ or experiences who participate in discussions about a topic, guided by a moderator (Aurini et al., 2016: 45). Even if the researcher made use of questionnaires, they were cast towards the qualitative method. The results were interpreted critically after gathering the information.

Before data were collected, the researcher first acquired the necessary documents needed to do the research work. The researcher then took the letter directed to the school principals to request permission to do research in the selected high schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi days before commencing with the research. These schools were selected based on the following: the schools were teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject, the schools were accessible to the researcher, these schools were selected because of their geographical context and that Northern Sotho is the first language to most people who live in the aforementioned areas. The learners were selected based on their language background, that is if they had Northern Sotho as their mother tongue. . They had to be eighteen years and older. Before distributing the questionnaires directed to learners and teachers, the researcher explained what the questionnaire was all about. After the clarifications, the researcher then distributed first the questionnaires that were directed to the learners. They filled the questionnaires and then the researcher thanked them afterwards. The same was done with the teachers. The researcher also conducted focus group interviews with 20 grade

twelve learners who were eighteen years and above. A tape recorder was used to record all the responses. The data collected was stored and later transcribed and analysed.

### **1.8 Scope of the study**

This research is an analysis of the challenges that impede mother tongue education with special reference to Northern Sotho schools. It focused on schools around the Pretoria area (i.e. Mamelodi and Atteridgeville High schools). Forty Northern Sotho speaking learners who were eighteen years and above and 20 teachers who were teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject were interviewed. This research project is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which has the context and statement of purpose, statement of the problem, the aim of the study, objectives, research questions, the significance of the research, brief literature review, research methods, theoretical framework, and the scope of the study.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework and literature review. It presents the theoretical point of departure that guides this research and earlier research on mother tongue education. Chapter 3 covers the methodological considerations for the study. Chapter 4 is a chapter for data analysis. The collected data were presented and analysed. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and final chapter of this study. It presents a summary of the study and recommendations.

### **1.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are integral to research. Since this study involves grade eleven and twelve learners in high schools aged 18 years and above, the researcher subjected the research to ethical considerations. The focus group comprised learners in grade twelve; therefore, this research complied with Unisa's ethical policy. Since this study dealt with learners from 18 years and above, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from Unisa. Letters of informed consent were acquired and assent forms for participation by learners were obtained from parents, guardians and the school principals because learners are vulnerable participants. In this study, the researcher considered the rights and feelings of the participants. The participants had a choice to participate or not to participate. Learners were not forced to participate in the research. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews for collecting data,

therefore the researcher needed to carefully respect the integrity of the people and give clarity on the purpose of the research. All the data gathered remained confidential.

## **1.10 Chapter organisation**

### **Chapter 1**

Background of the study.

Mother tongue education is still a thorny issue in Africa and some parts of the world. There are several challenges that impede this type of education.

### **Chapter 2**

Theoretical framework and literature review.

Research is based on a specific theoretical framework. The theoretical framework that will be used in this study is that of Cummins' of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and that of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). Vygotsky advocated the theory of language and thought.

### **Chapter 3**

Methodology and Research methods.

Data will be collected and interpreted.

### **Chapter 4**

Data analysis, findings and interpretations.

After collecting the data, then it will be analysed and interpreted.

### **Chapter 5**

Discussion of the Research findings, Recommendations and conclusions.

General/ Conclusion- summary of the study and recommendations.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter concerned itself with the exploration of the problem statement. The research findings discussed above have revealed to what extent English is still a dominating language. The aim of the study, objectives and research questions have clearly been outlined.

Under the justification of research, the reasons for this study were provided. The study showed why the research was worth undertaking. Under the literature review, there are gaps and pitfalls that are discovered by the research which makes it necessary to do more research. The theoretical framework is the framework upon which the research or study is grounded. The research methods were also outlined. These describe how the data is going to be obtained and analysed to answer the questions. The aim of the study is to investigate what impedes mother tongue education in the schools.

The sources reviewed do not adequately address the concept, hence the motivation to carry out this research. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of this study and the literature review.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO:**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, i.e. the introduction, the statement of the problem, aim of the study, justification/ significance of the research, definition of terms, theoretical framework, scope of study and ethical consideration were discussed.

This chapter will focus on reviewing theories that are related to mother-tongue education globally. The researcher will consider the works of other scholars who also investigated the challenges that impede mother tongue education in schools. Their opinions and debates will be interrogated as they underpin this current study. The study will finally focus on South African schools with special reference to High schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi where mother tongue education is still a bone of contention.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework dealt with in this study is more significant and its major proponents are Cummins (2001: 16) and Vygotsky (1994: 186).

Cummins became one of the world's greatest experts in three decades on minority languages. He is one such scholar whose research on multilingualism and mother tongue education has inspired many scholars. He advocated the concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). He suggests that if children have strongly developed their mother tongue, then this is a strong predictor of their second language development (Cummins, 2001:16). This simply means that if a child's mother tongue is Northern Sotho for example, the child will learn English faster and easier at school because he or she would have grasped the concepts of the former language. He further maintains that if children are taught in the language that they understand, then they will progress educationally. He also advocated the concept of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). This means that the child must learn first their language thoroughly before he can learn the next language. He laments the deliberate destruction of languages and cultures in the schools and observes that the children's mother tongue is critical towards their educational development. Cummins (2001: 17)

asserts that children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities.

The Russian psychologist, Vygotsky (1994), advocated the theory of language and thought. His work contributed substantially to learning a mother tongue and a foreign language, such as English, by exploring whether a child learn a foreign language in school differently from the way he learns his native language. He focuses on how thoughts relate to words and maintains that all other issues are secondary and logically subordinate and that the latter issue should be resolved first. He further notes that children who do not possess “the appropriate generalisation are often unable to communicate their experience”. Vygotsky, in Rieber and Carton (1987:49), observes that the problem is not the lack of the appropriate words or sounds, but the absence of the appropriate concept or generalisation. Without the latter, he maintains that understanding is impossible. Therefore, the current study aims at highlighting that if children do not have the appropriate concepts in the English language, it will be impossible for them to learn and understand in this language. He further maintains that the child does not begin learning his/her native language by studying the alphabet or, by reading and writing, with the conscious and intentional construction of phrases, with the definition of words, or with the study of grammar. According to Vygotsky, these are the characteristics of the child’s first steps in learning a foreign language. The child learns his/her native language without conscious awareness or intention whereas he/she learns a foreign language with conscious awareness and intention. He maintains that language is a tool for thought. He has contributed substantially towards mother tongue education in his analysis of the relationship between language and learning at all levels of education. Cummins concurs with Vygotsky in maintaining that parents play a pivotal role in the development and expansion of their mother tongues.

### **2.3 Literature Review of related studies in the world**

Many researchers shed some light on this pivotal issue of mother tongue education in schools. The current study aims at highlighting that if children do not have the appropriate concepts in the English language, it will be almost impossible for them to learn and understand in this language.

One of the researchers in this current study Skutnabb-Kangas (2013:82), argues that foreign languages, such as English and French, are often used as mediums of education at the expense of indigenous languages. She adds that a thorough knowledge of their mother tongue language will provide children with a springboard for strengthening the learning of English as a second or foreign language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 83). She asserts that English-medium education leads to disastrous results for learners whose mother tongue is not English, e.g. it can lead to poverty as children who do not perform well due to lack of language comprehension will normally drop out of school. She further asserts that "teaching children in a foreign language is assimilationist, genocidal and a crime against humanity".

The current study explores the importance of teaching children in their own mother tongue (Northern Sotho). Skutnabb-Kangas (2013:89) concedes that by promoting foreign languages at the expense of their mother tongues, human beings are responsible for the disappearance of languages. She further observes that:

Educational systems and the mass media are the most important direct agents in linguistic and cultural genocide and language related crimes against humanity" i.e. killing a language without killing the speakers (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 312).

This study seeks to understand the meaning that this researcher wishes to convey about linguistic diversity and biodiversity. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2013: 93), dominant language medium education can cause serious physical and mental harm to children who do not speak foreign languages. She notes that if languages, such as indigenous African languages, are not used as mediums of instruction or are promoted, these languages will continue to die like many other minority languages or like those that are destined to die. Hence, the current study aims at contributing towards filling in the gap identified in teaching children in their own mother tongues.

She blames parents and grandparents for not transferring their indigenous languages to their children as it is up to parents to choose which language(s) their children must speak and be educated. On the other hand, many young people are not interested in their mother tongues and prefer to communicate in English. Hence, these young people are deprived of their right to know their folktales, proverbs and riddles. Skutnabb-Kangas further maintains that children should be given the opportunity to learn idioms from their parents so that they can become as proficient as their parents

in their mother tongue and ensure the survival of the language. The present study similarly puts emphasis on the attitude of parents, teachers and children toward mother tongue education.

Edwards (2012: 29) is of the view that attitudes towards multilingualism and language diversity in general are important. While Edwards (2012) specifically focuses on having a positive attitude towards multilingualism, the present study goes beyond merely focusing on multilingualism by focusing specifically on mother tongue education (in Northern Sotho), since children will perform better if they are taught in their mother tongues.

Olthuis and Kivela et al. (2013: 217) conclude that young adults and their parents often do not speak the indigenous languages and are known as "the lost or stolen generations". They are lost to their own people because they do not know their culture or language, have not used the language, or have neglected to transfer it to the next generation.

Both Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) and Vygotsky (1962) concur that language is the most important instrument for understanding and forming concepts about one's immediate surroundings and the world at large (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 3). She acknowledges that every mother tongue spoken by a group of people is able to function as a medium of instruction and that all languages are equal. The present study also seeks to understand why mother tongues, such as Northern Sotho, are not used as mediums of instruction throughout the child's schooling like foreign languages such as Afrikaans and English are used in South African schools.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:296) is concerned with the state policies that are behind the punishment of a child for speaking their mother tongue. According to Makhetha (2016: 3), students at the Pretoria High School for Girls claimed that they were barred from using their home languages in private discussions. The learners further stated that the teachers find it offensive when they speak to their friends in their mother tongue and that they are stopped and told to "stop making funny noises". Tupas (2014: 120) observed the same scenario whereby three students were expelled from their school because they spoke their mother tongue, not during class but during break. Cummins (2001: 19) states that when either the implicit or explicit message is communicated to children in school to "leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door",

children also leave a central part of who they are (their identities) behind. He further maintains that when the children feel this rejection, they are unlikely to participate confidently in classroom instruction. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 327) concludes that punishing children physically for speaking their own language and/or forbidding the use of the language in schools must be seen as linguistic genocide according to the UN 1948 definition.

According to Ihemere (2009), the child's mother tongue should be the language of instruction in primary school and English should be used at a later stage. However, the present study's focus goes beyond simply preserving the mother tongue to using it as a medium of instruction throughout the child's schooling. The indigenous languages should also be accorded the same status as languages such as English. The present study has something in common with the studies of the above-mentioned researchers in mother tongue language and that of Makhetha (2016).

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) states that Kurdish children have a high dropout rate because they are not allowed to be taught in their mother language (Kurdish) or even to speak this language at school. They learn in Turkish and adopt Turkish culture. She adds that the use of Kurdish is generally restricted in Turkey. The present study focuses on Northern Sotho speaking children who must drop their mother tongue at grade three and be taught in a language (English) that most find difficult to understand and master, resulting in a high drop-out rate. This study similarly puts emphasis on the use of African languages to be used as mediums of instruction across South Africa.

Another major contribution to the debate on mother tongue education is that of Phillipson (2000: 13) who maintains that a mother tongue is the most valuable inheritance of human beings. He is of the view that if any language in the world dies, great human wisdom disappears with it. Like Skutnabb-Kangas, he further argues that most minority languages are in danger of becoming obsolete. This research is very significant to the current study because it provides some insight as to the significance of mother tongue education. The research has shown that if children are not taught in their mother tongues, it will lead to a high dropout rate in school because the language of education is not understood properly.

The present study, together with Lubbe (2004), Prinsloo (2007) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), notes the centrality of language rights. It is the right of every human being to learn and be educated in the language that he or she understands best. The study of Lubbe (2004) speaks to the present study in the sense that it states the importance of linguistic rights. Lubbe (2004: 119) asserts that this right can be justified on the grounds of the individual's humanity, i.e. if people are stripped of their right to their mother tongue, they are automatically stripped of their human rights. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) maintains that educational language rights are not merely vital but are also the most important linguistic human rights for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity on our planet and the development of languages. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998: 114) also demonstrate the importance of linguistic rights. They note that linguistic rights may take the form of the right of language(s) or the right to languages.

Tupas (2014:113) acknowledges that mother tongue plays a very important role in the lives of children and provides evidence of the critical and significant role it plays in eradicating poverty; achieving primary education; promoting gender equality; empowering women; reducing child mortality and improving maternal health; combatting HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring sustainable development. Tupas goes on to say that countries are perpetually haunted by the mother tongue issue mainly because mother tongues have been marginalized in nation-building projects in favour of colonial and dominant local languages. Tupas maintains that the school's anti-mother tongue stance is fuelled by an English-only ideology in education precisely because of the same pragmatist reason, i.e. to give its students greater access to society's material and symbolic goods through English.

#### **2.4 Literature review of related studies in the African continent**

Nyika (2015), whose study was conducted in Tanzania, argues that the use of mother tongue languages could lead to educational success and subsequently success in career development in the real world. He further argues that the level of comprehension of the language of instruction (English) can negatively affect performance because students may have trouble grasping the underlying basic concepts that are taught in various subjects. He maintains that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction should not exclude English because it could ultimately disadvantage students who are meant to benefit from such a policy. The

former statement therefore contradicts the latter statement. This research maintains that children should be taught in their mother tongue (Northern Sotho specifically) throughout their schooling.

For example, Gora (2014: 18) observes that there are frequently high repeat and dropout rates in Zimbabwe due to poor performance in English and subjects where English is used as the medium of instruction. She calls for a radical change of language education throughout Africa, as there are frequently high repeat and dropout rates due to poor performance in English and subjects where English is the medium of instruction. Phaahla (2014) is of the view that mother tongue education (using indigenous African languages) should be "drivers of change" in South Africa and that English and Afrikaans have been the dominant languages of communication and the mediums of education far too long. She observes that if children are taught in their mother tongue (in this case, African indigenous languages), they will perform as well as the Afrikaans speaking learners who are taught in their mother tongue (Afrikaans) and will subsequently produce good results.

Moyo (2002: 150) also noted that indigenous languages ought to be elevated and used as the media of instruction throughout the learners' schooling. According to Mahlobogwane (2016: 01), Sepedi, which is also called Northern Sotho, was a language of instruction at the University of Pretoria but was never used as such.

The above-mentioned studies under review interact with the present study in several ways. They highlight the importance of teaching children in their mother tongues so that they can understand the subject matter better.

Ndlovu (2015: 365) notes that Tonga, Kalanga and Venda groups pioneered advocacy to have the children taught in their mother tongues, i.e. Venda, Tonga and Kalanga. The current study is also faced with similar concerns, i.e. that Northern Sotho should be used as the medium of instruction in areas where Northern Sotho is widely spoken in South Africa.

Callinicos (2006:4) illuminates the present study in many ways. He observes that for more than two decades into South Africa's democracy and despite the 11 official languages, the struggle for prioritising the mother tongue continues. He maintains that for someone who has learnt English without having a mother tongue foundation, the

ability to think conceptually is impaired. His arguments concur with Vygotsky's theoretical framework on the relationship of thought to word.

Prinsloo (2007: 35), like the previous literature that was reviewed, focuses on the right to mother tongue language. She discusses that everyone has the right to speak and be educated in his or her mother tongue. In addition to Gora's study, Prinsloo also emphasises the right to receive education in a language of choice. This is important for the current study because it is hoped that the other indigenous African languages of South Africa will also be included as languages of instruction throughout the child's education.

Chiatoh (2011: 586) established that the Cameroon government is lukewarm about mother tongue education. Kufakunesu (2015: 8) provides examples of the unofficial hierarchical ranking of languages in some South African institutions such as the media, specifically television; education; the government; and the administration where English is placed at the top followed by Afrikaans and the African languages. Zungu and Pillay (2010: 112) observe that South African youth are abandoning isiZulu for English and cautions that isiZulu is likely to die if isiZulu speakers continue to ingratiate themselves with English to the detriment of their mother tongue. Zungu and Pillay (2010: 111) observed that Zulu learners communicate with each other in English, and cannot read and write standard isiZulu. The present study therefore profits from Zulu and Pillay's views, as this study also seeks to understand why most children whose mother tongue is Northern Sotho cannot read the Northern Sotho book.

Abijo (2014: 124) observes that languages that are supposed to be used for formal and non-formal education are fast facing extinction. Abijo (2014) affords the present study a window into understanding how languages and African languages in particular, are endangered and that if the governments concerned do not intervene quickly, these languages will face extinction.

Like Abijo, the researcher has also observed that parents take pride in their command of the English language at the expense of their African mother tongue. Children are encouraged both at school and at home to communicate only in English because it is seen as being equal to intellectual competence. Abijo also sheds light on how children who are taught in their mother tongue (Yoruba language in Nigeria) perform significantly better than their counterparts who were taught in English. Most pertinently, the study shows the significance of teaching pupils in primary schools in

their mother tongues.

The present study is also somewhat interested in establishing if children can perform better in school if taught in their mother tongue rather than through the medium of foreign languages (e.g. English), and, like Kamwangamalu (2005), the researcher is concerned about how mother tongue education can be implemented in schools after having survived the colonial eras. The present study also benefits from Kamwangamalu's (2005: 758) findings on what distinguishes mother tongue education in Western countries from mother tongue education in African countries. He maintains that mother tongue education in Western countries is enabling rather than disabling and empowering rather than disempowering, i.e., it ensures upward social mobility, allows access to employment and to economic resources, and facilitates participation in the social and political development of the state.

Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) concluded that indigenous languages are undermined in Africa, that they are treated as if they are purely oral and "unworthy of the written heritage of constitutions", and that they are being assimilated into other language groups.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Mazrui and Marui (1998) concur that some languages are slowly disappearing as the number of their speakers dwindles. Mazrui (1998: 46) goes on to say that the Africans themselves seem to have lost the will to sustain their languages and questions whether African languages will eventually "die out" and be replaced by English. These studies support what the researcher has observed, i.e. that children and their parents prefer to communicate only in English and that this is encouraged by the teachers at school.

Desai (2001:326) maintains that unless African languages are used in the primary domains of official government business, i.e. the legislative, executive and judicial, they are not going to be regarded with pride by those who use them and will continue to have a low status. This research however goes beyond what Desai states by including education as one of the primary domains of official government business. Children ought to be taught in their mother tongues, in this case, Northern Sotho. Desai (2001:329) argues that many young children throughout Africa are still being subjected

to incomprehensible education because they cannot comprehend English, which is currently the language of education in South Africa.

According to Rosekrans and Sherris et al. (2012), English remains the language of communication and the medium of teaching in Ghana even after its independence from British rule. They maintain that children in Ghana also have limited exposure to English until they enter school. At that point, they are expected to not only understand what their teacher is trying to teach them in a language that they do not understand, but they also have to learn to read and write in this language that is not the social language of their community, their family or even the playground (Rosekrans and Sherris et al., 2012:597). The present study notes that children continue to be taught in a language that they do not understand and find difficult to master.

Chetty and Mwepu (2008) maintain that children who do not utilise their mother tongues are deprived of "the opportunity for meaningful construction within the African context that forms their life world". They add that African children are more English orientated because of their attitudes towards their African languages; that African languages are undermined because children are taught in foreign languages, i.e. English and Afrikaans; and that children communicate in these foreign languages at school and at home. Chetty and Mwepu conclude by stating that the history of English in South Africa shows that this language was initially forced upon people (Chetty and Mwepu, 2008: 336).

In her study conducted in Kenya, Graham (2010) notes that many children in Africa are routinely educated in a language that they are in the process of learning. This can be very challenging for children. The present study, together with the literature under review, has observed that parents, teachers and children have a negative attitude towards their indigenous languages. English is still exalted as a superior language that is necessary to achieve success. Graham (2010) concurs with Skutnabb-Kangas that education that includes the mother tongue will result in academic achievement and progress.

Dukhan and Cameron et al. (2016) agree that learners who are educated in their first language perform better academically than their peers who are taught in their second language. Dukhan and Cameron et al. (2016) also note that parents usually desire their children to learn English early on in their schooling.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the literature that is relevant to the present study. It sets off by acknowledging the pivotal importance of mother tongue education, i.e. if African children are taught in their mother tongues, they will perform better and be less likely to drop out of school. First, the literature of related studies worldwide was reviewed, then related studies on the African continent followed by the literature specific to South Africa, which is the focus of the present research, was reviewed.

The literature review revealed that the subject has not been adequately explored in other parts of the world as well as in Africa, and in South Africa in particular; hence the present study.

One can conclude that currently no research has investigated why children who live in areas such as Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, are not taught in one of the African languages spoken in these areas, Northern Sotho, which is their mother tongue. The review has illustrated that there is a need for Northern Sotho to be used as a medium of instruction in the schools from as early as Grade R to Grade 12.

### **3 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 of this study presented the theoretical framework and literature review. The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological approaches that were utilised in collecting and analysing data collected from the participants. Mills and Birks (2014:32) argue that methodology is the greatest determiner of how the researcher thinks and makes decisions about a study and how they prepare themselves to interact with the participants and with the data collected. The research methods used in this study will be clearly explained and data collection methods will be outlined and discussed. The qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation and data collection will be explored. Some Sociolinguistic concepts that are central to the issues to be investigated in the study will be identified, for example, the attitude of the learners and teachers towards mother tongue education. These research methods and concepts will be discussed to obtain an understanding of these issues as they apply to the situation under investigation. After conducting the research, the data will be encoded and decoded and thereafter analysed. This study aims at, inter alia, establishing what factors impede mother tongue instruction as the language of the teaching and learning (LoLT) with special reference to Northern Sotho in the South African schools, what ways could be used for Northern Sotho language to be introduced as the language of teaching in high schools, what are the ways of changing the attitudes of Northern Sotho speakers towards the use of Northern Sotho in the high schools as a medium of instruction and what are the possible ways or strategies of changing the mind-set of the Northern Sotho speakers regarding their language. The rationale of the chosen research design lies in the fact that it will take the form of a descriptive survey and experimental design because this research employed the two broad categories of research, namely the quantitative and qualitative research designs.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 28) maintain that a research design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, the design indicates the general plan, how the research is set up, what happens to the participants, and what methods of data collection are used. They maintain that the purpose of the research design is

to specify a plan for generating evidence that will be used to answer the research questions. Meaning that it is of paramount importance that the research questions lead to desirable and intended outcomes. Whereas the term 'methodology' refers to the way, in which one approaches problems and seeks answers, a research design is one of the elements that fall under methodology. There are two broad research designs namely, the quantitative research designs and the qualitative research designs. McMillan` and Schumacher (2014) assert that the quantitative research designs maximise objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and control, whereas the qualitative research designs emphasise gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. Most of the data are in the form of words rather than numbers as in a quantitative design. Each of these categories uses different methods. Methods are the vehicles and processes used to gather the data (Wisker, 2001: 67). Qualitative research designs use methods that are distinct from those used in quantitative designs (Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2014: 31).

In this study, the following goals have been set to describe the challenges that impede mother tongue education.

- To establish factors that impede mother tongue instruction to be practised in the schools.
- To establish ways of introducing the Northern Sotho language as a medium of instruction in the schools.
- To change the attitudes of Northern Sotho speakers towards the use of Northern Sotho in schools as a medium of instruction.
- To establish ways of changing the mindset of Northern Sotho speakers regarding this language.

Similarly, Bordens and Abbott (2011: 102) see the functions of research design as consisting of exploratory data collection and analysis, which is aimed at classifying behaviours within a given area of research, identifying potentially important variables, and identifying relationships between those variables and the behaviours. What the researcher has outlined are examples of using both methods. The researcher used

both the qualitative and quantitative methods for purposes of triangulation. Sometimes a quantitative study is conducted to follow up on findings from qualitative data and a third way is to design a study where qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed at the same time. Results from one method can be extended or triangulated by using another method. These two methods will now be discussed in detail.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research method**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), qualitative research designs emphasise gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. A qualitative research design has a naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Most of the data are in a form of words rather than numbers as in the quantitative design. The qualitative methods are distinct from those used in quantitative methods (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:31). In this study, the qualitative findings grew out of the interview data collection method and filling up questionnaires. Three data collection methods were used, i.e. the interview, the questionnaire and observation.

*Table 3:1 Characteristics of qualitative research*

According to Litosseliti (2010: 57), qualitative research:  
Enables us to compare relatively large numbers of things/ people by using a comparatively easy index.  
Is by its very nature inductive rather than deductive.  
Uses hypotheses infrequently.  
Choses the samples purposefully for diversity rather than randomly.  
Uses comparatively smaller samples than those in quantitative research.

#### **3.3.2 Quantitative research method**

According to Borden and Abbott (2011: 38), the quantitative method defines the relationships between its variables. They further assert that the final judgement about a stimulus will be the result of a mathematical combination of the weights and scale values assigned to each piece of information. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 189) weigh in saying that the quantitative research method uses some type of instrument or device to obtain indices that correspond to characteristics of the subjects. These numerical values are then summarised and reported as the results of the study.

The strategies adopted under the quantitative method include interviews, questionnaires, attitude scales or observational tools. Questionnaires are the most commonly used data collecting instrument. The data that is collected quantitatively tends to be numerical. The researcher therefore designs and maximises objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure and control. Quantitative research methods cannot address the full range of problems in social sciences and the data gathering instruments do not frequently answer all the questions posed by the researcher in social sciences.

*Table 3:2 Characteristics of the quantitative method:*

According to Litosseliti (2010), the quantitative method:

- Focuses on how much or how many there is/are of a particular characteristic or item.
- Analyses data using statistical methods, i.e. uses particular mathematical tools that allow us to work with numerical data.
- Inevitably involves using variables. A variable is a feature of a particular case, and a particular case can take one of a set of possible features, e.g. Gender (male and female).

The researcher therefore employed these two research methods, i.e. the qualitative and the quantitative methods of research and later triangulated the two methods. Triangulation is another technique used to ensure credibility in data sources such as questionnaires and focus group interviews that were conducted in this study. After collecting data from the respondents, the researcher compared the responses obtained from the questionnaires and the focus groups, and then corroborated the responses. To satisfy the principle of trustworthiness, the researcher ensured issues about validity and reliability in this research. All the recorded interviews were later transcribed by the researcher who ensured that the collected data were ordered by arranging them in patterns and categories. In order to ensure the findings' trustworthiness, the researcher had to use a variety of strategies and techniques. The researcher compared the information gathered from the data that were acquired from the questionnaires and focus groups and later made judgement on the information's accuracy and reliability. It is important to note that when a research instrument is reliable, then it will yield the same result when used by another researcher at a different time or the same researcher at a later point in time. Bordens and Abbott (2011: 130) support this statement by asserting that the reliability of research concerns its ability

to produce similar results when repeated measurements are made under identical conditions. They maintain that the validity of a measure is the extent to which it measures what you intend it to measure. To ensure reliability and validity, the researcher also asked the interviewees in the focus groups the same questions in the same order. This resulted in consistency and comparison. Since one interviewer conducted the interviews, this also resulted in the results being reliable, comparable and valid. All the participants were interviewed in the same classroom to ensure reliability and validity. The recorded interviews were also recorded by one researcher which also ensured consistency, efficiency and reliability of results. The views and opinions of the key respondents who were the high school learners and teachers were relevant and valid. Although the study utilised both methods, the qualitative approach used is the main approach followed.

### **3.4 Research subjects and sampling**

#### **Population**

A few people or subjects who are representative of the whole research group were chosen. Bordens and Abbott (2011) maintain that the sample can be selected from a larger group of persons, identified as the population, or can simply refer to the group of subjects from whom data are collected.

It would not be possible to interview all the Northern Sotho speaking grade twelve learners and teachers in the selected schools in South Africa. Therefore, it was imperative to choose several participants who participated in the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) concur with the above-mentioned statement by saying that the sample of the number of participants is important. They maintain that more participants are needed for credible results, yet many factors need to be considered when sampling such as the size of the sample, time and monetary terms. Data analysis will be reasonable if the group is small enough.

The choice of schools that the researcher decided to research on was based on economic reasons and easy access to the participants or subjects during break time or after school. The population sample was selected from the high schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships. The population that was used in this research project is defined as school learners and teachers. The aim was to collect data on the challenges that impede mother tongue education.

### 3.5 Sampling techniques

McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 143) define a sample as a group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected. It is a mammoth task to interview the entire population. Etikan, Musa et al. (2016) also call the sampling technique as a judgement sampling or non-random technique. They further maintain that the researcher deliberately chooses a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. This study employed a purposive sampling technique. High school learners who are Northern Sotho speakers and teachers who are also Northern Sotho speakers were sampled.

The following selection procedures were used:

The researcher conducted the study in ten (10) high schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships. The learners at these schools were chosen according to their age group (18 years and above), most of them were in grade twelve, some in grade eleven, Northern Sotho speaking, and the language was one of their learning subjects.

In the case of teachers, those who are Northern Sotho speakers and teaching this language in the school were given questionnaires directed to teachers after seeking permission from the Department of Education and the school principals.

*Table 3:3 Selection table for learners*

| Number of grade twelve learners | Number of respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|

|    |    |      |
|----|----|------|
| 40 | 40 | 100% |
|----|----|------|

Table 3.5 indicates the school learners who answered the questionnaires. Although several learners in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships take Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school, the researcher decided to choose randomly this number among the learners whose home language is Northern Sotho.

### 3.5.1 School learners

The choice of forty grade twelve and eleven learners and twenty teachers in the schools around Gauteng Province was mainly based on economic reasons, the diversity of the population of these two townships and the influence of other factors like former model C learners, private schools, school policies in and around Pretoria, etc. The schools are situated mainly in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships where the main research was conducted. The participants/ subjects were both male and female. The learners were mainly from these township areas. The choice of these schools was appropriate, convenient and strategic because, in these schools, Northern Sotho is taught as a learning subject from grade eight to twelve. The researcher interviewed the grade twelve and eleven learners who were already eighteen years and above. The learners took Northern Sotho as a learning subject and not as yet a medium of instruction hence, the researcher chose to investigate why this language is not used as such.

*Table 3:4 Selection table for teachers*

| Number of teachers | Number of respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 20                 | 20                    | 100%                      |

Table 3.6 indicates that twenty teachers completed the questionnaires. The teachers answered these questionnaires at their respective schools. The teachers were randomly selected among the teachers who are Northern Sotho speakers and are teaching this language as a teaching subject in the schools.

### **3.5.2 Teachers**

The second group that answered the questionnaires comprised twenty Northern Sotho speaking teachers who are teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject in the schools. They were requested to fill up a questionnaire that was specifically directed to teachers. Most of them have been teaching this language for many years and some are heads of department of this language. However, the researcher observed that some of the teachers who are well qualified in teaching Northern Sotho were not willing to teach this subject, instead they opted to teach Mathematics and other subjects that are taught in English. The researcher finds this very disturbing because teachers are supposed to be exemplary to the learners by showing pride in their mother tongue and not continue exalting English as a dominant language.

### **3.6 Gatekeeping and data collection**

It is inevitable that the researcher seeks permission to conduct research from all relevant authorities. Meaning, each data collection method should be preceded by the seeking of permission to do the research work. This is exactly what gatekeeping entails. The researcher obtained the Ethics clearance certificate from the University of South Africa and also sought permission to conduct the research from the Department of Education and the school principals from the identified schools. Questionnaires were compiled for both learners and teachers. Five interview questions were prepared for four focus groups of learners.

According to Aurini et al. (2016: 59) researchers are expected to treat their participants with human dignity. One central concern of research ethics is the integrity of the research activity, where an honest revelation of a study's strengths and limitations mark its integrity. Coughlan, Cronin et al. (2007: 661) maintain that autonomy infers that an individual has the right to freely decide to participate in a research study without fear of coercion and with full knowledge of what is being investigated. Letters of consent for both learners and teachers were distributed among the participants. A formal letter was sent to each school principal. The researcher made it a point to visit each school to make appointments to see the school principals before conducting the research.

On the day of conducting research, the researcher first introduced herself and explained the purpose of her visit. Thereafter, the researcher briefly went through the contents of the questionnaire and explained that the responses are voluntary because researchers are expected to treat their participants with human dignity. The researcher thanked the respondents for their time in completing the questionnaire and then collected them and kept them safe for data processing and analysis. Some of the questionnaires were collected at a later stage. The researcher carried out in-depth questions with 20 learners who were divided into four focussed groups based on structured and unstructured questions. The structured and unstructured questions gave the interviewees enough time to answer the questions in detail. Bordens and Abbott (2011: 272) state that structured interviews are interviews whereby the researcher prepares questions whereas unstructured interviews are those that have a predetermined sequence of questions. They further state that the advantages of structured interviews are that all participants are asked the same questions in the same order, which eliminates fluctuations in the data that result from differences in when, and how questions are asked. They see the advantages of an unstructured interview as being more flexible in that interviewees can provide answers in their own words; therefore, the researcher can gain information that is more complete. Picardi and Masick (2014: 158) weighed in saying that researchers often use interviews to gather information and the interviews can be conducted one-on-one or in groups depending on the situation and need. When using this research method, the researcher can use gadgets such as tape recorders.

### **3.7 Data gathering techniques**

In this study, interviews, questionnaires and observation were used for collecting data. These data gathering techniques are crucial to the ultimate outcome.

The grade twelve and eleven learners who were selected were given questionnaires directed to learners and the teachers were given questionnaires that were directed to teachers to fill in at their schools. The researcher observed that they were able to read and write.

#### **3.7.1 Interviews**

These include both individual interviews (one-on-one) as well as group interviews (including focus groups). The researcher chose this method of data collection to complement the questionnaire. Although time-consuming, this method helped the

researcher to conduct in-depth discussions with the respondents, who are the learners. The researcher conducted focused interviews with four groups of learners, five participants in each group who are Northern Sotho speaking and taking Northern Sotho as an additional language. The data collected was recorded using a digital audio recorder and later transcribed into the written form. Recording the data proved to be worthy since the researcher got the time to go through the session at her own time. It also helps not to miss what the interviewees said during the session.

The advantages of using focus groups lie in the fact that they permit the researchers to observe a large amount of interaction on a specific topic in a short time. Picardi and Masick (2014: 158) further define focus groups as groups that are strategically designed and conducted to gather group and individual responses to structured questions, multimedia clips and pictures, and products as well as to observe non-verbal cues and behaviours. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 221) concur with the above-mentioned researchers in maintaining that the interview involves direct interaction between individuals. This means that the researcher gets into direct interaction with the interviewees by either asking them interview questions or explaining questions where applicable.

In this study, the researcher targeted twenty (20) grade twelve learners who participated in the four focus group interviews as already mentioned in the previous paragraph. The main purpose was to get responses concerning the participants' views on Northern Sotho language as a LoLT and as a subject/ discipline in teaching and learning. This tool was further used to probe responses and to make a follow-up, or clarify, as well as elaborate on some of the questions to achieve specific accurate responses.

### **3.7.2 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are the commonly used data gathering instrument and consist of closed and open-ended questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 211) describe a questionnaire as the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects or participants. They state that questionnaires can use statements or questions, but in all cases, the subject is responding to something written for specific purposes. Furthermore, Picardi and Masick (2014: 149) write that a questionnaire may

incorporate several types of questions and items such as questions about attitudes, beliefs, and preferences, questions about behaviours, and fact and demographic-based questions. Therefore, questionnaires are a series of carefully planned questions, which are put on paper in order to solicit answers from the respondents. It is one of many ways information can be obtained. Through questionnaires, information is gathered from the participants and this data will later be analysed.

Wisker (2001) concurs with the above-mentioned authors by saying that questionnaires have an advantage of being counted, measured and statistically analysed. She further states that questionnaires are likely to be more open-ended, delivered in the written or oral question-and-answer form to fewer people. The researcher drafted and distributed two questionnaires: one for the learners (18 years and above.) and the other one for teachers for the purposes of collecting data. The purpose of distributing and collecting these questionnaires to both learners and teachers was to probe the participants to express their views and attitude towards mother tongue education with specific reference to Northern Sotho language and what possibly hinders education in this language. Forty questionnaires were given to the learners and twenty to the teachers. The researcher expected the respondents to fill up the questionnaires to get a deeper understanding of their views.

There are structured and less structured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires are those that have closed questions, whereas the questionnaires that are less structured have questions that are more open-ended. Mcmillan and Schumacher (2014) define the closed form of the questionnaires as those with response selections and the open forms as those that require respondents to write the answers.

According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (2014), the advantages of the questionnaire are that it:

- is relatively economical;
- has the same questions for all subjects; and
- can ensure anonymity.

Wisker (2001: 188) on the other hand states that the researcher must ensure that the questionnaire is:

- kept confidential;
- trialled, piloted and refined;

- able to ask the questions you want to pose;
- unambiguous and avoids multiple questions; and
- entirely clear in its questions and layout.

In this study, the questionnaires had been used for data collection from the learners and teachers in connection with the issue of mother tongue education in the schools. Although it is a quantitative data collection technique, in this study, it has been cast in qualitative terms. The questionnaires were compiled in English for both learners and teachers. The questions in the questionnaires were simplified for the respondents to understand. The researcher did not encounter any problems, and everything went as expected. The principals of the schools and the teachers cooperated with the researcher by allowing her to conduct the research in the schools.

### **3.7.3 Focus groups**

According to Wisker (2001: 201), focus groups can be a good way to capture the responses of a small group of people. Aurini, Heath et al. (2016:45) concur with Wisker by saying that focus group involves a small group of people with common characteristics and/ or experiences who participate in discussions about a topic, guided by a moderator. The researcher can ask to meet a group of learners several times over a certain period. The aim is to get their responses to questions asked. She further states that focus groups need firmer or cleaner ground rules, such as:

- taking some responses in turn so that one person does not dominate the group;
- prompting each other to speak;
- being polite; and
- remembering to let the other person finish what he or she is saying.

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008: 181), field research can be considered either a broad tradition of qualitative research or a method of gathering qualitative data. The essential idea is that the researcher goes into the field to observe the

phenomenon in its natural state or on-site. They further assert that mixed methods represent an excellent example of field research. The goal of fieldwork is to generate holistic and realistic descriptions or explanations and is an integral part of both participant observation and in-depth interviewing.

The researcher also conducted focus group interviews in the high schools with twenty grade twelve learners who are eighteen years and above. Trust is important between the interviewer and the interviewee for data collection. Before conducting the research, the present researcher greeted the learners who were chosen to participate and explained the questions to them so that they could understand what would be asked. Five questions were posed to the learners to answer one by one, without hearing the answers from the other learner. A tape recorder was used to record the responses so that the researcher could transcribe and analyse them at a later stage. Each interview lasted between three and six minutes depending on the learner. Learners were asked the same five questions one-on-one. The interviews were later transcribed and analysed.

#### **3.7.4 Observation**

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995: 79), observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours and objects in the social setting chosen for the study. They further maintain that it is a fundamental and critical method in all qualitative inquiry. It can also be a rich source of information. Observation enables you to capture what people actually do rather than what they say they do (Wisker, 2001:203). Trochim and Donnelly (2008) maintain that the observer does not actively query the respondent. There are two types of observation: Semi immersed observation and Non-participant observation. In all kinds of observation as a researcher you will need:

- to win the trust and confidence of those with whom you are working;
- an observation schedule that records not only actions, but also your personal responses to them, your feelings and changes;
- to keep careful field notes, during and/or after events;
- to work out how much your presence affects the events and people with whom you are involved in the observation;
- make sure you are observing for long enough, not capturing a biased snapshot of activities; and

- to keep a diary, log or journal of your experiences and responses to what you see so that you can chart changing interpretations and separate out what you see, what you seek and what you interpret (Wisker, 2001:2004).

The researcher observed that although the learners were keen to be taught in their own mother tongue, in this case, Northern Sotho, they were also doubtful if this language had a future for them after completion of their grade twelve. Another observation made was the fact that these learners could not express themselves fluently in their own mother tongue although they are Northern Sotho speakers. The language they spoke was mixed with Setswana and English.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The researcher applied for Ethical clearance which was granted from the University of South Africa. Before starting with the interviews, the researcher requested permission from the Department of Education and heads of schools (Principals) in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships respectively to conduct research and make the necessary arrangements for the completion of the survey. The researcher made it a point to visit each school to make appointments with the school principals before conducting the study. Letters of consent for both learners and teachers were distributed among the participants.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

The technique that was used for the analysis of data collected proved crucial to the study's outcome. Aurini et al. (2016:182) maintain that the following should be taken into consideration for data analysis in qualitative research:

- Labelling: Transcripts, field notes, pictures or any other qualitative material should be organised and properly labelled.
- Coding: It is not possible to be able to code all the data you have collected. Coding is the process of marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or category names.
- Preparing documents: If you have transcripts or field notes, you will need to group text that represents a particular topic or line of discussion. Line spaces are used to separate stanzas to represent a new topic or direction.

- Formatting: Some programs handle documents saved on rich text; others can import materials in a variety of formats.
- To hard copy or not: Some researchers find it helpful to have a hard copy handy. As you code you can use the hard copy as a reference guide and refer to your pre-coding notes. All proceedings of the interview sessions were recorded and put on paper for easy analysis. The recording of data was also helpful since the researcher got the time to go over the sessions during her own time.

### 3.10 Conceptualisation of the frequency tables

#### 3.10.1 Below are the frequency tables derived from the learners' responses and teachers' responses:

#### 3.10.2 Frequency tables from learners' responses

Biographical questions were amongst the 26 items of the questionnaires directed to learners. Some of the questions from the questionnaire are discussed below. The researcher discussed some of the questions in pairs mainly because they had common elements, while other questions would be discussed individually.

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 aimed at establishing the socio-economic background of the learner's respondents.

#### Question 1: Gender

The question on the gender of the learner respondents allowed the researcher to ascertain the gender composition of the research participants who answered the questionnaire.

Table 3:5 Distribution of the learner respondents by gender

|       |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Female | 28        | 70.0    | 70.0          | 70.0               |
|       | Male   | 12        | 30.0    | 30.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total  | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## Question 2: Age

This question aimed at gathering the biographical information concerning the age group of the respondents who are Northern Sotho speakers and also taking Northern Sotho as a learning subject. The information gathered from the respondents was important in ascertaining whether the learners would prefer to be taught in their own mother tongue in order to understand their subjects better. Table 3.6 below shows the distribution of the learner respondents by age.

Table 3:6 Distribution of the learner respondents by age

|                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid           | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| (18 - 20) years | 38        | 95.0    | 95.0          | 97.5               |
| (20 - 25) years | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 100.0              |
| Total           | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## Question 3:

### Grade

This question gathered the information concerning the grades of the learners. The researcher sampled participants who were 18 years and above. In Atteridgeville and Mamelodi Government High schools, there are several learners who are 18 years and above in both grades eleven and twelve. This information was important in ensuring that the right age group participated since they were found in both these grades. The ages of the learners ranged from 18 years to 25 years.

Table 3:7 Distribution of the learner respondents by grade

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Grade 11 | 5         | 12.5    | 12.5          | 12.5               |

|          |    |       |       |       |
|----------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Grade 12 | 35 | 87.5  | 87.5  | 100.0 |
| Total    | 40 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

**Question 4:** Where do you reside?

This question was intended to gather information on the learners' residents. Learners in townships such as Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, tend to prefer speaking in their mother tongue language than learners in the suburban areas. Children whose languages are African languages who live in the latter areas prefer to speak more English than their own mother tongues.

*Table 3:8 The respondents' places of residence*

|          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid    | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| Suburb   | 4         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 12.5               |
| Township | 35        | 87.5    | 87.5          | 100.0              |
| Total    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 5:** Which language do you speak at home?

This question provided the researcher with information pertaining to the language that the questionnaire respondents speak at home. This information was important to show the distribution and the representation of different language speakers in the township areas such as Atteridgeville and Mamelodi. The responses obtained have been reduced to the frequency table below.

*Table 3:9 The language that the learner respondents speak at home*

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid English | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |

|                |    |       |       |       |
|----------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Isizulu        | 3  | 7.5   | 7.5   | 12.5  |
| Northern Sotho | 31 | 77.5  | 77.5  | 90.0  |
| Setswana       | 1  | 2.5   | 2.5   | 92.5  |
| Xitsonga       | 3  | 7.5   | 7.5   | 100.0 |
| Total          | 40 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

**Question 6:** What is the language mostly spoken in your neighbourhood?

This question allowed the researcher to gather general information on the language(s) spoken in the respondents' neighbourhood. The information is important in determining the language or languages spoken in their neighbourhoods since the data can be used to ascertain the language mostly spoken.

*Table 3:10 Shows the language mostly spoken in the respondents' neighbourhood*

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English        | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 7.5                |
|       | Northern Sotho | 30        | 75.0    | 75.0          | 82.5               |
|       | Other          | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 87.5               |
|       | Setswana       | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 95.0               |
|       | Xitsonga       | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 7:** Which languages are spoken at your school?

This question provided the researcher with the information pertaining to the language mostly spoken at schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas by the questionnaire

respondents. This information was important to determine the percentage of respondents speaking the Northern Sotho language.

Table 3:11 Shows the language that is spoken at school: Northern Sotho

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No             | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 7.5                |
|       | Northern Sotho | 37        | 92.5    | 92.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

### **Setswana**

The Setswana language is also widely spoken in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi schools, hence there is a lot of code-mixing. This question intended to find out the general knowledge if there are other languages spoken at school besides Northern Sotho. This helped the researcher to be able to weigh and conclude which mother tongue can then be used as a medium of instruction.

Table 3:12 : Setswana

|       |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No       | 27        | 67.5    | 67.5          | 67.5               |
|       | Setswana | 13        | 32.5    | 32.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## IsiZulu

This question was intended in finding out how many respondents speak the isiZulu language. IsiZulu is another language widely spoken in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships.

Table 3:13 IsiZulu

|       |         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | isiZulu | 24        | 60.0    | 60.0          | 60.0               |
|       | No      | 16        | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total   | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## English

This question aimed at determining the number of questionnaire respondents who speak the English language at school. The English language is still regarded as an elite language and a language that one can communicate with internationally.

Table 3:14 English

|       |         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English | 28        | 70.0    | 70.0          | 70.0               |
|       | No      | 12        | 30.0    | 30.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total   | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

## Other languages

This question aimed at determining which questionnaire respondents use other languages other than the ones mentioned above.

Table 3:15 Other languages

|       |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid<br>Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | No       | 37        | 92.5    | 92.5             | 92.5                  |
|       | Xitsonga | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5              | 100.0                 |
|       | Total    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0            |                       |

**Question 8:** Which language do you prefer to speak at school? (a) To your peers and (b) to your teachers?

Question 8(a) was intended to find out the language preference of the respondents to their peers. The learner respondents said that they find it easy to communicate with their peers in Northern Sotho since they have been speaking this language since they were young. Question 8(b) on the other hand, was intended to ascertain the respondents' language preference when speaking to their teachers at school. The views expressed by the learner respondents are shown in Table 3.16 below. However, the present researcher observed that although the learner respondents prefer to communicate with their teachers in English, both parties were not proficient enough in this language. The responses obtained have been reduced to frequency tables below.

Table 3:16 The language preference of the respondents when speaking to their peers at school

|       |                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid<br>Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | English           | 18        | 45.0    | 45.0             | 45.0                  |
|       | Northern<br>Sotho | 20        | 50.0    | 50.0             | 95.0                  |
|       | Other             | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5              | 97.5                  |

|          |    |       |       |       |
|----------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Setswana | 1  | 2.5   | 2.5   | 100.0 |
| Total    | 40 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

Table 3:17 The language preference of the respondents when speaking to their teachers at school

|       |                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English                  | 27        | 67.5    | 67.5          | 67.5               |
|       | Northern Sotho           | 8         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 87.5               |
|       | Northern Sotho & English | 4         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 97.5               |
|       | Setswana                 | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 100.0              |
|       | Total                    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 9:** Why do you prefer to speak the chosen language?

Question 9 was intended to find out which language the respondents prefer to speak at school. It is clear from their responses that although they prefer to be taught in their own mother tongue, they still prefer to speak in English under the encouragement of both their teachers and parents. 60% of the respondents prefer to speak in Northern Sotho while 35% prefer to speak in English.

**Question 10:** Questions 10 and 11 are almost similar. Question 11 is a follow up on question 10. The questions are: In which language of teaching were you taught from grade 1-3? And in which language of teaching were you taught from grade 4 to the current grade?

Question 10 was intended to find out the respondents' language of instruction from grade 1-3. Learners across South Africa are still taught in the medium of English until they complete grade 12 unlike the Afrikaans speaking learners who are taught in their mother tongue from grade 1-12. Those learners who are taught in Northern Sotho from grade 1-3 are at a disadvantage because they find it difficult to readjust from this language to English when they enter grade 4. Hence the researcher vehemently maintains that learners should be taught in Northern Sotho from grade 1-12 in order

to eradicate dropout rate and improving passing rates in their subjects. Question 11 allowed the researcher to gather information about the language that the respondents were taught from grade 4 to the current grade. This information is important in that, some of the respondents were taught in their mother tongue from grade 1-3 as mentioned previously and then switched to the English medium of instruction when they entered grade 4. Learners find it very hard to grasp the new concepts in foreign languages.

Table 3:18 The language of teaching in which the respondents were taught from grade 1-3

|                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Afrikaans          | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| English                  | 19        | 47.5    | 47.5          | 50.0               |
| Isizulu                  | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 52.5               |
| Northern Sotho           | 15        | 37.5    | 37.5          | 90.0               |
| Northern Sotho & English | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 97.5               |
| Other                    | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 100.0              |
| Total                    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:19 The language of teaching in which the respondents were taught from grade 4 to the current grade

|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|  |           |         |               |                    |

|       |                          |    |       |       |       |
|-------|--------------------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Valid | Afrikaans                | 1  | 2.5   | 2.5   | 2.5   |
|       | English                  | 27 | 67.5  | 67.5  | 70.0  |
|       | Isizulu                  | 1  | 2.5   | 2.5   | 72.5  |
|       | Northern Sotho           | 7  | 17.5  | 17.5  | 90.0  |
|       | Northern Sotho & English | 4  | 10.0  | 10.0  | 100.0 |
|       | Total                    | 40 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

**Question 12:** Do you understand the language currently used for teaching and learning? Questions 12 and 13 are combined.

This question intended to ascertain if the respondents understood the language used for teaching and learning (LoLT). It is apparent from Table 3.19 below that the respondents understood the current medium of instruction which is English. There seems to be no correlation between question 12 and question 21 below. According to Table 3.19, a decisive majority (97.5%) said that they understood the language that is presently used for teaching and learning (LoLT) whereas Table 3 reflects that only 40% of the learner respondents said that they were not proficient enough in the English language. The irony of it all is that even if the learner and teacher respondents are still not competent in this language, it is still highly preferred.

Table 3:20 : Whether the learner respondents understand the language currently used for teaching and learning

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No    | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
|       | Yes   | 39        | 97.5    | 97.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Questions 14 and 15: Which language of teaching and learning do you prefer and give reasons for your preference?**

Question 14 was intended to ascertain the respondents' language of teaching and learning preference. For decades and to date in South Africa, English and Afrikaans are the only mediums of instructions with Afrikaans gradually fading away. Some respondents said that they preferred the English language because it is international, i.e. they will be understood globally when using this language. They argue that the use of the English language brings linguistic communities together. However, the present researcher observed that the learners and their teachers are not proficient in the English language.

*Table 3:21 The language of teaching and learning that the respondents prefer*

|                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid English            | 29        | 72.5    | 72.5          | 72.5               |
| English & Northern Sotho | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 77.5               |
| Northern Sotho           | 6         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 92.5               |
| Xitsonga                 | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 100.0              |
| Total                    | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 16:** Do your parents encourage you to communicate in Northern Sotho or English mostly?

Question 16 was aimed at establishing whether the respondents' parents encourage them to communicate in Northern Sotho or English mostly. The respondents argued that their parents are happier if they communicate with them in Northern Sotho since it is their mother tongue than English. According to Table 3.22 below, 50% said that their parents want them to communicate with them in Northern Sotho, 47.5% said in English while only one respondent said in both languages.

Table 3:22 : Do your parents encourage you to communicate in Northern Sotho or English mostly?

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid both     | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| English        | 19        | 47.5    | 47.5          | 50.0               |
| Northern Sotho | 20        | 50.0    | 50.0          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 17: What is your attitude towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language?**

This question allowed the present researcher to ascertain the attitude of the respondents towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language. The information regarding the attitude of the respondents towards their mother tongue is shown in Table 3.23 below. It is encouraging to note that 62.5% of the learner respondents have a positive attitude towards their own mother tongue while a disappointing 35% have a negative attitude towards their own language.

Table 3:23 The attitude of the learner respondents towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid 4           | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| Negative attitude | 14        | 35.0    | 35.0          | 37.5               |
| Positive attitude | 25        | 62.5    | 62.5          | 100.0              |
| Total             | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Questions 18, 19 & 20: Are African languages, Northern Sotho in particular important to the new generation?**

Question 18 was intended to find out from the learner respondents if they think African languages, Northern Sotho, in particular, is important to the new generation. In South Africa, we have 11 official languages but nine African languages. The indigenous

African languages are as follows: isiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, SiSwati, XiTsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu. The two other languages are English and Afrikaans. The respondents said that they do not think that African Languages are important to the new generation based on the fact that they (the new generation) are more interested in speaking in English than their own mother tongues.

Table 3:24 The views of the learner respondents if they think that African Languages, Northern Sotho, in particular, are important for the new generation

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No    | 23        | 57.5    | 57.5          | 57.5               |
|       | Yes   | 17        | 42.5    | 42.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 21: What is your level of proficiency in the following languages? (Northern Sotho, English and Afrikaans).**

Question 21 was aimed at gathering the respondents' level of proficiency in Northern Sotho, English and Afrikaans. The latter languages are still the main languages used as mediums of instruction in the schools in South Africa.

Table 3:25 The level of proficiency of the learner respondents in Northern Sotho

|       |           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid |           | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
|       | Good      | 14        | 35.0    | 35.0          | 40.0               |
|       | Poor      | 8         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 60.0               |
|       | Very Good | 16        | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total     | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:26 The level of proficiency of the learner respondents in English

|           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid     | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Good      | 21        | 52.5    | 52.5          | 57.5               |
| Poor      | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 60.0               |
| Very Good | 16        | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
| Total     | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:27 The level of proficiency of the learner respondents in Afrikaans

|       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Good  | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 12.5               |
| None  | 18        | 45.0    | 45.0          | 57.5               |
| Poor  | 17        | 42.5    | 42.5          | 100.0              |
| Total | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 22: In which language do you speak to the following people? Indicate language where applicable: father, mother, siblings, grandparents, friends at school and friends in your neighbourhood.**

Question 22 was aimed at establishing the language of communication of the respondents with their fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents, friends at school and friends in their neighbourhood. Northern Sotho is the most common language used, with 62.5% of the respondents using it to speak to their fathers, 75% with their mothers, 60% with their siblings, 85% with their grandparents, 65% with their friends at school

and 67% with their neighbourhood friends. The distribution of the languages spoken by the respondents to speak to their families and friends is reflected in the tables below.

Table 3:28 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their fathers

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid          | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| English        | 8         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 22.5               |
| Northern Sotho | 25        | 62.5    | 62.5          | 85.0               |
| Other          | 5         | 12.5    | 12.5          | 97.5               |
| Xitsonga       | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 100.0              |
| Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:29 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their mothers

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid English  | 5         | 12.5    | 12.5          | 12.5               |
| Northern Sotho | 30        | 75.0    | 75.0          | 87.5               |
| Other          | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 95.0               |
| Xitsonga       | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 97.5               |
| IsiZulu        | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 100.0              |
| Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:30 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their siblings

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English        | 13        | 32.5    | 32.5          | 32.5               |
|       | Northern Sotho | 24        | 60.0    | 60.0          | 92.5               |
|       | Other          | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:31 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their grandparents

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English        | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
|       | IsiNdebele     | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 7.5                |
|       | Northern Sotho | 34        | 85.0    | 85.0          | 92.5               |
|       | Other          | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:32 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their friends at school

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English        | 14        | 35.0    | 35.0          | 35.0               |
|       | Northern Sotho | 26        | 65.0    | 65.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:33 The distribution of languages that are used by the respondents when speaking to their friends in their neighbourhood

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid          | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 2.5                |
| English        | 10        | 25.0    | 25.0          | 27.5               |
| Northern Sotho | 27        | 67.5    | 67.5          | 95.0               |
| Other          | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 100.0              |
| Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 23: State which type of school you are attending/attended. Tick next to the relevant box.**

Question 23 was intended to find out the type of school that is attended by the respondents. 100% of the learner respondents were attending the government public schools. This is because the researcher only conducted the research in government schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships.

Table 3:34 The type of school that is attended by the respondents

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Government school | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         | 100.0              |

**Question 24: Are you studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school?**

Question 24 intended to get the information from the respondents if they are studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school. Table 3.35 below demonstrates that most of the learners in these schools (77.5%) take Northern Sotho as a learning subject whereas 22.5 said no.

Table 3:35 : Whether the respondents are taking Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school or not

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No    | 9         | 22.5    | 22.5          | 22.5               |
|       | Yes   | 31        | 77.5    | 77.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 25: Which language are you studying as the first additional language at school?**

The objective of question 25 was to get the information about the language which the respondents are studying as the first additional language at school. However, it must be noted that some respondents might be confusing the first additional language with home language. This was a pertinent observation.

Table 3:36 The language that the respondents are studying as the first additional language

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | English        | 30        | 75.0    | 75.0          | 75.0               |
|       | French         | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 80.0               |
|       | Northern Sotho | 5         | 12.5    | 12.5          | 92.5               |
|       | Xitsonga       | 3         | 7.5     | 7.5           | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 26: If you had a choice, would you have chosen to study the first additional language prescribed at school?**

The responses in question 26 demonstrated that if the respondents had a choice, they would still stick to the language that is prescribed at school as the first additional language. Table 3.37 below reveals the responses.

Table 3:37 The respondents' responses if they would have chosen to study the first additional language prescribed at school

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | No    | 9         | 22.5    | 22.5          | 22.5               |
|       | Yes   | 31        | 77.5    | 77.5          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

### 3.10.3 : Frequency Tables for teacher respondents

#### Question 1: Gender

The question on the gender of the teacher respondents allowed the present researcher to ascertain the gender composition of the research participants. Table 3.38 below shows the gender of the participants.

Table 3:38 The gender of the teacher respondents

|       |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Female | 16        | 80.0    | 80.0          | 80.0               |
|       | Male   | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total  | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

#### Question 2: Age range in years:

21-25rs\_26-30 yrs\_31-40 yrs\_41-50 yrs\_51 and above\_

The question on the age of the teachers allowed the researcher to ascertain the age group of the research participants in the questionnaire instrument. The information regarding the age of the participants was important in order to establish as to whether the teachers are from a generation where Afrikaans was almost enforced by the apartheid government in South Africa as a medium of instruction or teachers of the younger generation.

Table 3:39 The age range in years of the teacher respondents

|                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid           | 2         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 10.0               |
| (31 - 40 years) | 3         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 25.0               |
| (41 -50 years)  | 9         | 45.0    | 45.0          | 70.0               |
| (51 and above)  | 6         | 30.0    | 30.0          | 100.0              |
| Total           | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

### Question 3: Race

This question provided the researcher with information pertaining to the race of the questionnaire respondents. The information was important to show the race of the respondents who were 100% of African descent (Black) since in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi schools the teachers are all from the African race. The respondents' mother tongue was Northern Sotho and most of them taught Northern Sotho as a learning subject.

Table 3:40 The race distribution of the teacher respondents

|             | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Black | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         | 100.0              |

### Question 4: Which grade are you teaching?

Question 4 was intended to find out the grades in which the respondents were teaching in the schools. A significant number of the respondents were teaching grade 12 (55%), which made sense since the learner respondents were also mostly grade twelves.

Table 3:41 The grade which the teacher respondents are teaching

|          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid    | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Grade 10 | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 10.0               |
| Grade 11 | 2         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 20.0               |
| Grade 12 | 11        | 55.0    | 55.0          | 75.0               |
| Grade 8  | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 95.0               |
| Grade 9  | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 100.0              |
| Total    | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 5: What is your experience in the subject (that the respondent is teaching)? Grade the subjects that you are teaching from 1-5.**

Question 5 intended to gather the teaching experience that the teachers have in their respective teaching subjects. The different subjects that were stated by the respondents were: Northern Sotho, English, Life Orientation, Mathematics, History, Business Studies, Economics, Home Economics and Geography.

0-5yrs\_6-10 yrs\_11-15 yrs\_16-20 yrs\_21 and more

Table 3:42The respondents' experience in their teaching subjects

|                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid           | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| (0 - 5 years)   | 3         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 20.0               |
| (11 - 15 years) | 2         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 30.0               |
| (16 - 20 years) | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 50.0               |
| (21 and above)  | 7         | 35.0    | 35.0          | 85.0               |

|                |    |       |       |       |
|----------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| (6 - 10 years) | 3  | 15.0  | 15.0  | 100.0 |
| Total          | 20 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |

**Questions 6, 7 and 8: Which language do you speak, which language do you prefer speaking and why do you prefer speaking that language?**

Questions 6, 7 and 8 were mainly focused on the language that is spoken and preferred by the respondents. As the researcher stated before, the respondents who were interviewed were predominantly Northern Sotho speakers who taught this language in the schools. According to Table 3.44, 60% of the respondents preferred to speak in Northern Sotho. The respondents also supplied the reasons for preferring a particular language which is reflected in Table 3.43. *Table 3:43 The language that is spoken by the respondents*

|   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Northern Sotho                        | 11        | 55.0    | 55.0          | 55.0               |
| Northern Sotho & English                    | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 75.0               |
| Northern Sotho, isiZulu & English           | 3         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 90.0               |
| Northern Sotho, isiZulu, Setswana & English | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 95.0               |
| Other                                       | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 100.0              |
| Total                                       | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:44 The language preference of the respondents

|                          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid English            | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Northern Sotho           | 12        | 60.0    | 60.0          | 65.0               |
| Northern Sotho & isiZulu | 7         | 35.0    | 35.0          | 100.0              |
| Total                    | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 3:45 The reasons why the respondents prefer that language

|   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid I am more comfortable with the language | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| I learnt the language at school               | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 10.0               |
| I'm proud of it                               | 2         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 20.0               |
| It's easy to speak                            | 6         | 30.0    | 30.0          | 50.0               |
| It's my mother tongue                         | 10        | 50.0    | 50.0          | 100.0              |
| Total   | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 9: How competent are you in this language? Rate yourself 1-5.**

Question 9 aimed at probing the teacher respondents' competence in their chosen languages from question 7 above. It is common sense to note that the preferred language will be the language that a person is competent in.

Table 3:46 The respondents' competence in their language of choice. Rate from 1-5.

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1     | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
|       | 3     | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 10.0               |
|       | 4     | 8         | 40.0    | 40.0          | 50.0               |
|       | 5     | 10        | 50.0    | 50.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 10: Do you think that there has been any improvement in the use of your main language with the introduction of the new constitution?**

Question 10 gave the respondents a chance to put forward their thoughts as to whether there has been any improvement in the use of their language with the introduction of the new constitution. According to Table 3.47 below, there has been a great improvement in the use of mother tongues in South Africa compared to the past years.

Table 3:47 Do you think there has been any improvement in the use of your language with the introduction of the new constitution?

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid |       | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
|       | No    | 6         | 30.0    | 30.0          | 35.0               |
|       | Yes   | 13        | 65.0    | 65.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 11: What is your attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?**

Question 11 was intended to investigate the teacher respondents' attitude towards

Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching. Compared to the learner respondents (62.5%) who said that their attitude was positive towards Northern Sotho, an impressive percentage (85%) of the teacher respondents have a positive attitude towards this language.

Table 3:48 The attitude of the teacher respondents towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Average | 3         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 15.0               |
| Positive      | 17        | 85.0    | 85.0          | 100.0              |
| Total         | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 12: What is the attitude of other teachers towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?**

Question 12 was aimed at probing the respondents about the attitude of the other teachers towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching. It is noteworthy that 45% of these teachers have a positive attitude towards this language. The responses obtained have been reduced to a frequency table. The results are reflected in Table 3.49.

Table 3:49 The attitude of other teachers towards Northern Sotho as a LoLT

|          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid    | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Average  | 6         | 30.0    | 30.0          | 35.0               |
| Negative | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 55.0               |
| Positive | 9         | 45.0    | 45.0          | 100.0              |
| Total    | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 13 & 14: What is the attitude of the learners towards Northern Sotho**

**as a subject of LoLT? Explain your answer.**

Question 13 was aimed at finding out the attitude of the learners towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching. There seems to be no correlation between the responses for learners' attitudes in Table 3.23 which shows that 62.5% were positive and the responses in Table 3.50 which show that 40% of the learners were positive towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching.

*Table 3:50 The attitude of learners towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching*

|          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid    | 1         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Average  | 7         | 35.0    | 35.0          | 40.0               |
| Negative | 4         | 20.0    | 20.0          | 60.0               |
| Positive | 8         | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
| Total    | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 15: Do you think Northern Sotho is taken seriously as a language?**

Question 15 was aimed at finding out if Northern Sotho like other African languages was taken seriously as a language like English and Afrikaans.

**Questions 16, 20, 21 and 22: Do you foresee Northern Sotho being used as a medium of instruction in the future? Do you foresee the importance of African languages (Northern Sotho in particular) for the new generation?**

This question was aimed at probing respondents if they foresee Northern Sotho being used as a medium of instruction in the future. Some of the learner and teacher respondents presume that this language may not have a future because of the hegemony of the English language and some think that it does have a future since now the African languages have been included in the SA Constitution. The responses obtained have been reduced to the frequency table below. The results are reflected in Table 3.51.

Table 3:51 Do you foresee Northern Sotho being used as a medium of instruction in the future?

|       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 3         | 15.0    | 15.0          | 15.0               |
| No    | 9         | 45.0    | 45.0          | 60.0               |
| Yes   | 8         | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
| Total | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Questions 17 and 18: What are the benefits of using mother tongue (Northern Sotho specifically) as a language of instruction? And do learners show interest in studying Northern Sotho and following careers that are related to this subject in Tertiary institutions?**

These two questions were aimed at establishing to what extent the respondents think are the benefits of mother tongue education and if learners show interest in taking Northern Sotho as a subject at school and following careers that are related to this subject in the universities. Most of the learners think that this language does not have a future, unlike English which is a language of commerce and industry. They regard this language as a language that will end here in South Africa and cannot go beyond the borders.

**Question 19: If learners were taught content subjects in Northern Sotho, do you think that they will be competent enough in their performance?**

The purpose of question 19 was to follow up on question 16 in order to determine if the learners can perform better if they can be taught in their own mother tongue in the future.

**Question 23: What language do you use to communicate with your learners in the classroom and sports grounds?**

Question 23 was intended to determine the language used by the teacher respondents to communicate with their learners in the classroom and sports grounds. This question was important in order to see if the teachers themselves take the Northern Sotho language seriously. If the learners hear the teachers taking pride in their mother

tongue, they will also follow.

Table 3:52 The language which the respondents use to communicate with their learners in the classroom and sports grounds

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Northern Sotho | 13        | 65.0    | 65.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 20        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |
| Valid | English        | 7         | 35.0    | 35.0          | 35.0               |

**Question 24: How competent are the learners in the English speaking language and reading? Rate 1-5.**

This question was aimed at revealing the competence level of the learners in the English language in speaking and reading. It is important to determine the level of the learners' competence in the English language because it is still their medium of instruction to date in South Africa. Yet the majority of these learners are not competent enough to learn in this language.

Table 3:53 The learners' competence in the English language, in speaking and reading

|           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid     | 2         | 5.0     | 5.0           | 5.0                |
| Good      | 21        | 52.5    | 52.5          | 57.5               |
| Poor      | 1         | 2.5     | 2.5           | 60.0               |
| Very Good | 16        | 40.0    | 40.0          | 100.0              |
| Total     | 40        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Question 25: How competent are the learners in Northern Sotho language in speaking and reading? Rate 1-5.**

Question 25 was intended to get information about the learners' competence level in the Northern Sotho language in speaking and reading. This question is important because this language is the learners' mother tongue and they ought to excel in it.



Question 27 was intended to establish how the teacher respondents feel about the concept of mother tongue education. Presently as mentioned in the previous pages, children in South Africa are still taught in the medium of English and Afrikaans.

### 3.11 Presentation and analysis of data from focus group interviews

Table 3:56 Distribution of the focus group discussion participants by gender

| Group                        | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------------------|--------|------|-------|
| Focus Group 1                | 4      | 1    | 5     |
| Focus Group 2                | 3      | 2    | 5     |
| Focus Group 3                | 3      | 2    | 5     |
| Focus Group 4                | 4      | 1    | 5     |
| Total number of participants | 14     | 6    | 20    |

#### **The questions were discussed individually as follows:**

**Question 1: Do you wish to be taught all content subjects in the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English?**

The interviewees who gave the yes answers had this to say:

- *Yes. Because you see at home we do not speak English. If children can be taught in Northern Sotho things can be simple and learners can pass very well at the schools.*
- *Yes. I think Northern Sotho must be included in the learners' subjects because English is not their language. They were not raised speaking English and this language is not their mother tongue.*

- Yes, Northern Sotho is the mother tongue language that we were speaking at home as we grew. So it will be easy if they can teach us in this language.
- Yes, because Northern Sotho is the language that we understand and almost use this language everywhere. When we speak to the people, we are not used to speaking with them in English.
- Yes, because we grew up speaking this language, so back at our homes we speak this language and when we get to school and they teach in English, we cannot understand because we grew up speaking 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho. So my answer is yes so that we can be taught all subjects in 'Sepedi' so we can understand better and pass because we grew up speaking this language.
- Yes, because it seems most children in the schools perform better in the subject 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho than in other subjects, so I suggest that they can also teach other subjects in Sepedi so that we can understand them better. So, I think the reason why they are mostly passing this subject is because it's Sepedi.
- Yes, because I would like to understand, when they teach us in English we cannot understand. So I think that I will understand if I am taught in Northern Sotho.
- Yes, because we understand Northern Sotho and it is our mother tongue. We understand it very well more than other languages like English, Afrikaans and they teach it at school.
- Yes, I do. Because I will enjoy being taught all content subjects in 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho because I enjoy this language very much compared to English.
- Yes, I wish to be taught all content subjects in 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho but then I have a problem because if I can be taught in 'Sepedi' if I go to other countries, you find that it becomes difficult for me to communicate with other people from these countries. Even the job that I will be doing, I will find it difficult to do presentations in Sepedi. My Sepedi will just end here.
- Yes, because it enables better understanding and you get to explore all different subjects in different languages which gives a sense of belonging because we all come from different backgrounds where we speak different languages. It will be better if subjects can be taught in languages that we understand better.

- *Yes, because in most cases when we get our examination questions, we are unable to answer, we cannot approach them the way they present them to us. Yes, it is my wish to be taught in the medium of Northern Sotho.*
- *Yes, because I understand my language better than English. So sometimes I get confused when I do many subjects in English.*

The positive responses from the majority of learners showed that Northern Sotho speaking learners desire to be taught in their own mother tongue language. The negative responses were received from a few interviewees.

**Question 2: Does the language, Northern Sotho have value and a future? Discuss.**

- *Not really. What if I get a scholarship in another country and in that country, there is no 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho. There is no way in which you can be taught in Northern Sotho that you are speaking. Yes, it has a future, but I do not think that the future generation must be taught in this language.*
- *Yes, I say that it has value because it is their mother tongue. I do not think that Northern Sotho has a future.*
- *Yes, I think it has value because the future children will know their roots and where they come from. They must know the language and embrace it.*
- *It has value because as a human being you must know the language that is spoken at home so that you can understand when they are speaking to you. I do not think that Northern Sotho has a future because almost every school is using English and Afrikaans because African languages are not important in schools.*
- *Yes, it has value and a future because it reminds you of your culture and where you come from. It is of no use speaking English that you do not even understand, and you did not grow up speaking this language.*
- *No, it has no value. Suppose in the future you get a successful job that makes you travel all around the world. You are bound to communicate in English so that other people can understand you.*

- *No, it has no value. I think in future Northern Sotho will lead us astray, like when we meet with other people from other countries, in Science expos, you will find that you understand things more in Sepedi and you will now get lost. But I think it has a future because we can understand better in this language.*
- *Yes, it has value and a future. Many children will be able to understand better and pass their subjects. The children will not struggle to understand the examination question papers.*
- *Yes, it has value and a future. It has value and a future because it reminds people not to forget about their tradition and where they come from. It will also help the next generation; they will not forget where their parents come from and that their language is valuable.*
- *Yes, it has a future because the next generation is coming, who must also know their roots and understand their language and not forget their culture.*
- *Yes, I think it has a future. There are provinces like Limpopo where the Northern Sotho language is mostly spoken so it has value and a future.*
- *Yes, it has value and a future. It is our mother tongue and we understand it much better. English has much difficult terms and there are many children here at school who do not know English well. So I believe Northern Sotho has a future.*
- *Yes. Take provinces like Limpopo for example, I believe the language 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho originate from there. English cannot beat Sepedi in this province because the latter language is predominantly used here. People in this province love their language, 'learn in this language', I am also very proud of this language even my future generation must know this language.*
- *Yes, according to me, it has value, especially for the next generation. For them to know their grounds, their roots where they come from and how to communicate with their ancestors. I do not think that Northern Sotho has a future, it can be there for a moment.*
- *Yes, it does have a value and a future. You have to know your roots and where you come from.*
- *According to me, it has no value and future because the youth have now lost their traditions. They are more engaged with English and they do not want to learn their own language.*

- *Yes, I think it does have value and a future but not like English. Because English has terminologies that Northern Sotho does not have. Take, for example, Physical science has terminologies that Northern Sotho does not have so we are bound to do subjects like these in English.*
- *Yes, it has value and it has a future. Using our mother tongue Northern Sotho, we get to learn many things in our own language than when we learn in the English language. But at school we learn in the English language.*
- *No, Northern Sotho does not have value and a future because the youth of today are learning English and Afrikaans more than their own language, Northern Sotho.*
- *Yes, it does have value and future. If one has a positive attitude towards Northern Sotho, then one can go far with it. Northern Sotho is also one of the languages that learners prefer to study in because they understand it better and it is their mother tongue and they find it easier.*

There is an overwhelmingly positive response from respondents about the value and future of Northern Sotho. The respondents cited various reasons in support of their positive responses. However, there are few respondents who said that Northern Sotho has no value and does not have a future.

**Question 3: Discuss the issue of language rights and language equality.**

- *Northern Sotho is not taught in most Private schools. So, based on this fact I think Northern Sotho has no rights.*
- *No, it does not have equal rights with other languages. Because in most cases English is used for so many things.*
- *No, I do not think that Northern Sotho is equal to other languages because we are currently learning all subjects in English. Northern Sotho is only a learning language.*
- *I will just say that it has rights on the basis that if we are still using it and it must continue like that, it cannot just stop like in the previous generation. But comparing it*

*to English, I do not think that it's equal to this language. Northern Sotho is definitely not equal to English and Afrikaans.*

- *I think that Northern Sotho does not have equal rights because in most places where one goes, they will not understand your language as a Northern Sotho speaker. But English is spoken and understood everywhere. Northern Sotho is not equal to English and Afrikaans.*
- *Yes, it has language rights because there are a lot of people who speak Northern Sotho and are not arrested for speaking this language. It is not a language that is banned. But I do not think that it is equal to English and Afrikaans because when it comes to tests and examinations, they are set in these languages only.*
- *Yes, I think Northern Sotho too has rights because it is also a South African language in its own rights. But I do not think it is equal to languages like English because currently we are forced to be taught in English and there are other schools where they are taught in Afrikaans but they cannot teach us in Northern Sotho even though we are 'Sepedi' speakers. So, I think it is not equal.*
- *I do not think Northern Sotho has rights. We are still taught most subjects in English and we are taught Northern Sotho as a learning subject. It is also not equal to other languages and subjects, English still predominates. If you ask a question maybe in a subject like Social Science, you must present the question in English which becomes difficult for us. That is why I am saying that it is not equal to other languages.*
- *No, I do not think that it has rights and is equal to foreign languages.*
- *No, I do not think it is equal because there are foreigners who come to our country. It is not possible that we can communicate with them in our language. We must communicate with them in English. English is a global language.*
- *Yes, Northern Sotho has rights, but it is not equal to English and Afrikaans.*
- *Yes, I believe that Northern Sotho has rights and it is equal to other languages.*
- *Yes, I think that Northern Sotho has rights, but these rights are violated because examination questions come in the English language and can also be translated in Afrikaans. We never find Physics questions in Northern Sotho, why can't they meet us*

*halfway because most of us in the school are Northern Sotho speaking. So, it shows that Northern Sotho is not equal to English or Afrikaans.*

- *Yes, I think that Northern Sotho has rights but is not equal to English and Afrikaans because the language that is mostly used is English. If you speak Northern Sotho language sometimes you can be discriminated by others and taken for granted.*
- *Yes, I absolutely think that it has rights. Yes, I think that it is equal to languages like English and Afrikaans.*
- *Yes, the fact that Northern Sotho is there in the schools it means that it has equal rights to other languages. Learners can learn this language and are allowed to express themselves in this language.*
- *Yes, Northern Sotho has rights and is equal to other languages like English and Afrikaans.*
- *I do not think Northern Sotho is equal to other languages because question papers still come in English or Afrikaans, most books are written in English. Therefore, English still dominates.*
- *No, because English and Afrikaans have more rights than Northern Sotho. It is not equal to other languages because most people favour English more than African languages like Northern Sotho.*
- *No, I do not think Northern Sotho is equal to English because most of the books are written in the latter language. Therefore, Northern Sotho does not have many rights as other languages.*

The researcher noted that some respondents observed that Northern Sotho as a language has rights, but it is still not equal to English and Afrikaans. They base their opinion on the fact that the medium of instruction in the South African schools is still predominantly English and Afrikaans. Books and articles are still widely written in the English language. They stated that English still has power since it is spoken worldwide whereas Northern Sotho is limited to a certain group of people in South Africa. There are some respondents who maintained that Northern Sotho has rights and is equal to other languages.

**Question 4: What is your attitude towards the Northern Sotho language as a learning subject and medium of instruction?**

- *Positive. Because it can be easy if Northern Sotho can be a medium of instruction.*
- *Positive. I have a positive attitude as I have stated before that Northern Sotho has to be equal to other languages.*
- *Positive attitude towards Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction because it will be easy for us to learn in this language. We use this language everywhere, at school and at home so it will be easy for us to learn in this language.*
- *Positive attitude. We understand Northern Sotho more even though English is the one that is used in the examination rooms. It will be better if they can change the language which is used to set questions so that we can understand better.*
- *It is positive. It will be better if we can get questions in 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho because we will understand quickly what has been asked. It takes time for us to understand English words.*
- *Positive. Northern Sotho is the language that we use every day, so it becomes easy for us to understand it better.*
- *I think that it is positive. It is because we understand it better than other languages. We only use English only at school and when we are at our respective homes then we use 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho. So if we can be taught in Northern Sotho, then I think we will understand better because it is the language that we often use.*
- *Positive attitude. I personally understand better if I am taught in Northern Sotho because it is my language.*
- *Positive attitude.*
- *Positive attitude. As I have already mentioned, we must know our languages thoroughly because this will help us a lot. We can understand better if we are taught in our languages.*
- *I think that it is positive. It is our language; we understand it better and it is one of our learning subjects. We speak Northern Sotho both at home and school.*
- *My attitude is very positive. I enjoy this language.*
- *I am proud of this language. We use this language for communication even though we*

*have to use English at school for answering questions for example. But I am still proud of my language.*

- *It is a positive attitude. I love my language because it is our native language, so I am very proud of it.*
- *My attitude is positive towards Northern Sotho. I love 'Sepedi' and I enjoy it.*
- *I value the language. My attitude is positive towards it.*
- *My attitude is positive. I like this language because I understand it more than English. When it is 'Sepedi' periods I find myself understanding more than English subjects.*
- *Positive. I feel more relaxed when I speak Northern Sotho than when I use other languages. I think it can be good to use it as a medium of instruction for some people.*
- *My attitude towards Northern Sotho as a language of instruction is positive because it is much easier to understand it when you speak, read and write it.*
- *My attitude towards Northern Sotho is a positive one. Because I enjoy and understand it better. But my concern about this language is that there might be other terms that I will not be able to understand in Northern Sotho.*

It is encouraging to note that almost 100% of the learner respondents stated that this language is their mother tongue so therefore, they definitely have a positive attitude towards it. They pointed out that since Northern Sotho is the language that they speak at home and use at school with their friends, it will also be easier for them to learn all content subjects in this language. Others stated that if the examination question papers were set in Northern Sotho then they will understand the questions better and be able to get higher marks.

**Question 5: What do you think could be the cause of non-use of African Languages as mediums of instruction in the schools?**

- *Shortage of Northern Sotho teachers. I think the government is also contributing to stopping education in Northern Sotho.*
- *English is still dominating our languages, and this is not fair for us. If for example we can turn the tables and say the English people must also be taught in the medium of*

Northern Sotho for example, they will also find it very difficult because it is not their language. Our language, Northern Sotho must also be equal to other languages. Children speak Northern Sotho at their homes but when they go to school, English is used as a medium of their education.

- *I think it is the English language because we are only taught in this language. They do not want to know whether we understand it or not, they just want us to learn in English. English is prioritised more than Northern Sotho.*
- *I think that it is the system. English is dominating, it is used in interviews and other areas. You are not allowed to use Northern Sotho.*
- *I think it is the English language and we do not even understand this language.*
- *I think English is being prioritised for the sake of the coming generation so that they can know this language very well. So that when they go for interviews, they should be fluent even when they are questioned by international people because English is an international language.*
- *I think it is the English language. After completion of matric examination, say you find a scholarship abroad, you will not be interviewed in Northern Sotho instead you will be interviewed in English. You will also be taught in English.*
- *I think the issue that is stopping education in Northern Sotho is that, when they set examinations, they will mainly use the English language. The reason why we are taught in English is that they do not want us to struggle when we write exams because we are going to encounter English questions. English is being enforced as a medium of instruction.*
- *We easily adopt languages that are not ours, foreign languages. You see even now, English is widely used as a medium of instruction in most of the schools in South Africa, followed by Afrikaans. We do not even understand these languages.*
- *There are people who are from foreign lands. They do not understand the African languages like Northern Sotho. That is where English bridges the gap. We are able to understand each other.*
- *English is still fine as a medium of instruction because in our school we have two African languages as learning subjects, that is, 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho and isiZulu*

languages. I guess it will not be fair to teach isiZulu learners in Sepedi. So, it is ok for all learners to be taught in English because we can all understand this language.

- Sometimes learners in the school are from different countries. This is the reason why English is used as a medium of instruction so that all can understand. There are learners who will not understand when taught in Northern Sotho.
- It will be difficult to set question papers in Northern Sotho in subjects like Physical Science and Maths because the terminologies in these subjects are mostly found in English. So, it will be tricky if they can be presented to us in 'Sepedi'.
- As I have stated before, it will be difficult for us to communicate and compete internationally in Northern Sotho. There will be a communication barrier I think because 'Sepedi' is only found in South Africa. If, for example, you go into the tourism industry, it will be very difficult for you if you only know 'Sepedi' language, you will be very limited.
- At school, we do subjects like Physical Science and Life Sciences. So, there are terminologies that cannot be stated in 'Sepedi' which have only English terms. So, it can be a little challenging to learn these subjects in Northern Sotho.
- I think it is the English language because it is still used as a medium of instruction.
- I think it is the government that is stopping education in Northern Sotho. The other problem is about terminology that is lacking in 'Sepedi' Northern Sotho.
- I think it is the history of colonialism and racism.
- I think the apartheid system was responsible for this situation because they enforced foreign languages such as Afrikaans and English to be taught to children whose mother tongues are African languages. Negative attitude towards Northern Sotho can also contribute towards the hindrance of Northern Sotho being considered as a medium of instruction.
- Most learners have a negative attitude towards Northern Sotho as a language.

Sometimes when it comes to subject choices, learners would rather choose Afrikaans than Northern Sotho.

This question sought to find out if perhaps the problem with Northern Sotho being used as a medium of instruction lies with the government policies, the attitude of learners towards the language or the budget, etc.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the methodology and research methods were discussed in detail citing various references. The research design was defined, and the researcher made use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The target population was defined and sampled. The research subjects contributed towards the study through their responses and views. The data for this study were collected from high school learners and teachers. The research findings from the questionnaires and focus group interviews were presented and analysed. The researcher interviewed four focus groups of learners, each consisting of five learners. The responses were later transcribed. The reliability and validity of the research findings were confirmed, and the research methods were triangulated. The ethical concerns were spelled out. The researcher asked consent from the participants to conduct research and from the relevant authorities such as the University of South Africa and the Department of Education. The next chapter will be Chapter 4, and it will deal with research analysis from questionnaires and focus group interviews.

## 4 CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the data analysis, findings and interpretation of the study. The questionnaire used in this retrospective study was carefully analysed to ensure that the data gathered was presented clearly with the aid of tables, percentages and graphs, where possible. The viewpoints and opinions of the research participants, i.e. the learners and the teachers were of paramount importance for this study. The researcher used the questionnaires, focus group interview methods and observation to collect this data. Following data collection and presentation, the researcher will now analyse the data collected and presented.

The overall aim of this study is to determine the barriers that impede mother tongue education in schools. The purpose is to see to it that in future learners can be able to be taught in their own mother tongue. Consequently, the findings will be analysed and interpreted as mentioned above in graphs and tables as applicable.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants in this study were 40 learners in both grade 11 and 12 in high schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas. These participants were between the ages of 18 and 25 years. They were Northern Sotho speakers taking Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school. The total number of 20 teachers also comprised Northern Sotho speakers who were mostly teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject in the school. Twenty (20) other learners were involved in the focus group interviews. Table 4.1 below gives a summary of the target population, the number of participants and the total number of respondents in this study.

*Table 4:1 : Shows the target population, number of respondents, total number of respondents (N=80)*

| Target Population    | Learners | Teachers |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Questionnaires       | 40       | 20       |
| Group Interviews     | 20       |          |
| Total of Respondents | 60       | 20       |

### 4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

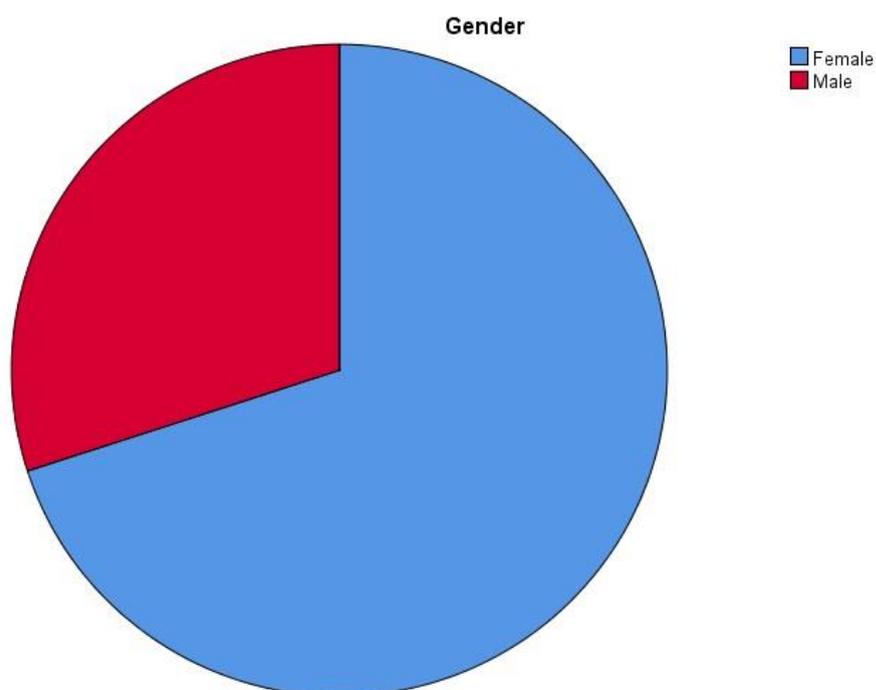
#### 4.2.1 Questionnaires data from the learners

The main objective of the study is using questionnaires as a tool to gain insight into the present situation about the possibility of teaching learners in their own mother tongue, with special reference to Northern Sotho. The participants who were involved in this research study were the grade 11 and 12 learners and teachers. After interpreting data that were collected from these participants, the researcher was able to make further suggestions and recommendations about teaching learners in their own mother tongue. In presenting and analysing the research findings, the names and identity of the research participants, i.e. the high school learners and teachers remained anonymous for confidentiality purposes. The questionnaires were completed by the learners in grade eleven and twelve who were between the ages of 18 and 25 years: The total number of respondents was 40.

#### **Question 1: Biographical Information Gender**

The biographical information about gender shows that 70% of the respondents were females while 30% were males. Figure 4.1 below demonstrated that there were more females than males in the government schools specifically high schools. All the targeted respondents participated in the research. The gender of the learner respondents is graphically presented in the pie chart in Figure 4.1 below.

*Figure 4:1 Pie chart showing the distribution of the learners by gender (N= 40)*



## Question 2: Age

18 years- 25 years

The distribution of the questionnaire respondents by age is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

The information on the distribution of the questionnaire respondents by age is presented graphically in the pie chart in Figure 4.2 below. The age range of the respondents was between 18 to 25 years. In township schools like the ones in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, it is not surprising to find children who are between the ages of 18-25 years in grades 11 and 12 due to a high failure rate. 95% of the learner respondents were between the ages of 18- 20 years, 2.5% between 20- 25 years and another 2.5% was of unknown age.

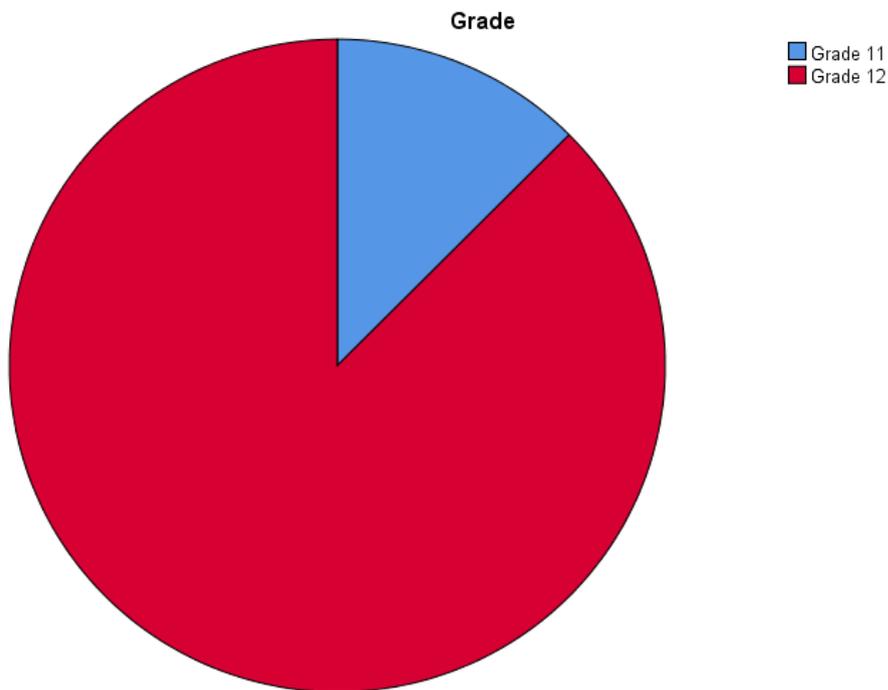
Figure 4:2 Pie chart showing the distribution of the learners by age (N=40)



## Question 3: Grade

Question 3 aimed at determining the grade of the learner respondents. This question provided the researcher with the knowledge as to whether the respondents were in grade 11 or 12. The information on the grade of the questionnaire respondents is shown in Figure 4.3 in the pie chart below. A high percentage (87.5%) are in grade 12, while 12.5% were still in grade 11.

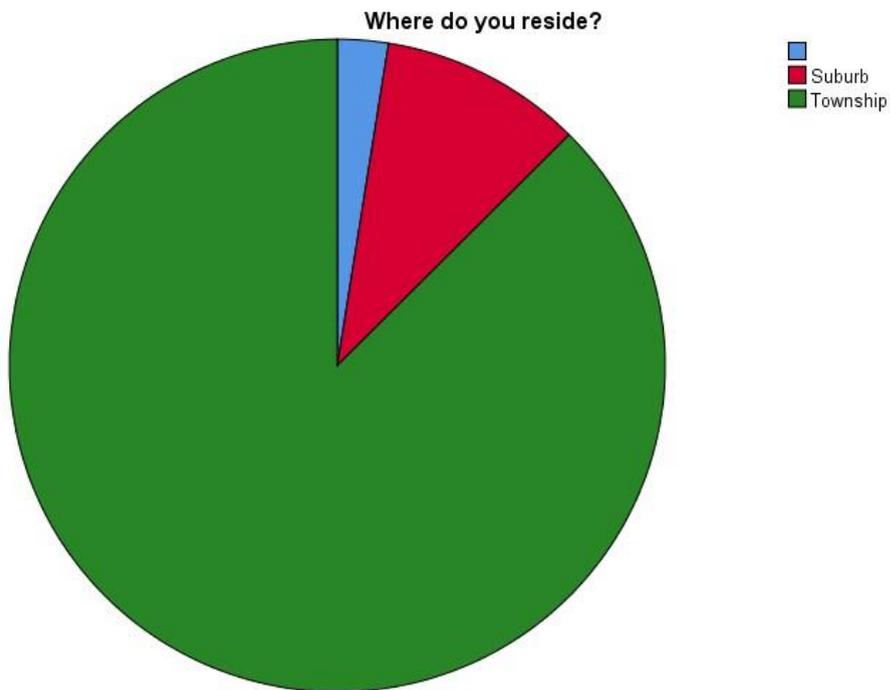
Figure 4:3 Pie chart showing the grades of the learners (N= 40)



#### **Question 4: Where do you reside?**

Question 4 aimed at establishing where the learner respondents reside. Since all the respondents were schooling in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi schools, most of them (87.5%) reside in the townships. 10% reside in suburban areas while 2.5% reside in other areas. This question was crucial for determining the language mostly spoken in these areas so that the researcher can be able to confirm that indeed justice should be served to the children living in these areas by teaching them in their own mother tongue. The pie chart below shows the distribution of the respondents' residences.

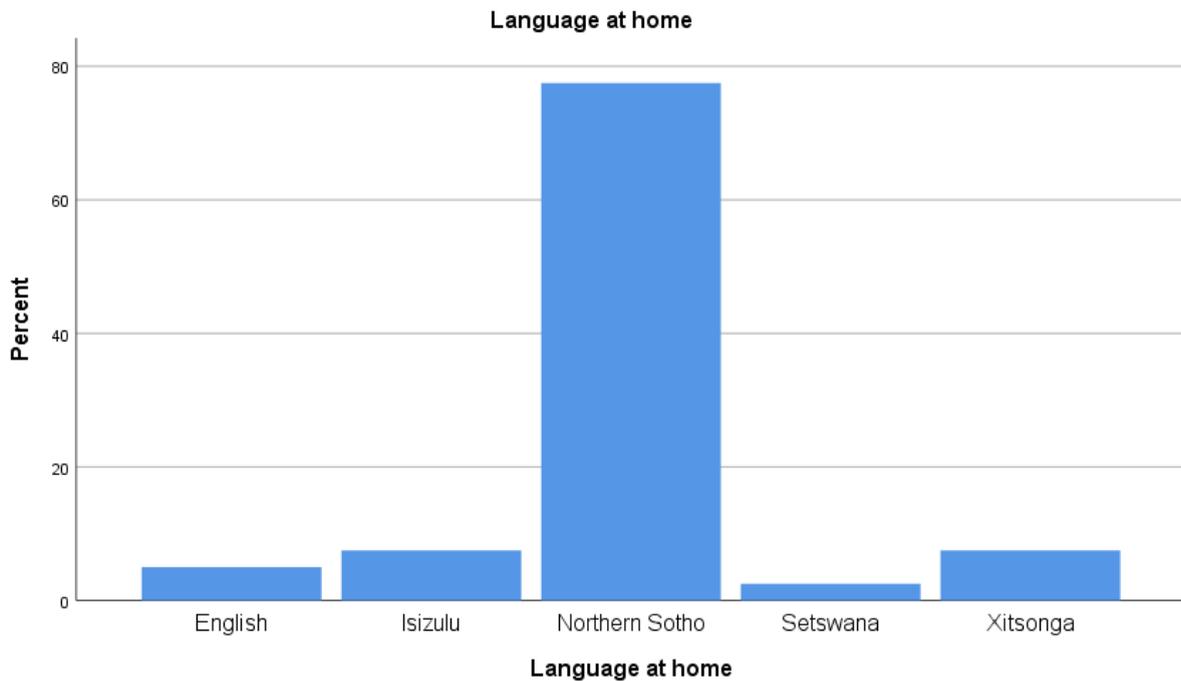
Figure 4:4 : Pie chart showing where the learners reside (N= 40)



#### Question 5: Language at home

Figure 4.5 below, shows that most of the respondents were Northern Sotho speakers (77.5%), followed by isiZulu and Xitsonga speakers; each language had 7.5% and the rest of the minority language speakers had 5% and less. From the bar graph below, it shows that most of the respondents are Northern Sotho speakers, therefore, they deserve to be taught in their mother tongue. Northern Sotho language is offered in most of the schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas.

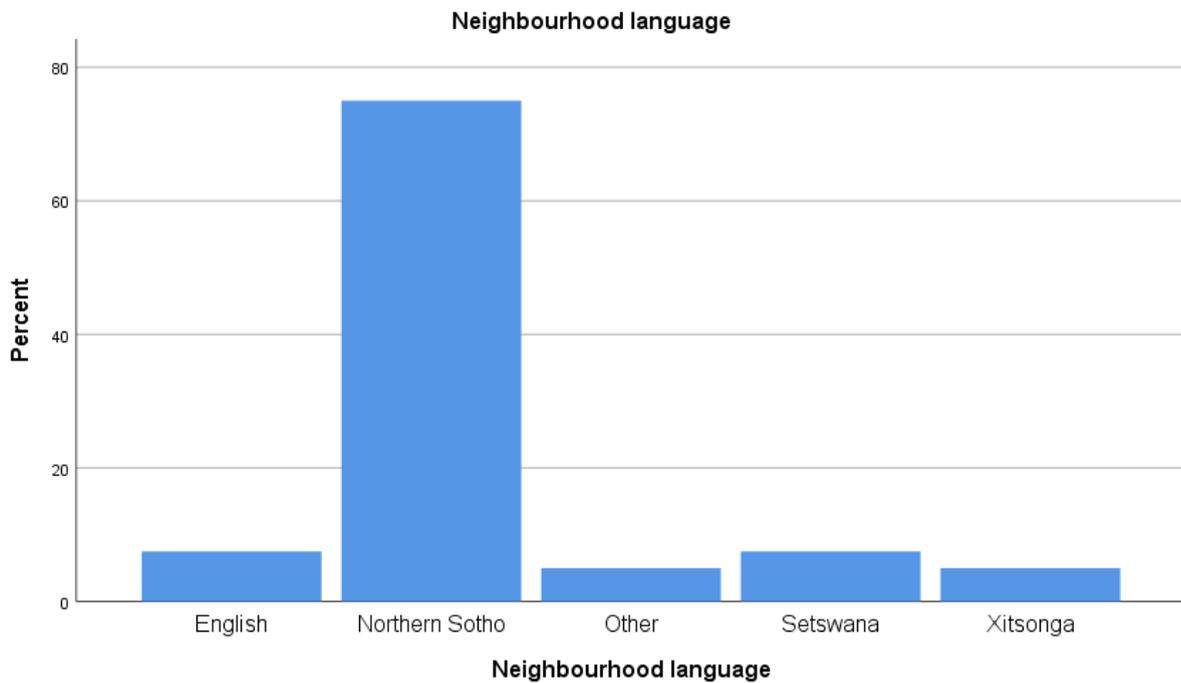
Figure 4:5 Bar chart showing the distribution of the language spoken at home (N=40)



### Question 6: Neighborhood language

The distribution of the languages is presented in Figure 4.6 below which reflects that the language that is mostly spoken is Northern Sotho (75%), followed by other languages. This language is spoken and understood by most of the people in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas. Therefore, if children can be taught in this language it will be to their advantage because they hear this language in their neighbourhood every day.

Figure 4:6 Bar chart shows the distribution of the language mostly spoken in the respondents' neighbourhood

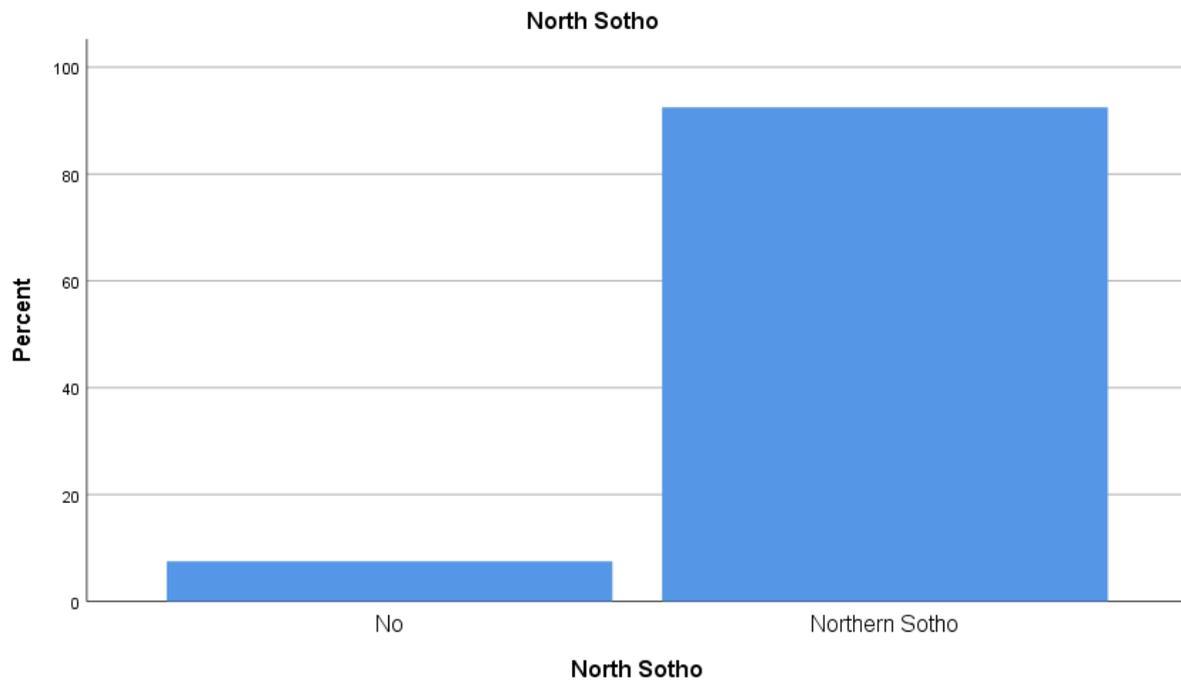


### Question 7: Which languages are spoken at school?

#### Northern Sotho

According to the bar chart below, 92.5% of the learner respondents in the above-mentioned schools speak the Northern Sotho language. A small percentage of 7.5% said they do not speak this language. As stated in the previous pages, this language is spoken and taught as a learning subject in 70% of the schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas.

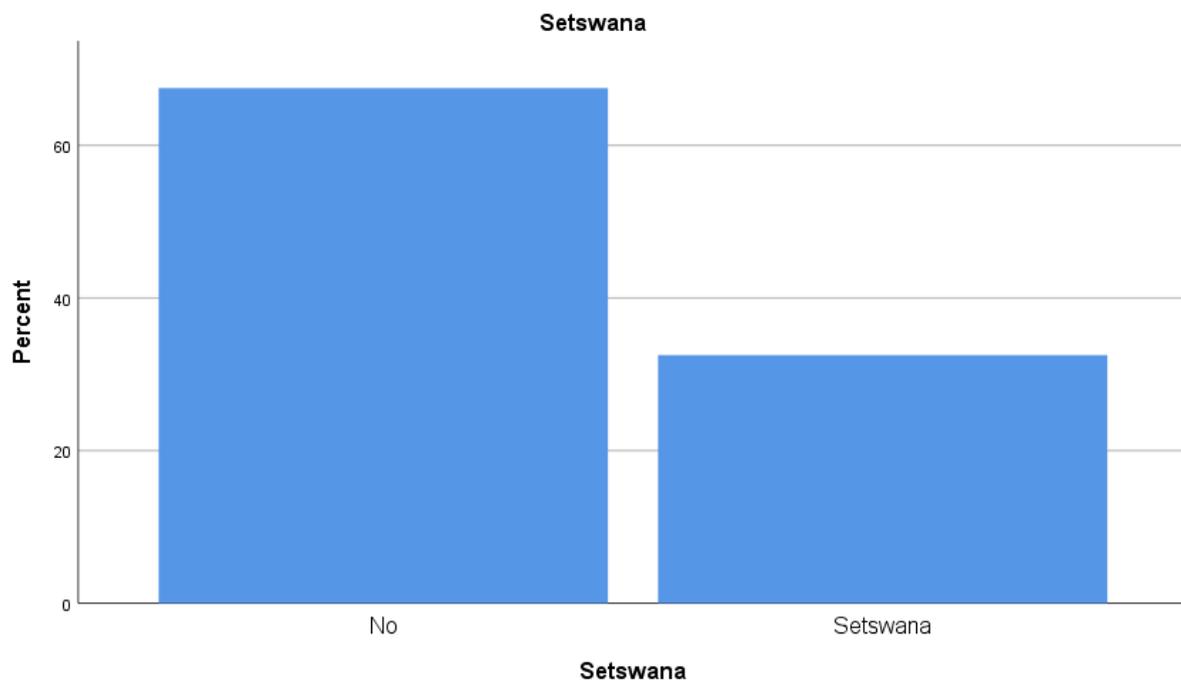
Figure 4:7 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents who speak Northern Sotho and those that do not speak this language



### **Setswana**

Setswana is another African language that is spoken in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships. Sometimes Northern Sotho and Setswana are mixed by the speakers of these areas. Figure 4.8 below demonstrates that 32.5% of respondents speak the Setswana language.

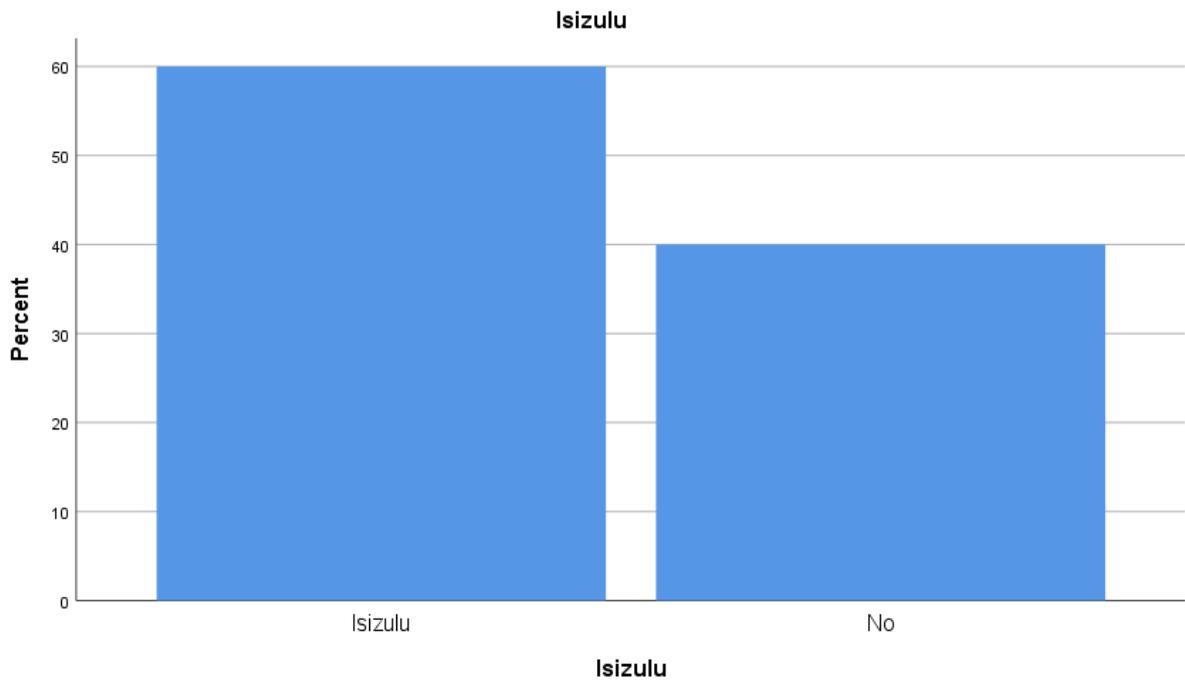
Figure 4:8 : Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents who speak Setswana and those that do not speak this language.



### IsiZulu

Figure 4.9 demonstrate that 60% of the participants speak isiZulu in the schools. There seems to be no correlation between question 7(a) and question7(c). Some of the learners in these schools speak isiZulu at home and at school, yet they are studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject. These different African languages are often switched all the time depending on which language a learner is using.

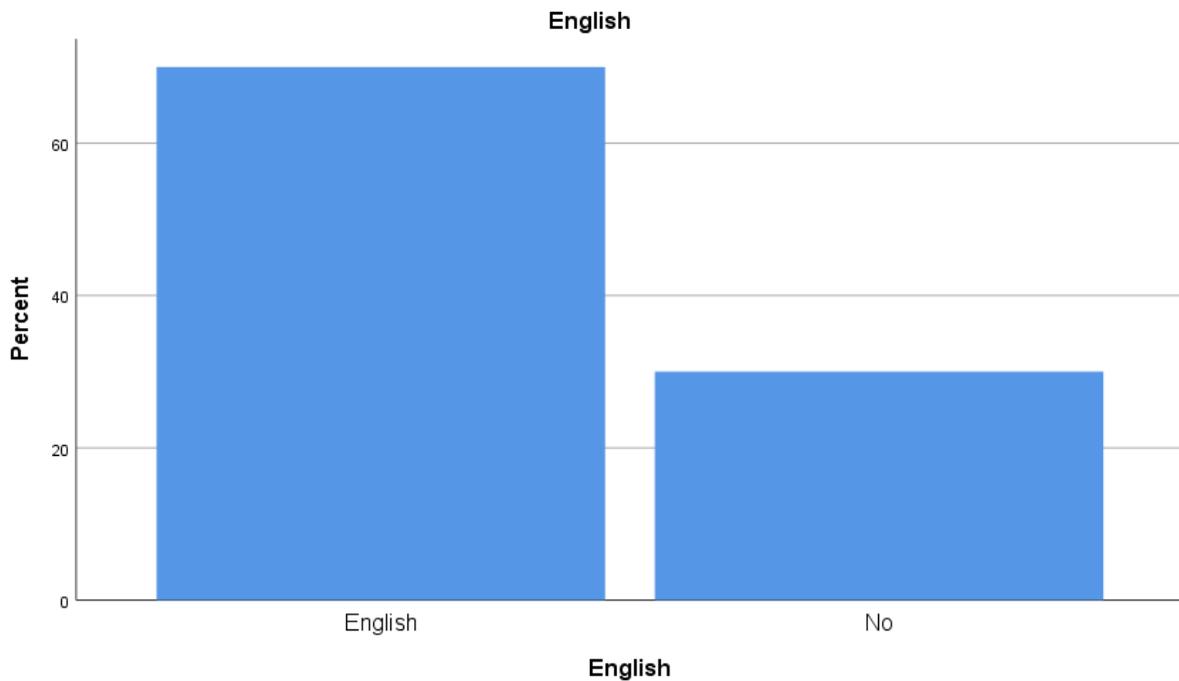
Figure 4:9 : Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents who speak isiZulu and those that do not speak this language



## English

Figure 4.10 below demonstrates that 70% of the respondents speak the English language at school. It is clear from the bar graph below that the English hegemony still continues. Even though the respondents voiced out that they would like to be taught in their own mother tongue (Northern Sotho), the researcher observed that they were still attached to the English medium of instruction.

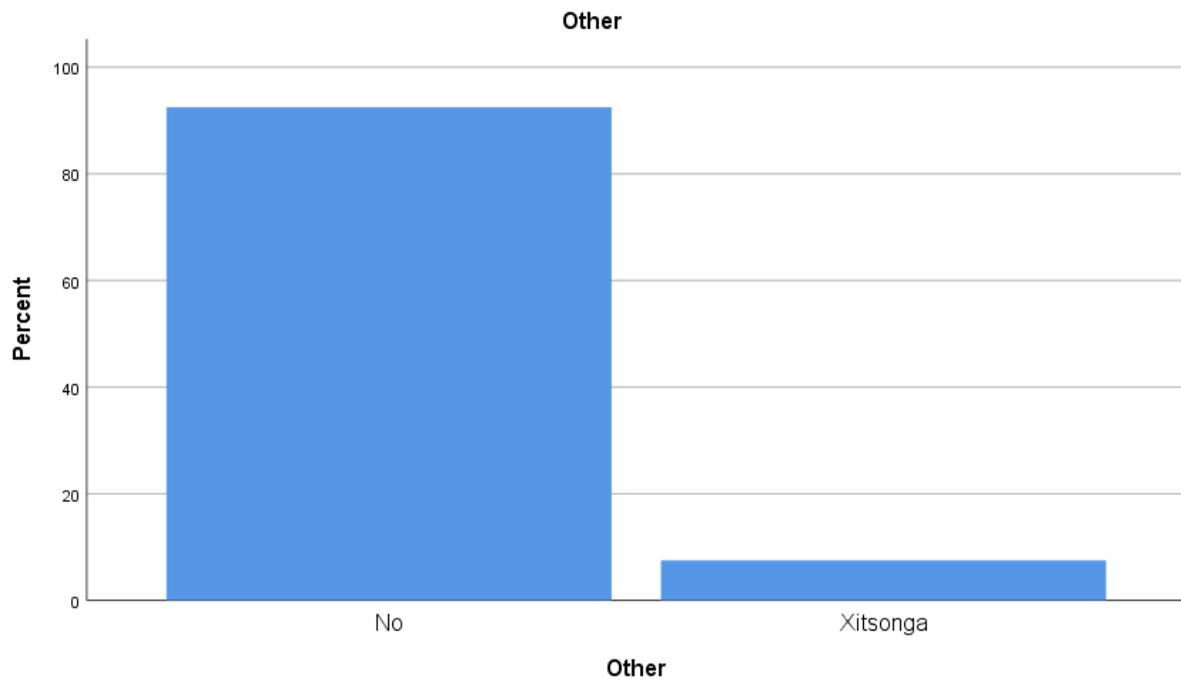
Figure 4:10 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents who speak English and those that do not speak this language



### Other

According to Figure 4.11 below, a smaller number (7.5%) speak the Xitsonga language at these schools. This language is not widely spoken in the schools in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville townships. As mentioned above, the respondents have voiced out that they would like to be taught in the Northern Sotho language as this is the language that they understand best.

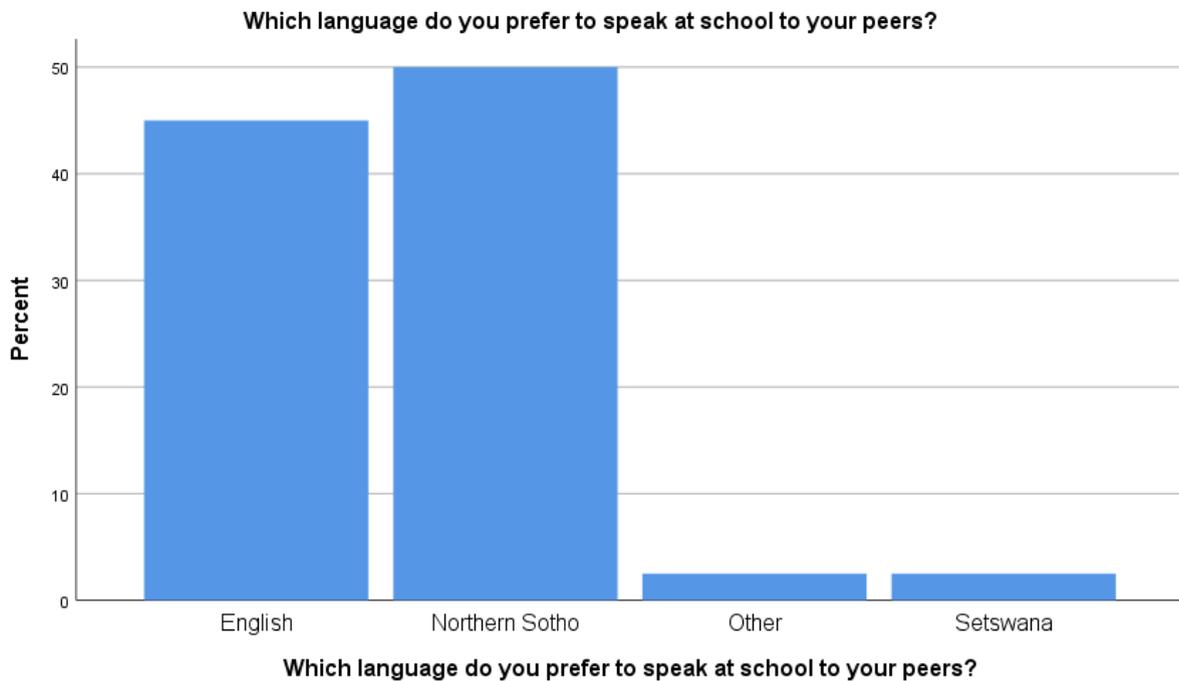
Figure 4:11 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents who speak other languages and those that do not speak these languages



**Question 8: (a) Which language do you prefer to speak at school to your peers?**

Figure 4.12 below demonstrates that 50% of participants prefer to speak to their peers in Northern Sotho, while 45% of respondents prefer to speak in English. English still comes second to their mother tongue, Northern Sotho since they are still taught in this language. 2.5% said they speak to their peers at school in Setswana while 2.5% speak in other languages. This study argues that learners should be taught in their own mother tongue so that they can perform better in their school subjects.

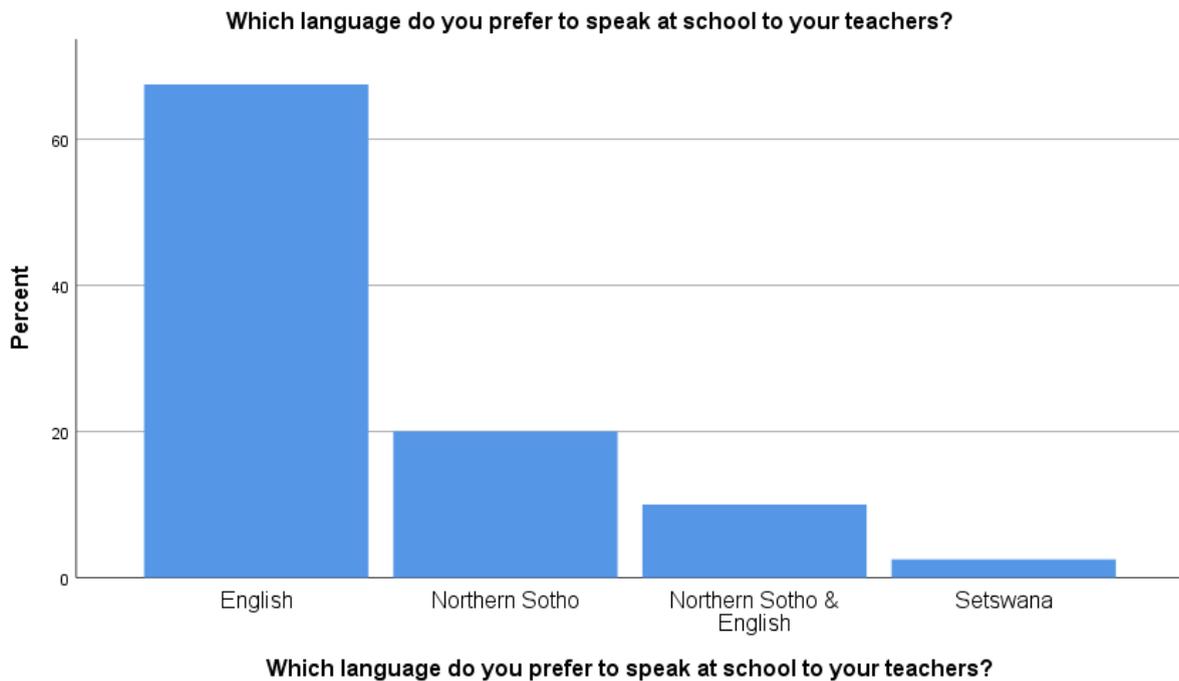
Figure 4:12 Bar chart showing the distribution of the language that the respondent prefers to speak at school with their peers



**(b) Which language do you prefer to speak at school to your teachers?**

Figure 4.13 illustrates that 67.5% of respondents prefer to speak to their teachers in English than their own mother tongue (Northern Sotho). Only 20% of respondents expressed that they prefer to speak to their teachers in Northern Sotho. 20% expressed that they use both Northern Sotho and English to speak to their teachers. Only 1 respondent said that they use Setswana. This scenario shows that although it is the wish of many of the respondents to be taught in their mother tongue, English is still a language of preference, this is supported and encouraged by the teachers and parents alike.

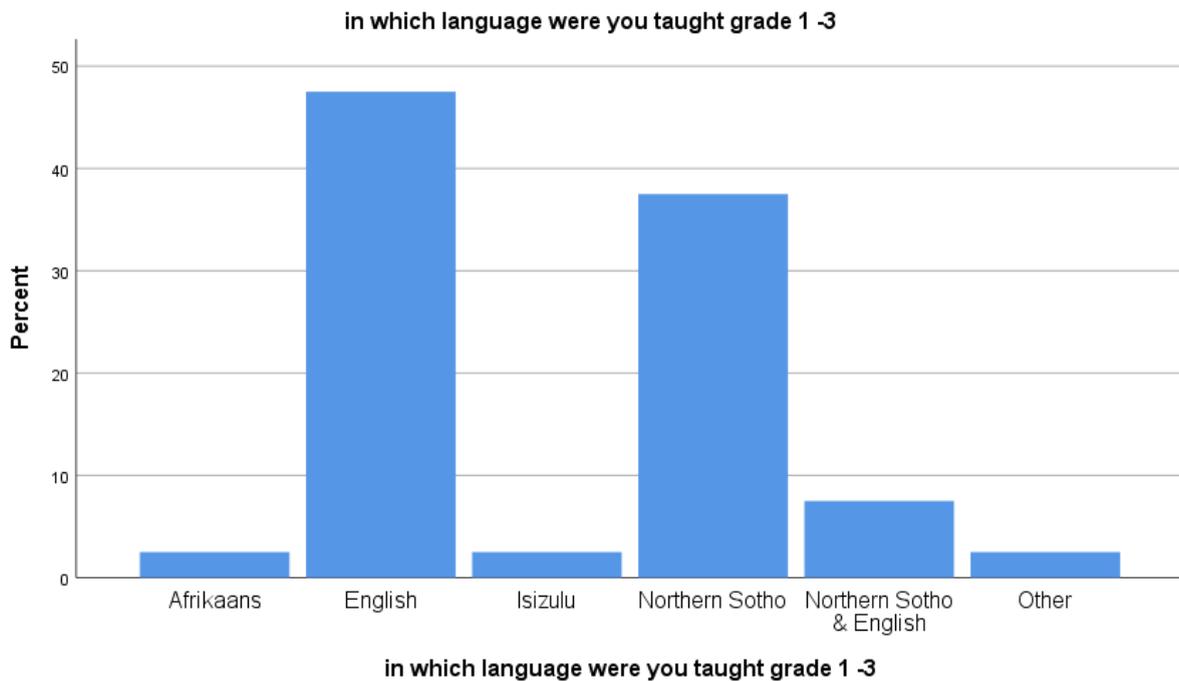
Figure 4:13 Bar chart showing the language preference of the respondents to their teachers



**Question 10: In which language were you taught grade 1-3?**

According to Figure 4.14, below 37.5% of the respondents said that they were taught in the medium of Northern Sotho, while 47.5% said that they were taught in the English language. The other languages are from 7.5% and below. This is not surprising since English has always been a medium of instruction in the schools to date.

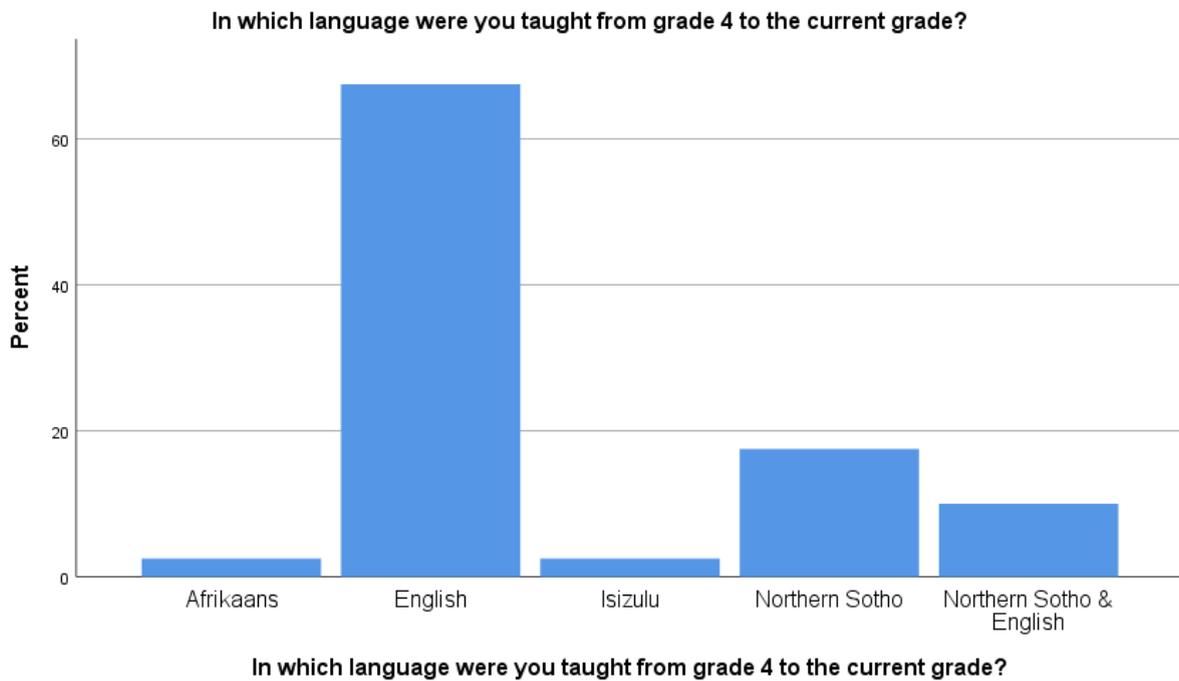
Figure 4:14 Bar chart showing the language in which the respondents were taught grade 1-3



**Question 11: In which language were you taught from grade 4 to the current grade?**

Figure 4.15 below illustrates that 67.5% of respondents reported that they were taught in the medium of English from grade 4, while 2.5% mentioned that they were taught in the medium of Afrikaans. The rest of the respondents must have misunderstood the question since in South Africa there are only two languages that are still used as LoLTs until grade 12.

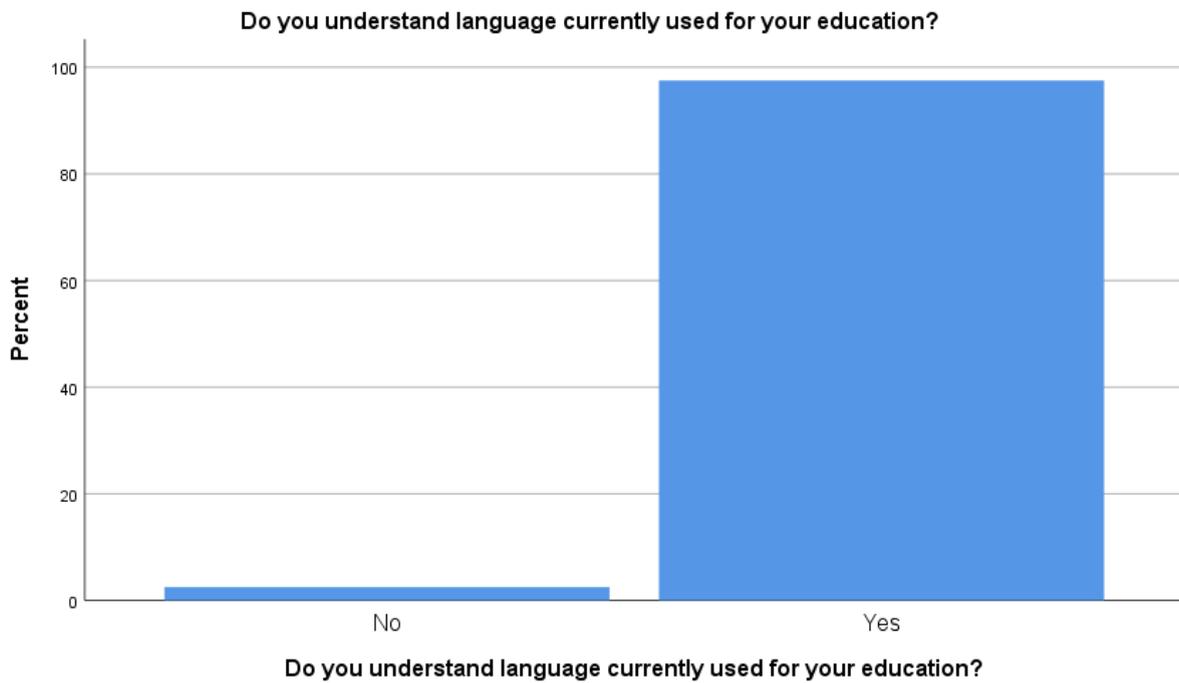
Figure 4:15 : Bar chart showing the language the respondents were taught from grade 4 to the current grade



**Question 12. Do you understand the language currently used for your education?**

Although the bulk of the respondents, (97.5%) according to Figure 4.16 said that they understand the medium of instruction currently used, the researcher observed that they were keen and excited about the idea of mother tongue education. Only one respondent (2.5%) said that they do not understand the current medium of instruction. The researcher has observed also that the English language still dominates. However, this study argues that if learners are taught in their own mother tongue, then they can perform better in their schoolwork because they will be taught in a language that they use daily both at home and school.

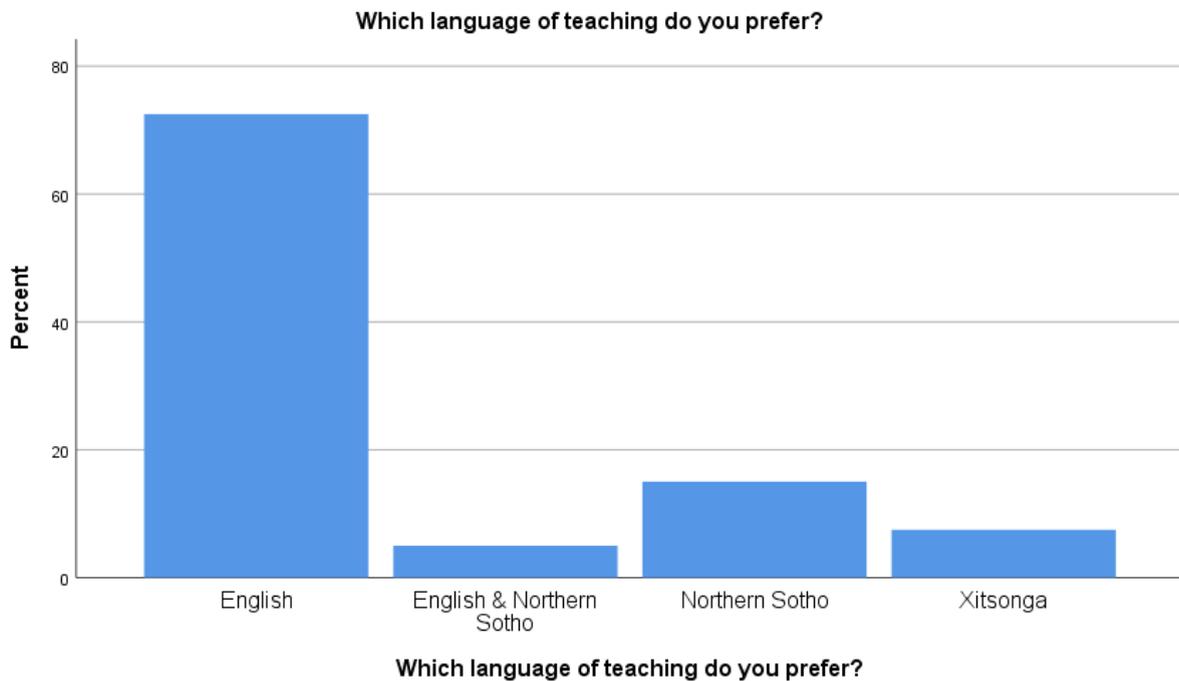
Figure 4:16 Bar chart showing the number of respondents who understand the language currently used for their education



#### **Question 14: Which language of teaching do you prefer?**

Figure 4.17 below demonstrates that 72.5% of the respondents prefer to be taught in English because this has been the language of instruction for many years. As the present researcher has mentioned before, although the learners may wish to be taught in their mother tongue, they were not certain as to where this language will lead them. English is still regarded as a language of commerce and industry.

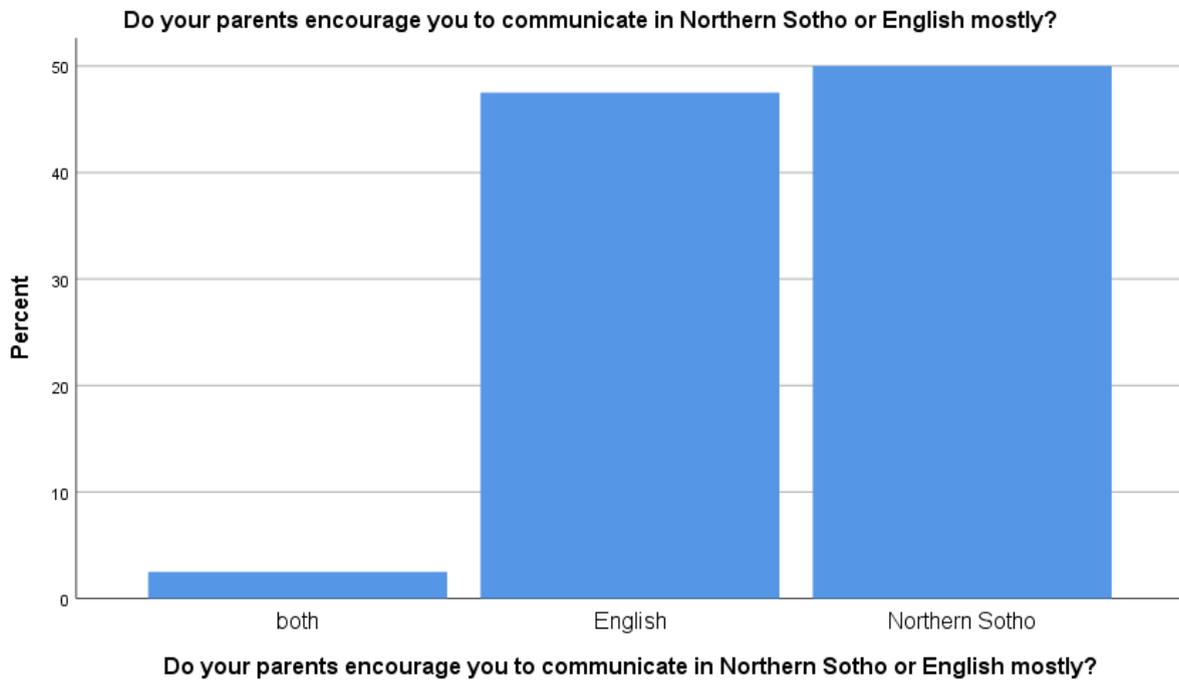
Figure 4:17 Bar chart showing the respondents' language of teaching preference



**Question 16: Do your parents encourage you to communicate in Northern Sotho or English mostly?**

Figure 4.18 below shows that 50% of parents encouraged their children to speak in Northern Sotho while 47.5% encouraged them to speak in English. Only 2.5% encouraged them to speak in other languages. This study argues that although the English language is still important for the learners, it will be best if they are taught in their mother tongue language (Northern Sotho). Parents are gradually realising the importance of mother tongue language in their children's lives, but they are however still regarding English as a prestigious language.

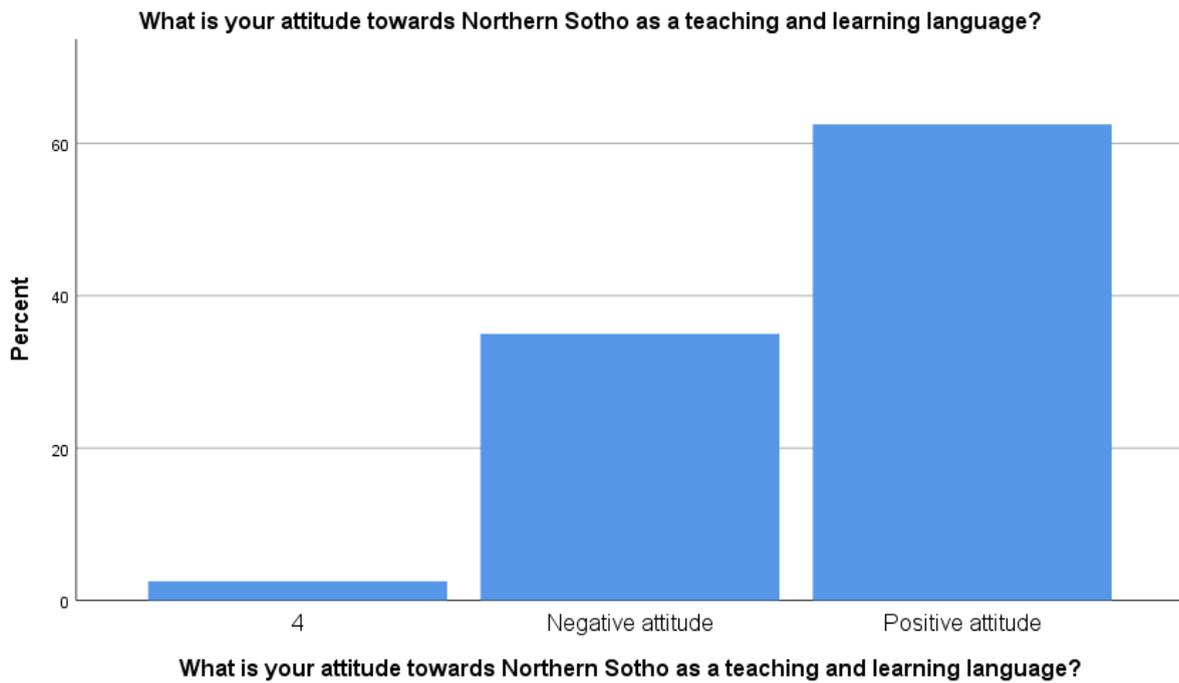
Figure 4:18 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents whom their parents encourage them to communicate in Northern Sotho or English



**Question 17: What is your attitude towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language?**

According to Figure 4.19, a significant number of respondents (62.5%) said that their attitude towards Northern Sotho was positive, while 35% stated that their attitude was negative towards this language. Only one respondent did not know whether his or her attitude was positive or negative. The respondents with a positive attitude based their answer on the fact that Northern Sotho is their first language, the language that is spoken at their homes and that they understood this language better.

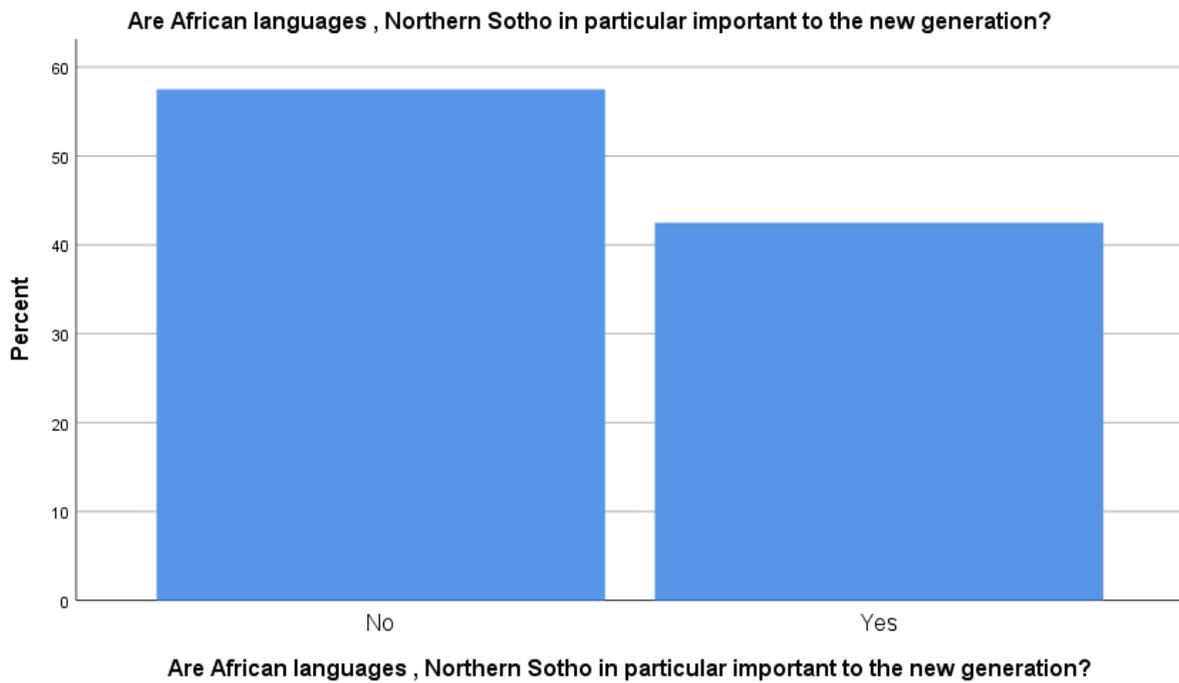
Figure 4:19 Bar chart showing the respondents' attitude towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language



**Question18: Are African languages, Northern Sotho in particular important to the new generation?**

It is clear from Figure 4.20 that 57.5% of the respondents maintain that African languages were not significant for the new generation. While 42.5% of the respondents thought that the new generation sees African languages, Northern Sotho in particular as important.

Figure 4:20 Bar chart showing if African languages, Northern Sotho, in particular, are important to the new generation according to the respondents

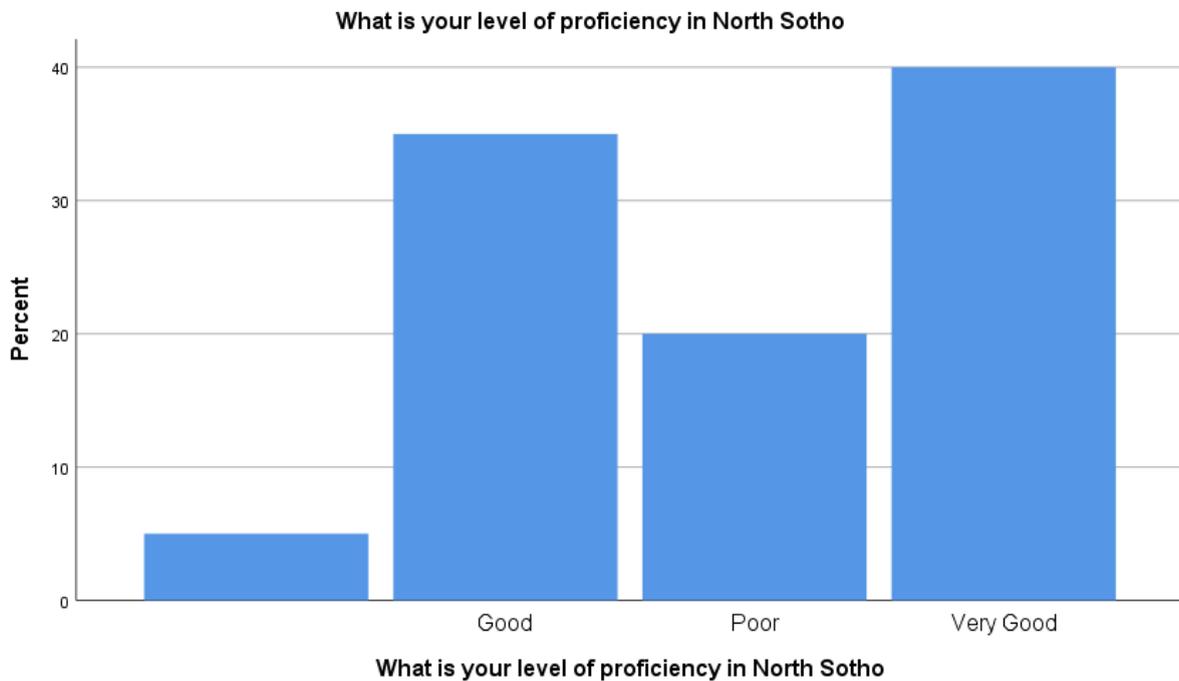


**Question 21:**

**Question 21.1: What is your level of proficiency in Northern Sotho?**

40% of the learner respondents confirmed that they are good at Northern Sotho compared to 35% who proclaimed that they were good at this language. However, the researcher observed that 90% of the learners in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi schools, do not speak the standard Northern Sotho, instead it was a mixture of the Sotho languages which are Northern Sotho, Setswana and Sesotho.

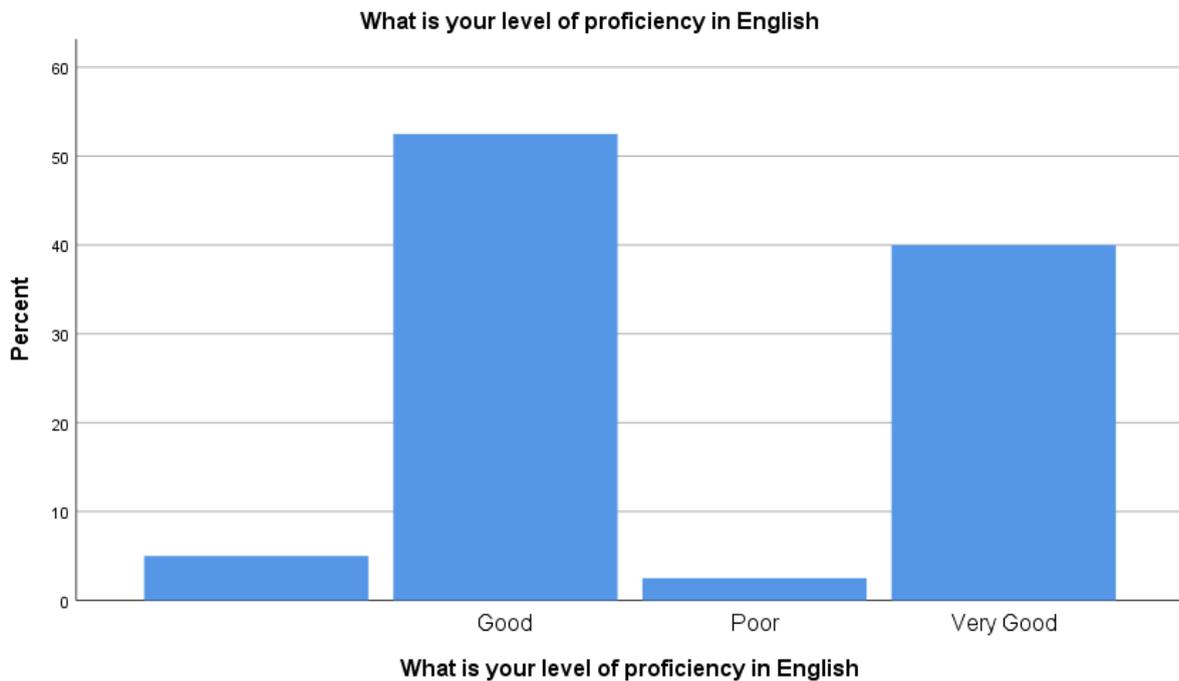
Figure 4:21 Bar chart showing the respondents level of proficiency in Northern Sotho



**Question 21.2: What is your level of proficiency in English?**

40% of the respondents according to Figure 4.22 maintained that their English was very good, while 52.5 said that their English was good. Although English is still the medium of instruction in most of the schools in South Africa, the researcher observed that both the learners and the teachers were not proficient enough in this language. Hence the researcher was of the view that the learners should be taught in the medium of Northern Sotho language.

Figure 4:22 Bar chart showing the respondents' level of proficiency in English



**Question 21.3: What is your level of proficiency in Afrikaans?**

This question is significant in that there are learners whose mother tongue is not Afrikaans but are still taught in this language due to the areas where they reside. 60% of learners whose mother tongue is not Afrikaans in the government schools, take Afrikaans as a learning subject or are taught in the medium of Afrikaans. Most of these learners find it very difficult to understand or comprehend in this language. According to Figure 4.23 below, only 7.5% of the respondents said that their Afrikaans was good while a high percentage of 42.5% confessed that their Afrikaans was poor. This is the same language that the previous government in South Africa before the 1994 elections was enforcing on the learners of all grades in the schools hence the 1996 riots which caused the lives of several people to perish.

Figure 4:23 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' level of proficiency in Afrikaans



**Question 22:**

**Question 22.1: In which language do you speak to your father?**

According to Figure 4.24 below, 62.5% said that they speak to their fathers in Northern Sotho, 20% in the English language, 12.5% in other languages and only 2.5% speak in Xitsonga language. This shows that Northern Sotho is the language that is predominantly spoken in the respondents' homes. Therefore, it is reasonable to use this language as a medium of instruction in their schools.

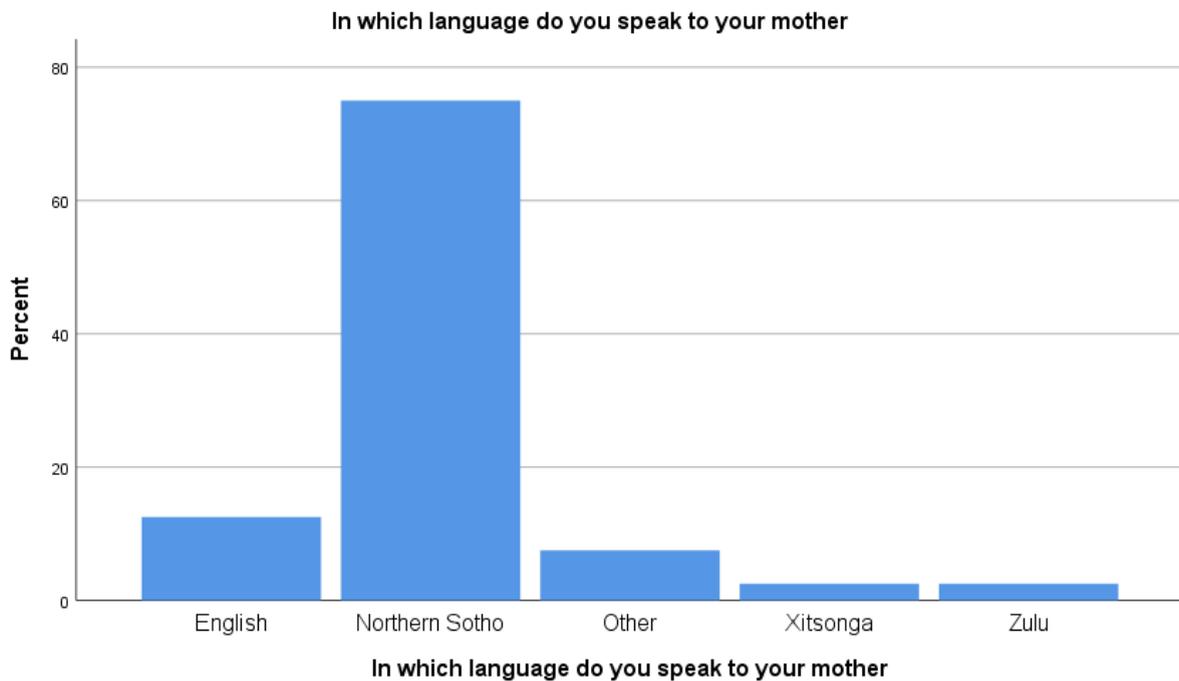
Figure 4:24 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' choice of language when speaking to their fathers



### Question 22.2: In which language do you speak to your mother?

This question also provided the researcher with information pertaining to the language that the respondents use to communicate with their mothers at home. According to Figure 4.25 below, the bulk of the respondents (75%) maintain that they speak to their mothers in Northern Sotho compared to 62.5% who speak to their fathers (Figure 4.24 above) in this language. Only 12.5% speak to their mothers in the English language, while a small percentage (7.5%) speak to their mothers in other languages, 2.5% speak to their mothers in Xitsonga while another 2.5% speak in the isiZulu language. This therefore shows the power of a mother tongue, Northern Sotho specifically.

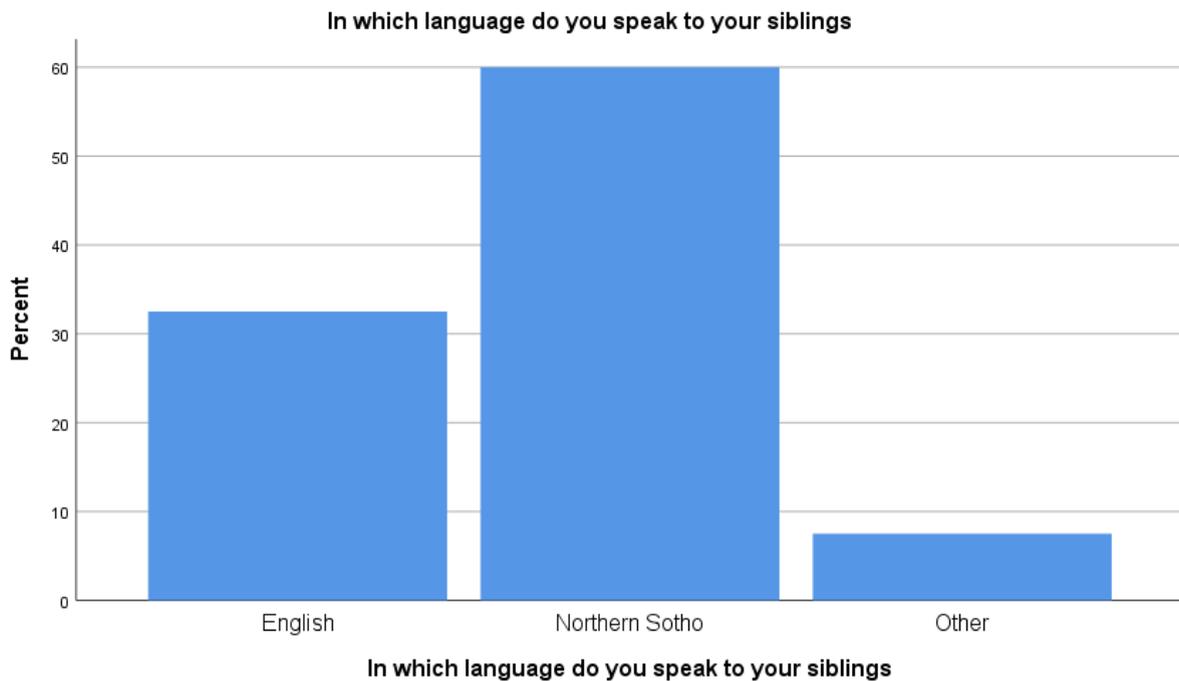
Figure 4:25 The language that is used by the respondents to speak to their mothers



### Question 22.3: In which language do you speak to your siblings?

This question allowed the researcher to gather general information on the distribution of the different languages that the respondents use to communicate with their siblings. Figure 4.26 indicates that 60% of the respondents speak to their siblings in their mother tongue, Northern Sotho while 32.5% speak to them in the English language. Only 7.5% speak to their siblings in other languages. The percentage for communication in English between the siblings has risen because children are encouraged to communicate in this language both at school and home. Furthermore, English is still viewed as a language of success since it is spoken worldwide.

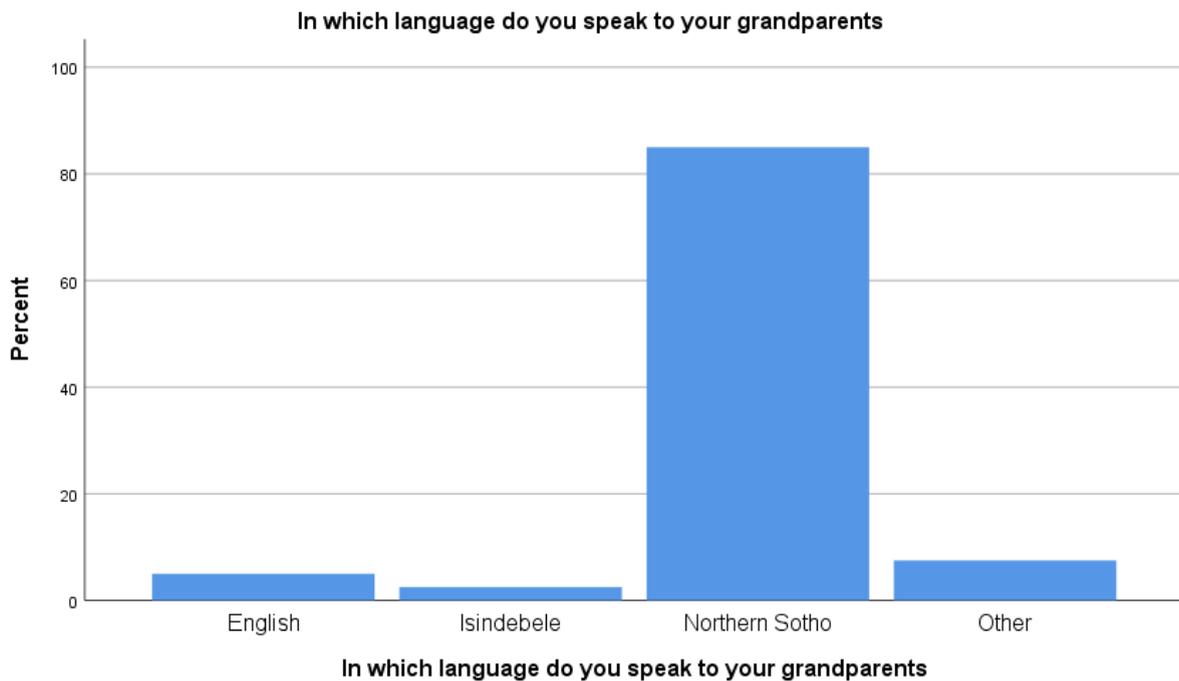
Figure 4:26 Bar chart showing the language that the respondents use to speak to their siblings



**Question 22.4: In which language do you speak to your grandparents?**

Question 22.4 was intended to find out the language the questionnaire respondents were using in communicating with their grandparents. The bulk of the respondents (85%) strongly maintained that they speak to their grandparents in Northern Sotho, 7.5% speak in other African languages and a small percentage (5%) use English to communicate with their grandparents. This shows the significance of communicating in a mother tongue (Northern Sotho specifically) to the elderly people since 80% of them are not conversant in the English language.

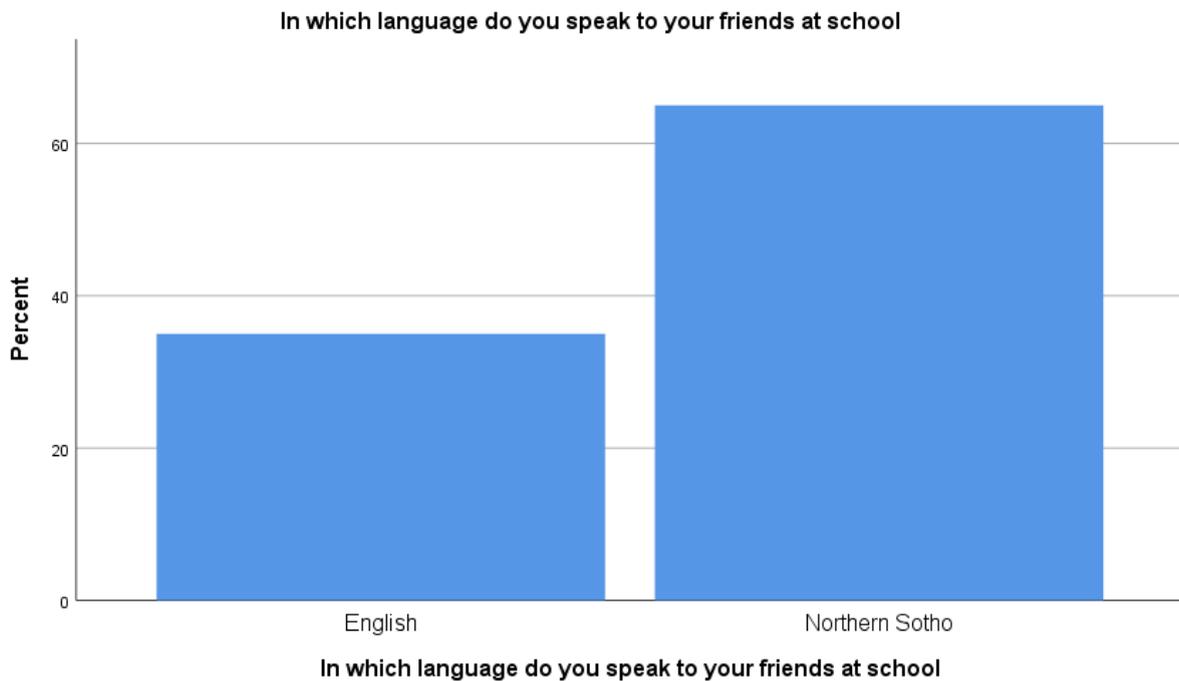
Figure 4:27 Bar chart showing the language that the respondents speak to their grandparents



**Question 22.5: In which language do you speak to your friends at school?**

This question intended to find out which language the respondents use to speak to their friends at school. Figure 4.28 below shows that a high percentage of 65% of the respondents speak to their friends at school in Northern while 35% communicate with their friends in English. Since the respondents are attending the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi schools, it is understandable that most of them communicate with each other in their mother tongue. This shows the significance of a mother tongue.

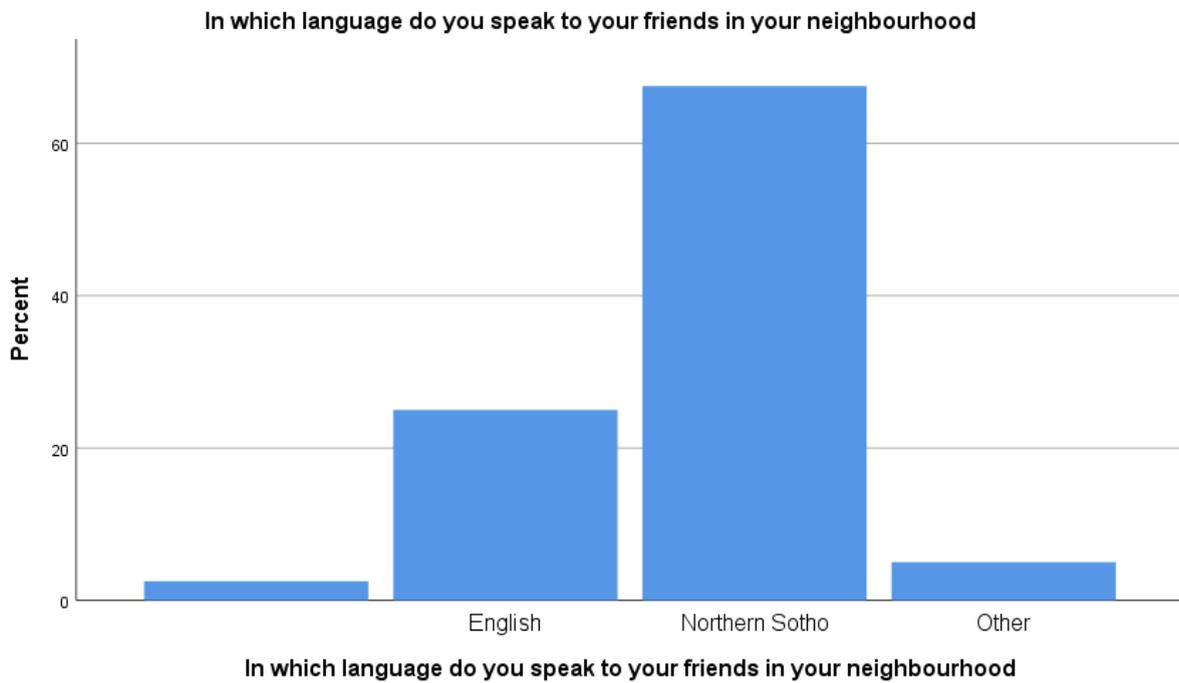
Figure 4:28 Bar chart showing the language which the respondents speak to their friends at school



**Question 22.6: In which language do you speak to your friends in your neighbourhood?**

Like question 22.5, this question intended to find out which language the respondents use to speak to their friends in their neighbourhood. Figure 4.29 below shows that 67.5% speak to their friends in their neighbourhood in Northern Sotho, 5% speak in other African languages since they are not in the same school and on the other hand 25% said that they speak to their friends in English. This can also result in mixing the languages since they are not in a formal institution, like at school.

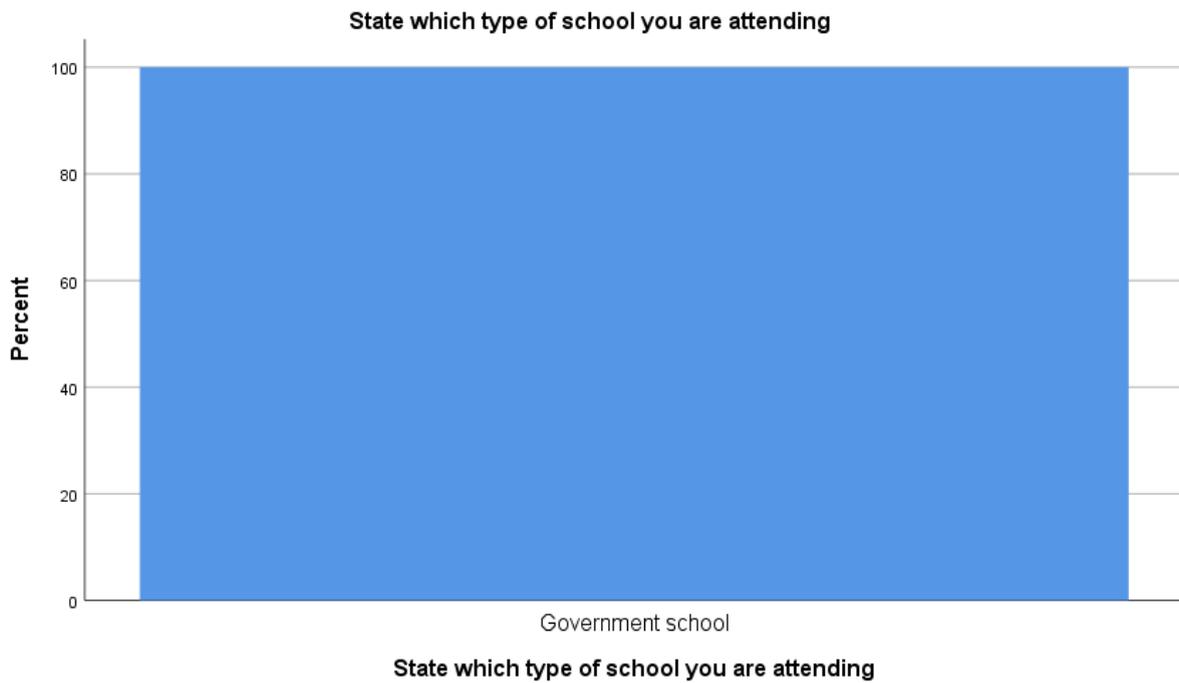
Figure 4:29 Bar chart showing the distribution of the languages that are used by the respondents to speak to their friends and neighbours



**Question 23: State which type of school you are attending**

According to Figure 4.30 below, 100% of the respondents are in the State schools. This is understandable since the researcher only conducted research and collected the questionnaire responses at the State schools in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas. Northern Sotho is still offered as a learning subject in these schools.

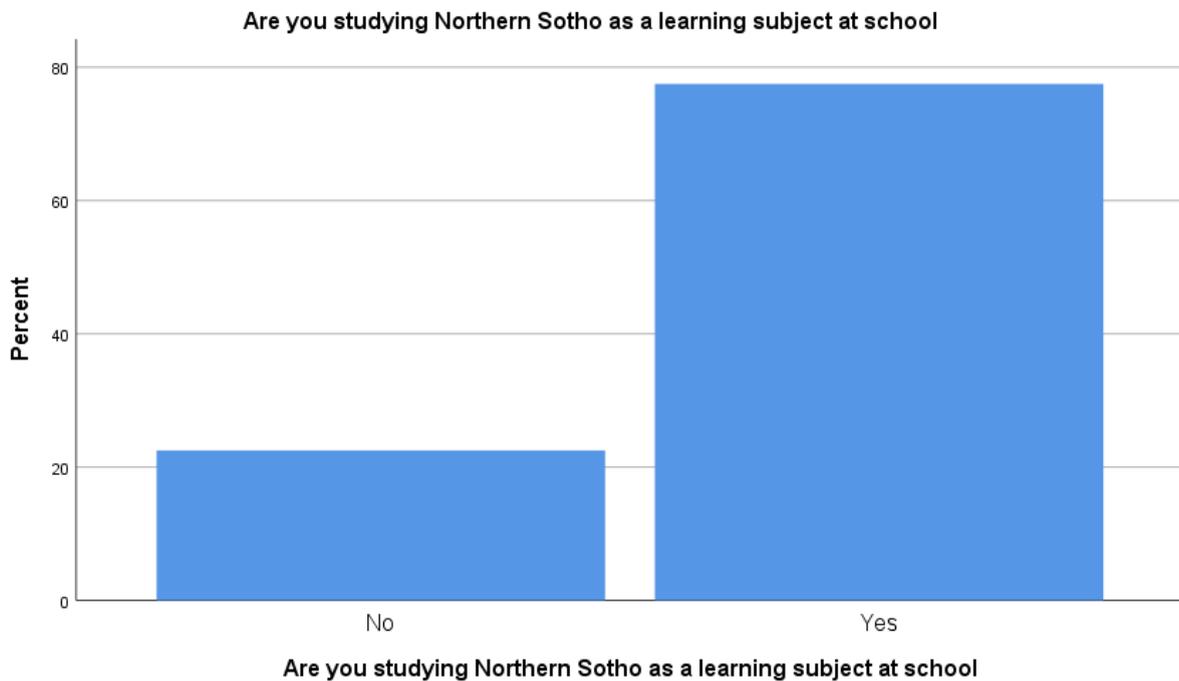
Figure 4:30 Bar chart showing the type of school that is attended by the respondents



**Question 24: Are you studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school?**

According to Figure 4.31 below, 77.5% of the learner respondents stated that they are studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school while on the contrary 22.5% said they were not taking this language as a learning subject. The latter respondents were the ones who can speak this language but were taking other African languages as learning subjects.

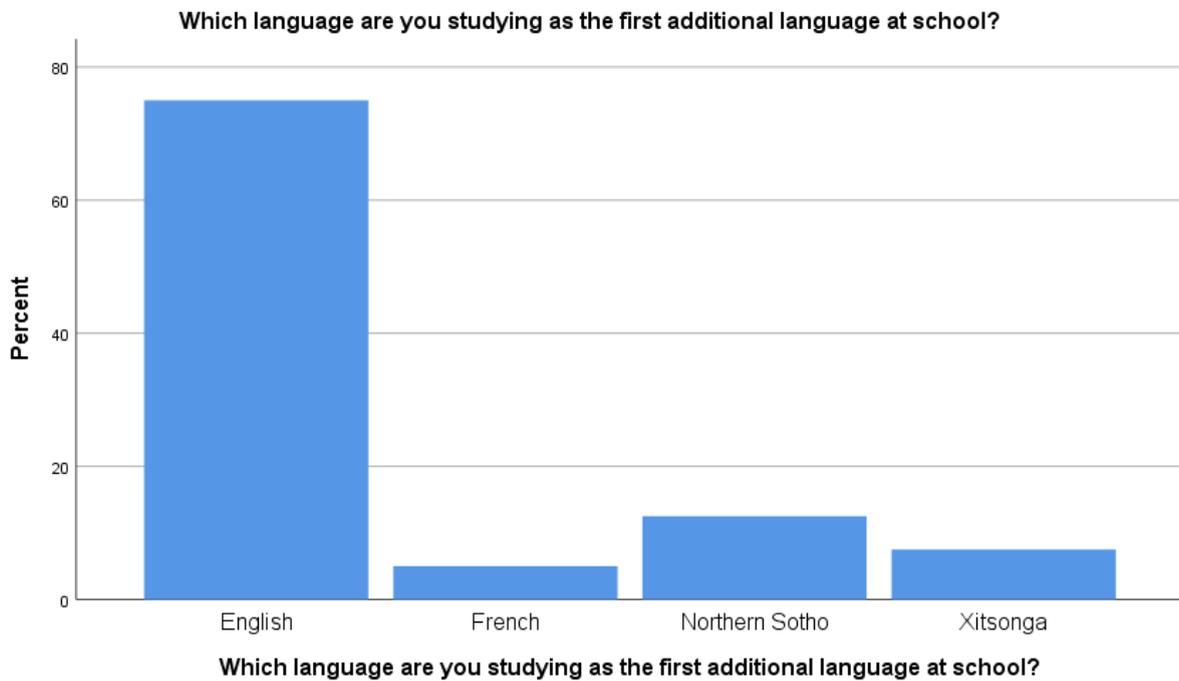
Figure 4:31 Bar chart showing if the respondents are studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school



**Question 25: Which language are you studying as the first additional language at school?**

Figure 4.32 below shows that 75% of the respondents studied English as the first additional language at school, 12.5% of respondents confirmed that they took Northern Sotho, 7.5% were taking Xitsonga and 5% were taking French as first additional languages at school. If we accept the percentages as they are, this then demonstrates that English still remained a dominant language.

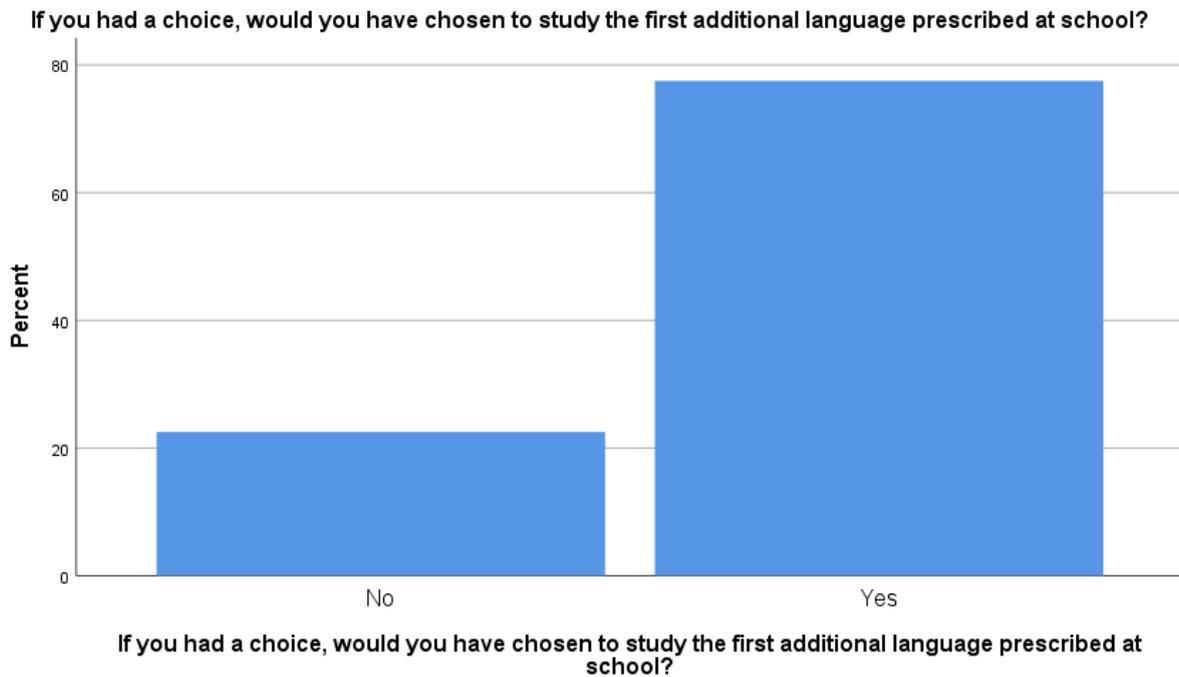
Figure 4:32 Bar chart showing the language that the respondents are studying as the first additional language at school



**Question 26: If you had a choice, would you have chosen to study the first additional language prescribed at school?**

Figure 4.33 below, demonstrate that a high percentage of 77.5% of the respondents were still comfortable with English as a learning subject and medium of instruction in the schools. Conversely, 22.5% of the respondents strongly argued that if they had a choice, they would not have chosen to study the first additional language prescribed at school.

Figure 4:33 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' choice of the first additional language prescribed at school if they had a choice

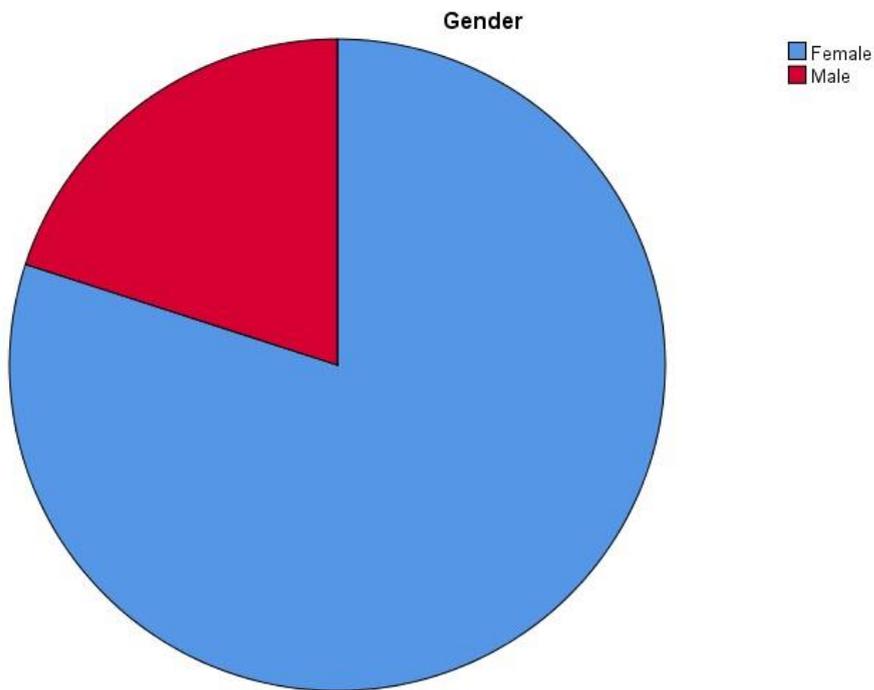


#### 4.2.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRES FROM THE TEACHERS

##### Question 1: Gender

The biographical information about the gender of the teachers is graphically presented in the pie chart in Figure 4.34 below. It demonstrates that 80% of the respondents were females and 20% were males. It is clear from the pie chart that there were more females who participated than males. The Northern Sotho speaking teachers who also teach this language as a learning subject were predominantly females.

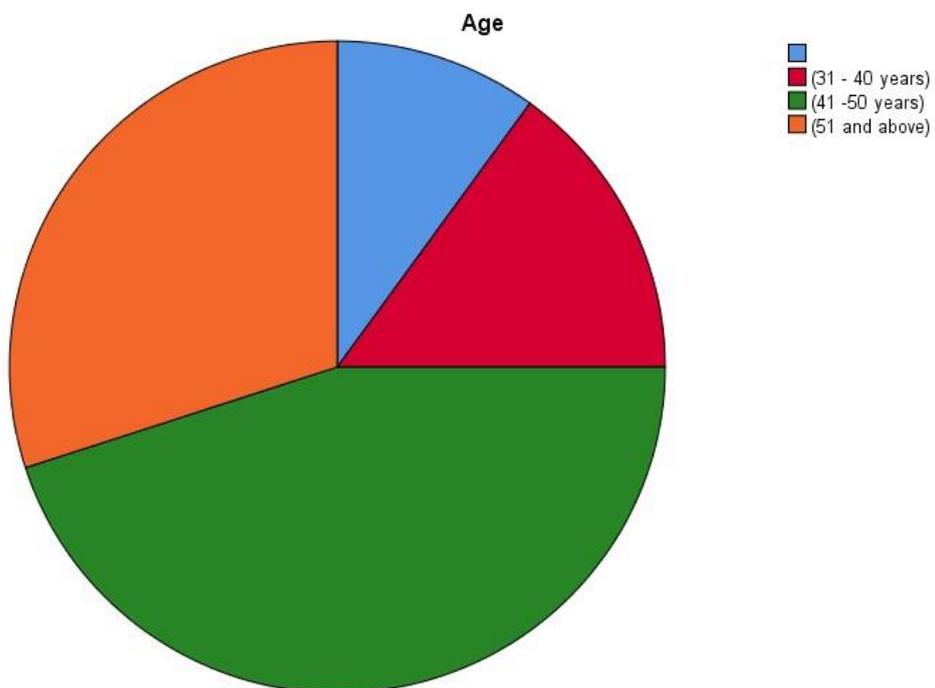
Figure 4:34 Pie chart showing the distribution of the gender for teachers



### Question 2: Age

The distribution of the questionnaire respondents by age is shown in Figure 4.35 below. As shown in this pie chart, the age range of the respondents ranges from 31 and above. 45% of the respondents were between the ages 41-50 years, 30% were between the ages 51 and above, while 15% were in the age bracket of 31-40 years.

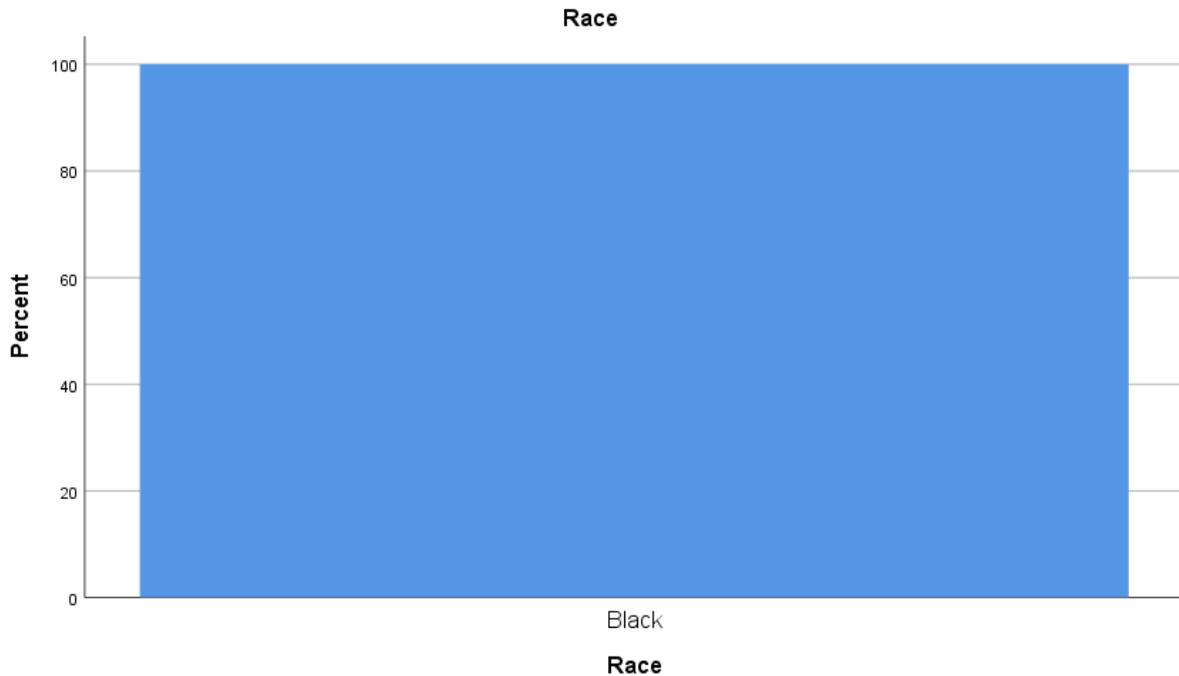
Figure 4:35 Pie chart showing the distribution of the ages of teachers



### Question 3: Race

This question provided the researcher with information pertaining to the race of the participants. 100% of the teacher respondents were Africans as shown in Figure 4.36 below. The researcher collected data from the participants who were mostly teachers who were teaching Northern Sotho in the townships of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi.

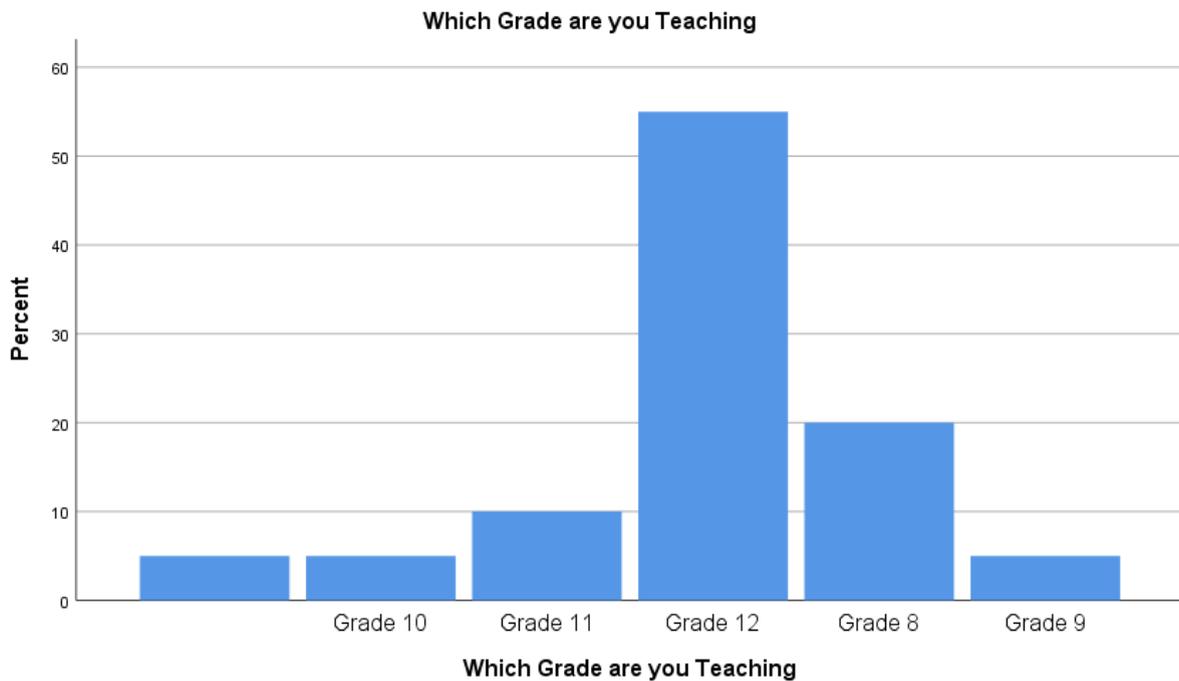
Figure 4:36 : Bar chart showing the race of the respondents



### Question 4: Which Grade are you teaching?

Question 4 was intended to find out the grades which the teacher respondents were teaching in the schools. Since the researcher's focal group were the learners from 18 years and above, 80% of these learners were in grade 12, therefore, it made sense to the researcher to also interview their grade 11 and grade 12 Northern Sotho speaking teachers. Figure 4.37 below shows that 55% of the respondents were teaching grade 12, 10% grade 11 and the rest were teaching the lower grades until grade 8.

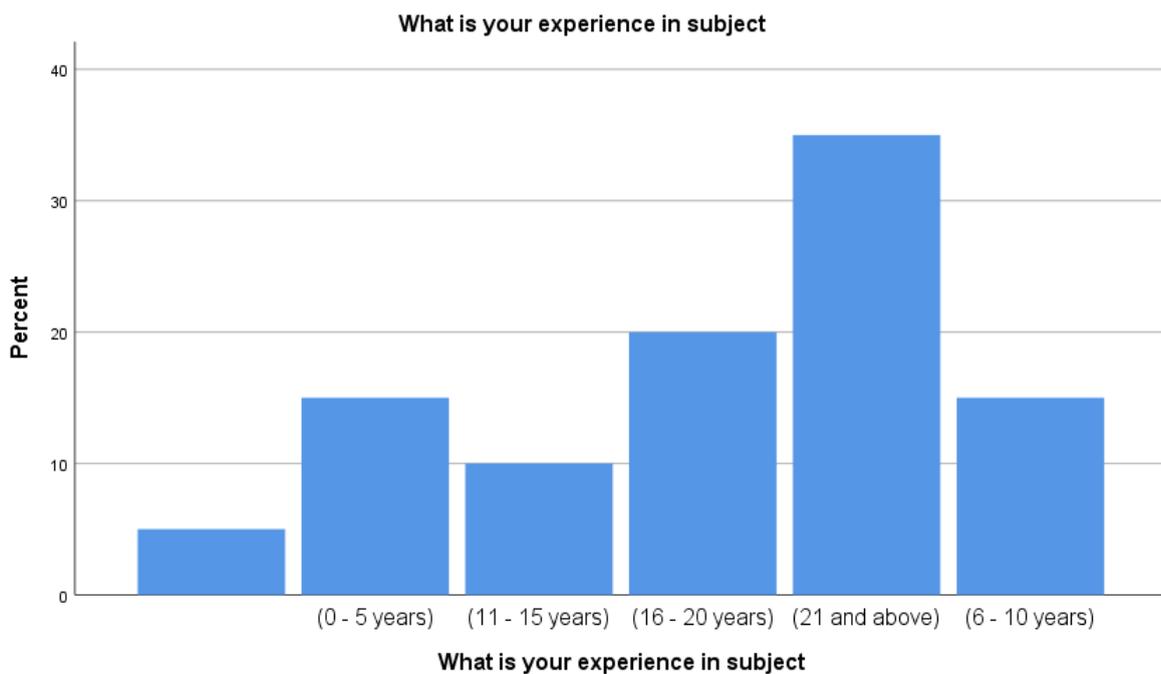
Figure 4:37 Bar chart showing the distribution of the grades that the respondents are teaching



**Question 5: What is your experience in the subject?**

According to Figure 4.38 below 35% of the respondents said that they had 21 years of experience and above. 20% had 16-20 years of experience, 15% and another 15% had 0-5 years and 6-10 years, respectively.

Figure 4:38 Bar chart showing the respondents' experience in the subject



## Northern Sotho

This question was aimed at determining the number of respondents who were teaching the subject Sepedi which is also called Northern Sotho. As shown in Figure 4.39 below, the bulk of the respondents (90%) were teaching this language. This shows the positive attitude that these respondents show towards their mother tongue. Although the teachers were teaching this subject, they do not consider themselves as less important than the teachers who were teaching Mathematics and Business Economics, for example. This was encouraging since the learners had an interest in their mother tongue when they saw their teachers leading them by example.

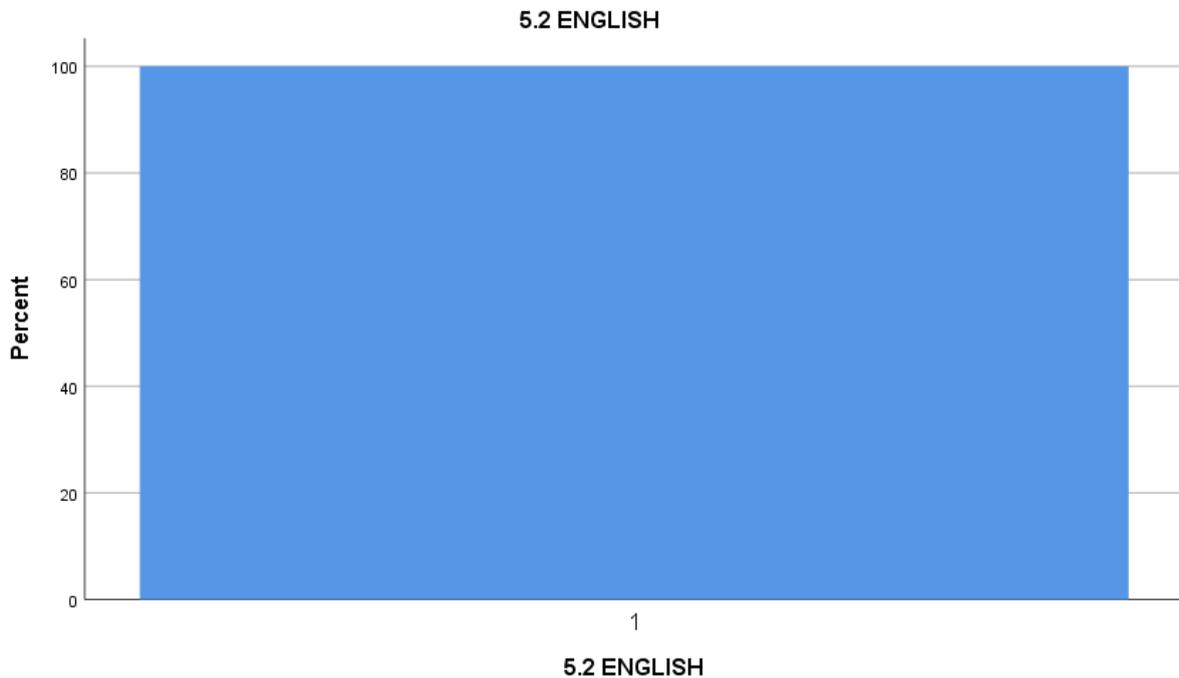
Figure 4:39 Bar chart showing the percentage of the teachers who are teaching Sepedi as a learning subject



## ENGLISH

This question reveals that 20% of the teacher respondents according to Figure 4.40 below taught the subject English. This language is still predominant and used as a medium of instruction in the schools in South Africa, followed by Afrikaans. Although these respondents were teaching this language, they were not as competent enough in teaching it.

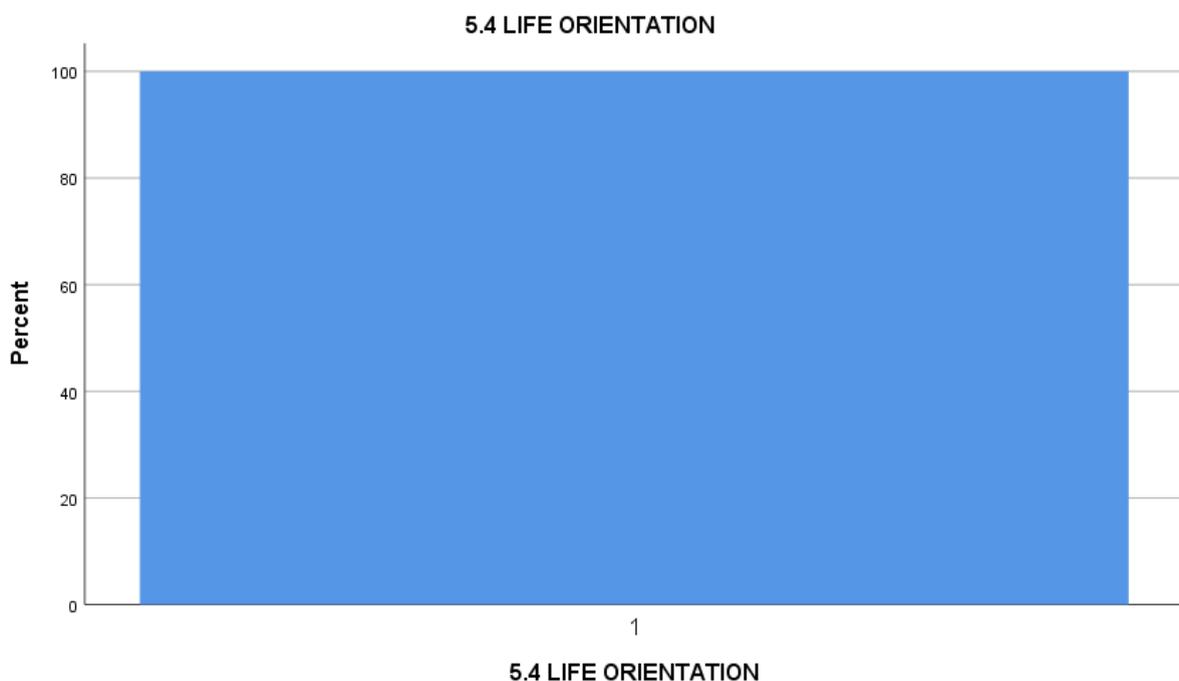
Figure 4:40 : Bar chart showing the percentage of teachers who are teaching English



### LIFE ORIENTATION

This question was intended to show the respondents who were teaching the subject, Life Orientation. In high schools, teachers teach more than one subject. Even though they were teaching Northern Sotho, for example, they can also teach other subjects as well. According to Figure 4.41 below, 30% of the respondents taught this subject.

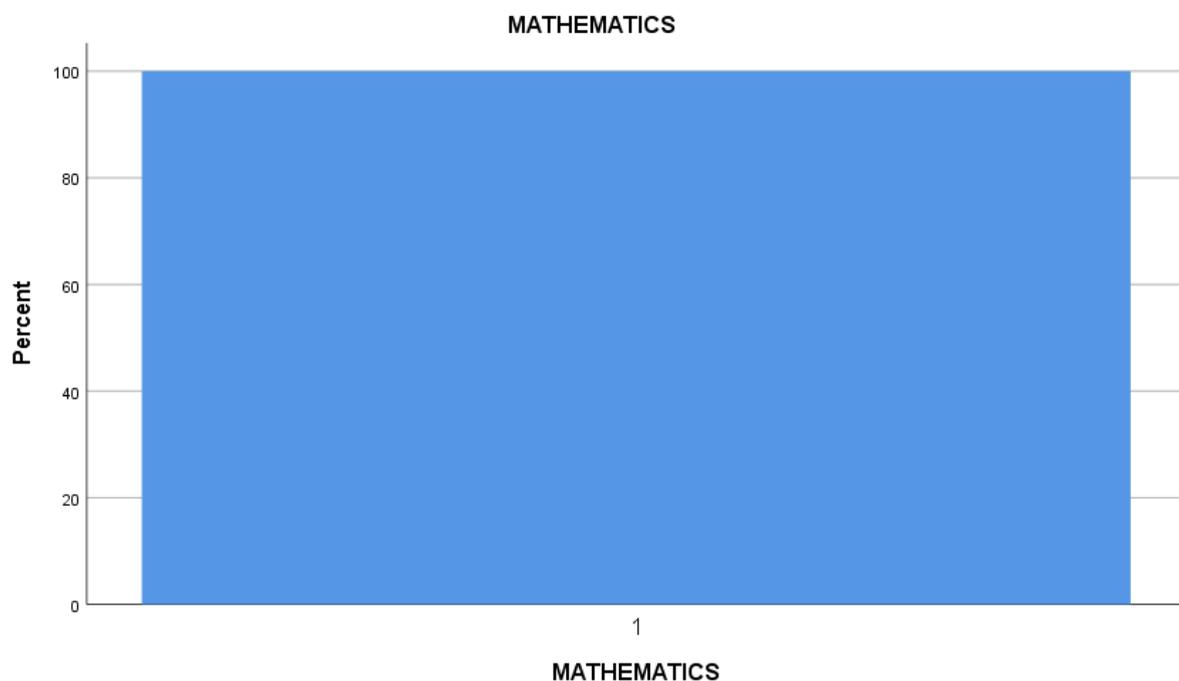
Figure 4:41 Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents teaching Life Orientation



### MATHEMATICS

This question aimed at establishing the number of respondents teaching Mathematics. There is a small percentage of teachers who specialise in teaching Mathematics as a subject in the universities and colleges of education in South Africa. Therefore, this results in a shortage of Mathematics teachers in the schools. Figure 4.42 below shows that only 5% of the respondents teach Mathematics. This demonstrates that maybe teachers found this subject to be difficult to study and subsequently teach it in the schools.

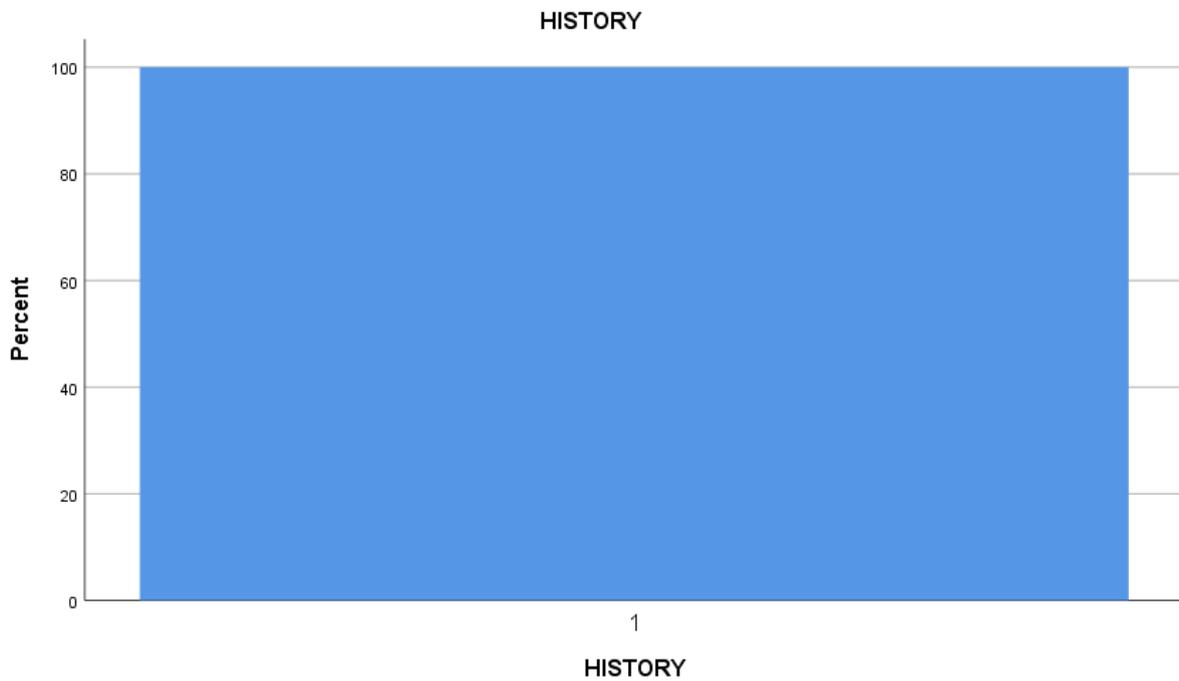
Figure 4:42 Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who are teaching Mathematics



## HISTORY

Question 5.6 intended to determine the number of respondents who are teaching History in schools. Figure 4.43 below demonstrate that 25% of the respondents were teaching History.

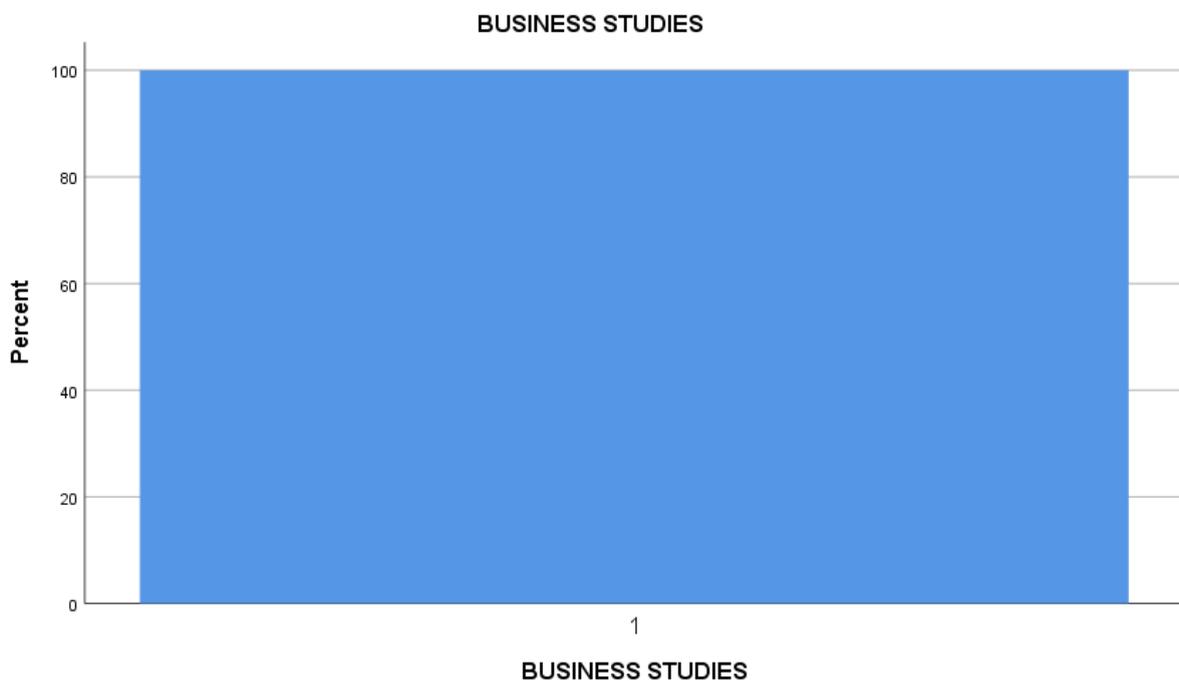
Figure 4:43 Bar chart showing the number of respondents who are teaching History



### BUSINESS STUDIES

This question was intended to show the number of respondents who are teaching Business Studies. This is another subject that has a low percentage of teachers who specialised in the subject. Therefore, only 5% of the respondents according to Figure 4.44 below were teaching this subject.

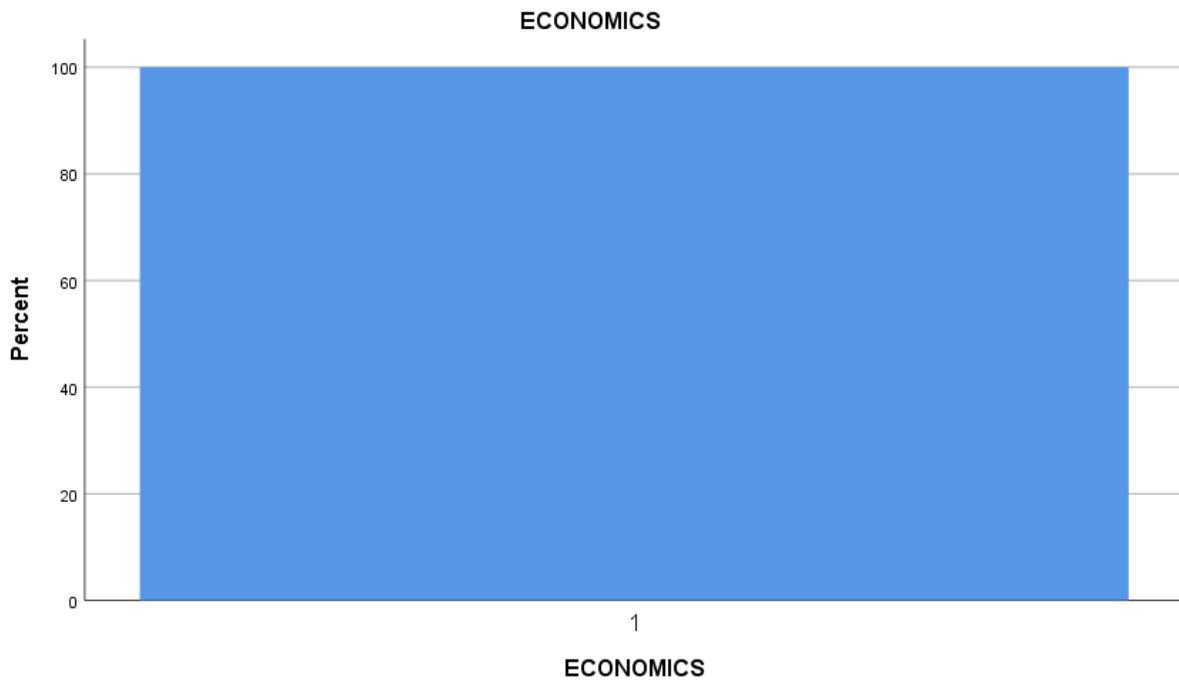
Figure 4:44 Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who are teaching Business Studies



## **ECONOMICS**

This question was intended to get the number of respondents who were teaching Economics. This is another subject that is not taught by many teachers. The evidence to this point is shown in Figure 4.45. Only 5% of the respondents taught the subject, Economics.

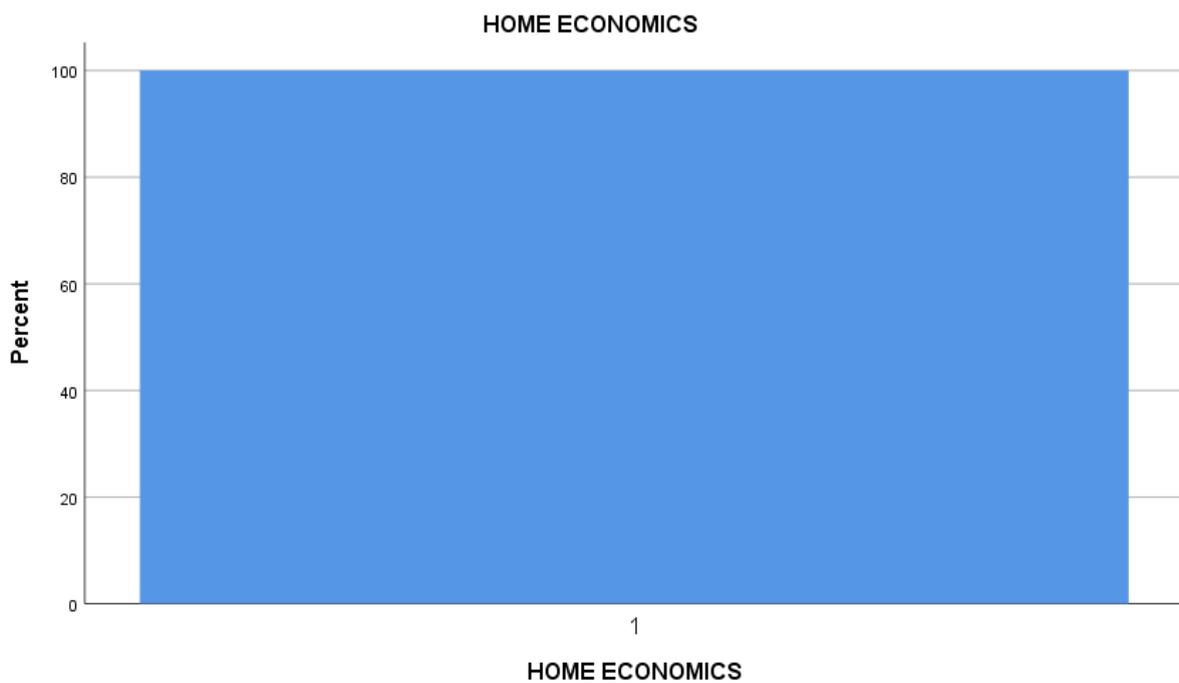
Figure 4:45 Bar chart showing the number of respondents teaching the subject, Economics



### HOME ECONOMICS

This question reveals that there is a scarcity of Home Economics teachers. Figure 4.46 below shows that 5% of the respondents teach Home Economics.

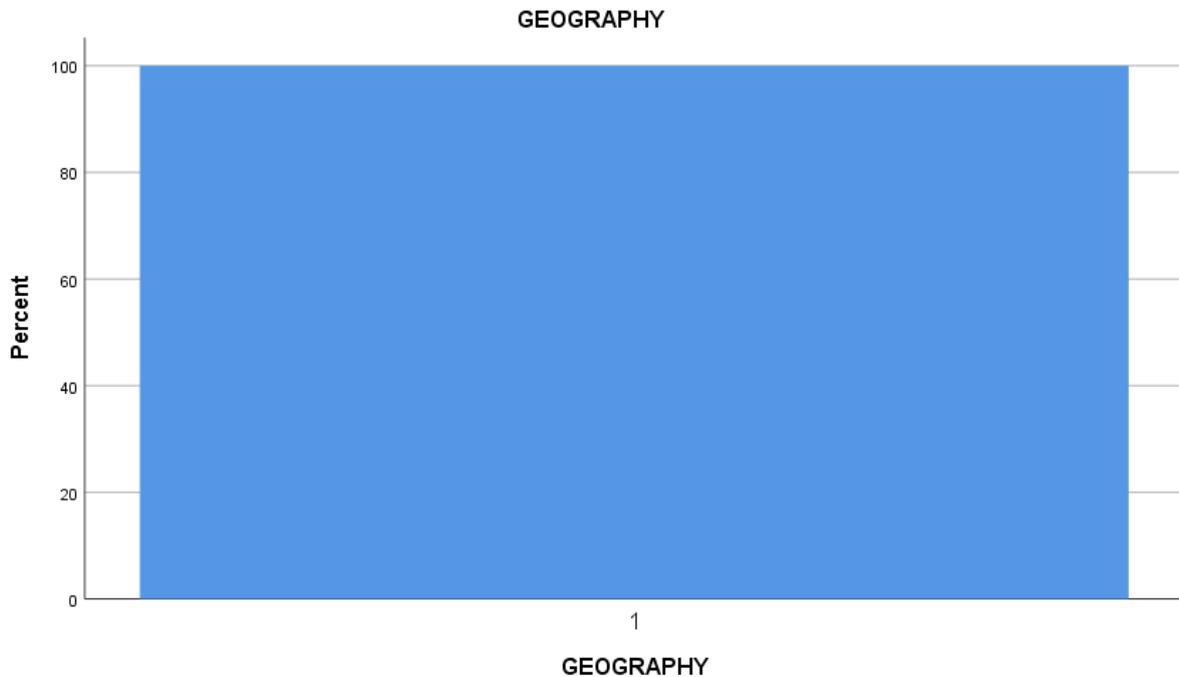
Figure 4:46 Bar chart showing the percentage of the respondents who are teaching Home Economics



### GEOGRAPHY

This question was intended in establishing the number of respondents teaching Geography. Figure 4.47 below shows that 15% of the teacher respondents teach this subject.

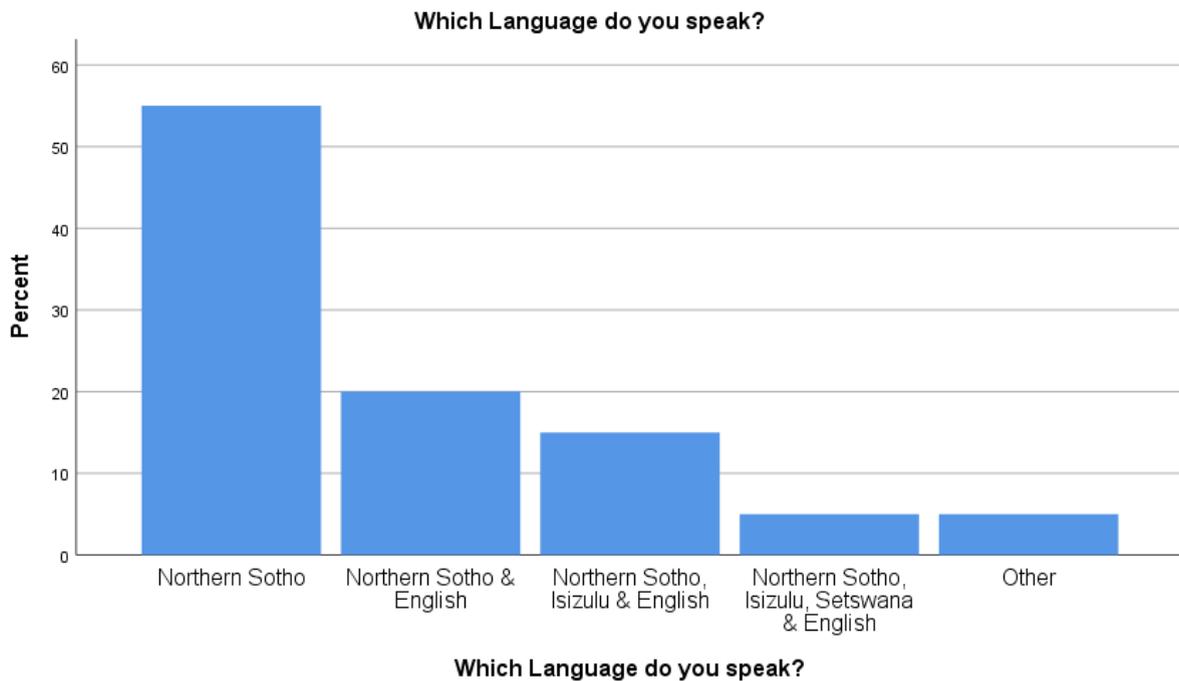
Figure 4:47 Bar chart showing the number of respondents who are teaching Geography



**Question 6: Which Language do you speak?**

Figure 4.48 below shows that 55% of the teacher respondents spoke Northern Sotho, 20% spoke both Northern Sotho and English, 15% spoke Northern Sotho, isiZulu and English, 5% spoke three African languages and English and the remaining 5% spoke other languages. It shows from this table that English remains a common language that is spoken by many.

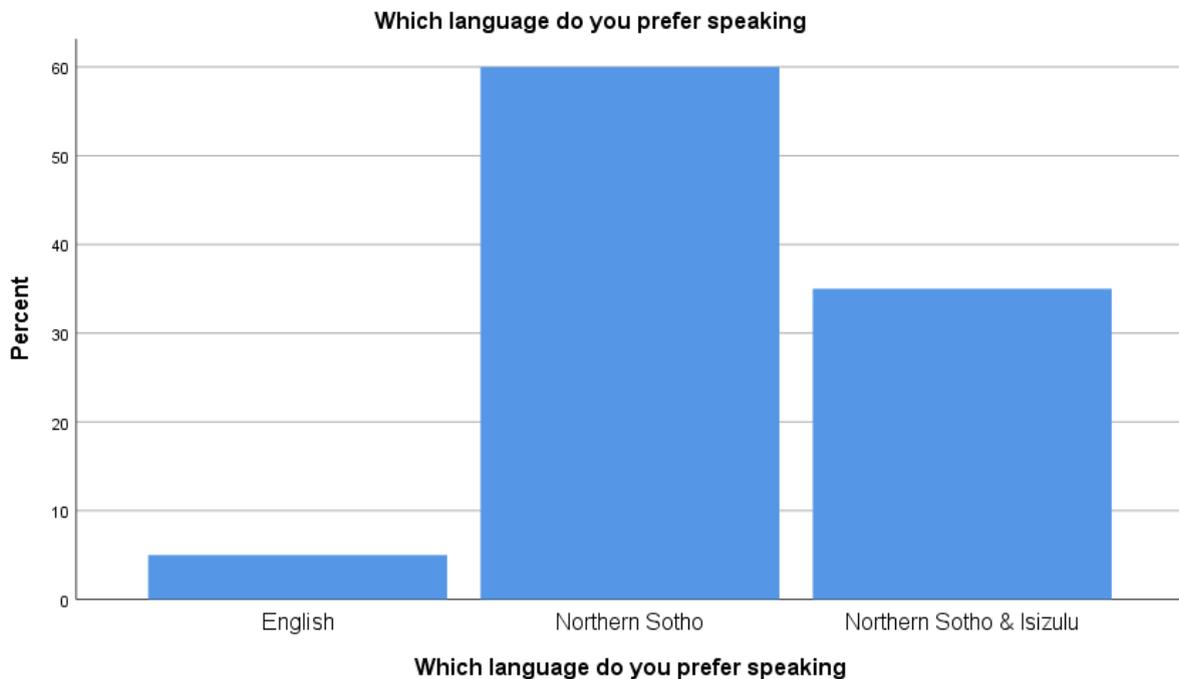
Figure 4:48 Bar chart showing the distribution of the language that is spoken by the respondents



### Question 7: Which language do you prefer speaking?

Question 7 intended to determine the language preference of the teacher respondents. Figure 4.49 below demonstrates that 60% of the respondents preferred to speak in Northern Sotho compared to only 5% who preferred to speak in English, while 35% preferred to speak in both Northern Sotho and isiZulu. This is not surprising since the latter languages are spoken predominantly in Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships.

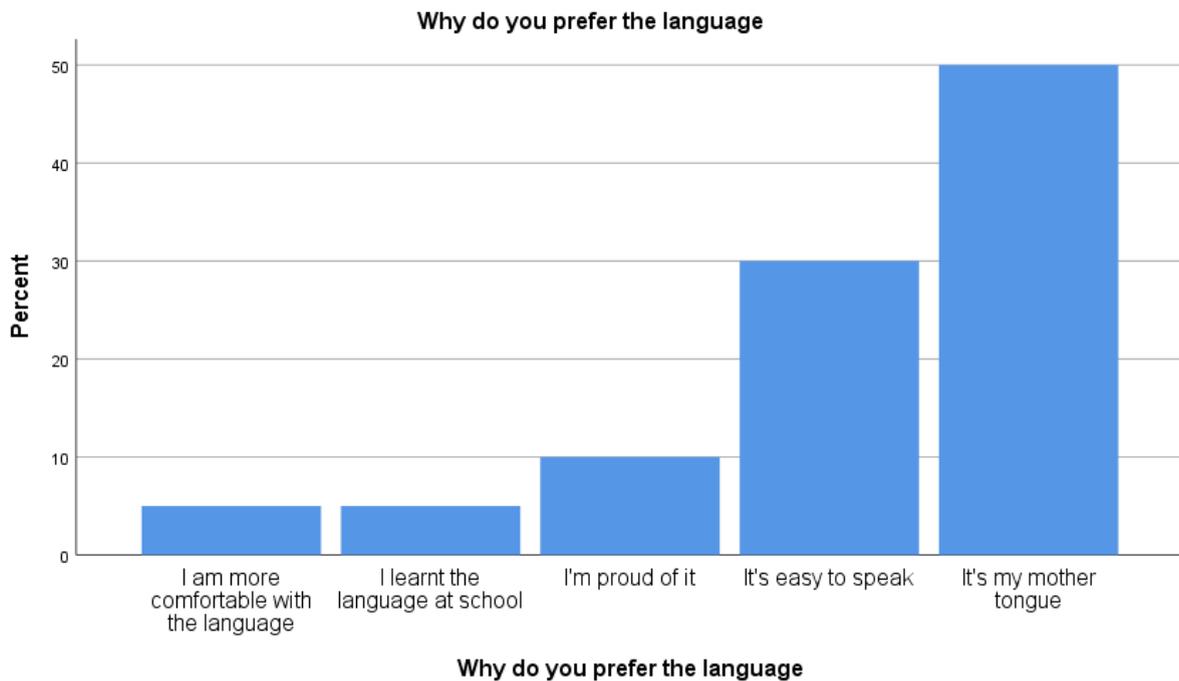
Figure 4:49 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' language preference



#### Question 8: Why do you prefer the language?

This question aimed at revealing the respondents' reasons for preferring a particular language. The respondents gave various reasons. Figure 4.50 below shows that 50% of the questionnaire respondents preferred to speak in Northern Sotho because it is their mother tongue. 30% said it was easy to speak in this language, 10% asserted that they were proud of this language while 5% stated that they feel more comfortable speaking in this language and another 5% said that it was because they learnt the language at school.

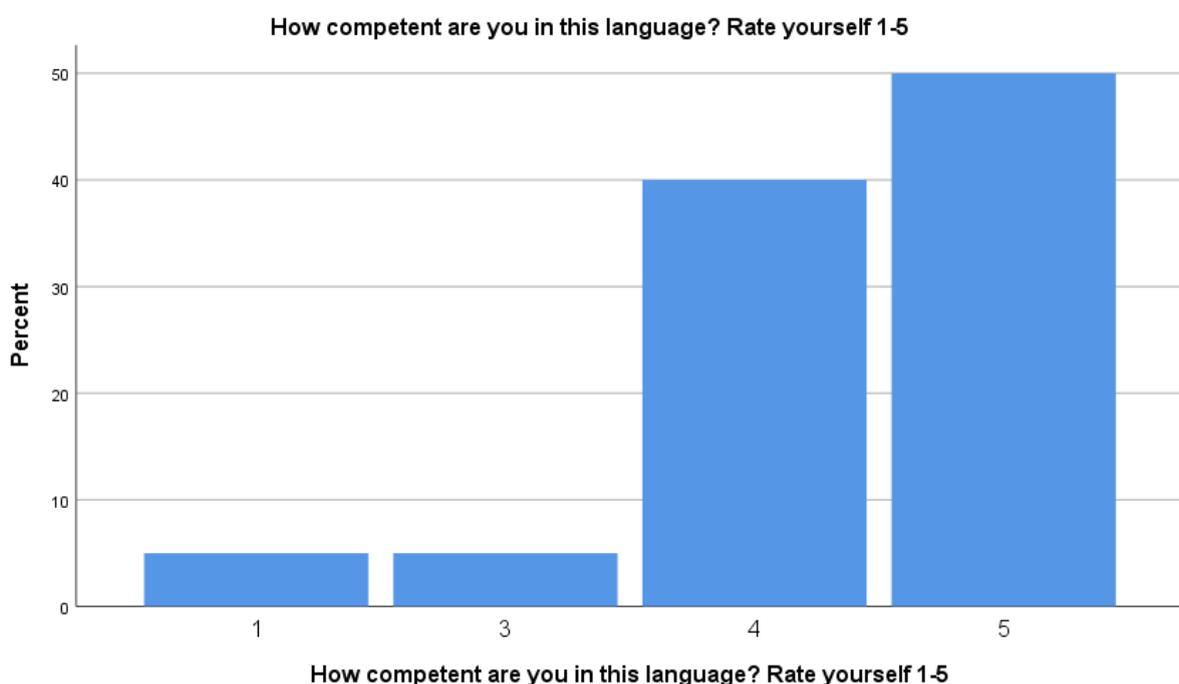
Figure 4:50 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' reason for their language preference



**Question 9: How competent are you in this language? Rate yourself 1-5.**

Figure 4.51 indicates that only 50% of the respondents said that they were highly competent in their language of choice. It is surprising to note that 40% of the respondents were not so competent, 5% were weak in that language and 5% were not competent at all in their language of choice.

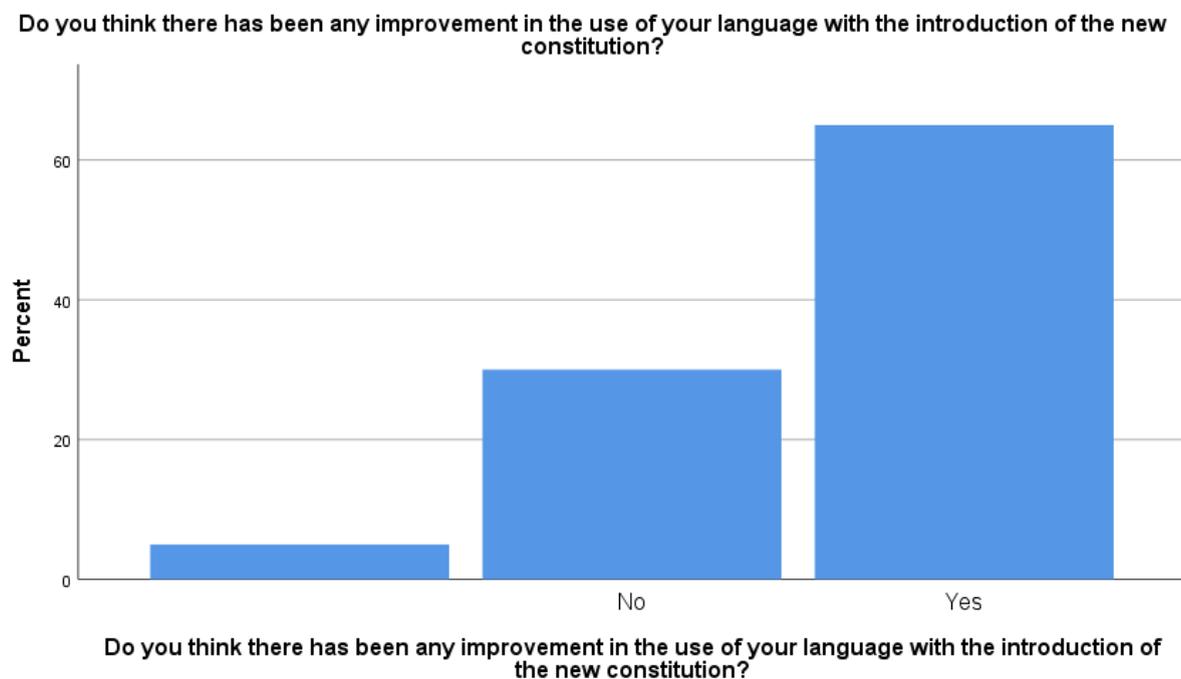
Figure 4:51 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' competence in the language Northern Sotho



**Question 10: Do you think there has been any improvement in the use of your language with the introduction of the new constitution?**

Data in Figure 4.52 indicates that the greatest percentage, that is, 65% of the respondents were happy that there has been an improvement in the use of their language. However, 30% of the teacher respondents were not so satisfied, while 5% said no. This shows that there has been a great improvement in the use of mother tongues compared to the past years. The next step would be to use these languages as mediums of instruction in the schools.

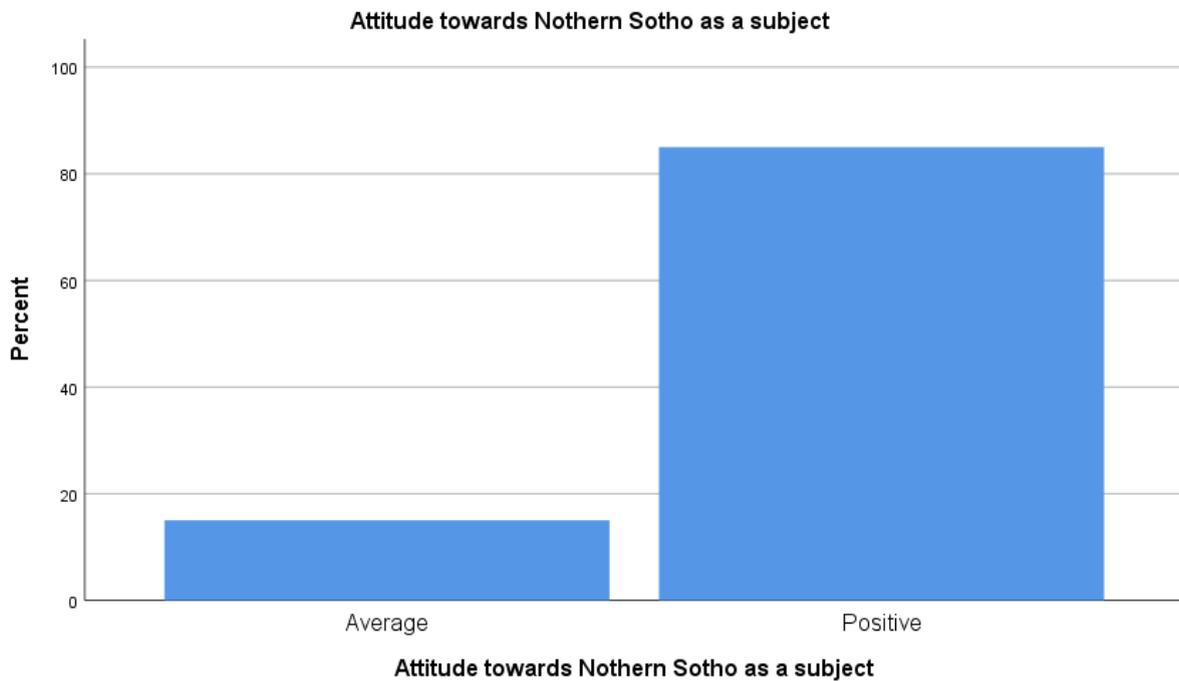
*Figure 4:52 Bar chart showing the distribution of the teacher respondents' response towards their thought as to whether they think if there has been any improvement in the use of their mother tongue with the introduction of the new constitution*



**Question 11: Attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject**

The data presented in Figure 4.53 showed that the greatest percentage of the teacher respondents that is 85% of them compared to the learner respondents (62.5%) held that their attitude was positive towards their mother tongue (Northern Sotho). This shows overall that the Northern Sotho speakers have a positive attitude towards their language therefore, the learners ought to be taught in their language in order to improve their subject results and lower the dropout rates.

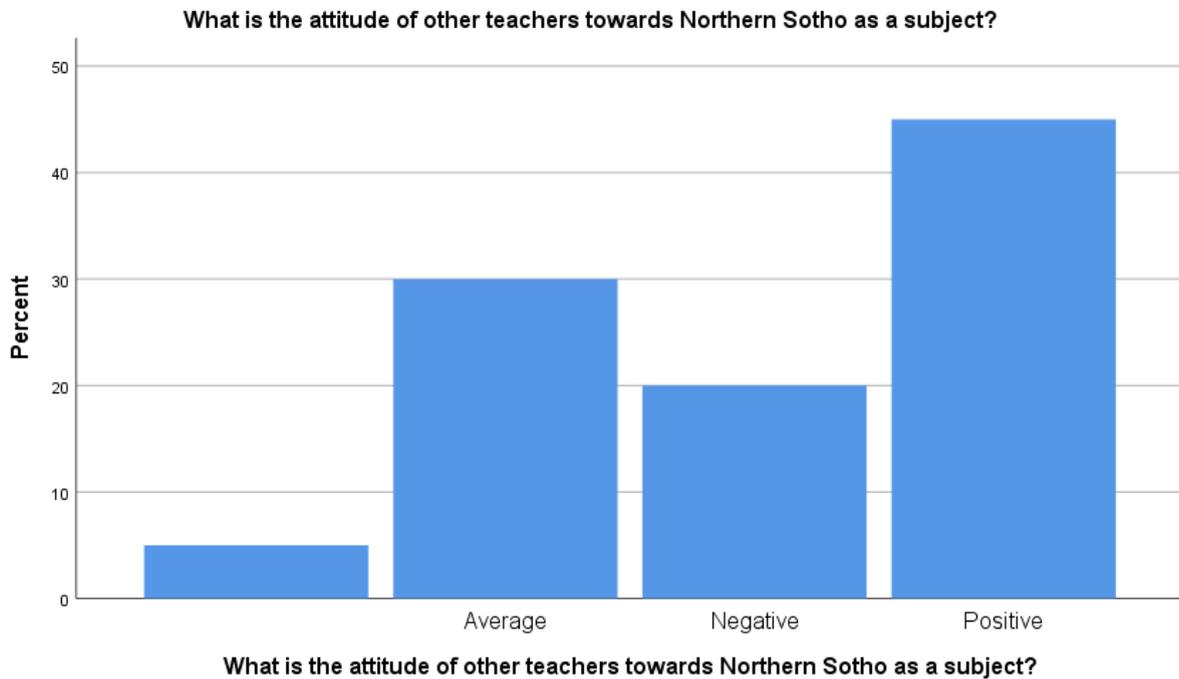
Figure 4:53 Bar chart showing the distribution of the teacher respondents' attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching



**Question 12: What is the attitude of other teachers towards Northern Sotho as a subject?**

It is interesting to note from Figure 4.54 that, 45% of the other teachers were positive towards Northern Sotho as a learning and teaching subject compared to the 85% of teachers in Figure 4.53 who responded positively. The attitude of 30% of the teachers was just average towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching while the attitude of the ones who had a negative attitude was only 20%. It is discouraging to note that there were 30% and 20% of teachers in the schools who had an average and a negative attitude respectively towards their own language. Teachers ought to lead by example. If they show a positive attitude towards their own mother tongue, then the learners will do the same.

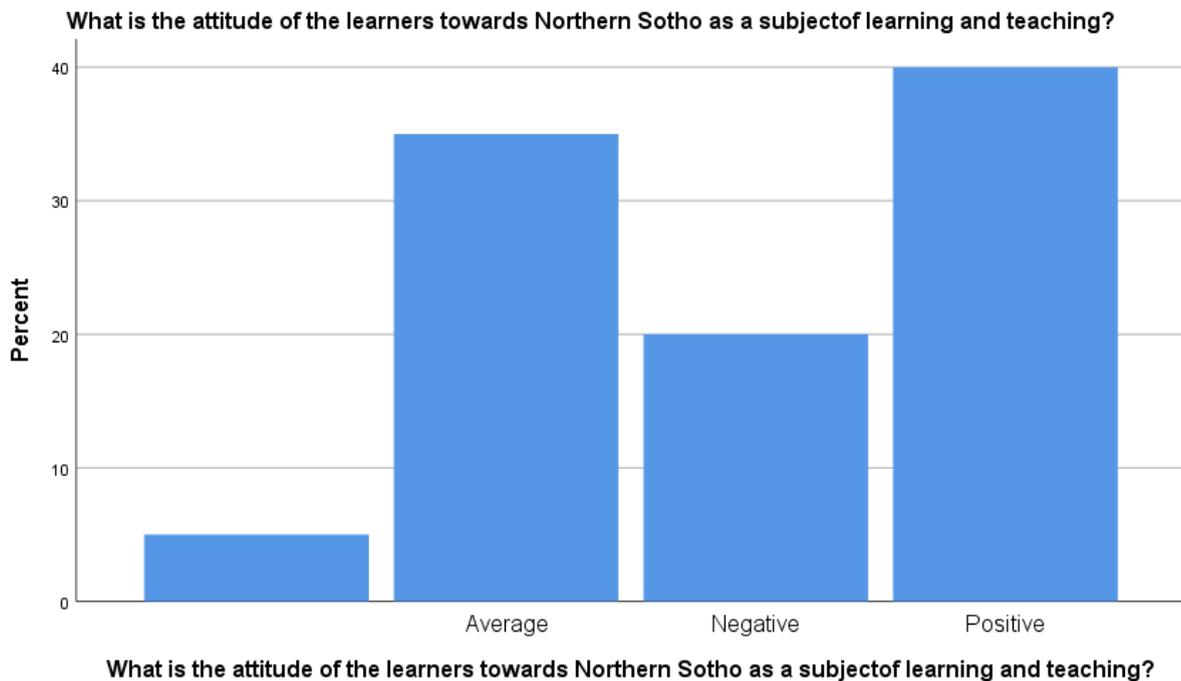
Figure 4:54 Bar chart showing the other teacher respondents' attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching



**Question 13: What is the attitude of the learners towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?**

Question 13 was aimed at finding out the attitude of the learners towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching. As stated previously, 62.5% of the learner respondents said that their attitude was positive towards the language Northern Sotho. The percentage is different from the one shown in Figure 4.55 which shows that 40% of the learners are positive towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching. 35% of the teacher respondents stated that the learners were average towards this language while 20% were totally negative towards Northern Sotho as a language of teaching and learning. This shows that there were still several learners who were clinging to English as a language of teaching and learning.

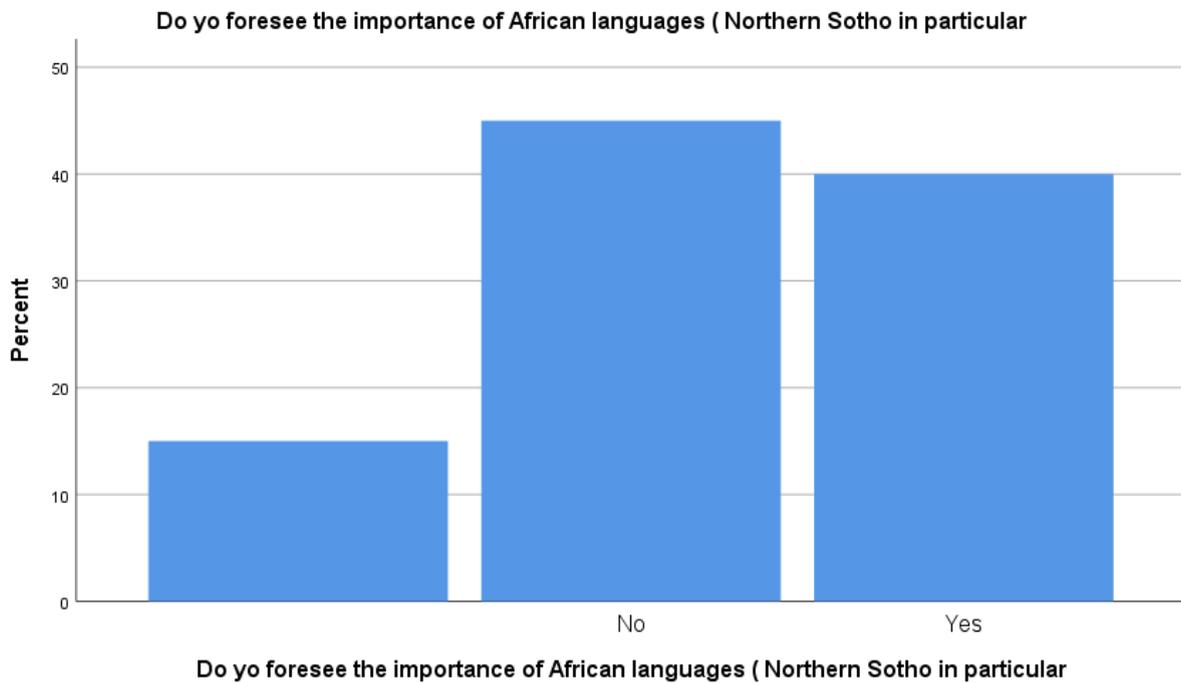
Figure 4:55 Bar chart showing the distribution of the learner respondents' attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching



**Question 20: Do you foresee the importance of African languages (Northern Sotho in particular) for the new generation?**

Question 20 intended to find out the respondents' views on the importance of African languages for the new generation. It was disappointing to note that, a high percentage of 45% of the respondents said that they did not foresee the importance of African languages for the future generation. On the other hand, Figure 4.56 shows that 40% of the teacher respondents agreed vehemently that they foresaw a bright and promising future for the African languages. This shows that English still has its grip as a global and relevant language if one wants to prosper.

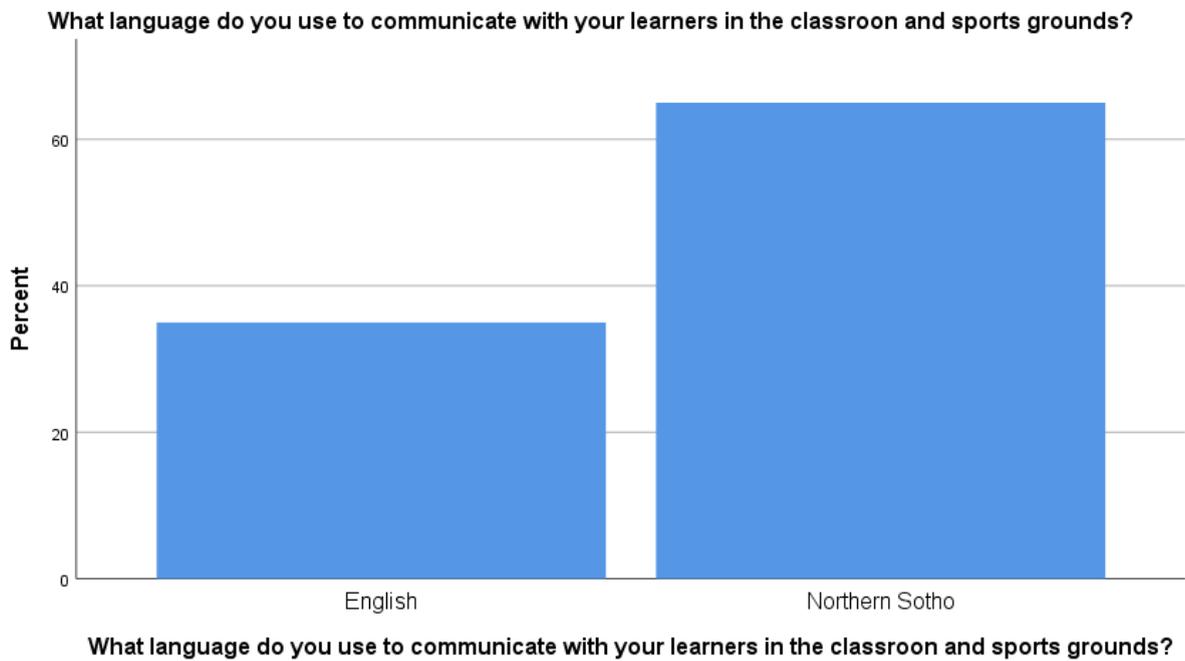
Figure 4:56 Bar chart showing the distribution of the teacher respondents view if they foresee the importance of African Languages (Northern Sotho) in particular



**Question 23: What language do you use to communicate with your learners in the classroom and sports grounds?**

Figure 4.57 indicated that 65% of the teacher respondents spoke to their learners in Northern Sotho, while 35% spoke to them in English. The teachers in the Atteridgeville and Mamelodi areas have a tendency of switching to Northern Sotho when teaching the learners even if the subject is in English so that they can understand them better. If then this is the case, it is best to teach the learners in their own mother tongue.

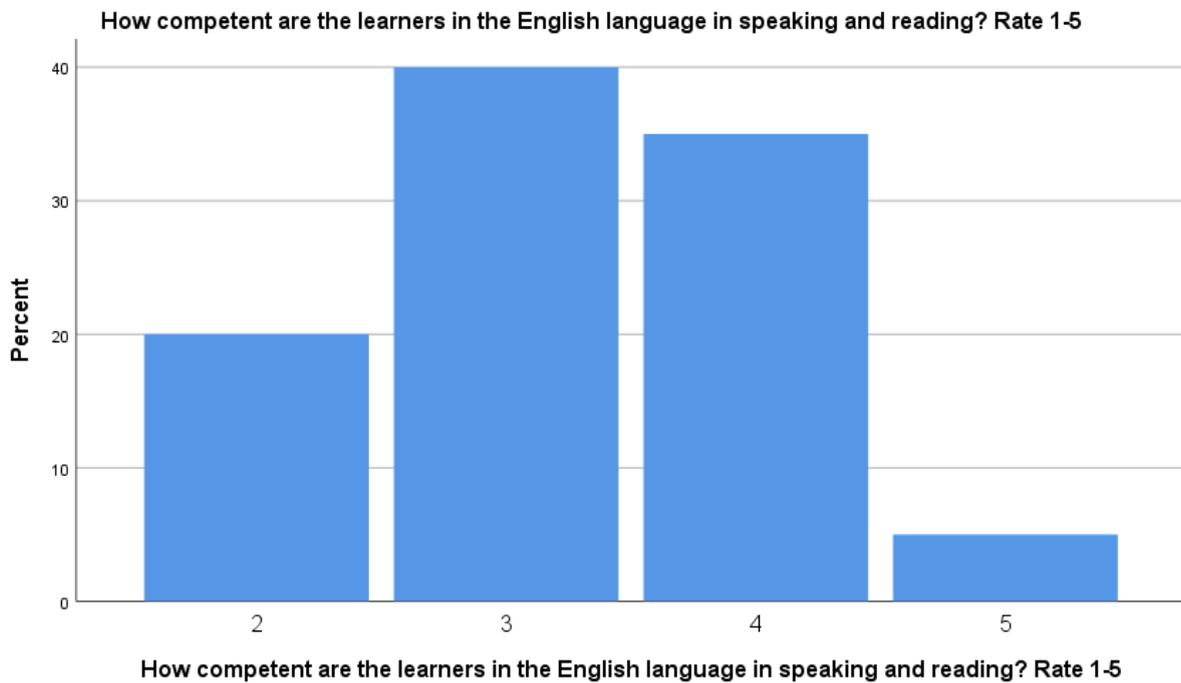
Figure 4:57 Bar chart showing the distribution of the teacher respondents' language of communication with their learners in the classroom and sports grounds



**Question 24: How competent are the learners in the English language in speaking and reading? Rate 1-5.**

According to Figure 4.58 below, only 5% of the learner respondents were competent enough, 35% of the learner respondents were just doing well, 40% were just average while 20% were not really doing well in this language. According to this bar graph, it is clear that the learners ought to be taught in their own mother tongue.

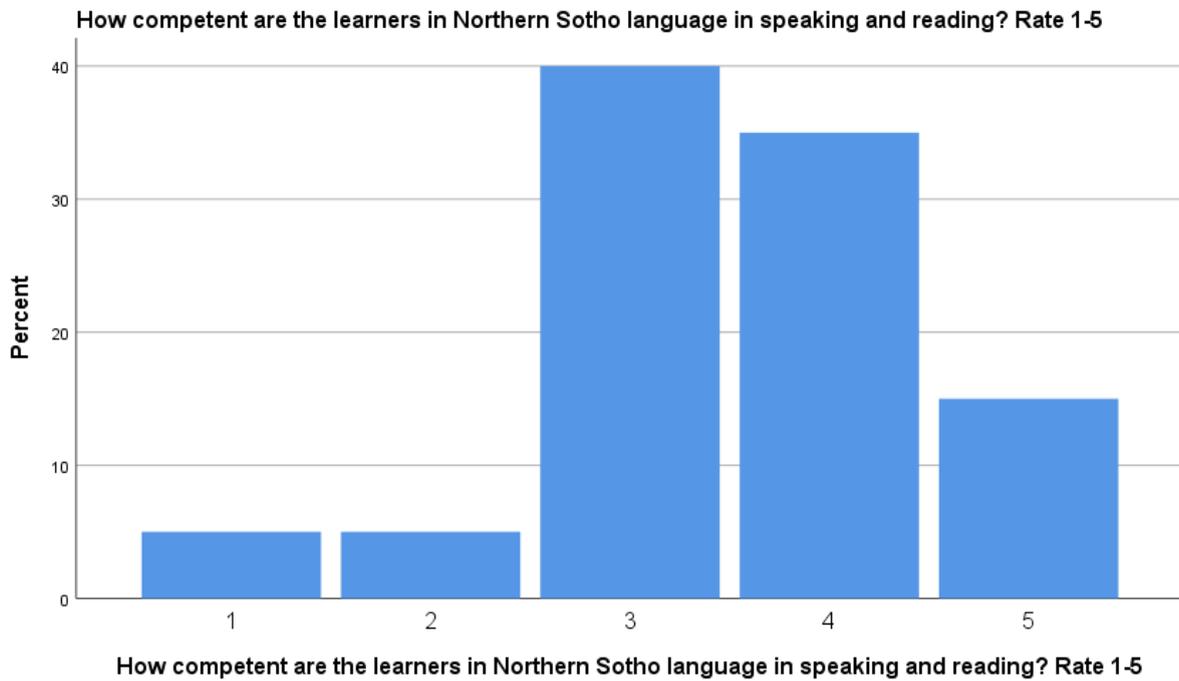
Figure 4:58 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' views on how competent the learners are in the English language in speaking and reading



**Question 25: How competent are the learners in Northern Sotho language in speaking and reading? Rate 1-5.**

Contrary to what has already been stated in the previous pages, the data presented in Figure 4.59 shows that only a disappointing 15% of the learner respondents according to the teacher respondents were able to fluently express themselves in their own mother tongue. Also, according to the teacher respondents, 35% of the learners were average in communicating in this language, as many as 40% of the learners were somehow able to communicate in their mother tongue while a disappointing 5% and another 5% were poor in communicating in their own mother tongue. The researcher also observed while collecting data from the learner respondents that they were not so fluent in communicating in their own language. In most cases, the learner respondents were co-mixing the languages.

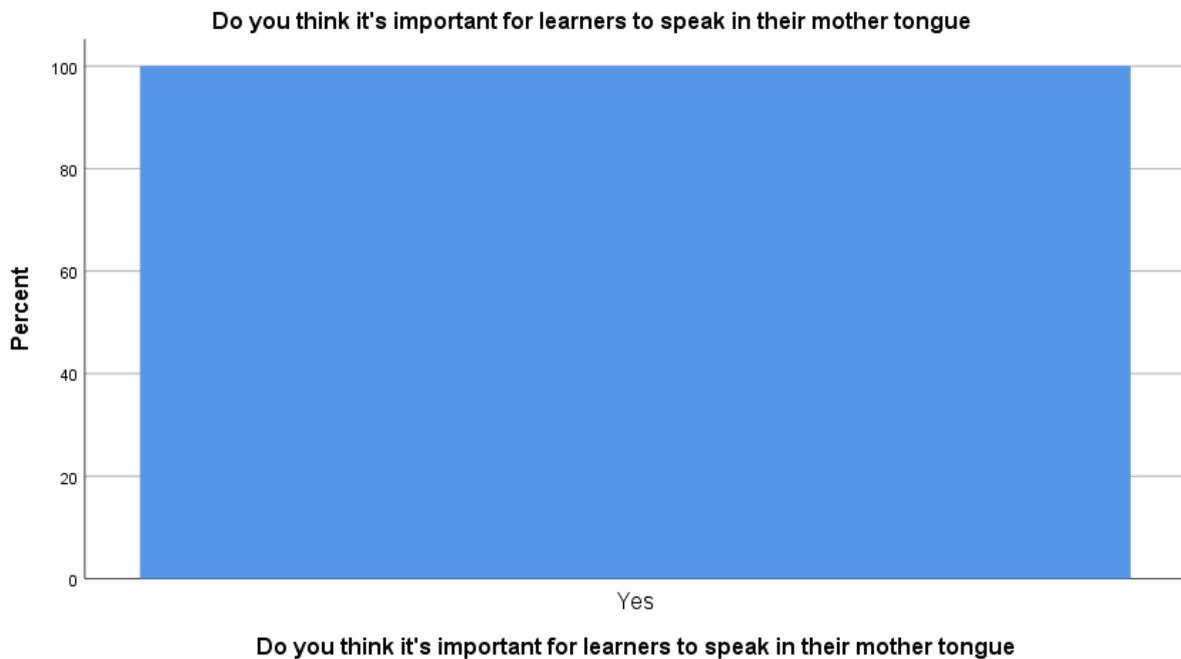
Figure 4:59 Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents' views on how competent the learners are in Northern Sotho language in speaking and reading



**Question 26: Do you think it's important for learners to speak in their mother tongue?**

This question was intended to get the teacher respondents' views on the importance of mother tongue for the learners. It was impressive to note that according to 100% of the teacher respondents, it was very important for the learners to speak in their mother tongue. This shows how important one's mother tongue is. Therefore, children ought to be taught in this language.

Figure 4:60 Bar chart showing the distribution of the teacher respondents' views whether they think if it's important for the learners to speak in their mother tongues



#### 4.3 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM THE GROUP INTERVIEWS (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS) WITH THE NORTHERN SOTHO LEARNERS

This section analyses the research findings from the questions asked in the focus group of Northern Sotho learners and their responses. In this section, the researcher analyses the responses from the learners about the challenges that impede mother tongue education (Northern Sotho in particular). By gathering data through group interviews, the researcher augmented the findings gathered through the questionnaires. This survey will enable the researcher to make further suggestions and recommendations about teaching through the medium of Northern Sotho language in high schools. The four groups comprised Northern Sotho speaking learners in grade 12. The researcher first explained to the learners what this interview was all about and then proceeded to ask questions and then got actual responses from the respondents on the challenges that impede mother tongue education. The total number of participants in these focus groups was twenty grade 12 learners.

Table 4:2 Distribution of the focus group discussion participants by gender (N= 20)

| <b>Group</b>                        | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Focus Group 1</b>                | <b>4</b>      | <b>1</b>    | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Focus Group 2</b>                | <b>3</b>      | <b>2</b>    | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Focus Group 3</b>                | <b>3</b>      | <b>2</b>    | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Focus Group 4</b>                | <b>4</b>      | <b>1</b>    | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Total number of participants</b> | <b>14</b>     | <b>6</b>    | <b>20</b>    |

**The questions will be discussed individually as follows:**

**4.4 Do you wish to be taught all content subjects in the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English?**

Below are the broad views and the actual responses from the focus group on question1.

Most of the respondents (75%) expressed themselves strongly that they would like to be taught all content subjects through the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English. The positive responses to this question proved that the learners wished to be taught in a language that they understood best, the language that they spoke daily at home since they were young. Respondents indicated that if they can be taught in their own mother tongue language like the learners whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and are taught in the medium of Afrikaans in their schools, then the pass rate will go higher. They further indicated that at home they communicated in their mother tongue Northern Sotho and when they went to school they were obligated to learn and communicate in English which became confusing for them hence the high failure and dropout rate. This shows that there is something that impedes the mother tongue in the medium of Northern Sotho.

25% of the respondents observed that Northern Sotho seems to be spoken only in

South Africa and it will be difficult to communicate with other people from other countries or even do presentations in Northern Sotho and be understood by everyone. The challenge is that even if the government can approve that the learners be taught all content subjects in Northern Sotho, their language will end in South Africa since they will not be understood by the non-speakers of this language. These are the main challenges that impede education in Northern Sotho and other African languages. Among the 25% of the respondents, some stated clearly that they do not wish to be taught all content subjects in the medium of Northern Sotho language. They mentioned the fact that they seem to be understanding English better and that the former language has a future compared to the latter language. They obviously find it is easier to learn in English than in Northern Sotho.

Another concern raised by the respondents was about the Northern Sotho terminology when it comes to subjects like Physical Science and Mathematics. The respondents maintained that it is challenging to translate some words from English to Northern Sotho. These opinions imply that it is the wish of the learners to be taught in the language that they understand best, which is their mother tongue (Northern Sotho), but they are already used to the English terminologies. Although currently the learners are taught in the medium of foreign languages such as English and Afrikaans (which is gradually falling off), they still find it difficult to comprehend in these languages. Therefore, the English language is still dominating.

### **Does the language, Northern Sotho have value and a future? Discuss.**

70% of the respondents stated that Northern Sotho has value on the basis that it is a mother tongue of a certain group of people in South Africa who value their culture and tradition. The respondents emphasised the fact that the children must know their roots and not forget where they come from. They further stated that its value lies in the fact that it is a mother tongue to the Northern Sotho speaking people, therefore the learners will understand better than when they are taught in English which is foreign to them. The respondents suggested that Northern Sotho like all the African languages should be taught to the next generations and the present generation should not allow this language to disappear. This is in line with the opinion held by the researcher.

30% of the respondents, on the other hand, cited that Northern Sotho does not have value because this language will not go beyond South African borders. They stated that one needs English to communicate with the rest of the world and that this

language promotes social interaction and understanding in different societies. They further maintained that Northern Sotho is limited to certain boundaries. 60% of the respondents maintained that most of the young people want to learn in English and are not interested in the Northern Sotho language because they believe that English has a future thus, they have also lost their traditions and culture. 40% of the respondents stated that Northern Sotho has a future and that the coming generation is encouraged to learn this language. By learning this language, the future generation will know their roots and traditions. The children will know where they come from. They further stated that the future of Northern Sotho lies in the fact that children will understand their subjects better if they are taught in their own mother tongue language. They have observed that all the schools in South Africa use either English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and that African languages do not have a future and are insignificant. Learners are more interested in learning in English than in Northern Sotho. From the informant's responses, the researcher noted that the learners prefer to be taught in their own mother tongue but are dubious about its future and if they can be competitive globally if they have learned in this language. All these observations further demonstrate the indispensability of English in South African schools.

#### **4.5 Discuss the issue of language rights and language equality.**

50% of the respondents cited that one can sometimes be discriminated for speaking in Northern Sotho by the people who regard English as an elite language. They believe that English has the power to free oneself from atrocities like hunger, oppression, ignorance, etc. Therefore, they also find themselves speaking in English even though they cannot express themselves due to fear of being stigmatised. 50% of the respondents showed in their answers that Northern Sotho is not equitable to English since it is not widely used in the schools. In a nutshell, the only time the learners are in contact with Northern Sotho is when they are taught this language as a learning subject and when they are communicating outside their classrooms and at home. However, it was noted that English is still regarded as a dominant and powerful language around the world. 25% of the respondents showed in their answers that Northern Sotho is equivalent to English and Afrikaans but fell short of supporting statements to their answers. 75% were of the view that Northern Sotho is not equal to the English language. From all the responses the researcher concluded that the English language is still held high and winning on the basis that it is spoken and understood worldwide.

#### **4.6 What is your attitude towards the Northern Sotho language as a learning subject and medium of instruction?**

It is impressive to note that 100% of the learner respondents gave a positive response to question 4 above. They argued that the Northern Sotho language is as good as the English language. Therefore, it is obvious from their response that their attitude is positive towards this language as a learning subject and as a medium of instruction. This indeed is a good response from the learners. They pointed out that since Northern Sotho is the language that they speak at home and use at school with their friends, it will also be easier for them to learn all content subjects in this language. Others stated that if the examination question papers were set in Northern Sotho then they would understand the questions better and be able to get higher marks. From the information gathered from the respondents, it is clear that the learners had a positive attitude towards their mother tongue but there is a hindrance towards being taught through this language.

#### **4.7 What do you think could be the cause of non-use of African Languages as mediums of instruction in the schools?**

Only 10% of the respondents pointed out that the government is responsible for stopping education in the medium of Northern Sotho and other African languages. Others pointed to the fact that there is a shortage of Northern Sotho teachers in the schools. 85% of the respondents mentioned that the English language is the one hindering education in Northern Sotho because it is still dominating and preferred. They pointed out that it is not fair for Northern Sotho speaking children to go to school and learn in English which causes a huge problem towards their learning. According to the learners, the English language is being prioritised more than the African languages. Some even gave examples of English terminologies in subjects like Physical Science and Mathematics that are difficult to translate to the Northern Sotho language. Therefore, according to these respondents, English still forms a barrier to the development of African languages because of its global status. Therefore, from the respondents' viewpoint, there is still a long way to go before Northern Sotho or other African languages can be used as mediums of instruction in the schools.

2.5% of the respondents indicated that it can be due to historical reasons. This is the reason why there is still no education in African languages in South Africa. The English language is enforced as a medium of instruction in the schools. They also mentioned the fact that most learners and teachers have a negative attitude towards Northern Sotho and other African languages which is contrary to what has been mentioned in

question 4 above, yet they are the custodians of these languages. The researcher suggests that if this opinion is true, then something needs to be done about this situation. Learners prefer the English language more. Only 2.5% of the respondents mentioned the fact that there is a shortage of African language teachers, Northern Sotho in particular.

Overall, after gathering the responses from the participants, the researcher observed that most of the Northern Sotho speaking learners who claim to speak this language cannot fluently express themselves better in their own language. They switch from one language to the other or they mix the languages. They do not speak a clean language, Northern Sotho. The learners and their teachers are also not competent and proficient enough in the English language. From all the responses, English is still a dominant language in South African schools. All content subjects are still taught in the medium of this language.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has analysed and interpreted the research findings from the questionnaires and focus group interviews. The various views of the research participants were presented and analysed. From the data collected, it was noted that both the learner and teacher respondents are keen but doubtful to have Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction in the schools. They have been used to the English medium of instruction for many years. A significant percentage of respondents also showed a positive attitude towards this language (Northern Sotho). They, however, argued that the African languages (Northern Sotho in particular) deserved the right to be equal to English and Afrikaans and that the learners deserved to be taught in their own mother tongue because they will understand their subject matter better. The findings revealed that English still remains dominant, a language of commerce and industry. In the next chapter, the present researcher will discuss the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the researcher analysed and interpreted data that were presented in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the outcomes from the questionnaires directed to both learners and teachers were compared with the outcomes from the focus group interviews. The results proved to be trustworthy. The findings of this study are centered on the challenges that impede mother tongue education in the schools. The researcher further examines the respondents' perceptions towards the use of their mother tongue (Northern Sotho) as a language of teaching and learning. The discussion in this chapter will be outlined according to the themes that emerged from the research questions.

### **5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **5.2.1 Socio-Economic Background of Respondents**

The respondents from the questionnaire survey and the focus group interviews revealed similar and dissimilar thematic constructs.

#### **5.2.2 Results of the questionnaire survey**

The respondents that were randomly selected to participate in filling up the questionnaires were Northern Sotho speaking learners from grade 11 and 12 who were 18 years and above. The other group of respondents comprised high school teachers who are teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject in the schools. Both these groups of respondents had a positive attitude towards Northern Sotho as a learning subject and hopefully as a medium of instruction in the schools in the near future. They, however, were concerned about the future and destiny of this language. The hegemony of the English language continues since it is still preferred as a language of commerce and industry.

#### **5.2.3 Findings 1**

The results from the questionnaires indicate that although the respondents have the desire for Northern Sotho to be a language of teaching and learning, they still want to be taught in the English medium of instruction. The results of teacher respondents also concur with those of the learner respondents based on the following reasons:

- Historical factors.
- Some said that English is spoken and understood by many people around the world, so it will be easier for them to communicate with the outside world.
- Some maintained that there are terms in subjects like Science and Mathematics that are better left off in English than to be translated in Northern Sotho or other African languages.

#### **5.2.4 Results of focus group interviews**

Like the questionnaire interviewees, most of the focus group interviewees had a positive attitude and wish to be taught in their own mother tongue (Northern Sotho). Yet they too had a great concern about being taught in this language. Learners in South Africa and Africa in general have been exposed to the English medium of instruction for decades. Therefore, although they like the idea of mother tongue education, they are doubtful about the prospects of replacing the English medium of instruction by the Northern Sotho medium of instruction. Although both the teachers and learners are not competent enough in the English language, they are still comfortable in this language for higher communicative functions.

#### **5.2.5 Findings 2**

The learners who participated in the focus group interviews were learners randomly selected from the grade 11 and 12 classes. They were Northern Sotho speaking and taking this language as a learning subject in the schools. Most of the respondents had a perception regarding the use of Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction in the future. As stated in the previous paragraphs, some respondents showed a positive attitude, and others displayed a pronounced negative attitude towards the prospects of using Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction while some felt compelled to pledge allegiance to their mother tongue. Although most of the respondents have a positive attitude towards Northern Sotho, they strongly maintain that English should remain as a medium of instruction in the schools due to fear of the unknown. Like the learners whose mother tongue is Afrikaans, who are taught in this language, the Northern Sotho speaking learners also wished to be taught in their own language so that they can perform better in their subject matter. They just need to be reassured that Northern Sotho also has a future like English. The issue is that the latter language has been equated with success and prosperity.

### **5.3 The wish to be taught all content subjects in the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English**

#### **5.3.1 Results of the focus group interviews**

The majority of the interviewees were vocal about their wish to be taught in their own mother tongue, Northern Sotho. They asserted that the percentage in their subjects will go higher if they are taught in the language that they understand best.

#### **5.3.2 Findings 3**

Some 25% of the interviewees did not agree with their fellow-interviewees who expressed themselves positively about mother tongue education. They maintained that they have been taught for many years in English, as such, it will be difficult for them to learn in a language that they were not taught in during the previous grades. They do not see the suggestion made by 75% of the respondents as a solution to the problem.

### **5.4 The value of Northern Sotho and its future**

#### **5.4.1 Results of the focus group interviews**

Most of the interviewees agreed that Northern Sotho has value and a future just like English and Afrikaans, on the basis that it is their mother tongue. They further maintain that Northern Sotho must be taught to the next generations for its future's sake. However, this researcher observed that even though the interviewees expressed themselves this way, they were still convinced that English has more value than their own African languages.

The factors that were raised by the focus group interviewees are as follows:

- The present generation is losing its traditions and culture because has adopted the English language and western traditions.
- Northern Sotho can have a future if the present and future generations can be encouraged to speak and learn their language. By so doing, they will know their roots and traditions.

From the researcher's observation, the learners prefer to be taught in their own mother tongue, but they are not convinced about the future of Northern Sotho.

## **5.5 The issue of language rights and language equality**

### **5.5.1 Results of the focus group interviews**

The response that emerged from 50% of the interviewees was that Northern Sotho has rights and is indeed equal to English and Afrikaans. Stoop (2017) also stated that African languages must enjoy the same rights and be treated equal to English and other languages such as Afrikaans. However, the present researcher observed that the interviewees were doubtful about their response since some of them expressed the fact that they were sometimes discriminated for speaking in their mother tongue by the people who still hold English as a prestigious language. Compared to the 50% who maintained that Northern Sotho is equal to English, another 50% of the interviewees strongly opposed their fellow- interviewees that this was not the case. The present researcher admits that English still dominates other languages like the African languages.

#### **5.5.1.1 Findings 4**

The factors that were gathered by the present researcher from the focus group interviewees are as follows:

- 75% of the interviewees vehemently disagreed with the notion that Northern Sotho is equivalent to English.
- The interviewees maintained that books and articles are still predominantly written in the English language.
- English is spoken in most of the countries worldwide.
- Northern Sotho is a language that is used in the classroom when they are taught this language as a learning subject and when they are communicating outside the classroom and at home. So, therefore, they are not convinced that they can go beyond borders with Northern Sotho.

## **5.6 Attitude towards Northern Sotho as a learning subject and medium of instruction**

### **5.6.1 Findings 5**

It is clear from the discussion of the research results in this study that the respondents' attitude towards Northern Sotho language is positive, but some respondents were unsure if this language should be used as a language of teaching. They were afraid

that Northern Sotho might lead them to nowhere as compared to English. Graham (2010) weighs in by saying that parents, teachers and other community members are also doubtful about the implementation of mother tongue education in the schools. Surprising to the researcher is that there are some respondents who have a completely negative attitude towards their own language. To them, English is still a dominant language that will lead a person to success because it is regarded as an international language.

## **5.7 What do you think could be the cause of non-use of African languages as mediums of instruction in the schools?**

### **5.7.1 Findings 6**

As noted previously, some respondents were blaming government policies. They felt that there was a need for the government to change the language policy that is prevailing in the schools. According to most of the respondents, African languages (Northern Sotho in particular) should be given opportunities as languages of teaching and learning like English and Afrikaans. The second concern was the negative attitude of some of the respondents towards their own mother tongue. Seemingly, parents are still in favor of English medium education. 47.5% of the respondents' parents encourage them to communicate in English because they believe that their children will have a bright future and that it is a language of wider communication. 85% of the respondents stated that English is the one that is standing on the way of Northern Sotho medium of instruction.

## **5.8 Northern Sotho as a language of teaching and learning**

### **5.8.1 Findings 7**

Presently, Northern Sotho is taught as a learning language but not yet as a medium of instruction. English is still predominantly a language of instruction in South Africa as mentioned in the previous chapters. Stoop (2017) maintains that the government needs to take positive measures to elevate the status of African languages according to section 6.

### **5.8.2 Results of the questionnaire survey**

- 72.5% of the respondents preferred to be taught in English.
- 15% of the participants preferred to be taught in their mother tongue, Northern Sotho.

- Some (5%) reported that they preferred to be taught in both English and Northern Sotho.

This is indeed a disappointing result since Northern Sotho is the respondents' mother tongue language. However, the researcher observed that the teachers sometimes used both languages, i.e. English and Northern Sotho so that the learners can understand the subject matter better.

#### **5.8.2.1 Results of the focus group interviews**

The results from the focus group interviewees do not tally with those of the questionnaire respondents. 75% of the interviewees said that they prefer to be taught all content subjects through the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English. 25% of their co-interviewees said that they do not wish to be taught subjects in Northern Sotho on the basis that they are used to the present medium of instruction.

### **5.9 Northern Sotho as a language of communication**

#### **5.9.1 Findings 8**

At least a modicum of Northern Sotho is used as a language of communication both at school and at home. This language is used for communication with adults at home, friends at school and in the neighborhoods.

#### **5.9.2 Results of the questionnaire survey**

- It was impressive to note that 62.5% of the questionnaire respondents spoke to their fathers using Northern Sotho.
- 75.0% reported that they used it to speak to their mothers.
- 60% used Northern Sotho to communicate with their siblings.
- A high percentage of 85% used it to speak to their grandparents.
- 85% used this language frequently to speak to their friends at school.
- 67.5% used it to speak to their friends in their neighborhood.

This is a positive indication that Northern Sotho is also widely used by its speakers as a language of communication amongst themselves.

## **5.10 Level of proficiency in speaking Northern Sotho**

### **5.10.1 Results of the questionnaire survey**

The figure of 60% of the teacher respondents said that they were proficient in Northern Sotho while 40% of the learner respondents maintained that they were proficient enough in this language.

#### **5.10.1.1 Findings 9**

The results of the questionnaire survey revealed that there is an average percentage of respondents who are proficient enough in their own mother tongue language, Northern Sotho. This is a very disturbing result since the present researcher is advocating for mother tongue education which is critically important for the children.

### **5.10.2 Results of the focus group interviews**

Even though the respondents were not proficient enough in Northern Sotho, which is their mother tongue, a high percentage of 75% were vocal about their wish to be taught all content subjects through the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English.

### **5.10.3 Language taught from grade 1-3**

#### **5.10.4 Findings 10**

The results of the questionnaire survey showed that 37.5% of the respondents as compared to 47.5% were taught in the medium of English. This is one of the reasons why some learners still want to proceed to be taught in English because they have been taught in this language from the foundation phase. Some respondents gave a reason that it is the language that they are used to even though their mother tongue is Northern Sotho.

## **5.11 Language taught from grade 4-12**

### **5.11.1 Findings 11**

It was not surprising to note that a high percentage of 67.5% of the respondents answered that they were taught in the medium of English because to date English is still a medium of instruction in many South African schools. The other respondents (32.5%) must have misinterpreted the question because there is still no mother tongue education in African languages in the schools.

## **5.12 Language of teaching preferred by the learner respondents**

### **5.12.1 Findings 12**

The results of the questionnaire survey revealed that there was still a high percentage of learners who preferred to be taught in the medium of English even though they had a positive attitude towards their mother tongue, Northern Sotho. Although the present researcher is of the view that learners should be taught in their mother tongue, some respondents were adamant to still be taught in English because it is regarded as a language of success.

## **5.13 Language of preference by the teacher respondents**

### **5.13.1 Findings 13**

The results of the questionnaire survey showed that the majority of the teacher respondents (60%) preferred to speak in Northern Sotho which is their mother tongue. It was not surprising because the interviewees were the teachers who were teaching Northern Sotho as a learning subject in the schools. 35% spoke both Northern Sotho and isiZulu languages.

## **5.14 Attitude of the teacher respondents towards Northern Sotho**

### **5.14.1 Findings 14**

The percentage of the teacher respondents who were positive towards Northern Sotho was much higher (85%) than that of the learner respondents. The same teacher respondents maintained that 40% of the learners had a positive attitude towards their mother tongue. All the interviewees (100%) further agreed that it was important to speak to the learners in their own mother tongue.

## **5.15 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

After doing thorough research, the present researcher deemed it fit that recommendations and suggestions be made. The researcher highly recommends that the learners should be taught in their own mother tongue language, specifically Northern Sotho which is widely spoken in the areas of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi townships. Cummins who is one of the world's greatest experts on minority languages recommended that children should strongly develop their mother tongue. One of the issues that need to change is the attitude of the learners, teachers and parents specifically towards their own languages. A positive attitude will help the

learners to develop their mother tongue language. The present researcher also recommends that the attitude of those in power, that is the government and those in charge of the language policies, must also change drastically towards the African languages. English and Afrikaans have for a very long-time been languages of instruction in South Africa. To date, there has been a small change for the status of the African languages, since in some primary schools from grade 1-3 children are taught in their mother

tongues, for example, Northern Sotho, isiZulu, etc. From grade 4-12 they are expected to switch to the English medium of instruction, and this tends to be difficult for the majority of the children because it is a foreign language to them. The researcher recommends that the children should be taught in Northern Sotho from grade R-12 because it is their mother tongue, the language that they understand best. In the previous pages, the researcher mentioned that Afrikaans speaking children are taught in this language from grade R-12. They manage to pass with high percentages because they are taught in their mother language. For starters, the government should introduce education in the medium of Northern Sotho but still keeping education in the medium of English. Classes can be introduced whereby the children who want to be taught in their mother tongue can go there. There are presently schools where there are children who are taught in English medium of instruction and Afrikaans medium of instruction. The children are divided into groups according to their language of instruction. Therefore, the same thing can be done for Northern Sotho speaking learners. The researcher maintains that any language can be developed and used on all spheres of life provided that there is political will to provide support to these languages. For Afrikaans to be where it is today, it is because resources were poured towards this language. Any language has the possibility of being developed. The researcher believes that if this can be done then the attitude of the learners towards their own language will change. Parents will also change their attitude towards their own language and stop seeing English as a language of success and as the only language which will make their children prosper.

The present researcher also recommends that the mindset of the learners, teachers and parents must change towards their own languages, with specific reference to Northern Sotho. The struggle to change the people's attitude can only be won by changing their mindset. The researcher therefore recommends that language policies, books in different subjects, curriculum, etc. be written in Northern Sotho across the

grades. Northern Sotho must also have equal rights and be equivalent to the English language. African children should be taught in African languages. Subjects such as Science and Mathematics can be taught in Northern Sotho just as these subjects have for years been taught in Afrikaans. The present researcher, therefore, recommends that the Northern Sotho speaking children should be taught in their language from grade R-12 and not taught in foreign languages. It is the duty of the government to introduce a policy that allows African languages to be used as mediums of instruction in the schools. When children are taught in their mother tongue they are bound to perform better, to enjoy their schooling and therefore the high dropout rate will obviously be lower. All the children have the right to access education in their own mother tongue.

### **5.16 Conclusion**

This study has revealed the importance and urgency of teaching children in their own mother tongue with special reference to Northern Sotho. The mother tongue speakers of this language are keen to be taught in their own language although they have concerns about its future. As stated previously, English remains the dominant language which is used as a medium of instruction in most of the schools in South Africa. This is the reason why some parents and learners are still in favor of education in English because it is a language of success.

The interviewees voiced out several concerns that contribute to the impediment of mother tongue instruction in Northern Sotho in the previous chapters. Ways of introducing Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction in the schools were also suggested such as hiring more teachers who specialised in this language, setting question papers in Northern Sotho, etc. The attitude problem has been thoroughly threshed out as there is a great struggle to change people's attitudes. As stated in the previous pages, a change of attitude can only be won by changing the mindset of the people.

The importance of mother tongue education was noted in the earlier chapters. The present researcher feels strongly that it is feasible for Northern Sotho to be used as a language of instruction and learning in the schools. It deserves to have equal rights such as languages like English and Afrikaans in South Africa.

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# Annexure A: Department of African Languages Research Ethics Review Committee



## DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 27 November 2017

Ref #: (2017\_DAL..RERC\_026]  
Name of applicant:  
Ms Anthea Lucy Ndlovu  
Staff No.: 90241878

Dear Ms Ndlovu,

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

Name: Ms Anthea Lucy Ndlovu, [endlowa@uniso.ac.za](mailto:endlowa@uniso.ac.za) 012 429 8084/071 447 9710

**Proposal:** An investigation into the challenges that impede mother-tongue education in schools with special reference to Northern Sotho.

**Qualification:** MA

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department of African Languages Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research period until 31 December 2019.

*For full approval: application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of African Languages on 06 November 2017.*

*proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:*

- 1) researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of African Languages Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*



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# Annexure B: GDE Research Approval Letter



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**

Department of Education  
Republiek van Suid-Afrika

814/411/2

## GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 20 March 2018  
 Validity of Research Approval: 05 February 2018 – 23 September 2018  
 20171398

Country: State  
 Telephone Number: 429 8084 071 447 9710  
 Email address: endlova@unisa.ac.za

Research Topic: An investigation into the challenges that impeded mother-tongue education in schools with special need to Northern Sotho

Level of Degree: Master's  
 Level and type of schools: Secondary Schools  
 District: Tlokweng

### Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter indicates that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant title agreements with the schools.

and/or office involved to conduct the research. A separate copy (if this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District Head of the Senior Management) has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to the research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be violated.



Office of the Director: Educational Research and Knowledge Management  
 17 Simons Street, Johannesburg - 1  
 Tel: (01) 305 0411  
 Email: rai@eduk.gov.za  
 Fax: (01) 305 0411

## **Annexure C: A request for permission to conduct research in your school (Principal)**

21 Wildwoodway  
Silverwoods Country Estate  
Silverlakes road  
0181

The Principal

Dear sir/madam

### **A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I hereby request permission to conduct research in your school. Currently I am conducting a research project aimed at: investigating the challenges that impede mother- tongue education in schools with special reference to Northern Sotho. In your school, five learners will be selected to participate in this study. All these participants will be given questionnaires to answer. The interviews will commence the beginning of February 2018.

This research project is the partial fulfillment of the Department of African languages carried out at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Prof. P. Phaahla. The questionnaires will be answered during break times and after school hours so as to avoid disruption of effective teaching and learning and they will last for about thirty minutes.

Your cooperation and positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ms Lucy Ndlovu (Researcher)

Cell phone: 071 447 9710

Office: 012 429 8084

## Annexure D: Interview Consent form

### Interview Consent Form

I, .....(participant's name), understand that I am being asked to participate in this study by filling up a questionnaire. I have been given some general information about this study and the types of questions I can expect to answer. I understand that participating in the study might take some of my valuable time. I also realise that my participation in the study will take approximately twenty minutes.

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I am free to decline to participate, without consequence, at any time prior to or at any point. I understand that, with my permission, the answers that I provide, will be kept confidential, used only for the purposes of completing this questionnaire, and will not be used in any way that can identify me. All interview notes, tapes, or electronic records will be kept in a secured environment.

I also understand that there are no risks involved in participating in this activity, beyond those risks experienced in everyday life. I have read the information above. By signing below and returning this form, I am consenting to participate in this study via the questionnaire as designed by the student of the University of South Africa named below.

Participant name (please print): .....

Participant's signature: .....

Date: .....

Researcher's name: .....

Researcher's signature: .....

Date: .....

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records. If you have other questions concerning your participation in this study, please contact me at:

Telephone number: 012 429 8084

Email address: endlova@unisa.ac.za

Or

My supervisor and line manager: Prof P. Phaahla

Telephone number: 012 429 8284

Email address: pphaahla@unisa.ac.za

**Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.**

## Annexure E: Parent consent form- Interview consent form

### Parent Consent Form- Interview Consent Form

Name of child.....Date of Birth.....

Parent/Guardian.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Tel (day): .....Tel (evening).....

Mobile: .....e- mail: .....

Relationship to child: .....

#### **Consent** (please read carefully)

- a) I agree to my son/ daughter taking part in this study/research.
- b) I understand that my son's/ daughter's participation in the study might take some of his/her valuable time.
- c) I understand that my son's/ daughter's participation in this study is completely voluntary and that he/she is free to decline to participate, without consequence, at any time prior to or at any point.
- d) I consent to my son/ daughter participating in this study via the questionnaire or interview as designed by the student of the University of South Africa named below.

**Name of student (researcher):** Mrs Lucy A. Ndlovu

Telephone number: 012 429 8084/ 071 447 9710

Email address: endlova@unisa.ac.za

Signed.....(Parent/ Guardian) Date: .....

## Annexure F: Questionnaire Directed to Learners

### QUESTIONNAIRE DIRECTED TO LEARNERS

Please answer all the questions and also tick the appropriate box

#### Personal Information

##### SECTION 1

1. **Gender:** Male  Female:

2. **Age:**

|                      |                      |                         |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>18 – 20 years</b> | <b>20 – 25 years</b> | <b>25 years - above</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|

3. **Grade:**

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Grade 11</b> | <b>Grade 12</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------|

4. **Where do you reside?**

Suburb:

Township:

Other specify:

5. **Which language do you speak at home?**

|                              |                 |                |                |              |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>N. Sotho<br/>(Sepedi)</b> | <b>Setswana</b> | <b>IsiZulu</b> | <b>English</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|

6. What is the language mostly spoken in your neighbourhood?

|                      |          |         |         |       |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho<br>(Sepedi) | Setswana | IsiZulu | English | Other |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|

7. Which languages are spoken at your school?

NB You can mark more than one language.

|                      |          |         |         |       |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho<br>(Sepedi) | Setswana | IsiZulu | English | Other |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|

8. Which language do you prefer to speak at school?

a) To your peers

|                      |          |         |         |       |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho<br>(Sepedi) | Setswana | IsiZulu | English | Other |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|

b) To your teachers

|                      |          |         |         |       |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho<br>(Sepedi) | Setswana | IsiZulu | English | Other |
|----------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|

9. Why do you prefer to speak that language?

Give reasons.....  
 .....

10. In which language of teaching were you taught from Grade 1- 3?

|                   |         |            |
|-------------------|---------|------------|
| N. Sotho (Sepedi) | English | Other..... |
|-------------------|---------|------------|

11. In which language of teaching were you taught from Grade 4 to the current grade?

|                   |         |            |
|-------------------|---------|------------|
| N. Sotho (Sepedi) | English | Other..... |
|-------------------|---------|------------|

12. Do you understand the language currently used for your education?

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

13. If yes, why.....

.....

If no,

Why .....

.....

14. Which language of teaching do you prefer?

|         |                   |            |
|---------|-------------------|------------|
| English | N. Sotho (Sepedi) | Other..... |
|---------|-------------------|------------|

15. Give reasons for your preference

.....

.....

16. Do your parents encourage you to communicate in Northern Sotho or English mostly?

State the language and the reason why

.....

.....

17. What is your attitude towards Northern Sotho as a teaching and learning language?

.....  
.....

18. Are African Languages, Northern Sotho in particular important to the new generation?

19. If yes, why.....  
.....

20. If no, why .....  
.....

21. What is your level of proficiency in the following languages?

|           | None | Poor | Good | Very good |
|-----------|------|------|------|-----------|
| N. Sotho  |      |      |      |           |
| English   |      |      |      |           |
| Afrikaans |      |      |      |           |

22. In which language do you speak to the following people? Indicate language where applicable.

(a) Father

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

(b) Mother

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

(c) Siblings

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

(d) Grandparents

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

(e) Friends at school

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

(f) Friends in your neighbourhood

|          |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | English | Other |
|----------|---------|-------|

23. State which type of school you are attending/ attended. Tick next to the relevant box.

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Government school |  |
| Private school    |  |
| Other specify     |  |

24. Are you studying Northern Sotho as a learning subject at school?

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

25. Which language are you studying as the first additional language at school?

.....

26. If you had a choice, would you have chosen to study the first additional language prescribed at school?

If yes,

Why .....

.....

If no,

Why .....

.....

**Thank you for your time and acceptance to participate in this research.**

## Annexure G: Questionnaire Directed to teachers

### QUESTIONNAIRE DIRECTED TO TEACHERS

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

##### Section 1

1. Gender: Male  female

2. Age range in years:

|            |            |            |             |              |
|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 21 -25 yrs | 26 -30 yrs | 31 -40 yrs | 41 – 50 yrs | 51 and above |
|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|

3. Race:

|       |          |       |        |               |
|-------|----------|-------|--------|---------------|
| Black | Coloured | White | Indian | Other specify |
|-------|----------|-------|--------|---------------|

4. Which grade are you teaching?

|         |         |          |          |          |
|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 |
|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|

5. What is your experience in the subject?

|           |            |             |             |              |
|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 0 – 5 yrs | 6 – 10 yrs | 11 – 15 yrs | 16 – 20 yrs | 21 and above |
|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|

5. Grade the subjects you would like to teach from 1 – 5

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

4. ....

6. Which language do you speak?

NB You can tick more than one block.

|          |         |          |         |       |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | IsiZulu | Setswana | English | Other |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|

7. Which language do you prefer speaking?

|          |         |          |         |       |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|
| N. Sotho | IsiZulu | Setswana | English | Other |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|

8. Why do you prefer speaking that language?

.....  
.....

9. How competent are you in this language? Rate yourself 1- 5.

.....

10. Do you think that there has been any improvement in the use of your native language with the introduction of the new constitution?

.....  
.....

11. What is your attitude towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?

|          |          |         |       |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| Positive | Negative | Average | Other |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|

12. What is the attitude of other teachers towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?

|          |          |         |       |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| Positive | Negative | Average | Other |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|

13. What is the attitude of the learners towards Northern Sotho as a subject of learning and teaching?

|          |          |         |       |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| Positive | Negative | Average | Other |
|----------|----------|---------|-------|

14. Explain your answer

.....  
.....  
.....

15. Do you think Northern Sotho is taken seriously as a language?

If yes, why .....

.....

If no, why .....

.....

16. Do you foresee Northern Sotho being used as a medium of instruction in the future?

If yes,  
explain.....

.....

If no,  
explain.....

.....

17. What are the benefits of using mother tongue (Northern Sotho specifically) as a language of instruction?

.....  
.....

18. Do learners show interest in studying Northern Sotho and following careers that are related to this subject in Tertiary institutions?

If yes, why .....

.....

If no, why .....

.....

19. If learners were taught content subjects in Northern Sotho, do you think that they will be competent enough in their performance?

If yes, why .....

.....

If no, why .....

.....

20. Do you foresee the importance of African languages (Northern Sotho in particular) for the new generation?

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

21. If yes, why .....

.....

22. If no, why .....

.....

**Section B**

23. What language do you use to communicate with your learners in the classroom and sports grounds?

|                |         |       |
|----------------|---------|-------|
| Northern Sotho | English | Other |
|----------------|---------|-------|

24. How competent are the learners in the English language in speaking and reading? Rate 1 – 5.

.....

25. How competent are the learners in Northern Sotho language in speaking and reading? Rate 1 – 5.

.....

26. Do you think that it is important for learners to speak in their mother tongue?

Yes  No

If yes, why? .....

.....

If no, why? .....

.....

27. What do you feel is or would have been the ideal language that is used for teaching and learning for your learners? You may choose more than one item.

(a) Language of teaching and learning should be mother tongue and be taught another additional language

(b) Children should be taught in both their mother tongue and English

(c) Children should be taught in English and learn English only

(d) Language of teaching and learning should continue being English/Afrikaans and be taught their mother tongue

**Thank you for your time and acceptance to participate in this research.**

**Annexure H: Questions for Focus group of the Northern Sotho learners**

**QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP OF THE NORTHERN SOTHO LEARNERS**

1. Do you wish to be taught all content subjects in the medium of Northern Sotho instead of English?

If yes, why

..... If no, why .....

2. Does the language, Northern Sotho have value and a future? Discuss.

.....

3. Discuss the issue of language rights and language equality.

.....

4. What is your attitude towards the Northern Sotho language as a learning subject and medium of instruction?

.....

5. What do you think could be the cause of non-use of African Languages as mediums of instruction in the schools?

.....

**Thank you for your time and acceptance to participate in this research.**