

THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL  
GOVERNING BODY TOWARDS HOME LANGUAGES AS A LANGUAGES OF LEARNING  
AND TEACHING IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MAMELODI, SOUTH AFRICA

by

Keamogetse Tsholofelo Moganedi

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. V. Hlatshwayo

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof. T. Shange

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## DECLARATION

Name: Keamogetse Moganedi

Student number: 53846559

Degree: Master of Arts English (TESOL)

Topic: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home languages as languages of learning and teaching in a township primary school in Mamelodi, South Africa. I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



29 February 2024

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my late grandmother Lydia “Mawe” Moganedi, for instilling in me the love for education and the value of determination.

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All glory, honour and praise to my heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ for carrying me through this journey. For the Wisdom, guidance and Your constant presence each day. Thank you for Your supernatural Grace that carried me each day, especially on days when I could not go on. Indeed, after the fulness of Your grace you have blessed me, giving me one blessing after the other (John 1:16).

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the school governing body towards home languages as languages of learning and teaching, and their preference for using certain languages for teaching and learning purposes over others. Current research indicates that parents and teachers have a positive perception towards English as a medium of instruction. However, there is limited research regarding parents and teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT in quintile one schools. A qualitative, exploratory study was used to collect data through interviews with ten parents (n=10), ten teachers (n=10), and six school governing body members (n=6) at a primary school in the township of Mamelodi. Data was also collected through analysing significant documents, such as language policies currently used in education. Data collected were transcribed and analysed thematically to establish the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT. The principal findings indicate that parents and teachers generally favor English for its perceived future benefits, while acknowledging home language's cultural value. Additionally, the SGB members demonstrated awareness of the importance of home languages though they often prioritized practicalities of learning in English. Overall, attitudes of the stakeholders at this school lean more towards English as a language of learning and teaching. Future research should focus on how home languages as LoLT could be implemented from early childhood learning up to grade 12. It is recommended that parents should be more informed about the benefits of home languages as LoLT.

**Key words/concepts:** Attitude, perception, home languages as LoLT, language policy, multilingualism, township, teacher, parental involvement, language identity, first additional language



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FAL	First additional language
HL	Home language
LANGTAG	Language Plan Task Group
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LP	Language Policy
LPP	Language Planning and Policy
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board
SASA	South Africa School's Act
SGB	School Governing Body
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Before the democratic elections of 1994, South African parents and teachers had no voice regarding the languages of learning and teaching in schools. The government of the day enforced rigid policies on all citizens in accordance with racial, economic, geographical and linguistic factors (Ngidi, 2006; Evans, 2014). These policies prescribed children's languages of learning and teaching in schools, enforcing two main languages, amongst other proscriptions. English and Afrikaans were dominant languages for learning in schools and flourished at the expense of native African languages such as Isizulu, Xitsonga, Sesoth, etc. (Nugraha, 2019).

Transformation began in 1994 through the abolishment of the apartheid government and the birth of a new democracy. This transformation saw the decision by the government to officiate eleven South African languages, nine of which were native African languages. Furthermore, through the establishment of school governing bodies under the School School's Act (1996), parents and teachers became involved in decisions pertaining to language usage and policies in schools. Therefore, school-going learners could now enjoy the privilege of equal and quality education; including receiving an education in their own home languages (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Bostok, 2018).

Since the democratic elections of 1994, South Africa has since followed the route of a multilingual approach to education using 'mother-tongue based' bilingual education from grade one to grade seven. According to van Ginkel (2014), this additive approach to multilingualism enables students to achieve high levels of competency in both their native language and the second language. This suggests that indigenous African languages ought to be employed as the main languages of teaching and learning during the initial stages of formal education, specifically in the initial years of schooling (Grades R-3), with a shift towards the introduction of additional languages as subjects as learners progress into the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and beyond. This approach was adopted by the Constitution of South Africa of 1996, with its principal ideas for

language policy put out in Section six of Chapter one's Founding Provisions. After the enactment of this significant constitutional provision, various legislative measures were implemented within the realm of education in order to guarantee that the education system was in conformity with the constitutional objective of advancing multilingualism. This included the formulation of the South African School's Act (1996) and Language in Education policy (1997), amongst others. The Language in Education Policy (1997) of South Africa takes a firm stance on promoting the equal treatment of languages in education through the maintenance of home languages as languages of learning, while providing access to acquisition of additional languages. The policy makes a distinction between the languages used for learning and teaching (LoLT) and languages used as subjects. The policy clearly states that the individual has the right to decide which language to use for learning and teaching (LiEP, 1997). The implication would be that both teaching and learning would take place in a child's home language, should they desire to take this route. The reality, however, strays from this possibility.

According to Mpanza (2023), many learners have yet to benefit from the promise of equal access to education in their home (native) languages as enshrined in numerous legislative instruments, such as the South African School's Act (1996) and the LiEP (1997). This is due in part to the absence of political will to implement the LiEP (1997) that pupils in these schools have had few opportunities to acquire a native African language as a language of learning and teaching (Huegh, 2013). Bostok (2018) and Kamwangamula (2007) revealed that English is the language of teaching in 80% of South African schools. Many township schools, for example, focus on the use of home language instruction only from Grade R until Grade Three, while simultaneously introducing English as a First Additional Language (FAL) (DBE, 2011a). From Grade Four onwards, these schools offer home (native) languages only as a subject, with English being the primary medium of instruction for all other subjects. Learners further undergo a drastic change of learning through their home languages from Grades One to Three, and subsequently learning through what was previously a First Additional Language (English) from Grade Four onwards (Desai, 2016; Klapwijk & Van der Walt, 2016). Cele (2021) describes this observation as a mismatch between the language policy and the linguistic reality in schools in South Africa.

It would seem that the implementation of the language-in-education policy (1997) in South African schools is met with distinct complexity. This, according to Wildsmith and Balfour (2019), results from the multilingual nature of South African society. Learners in most South African township schools are language minority learners, as they come from homes where languages other than English are spoken, yet the language of learning and teaching in schools is predominantly English. In the township of Mamelodi, for example, 98.8% of the population use a native African language as a home language (Statistics SA, 2011), while the language of instruction in most schools in the township is English.

Learners in schools in Mamelodi are language minority learners, as they come from homes where languages other than English are spoken, and are often unable to learn effectively, or communicate fluently in English. This is reflected negatively in South Africa's annual national school-leaving exams, which show that black learners consistently perform below average (Postma & Postma 2011), due to challenges that can be traced directly to language. Therefore, language attitudes in education in South Africa are deeply influenced by the country's complex socio-political history and its diverse linguistic landscape. The post-apartheid education system has made strides towards multilingualism, promoting mother-tongue education and acknowledging the linguistic rights of various communities (Makoe, 2021). However, there remains a tension between the promotion of indigenous languages and the dominance of English as a medium of instruction, which is often perceived as a key to economic and social advancement (Barkhuizen, 2022). This duality reflects broader societal attitudes where English is valued for its global relevance, while indigenous languages struggle for equal status and resources within educational contexts (Heugh, 2023).

It is perceptible that the successful implementation of home languages as LoLT education in schools relies on its endorsement by all stakeholders involved on the implementation level, such as the parents of these learners, teachers and the School Governing Body (SGB), and not merely on the government. In response to these entanglements, this research aims to systematically examine the attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and the SGB members of a primary school in Mamelodi, Pretoria, towards home languages as LoLT and the roles they assign to

home languages in education. Heugh and Stroud (2020:11) emphasise the need for investigating the perceptions of parents towards language use in schools to discover alternative multilingual approaches to home languages as LoLT in education, following their claim that the DOE has failed to put the LiEP (1997) into practice.

## **1.2 Contextual setting**

According to section 29 of the Constitution (1996), all citizens have a right to a basic education in any official language of their choice, where reasonably practicable. The South African School's Act (1996) further states that school attendance in the country is compulsory for all children between the ages of 7-15. This means that each child born in South Africa ought to have access to basic education as and when they reach school-going age. The Statistics of South Africa Census (2011) reported that, between 1996 and 2011, the percentage of people up to the age of 15 attending educational institutions generally increased. A large-scale community survey subsequently conducted between Census 2011-2021 revealed that, in the year 2016, the number of persons between the ages of 5-24 attending an educational institution in South Africa had increased to approximately 16 million (STATS SA, 2016:72).

With the country seeing an increase in school attending individuals and the influx of non-citizens, who according to Stats SA account for 2,1% of the total population (STATS SA, 2016), the implication is that schools have started to accommodate more learners and are becoming increasingly diversified. As a result of the diversification in South African schools, it is common to find speakers of any number of spectra of languages attending a single school. In most township schools for example, it is a norm to find learners of different home languages in one classroom, whose home languages are not English.

Learners in most South African township schools are language minority learners as they come from homes where languages other than English are spoken. Therefore, such learners are often unable to learn effectively or communicate fluently in English. These learners come from households whose home languages are either one of the eleven official languages, in some cases, two or more languages, or a foreign language. In the settlement of Mamelodi for example, 98.8% of the population use a black African language as a first language (Statistics SA, 2022).



A South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) focusing on the attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns of the culturally diverse population is conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa annually to track societal values in changing times. In their 2018 study, almost 77% of the South African population identified themselves as speakers of black African languages, with only 23% identifying themselves as speakers of English, Afrikaans, or a foreign language (HSRC,2018). However, 65% of the survey respondents preferred English as the main language for learning and teaching, and not their home language.

There is a clear indication of an increase in preference for English (which represents less than 10% of the country's speaking population) over black African languages as languages of instruction in schools. Due to such evidence and the major role that attitudes play in the way language is used, this study aims to explore the prevalent attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the SGB members of a township primary school in Mamelodi towards the languages that surround them in their educational environment.

Townships in South Africa are settlements that were formed by the apartheid government through the Group Areas Act of 1995, which designated separate residential settlements for non-white citizens (Pernegger & Godehart, 2007). Mamelodi is one of the townships in South Africa, and has a population of 334 577 people and almost all the residents use a black South African language as a first language (Statistics SA, 2022). As it stands, primary schools in Mamelodi are culturally diverse, as they offer the eleven official languages (Sepedi, isiZulu, Sesotho, isiXhosa, Setswana, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Seswati, isiNdebele, English and Afrikaans) as languages of teaching and learning.

The current study was conducted at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School, which is a public school based in the township of Mamelodi. It is important to note that all public schools in South Africa are divided into five quintiles following the recommendations of the former minister of the National Department of Education <sup>1</sup> (1995) Sibusiso Bengu. The DBE used indicators such as total household income, literacy levels, and unemployment rates of a community to calculate a school's quintile ranking. Schools that fall under the first three quintiles are “no fee-paying” schools whilst “fee-paying” schools fall under quintiles Four and Five, respectively. Mahlasedi Masana Primary school is a Quintile One public school, which denotes that the surrounding community is

faced with difficulties of low income levels, literacy, and employment rates.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Existing studies show that both parents and teachers view English as a favorable language for teaching and learning (Ngidi, 2007). However, there is a lack of research that includes SGB members in addition to parents and teachers, and their attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of the home languages for learning and teaching, especially in quintile one schools. Previous research has shown the importance of a bilingual child's home language in their educational development (Webb, 1992; Madadzhe & Sepota, 2007; Nishanti, 2020). A key study by Cummins (1984) emphasises the importance of learners to have a strong foundation in their mother tongue so as to prevent failure in English as and when it is introduced as an additional language. This is supported by Nishanti (2020), who found that children who have a strong foundation in their home language prepares them to learn additional languages. Children therefore do this by transferring the unique structure of their language into another language.

The challenge of this situation is that most learners whose home languages are not English are not likely to achieve above 40% in their final school examination if they are thrust too soon into an English-only or predominantly English education (Heugh, 2002). In the case of South Africa, many schools offer most subjects in English, thus the reference to 'English mainly' schools. This is supported by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2021), which demonstrated very poor performance levels of South African learners' capacity to comprehend text as the reach Grade Four. South Africa significantly underperformed in the literacy study with a score of 288 compared to the PIRLS centre point of 500. The implication is that learners have not mastered literacy skills in their home languages and therefore cannot transfer these skills to additional languages/s (Edele & Stanat, 2016). There is surmountable evidence that a child's home language plays a crucial role in learning as it improves academic performance and learning outcomes (Williams, 1996; MacKenzie, 2010; UNESCO, 2023).

Whilst teaching languages in both township and suburban schools, I developed an interest in language issues after a few frustrating situations, particularly at the township

school. First, poor academic performance by learners in most learning areas eventuated from being taught in English, despite the language policy of the school upholding isiZulu as the core language of learning and teaching from Grade R to 7. The second situation was the difficulty of communicating with parents in a language unfamiliar to them over issues pertaining to their children's performance, such as devising ways of assisting their children with their schoolwork at home. This led me to question the perceptions and attitudes that the school community holds towards the languages they house, and the roles that they assign to them.

Despite provisions in the policy for multilingualism, parents and teachers do not seem to value the role that home languages as LoLT plays in enhancing learner performance. This was confirmed by Gordon and Harvey (2019), who argued that a significant number of parents in South Africa prefer English as a language of instruction at all levels of their children's education. According to Webb (1999:355), "...there has been a decline in the choice of an African language as first language of learning and teaching..." and a great number of stakeholders in South African schools prefer their children to use languages such as English as opposed to their home language in the Foundation Phase. Webb (1999) describes this observation as a mismatch between the language policy and the linguistic reality in education in South Africa. This is also emphasised by Phindane (2015), who investigated parental perceptions in the Eastern Cape, and found that parents preferred English as a language of learning for their children's Foundation Phase education. It appears that what researchers and policy makers in education, such as Webb (1999), believed decades ago, namely that there is a shift in the attitudes of parents and teachers towards home languages as languages of learning in education, remains relevant today.

If the above-mentioned statement by Webb (1999) and Gordon and Harvey (2019) still remains the case (namely, that African languages have become an unpopular choice amongst parents themselves), stakeholders in education ought to be concerned about the growth of black African languages in South African society, as these perceptions contradict the desired goal of the LiEP, which aims to promote and maintain the home languages of learners in service to South African cultural posterity. This situation calls for an investigation into the current attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders in

education regarding home languages as LoLT. This poses substantive concern for the future of the minority languages in South Africa in particular, as a fortune is invested in resources to promote the use of black African languages in schools on the part of the government. The findings of this study will assist in providing recommendations that will be useful in language planning in education, both at the micro level (the classroom itself), as well as the macro level (the public sphere of South African life).

#### **1.4 Purpose statement**

According to Thomas and Hodges (2010), a research purpose statement refers to the main goal of the research. Abbas (2014) views a research purpose as a statement that delineates the reason why the study is being conducted. The purpose statement is a brief and succinct statement that summarises what the research project is about. The purpose of a study may be to explore, discover, predict a situation, or gain an understanding of a phenomena (Beckingham, 1974). The main purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the current attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards using home language as LoLT at a township primary school in Mamelodi, South Africa. Through interviews, the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of these stakeholders' perceptions towards home languages as LoLT and the roles they assign to home languages in education.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are to do the following:

1. explore parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at a primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng;
2. examine parents, teachers SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in education; and
3. investigate the reasons why parents, teachers and SGB members prefer children to use certain languages for learning purposes.

## **1.6 Research questions**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT at a township primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are parents, teachers and the SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at a primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng?
2. What are parents, teachers and the SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in an educational environment?
3. Why do parents, teachers and the SGB members prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes?

## **1.7 Scope and delimitation of the study**

This research study focused on the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGBs on home languages as LoLT specifically within a primary school setting in Mamelodi. Mamelodi is a township that is located in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality and is situated in the northeast of this municipality. The location of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality is in northern Gauteng, South Africa. The study explored the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body towards home languages as LoLT at this particular school.

This study is limited to language teachers who teach English second language learners. Focusing on teachers of English in this study, rather than teachers of African languages, provides a unique lens through which to examine language attitudes and perceptions within the context of learning in the home language. English teachers' perspectives can highlight potential gaps and opportunities in integrating home languages into the curriculum, offering valuable implications for language policy and instructional practices in diverse educational settings. Furthermore, since the study specifically targets second language learners who are learning English as an additional language, understanding the perspectives of those who teach these learners is crucial because their attitudes directly affect pedagogical approaches and learners outcomes. Teachers of English are

likely to have unique insights into the challenges faced by learners who may not have strong foundations in their home languages but are required to learn through English.

This focus allows for a deeper exploration of how home languages as LoLT intersects with second language acquisition. While it might seem limiting to focus solely on teachers of English at first glance, this approach is justified by considering the broader educational context, the specific needs of second language learners, policy implications, cultural relevance within Mamelodi, and the potential for bridging linguistic divides. Furthermore, the study only focused on one primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng, South Africa, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other schools or regions. It did not include other municipalities in the province of Gauteng. The sampling process shaped this delimitation. The study does not cover all teachers teaching other subjects as the focus is on home languages as LoLT.

### **1.8 Ethical considerations**

When conducting any type of research, it is imperative that the researcher obtains informed consent for the data. Permission was requested from the principal of the school and the Department of Education as the study included parents and teachers. The research began once permission was granted.

In order to ensure the integrity of the research, potential participants were provided with an overview of the objectives of the study, and were informed of their right to decline to answer any questions they deemed confidential. Furthermore, they were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time without prior notification. The potential participants were reassured that their responses would be kept confidential, and that anonymity would be maintained throughout the study. The parents, teachers and SGB members were also assured that their responses would not be traced back to them.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

While there has been a vast amount of research prior to this focusing on developments in language policy implementation and home languages as LoLT in primary schools,

such as forwarded by Desai (2016) and Wildsmith & Balfour (2019), few studies focus on parents, teachers and the school governing body as active contributors in policy implementation, particularly in townships. An empirical study on the language attitudes and perceptions of these stakeholders is vital in assisting language planners and government to comprehend observed linguistic behaviours in education, the language choices of multilingual communities, language loyalty and language prestige in the respective speech community (Obiols, 2002). Furthermore, Griva and Couvarda (2012) motivate that studying the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders involved in a child's education proves imperative, since these stakeholders are able to contribute to conversations pertaining to language status, as well as have an influence on all the language policy decisions.

Therefore, crucial changes such as how and when English should be introduced alongside home languages may stem from the study and possible resolutions to less disruptive bilingual model implementation strategies. Such reasons place these stakeholders in a position to determine a new path for multilingual education. This research will enable further research projects in areas of language use in schools and the attitudes and perceptions of parents and other stakeholders in township schools towards their home languages in education. A current study in this field may provide an indication of the expected future growth of African languages in South Africa and how these can be used in communication and education.

Huegh and Stroud (2020) emphasise the need for alternative multilingual approaches to home languages as LoLT in education following their claim that the DOE has failed to put the policy into practice; even after implementation proposals were continuously brought forth. The findings of this study therefore, will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of multilingualism and approaches to multilingualism in schools in South Africa.

Furthermore, the study will influence policy direction in home languages as LoLT and teaching, by revealing the key tenets of stakeholder perception in promoting home languages as LoLT. An empirical study on the language attitudes and perceptions of these stakeholders can assist language planners and government alike to comprehend observed linguistic behaviours in education, the language choices of multilingual communities, language loyalty, and language prestige in the respective speech community (Obiols, 2002). Due to the fact that attitude and perception have a direct

influence on behaviour, knowing what views parents, teachers, and the SGB have towards a language may assist with improving learner achievement. For example, if these stakeholders have a negative attitude towards languages, this may give an indication of the level of difficulty or ease (even resistance) that is experienced by learners when learning a particular language (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014).

Moreover, Griva and Couvarda (2012) motivate that studying the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders involved in the child's education is imperative, since these stakeholders are able to contribute to conversations pertaining to language status as well as have an influence on all the language policy decisions. Such reasons place these stakeholders in the position to determine a new path for multilingual education. This research will enable further research projects in areas of language use in schools and the attitudes and perceptions of parents and other stakeholders in township schools towards their home languages in education. An updated study in this field may provide an indication of the expected future growth of African languages in South Africa, and how they can be used to facilitate communication and education.

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF CORE CONCEPTS**

The purpose of this study is to explore important stakeholders' attitudes and beliefs about home languages as LoLT and how they are mirrored in the implementation of language policies in schools. To gain a better knowledge of this topic, it is necessary to first establish a few essential terms linked with it.

### **1.10.1 Parent**

A "parent" is a person who is responsible for assisting in a child's upbringing during all stages of development by assuming the parental obligations that come with raising children. According to the South African Scholl's Act (1996), the word "parent" refers to the parent or guardian of a learner, the person legally entitled to custody of a learner or the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to towards the learner's education at school. Persson (2019) defines the term "parent" as one who carries the daily duty of raising a child.



### **1.10.2 Township**

The term "township" was adopted in the apartheid context from alternative uses elsewhere to describe "non-white" neighbourhoods, which under apartheid usually suffered from varying degrees of structural informality. Townships in the South African circumstance are settlements that were formed by the apartheid government through the Group Areas Act of 1950, which designated separate residential settlements for non-white citizens (Pernegger & Godehart, 2007). As part of apartheid government logic, it was imperative to take every precaution to prevent any alleged interaction of citizens of different races, to achieve the vision of apartness implicit in its name. However, in an attempt to correct some of the social ills of the past, the contemporary democratic South African government that inherited the effects of apartheid has since introduced initiatives to develop areas known as townships to better and more humanely cater to their residents. For example, a township such as Mamelodi has begun to develop in areas such as recreation, industry, and transport through initiatives led by the government. The permanency of urban planning interventions mean that townships remain at the core of the ongoing discussion of how to reconstitute, recuperate and repair the South African landscape.

### **1.10.3 Home languages as LoLT**

The National Language Policy Framework (2002) defines home a language as a language that children initially learn through exposure at home and the language in which they develop their capacity for thought. Family members speak it the most frequently when conversing informally at home. The terms mother tongue, first language, and native language are also used to describe it (UNESCO, 2023). Home languages as LoLT, therefore, as used in this study, refers to education that takes place in the learner's mother tongue. For example, home languages as LoLT in Mamelodi could refer to learning that occurs in one of South Africa's historically marginalised languages, such as Sesotho, isiZulu, Sepedi, and others, which are spoken by families in township communities.

### **1.10.4 Language policy**

The linguistic environment of multilingual cultures is shaped in large part by language policy. The National Curriculum Statement (DBE, 2003) states that language policy is a

legal document that governs the roles of various languages in multilingual contexts, notably in terms of their status as nationwide, official, or regional languages. This policy is especially important in educational contexts, since it determines which languages will be used for instruction and learning. The national language policy that governs the promotion and use of all eleven official languages in schools is the Language in Education Policy of 1997.

### **1.11 Synthesis**

This section offers a detailed plan of the research and the proposed methods of collecting and reporting data. Owing to the diverse linguistic repertoires of South African classrooms, language planners and policy makers ought to strive towards progressive multilingual approaches to using home languages in education. Such approaches need to include the views of functional contributors in the process of education such as parents, teachers and the school community. One can argue that the successful implementation of home languages as LoLT in schools therefore rests on its endorsement by these stakeholders. The support of parents, teachers and school governing body could expedite significant advancements in language planning in education. Despite the abovementioned limitations, a current study on the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and stakeholders in education proves vital, since parents, teachers and the SGB members all have an impact on language policies and have the power to determine a new direction for multilingual education in South Africa (Grieva and Chouvarda, 2012).

### **1.12 Chapter outline**

The chapters of this study will be organised as follows:

#### ***Chapter 1: Orientation to the study***

Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study, the contextual setting, the purpose of

the study, the research objectives and research questions, the scope and delimitations of the study, along with the ethical considerations, the significance of the study, the definition of core concepts.

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

Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to home languages as LoLT, theoretical framework, and an overview of South Africa's linguistic context. The chapter focuses on the country's linguistic history, demographics and its people. Additionally, the chapter discusses South Africa's language policies and the rationale behind using official languages in education. The chapter also explores the views of parents, teachers and SGB members towards languages in education.

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

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach of the study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research methodology, research paradigms, research design and approach, principles of trustworthiness, and the population and sampling procedures. The chapter further discusses the data management and analysis, data collection procedures and instruments, and the demographics information. Finally, the chapter provides a discussion of the ethical issues that are relevant to this study.

### ***Chapter 4: Research Findings and Interpretation***

Chapter 4 reports on the findings and interpretation of the data obtained from the parents, teachers and SGB interviews, and the policies that were reviewed. It also provides the themes that emerged from the findings.

### ***Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings, recommendations and conclusion***

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, recommendations of the study and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews the literature related to parents, teachers and SGBs' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT, as well as the theoretical framework. The literature will derive from themes emanating from the objectives. First, the theoretical framework that is employed in the study is discussed and is subsequently followed by a section on South Africa's linguistic context. The linguistic context draws focus on the country's linguistic history, demographics, and its people. Second, a discussion of the language policies of South Africa is provided, with reasons for undertaking the route of the official languages in education. The chapter then provides an overview of the roles of attitudes and perceptions in language, followed by a brief history of stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions and a conclusion of the chapter is then provided.

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

A well-conceptualised literature review shows the researcher's level of expertise in a particular area of study (Randolph, 2009). Correspondingly, a literature review, according to Knopf (2006), serves to succinctly summarise any claims and conclusions made by earlier studies, while imparting new knowledge on the topic at hand. The current study aims to explore the current attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT at a township primary school in Mamelodi. Therefore, the literature review in this study will be used to impart knowledge pertaining to home languages as LoLT by looking at preceding studies in the field. As previously stated, literature will derive from themes emanating from the objectives of this study.

The function of mother-tongue instruction, also known as home languages as LoLT, has been heavily discussed in the literature as it relates to the relevance of language in education. Studies conducted globally by scholars such as Cummins (2001) and Nishanthi (2020) have demonstrated the value of mother-tongue instruction in fostering cultural identification and improving learning results. However, there is still much to learn about how important stakeholders feel about learning throughout schooling in their home languages, especially in the context of South Africa.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Forming a theoretical framework is beneficial as it provides the researcher with a guide, especially when the problem under investigation may have roots in many other theories (Kumar, 2012). A theoretical approach allows the researcher to develop a direct focus on the literature, explain phenomenon related to diverse individuals, and make predictions about the future based on the findings. According to Balboni (2018), a theoretical approach to research in language education is useful in two ways; it is epistemological as it is framed in accordance with the logic of scientific research while also proving to be intercultural as people are always moving from country to country, and each culture expresses their own meaning of what knowing and learning a language may entail.

Based on the objectives of this study, which aim to explore parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards using home languages as LoLT, it is fitting to draw on Bernard Spolsky's theory of language policy and Epstein's theory of parental involvement. Together, these theories offer a robust framework for investigating the complexities of language policy and parental involvement. Epstein's theory provides the lens to explore how stakeholder engagement and collaboration impact educational outcomes, while Spolsky's theory offers insight into the socio-cultural factors that shape language policy and practices. By integrating both theories, the study can more effectively address how stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages are influenced by both their direct involvement in the educational process and the broader language policy environment.

### **2.2.1 Theory of language policy**

According to Spolsky (2007), a theory of language policy seeks to explain the frequent decisions made by speakers based on established patterns in the speech communities of which they form a part. The overarching assumption of Spolsky's theory of language policy is that language policy, like other facets of language, is primarily a social phenomenon that depends on the accepted behaviours and viewpoints of specific individuals within a speech community (Spolsky, 2007). In this view, the viewpoints of

parents, teachers and SGB members of a specific speech community in Mamelodi, play an integral role in how the language policy is implemented, particularly home languages as LoLT. Furthermore, Milburn (2016) points out that acknowledging these stakeholders as a speech community, allows one to start learning more about their opinions, assessments, or attitudes toward other speakers or groups.

The second assumption of Spolsky's theory of language policy is that language policy is made up of three interrelated components, namely: practices, beliefs, and management (Spolsky, 2007). Language practices refer to the observable behaviours of individuals regarding language. Beliefs about language are those values assigned to these languages; for example, an individual may assign the highest value to a language that represents their ethnicity or region as opposed to other varieties. Similarly, parents, teachers and SGB members may assign the highest value to a language that is tied to their ethnicity. The third component, language management, refers to the overt and visible attempt by someone or a group in authority to influence people's behaviours or views. These three components, according to Spolsky (2007), create factors that explain the participants' language preferences and account for the attitudes and perceptions of speech communities regarding language. Therefore, a thorough understanding of parents, teachers and SGB members' language practices, beliefs and management (as the three components reflected in the language policy) provide an account for these stakeholders' language preferences, attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT.

### **2.2.2 Theory of parental involvement**

As mentioned earlier, the study also draws on Epstein's theory of parental involvement. According to Epstein's theory, parental involvement is more than a relationship between the school and home but rather a partnership between parents, schools and their surrounding communities (Epstein, 2001). Parental involvement is defined by Wright (2009) as follows:

“a meaningful, two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including: ... serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child...” (Wright, 2009:2-3).

Epstein establishes six types of parental involvement, which are: parenting support, facilitating communication, fostering home learning, involving parents in school's decisions, community decisions and encourage volunteerism (Kathryn, 2017). Parents ought to participate in overseeing every area of education alongside the community (Ashbaugh, 2009). It is therefore evident that parents, teachers, and the school community, which is represented by the SGB members, are as equally important as the government in making decisions regarding home languages as LoLT and its implementation. Therefore examining their attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT proves itself to be important.

**Figure 1:** Epstein's six types of parental involvement



Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) note that good cooperation between the school, parents and the school community can lead to innovative reforms in education. This is confirmed by Sanders and Sheldon (2009) who note that a strong bond between the community, teachers and parents results in schools that flourish. The collaboration of parents, teachers and SGB members will have a positive impact on the effective implementation of home languages as LoLT which will in turn meet the desired aims of the LiEP. Epstein's theory of parental involvement maintains that, amongst the many advantages of establishing a relationship between parents, teachers, and the school's community is

that it aids in learners' success, improves school programmes, and connects the school with the school community (Đurišić and Bunijevac, 2017). It is according to this idea that parents, teachers, and SGB members are deemed critical agents in the implementation of home languages as LoLT and language policies at the school, where a better understanding of their stance on home languages as LoLT is critical in the successful implementation of these languages.

The current study will be conducted in the field of language planning and policy (LPLP). Language planning and policy is a multi and inter-disciplinary field, which is not only concerned with the regulation of languages but is "...increasingly concerned with internationalization and globalization, especially the role of English as a world language, language endangerment, and migration" (Romaine, 2021:4). Therefore, Bernard Spolsky's theory of language policy and Epstein's theory of parental involvement underpin the current study.

### **2.3 SOUTH AFRICA'S LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND**

The historical linguistic backdrop of South Africa is characterised by a complex interplay of colonial powers, indigenous opposition, and apartheid legislation. Language laws and practices reflect the dominance of colonial languages like English and Afrikaans while at once unnaturally marginalising indigenous African languages. The post-apartheid era saw formal constitutional recognition of eleven official languages, with the goal of righting historical wrongs and promoting linguistic variety. However, obstacles to enacting inclusive language policies and addressing the socioeconomic and behavioural variables that sustain linguistic inequality persist.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, adopted in 1996, recognises and encourages all 11 official languages as media of instruction in schools, reflecting the vast linguistic varieties of South Africa. Furthermore, the language in education policy (LiEP, 1997) advocates the use of these languages in schools as cited below:

It is recommended that the learner's home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible. This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase [Grade R-3] where children learn to read and write. Where learners have to make a transition from their home language to an additional language. (DoE,



However, the use of native South African languages is still largely discouraged in many South African schools through school's language policy implementation activities according to Probyn (2006), which still greatly favour English. As Sapire and Roberts (2023:12) note, "...the use of mother-tongue within the schooling system continues to be a challenge in our schooling system, especially for learners of African descent. Their languages were being marginalised by the schooling system."

One of the reasons for this marginalisation may be that parents in South Africa are progressively gravitating toward the opinion that their children ought to be taught English. Therefore, the views, attitudes and perceptions of parents and teachers toward home languages as LoLT are frequently confounded by this linguistic dynamic, along with the effects of globalisation, and urbanisation. The movement of parents in and out of cities results in the interconnection of languages, political, cultural and economic activities. Languages such as English end up being used as a common language for communication in communities of different linguistic groups, dominating the smaller minority languages.

According to research by Hornberger and Vaish (2009) as well as Msweli (2018), parents, teachers, and school governing body (SGB) members are frequently identified as the primary influencers impacting the language learning environment. On this basis, children's learning and subsequent academic performance are significantly impacted by these stakeholders' attitudes toward home languages as LoLT and language-in-education policies.

Stakeholders' awareness of the function of home languages in school is a critical component of their attitudes. Alexander (2000) mentions that cognitive, cultural, and socio-political purposes are served by language in education, and in particular by home language instruction. This is supported by Thomas and Collier (2002), who emphasise that greater conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking abilities are among the cognitive advantages of home languages as LoLT.

The use of home languages in the classroom can further enhance students' sense of self-worth and sociocultural belonging, since language is such an important part of cultural identity. As language impacts social interactions and access to possibilities, the

socio-political component of language in education is particularly significant. However, as Benson (2004) notes, it is possible that parents, educators, and SGB participants do not fully comprehend these positive attributes of language, which results in their preference for some languages over others.

A study conducted by Garcia and Wei (2014) on translanguaging in multilingual environments also emphasizes the benefits of incorporating multiple languages in the classroom, which correlates with Spolsky's theory that language use is influenced by practices, beliefs, and management. In their research, both García and Wei focused on public schools in New York with a Latino student population and on complementary schools in the United Kingdom for students from Chinese family backgrounds. The research highlighted the importance of presenting multilingualism in classrooms as a valuable tool that should be used by all children and educators (Vallejo, 2018). Garcia and Wei's (2014) research findings are especially applicable to South Africa, where the difficulties of implementing multilingual education policies mirror challenges experienced worldwide. This global perspective highlights that despite diverse circumstances, the struggle between preserving linguistic diversity and seeking economic advantages continues.

According to Kamwangamalu (2000) and Brock-Utne (2007), the predominant factors that frequently influence language selection are economically and socially related. For example, languages that are viewed as more economically beneficial or socially prestigious may be preferred by parents, teachers, and SGB members. In this regard, Ball (2009) and Heugh (2013) agree that such preferences may influence a child's motivation, academic success, and formation of their sociocultural identities.

Black South Africans, specifically, seem to hold negative attitudes towards their languages in comparison to languages such as English. As Taylor (2013:3) notes, "English is widely perceived to be the language of upward mobility, and this leads to a preference for instruction in English from as early as possible. This is ironic due to the fact that contrasting evidence in many language studies such as Desai (2012) show that there are hardly any pupils who write adeptly by the time they complete their school careers.

In addition, pupils battle to grasp concepts in other subjects, due directly to the fact that pupils find it difficult to express themselves in English. The reading performance worsens as pupils progress to higher grades. An annual systematic assessment of

numeracy and literacy of learners from grade Three to Nine (Annual National Assessment), has shown that learners' literacy levels in South Africa have declined instead of improving since the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (DBE, 2013). For example, South African Grade Six learners performed below the mean in the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III), when compared to learners of the same age groups in other countries (see Table 2).

**Table 1:** South Africa's Grade Six student achievement in comparison to SACMEQ countries

Year	Reading score		Mathematics score	
	2000	2007	2000	2007
South Africa	492	497	486	495
SACMEQ	500	512	500	510
	8 points below the mean	17points below the mean	14points below the mean	15points below the mean

Note: Adapted from Heugh (2013)

Pupils are seemingly not sufficiently prepared for the academic texts to which they are exposed when they reach Grade Six, as the evidence suggests. It can be argued that this may be directly linked to a deficiency of a strong foundation in the learner's home language. The LiEP clearly states that the Department of Education advocates the learning of a South African indigenous language for all learners for at least three years by the time they reach Grade Nine (LiEP, 1997). However, exposure to the home language from only Grade One to Grade Three does not seem to be sufficient to equip learners for reading in the higher grades.

According to the specifications for reading levels for each grade that are set out in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DBE, 2012). Grade Three learners are supposed to have a reading vocabulary of 1500 words in English FAL. Similarly, Grade Four learners are expected to have a vocabulary level of 2500 words, 3500 words for Grade

Five and 5000 words for Six, respectively. However, Wababa (2009) disproves this by showing that learners in Grade Six in fact require a vocabulary level that far exceeds 5000 words as the NCS claims. As learning areas are added in Grade Four, subjects such as Natural Sciences require an additional vocabulary of 4500 words in the FAL. Clearly, the 2500 words are stated in the NCS show that learners do not acquire enough vocabulary to assist them with reading in the higher grades.

According to Postma (2011), South Africa's annual national school-leaving exams show that black learners consistently perform below average, due to language related challenges. It is not known whether this stems from lack of knowledge regarding the importance of mother tongue languages in education and the benefits thereof. This study seeks an enhanced understanding of parents, teachers and SGB members' perceptions and attitudes with regards to the languages around them. The documentation of the perceptions and attitudes of these stakeholders towards these languages is vital for policymakers, as policies will therefore reflect the needs of these parents, their children, and schools, instead of the interests of certain languages (Webb, 1996).

Spolsky's theory of language policy emphasizes the interplay of language practices, beliefs, and management within a sociopolitical context. In South Africa, this theory can be applied to understand the complex historical and contemporary issues surrounding language policy. Despite the adoption of policies such as the LiEP, the practical implementation of multilingual education faces significant challenges. Individuals often still favour English, influenced by a societal preference for languages perceived as economically and socially advantageous. This preference is not merely a matter of policy but is deeply embedded in the attitudes of parents, educators, and policymakers, reflecting Spolsky's assertion that language management is shaped by underlying language beliefs and practices.

Parents and teachers often perceive English as a gateway to upward mobility, thus perpetuating a cycle where linguistic diversity is underutilized, impacting students' academic performance and sense of identity, as supported by the research findings on literacy and numeracy performance. Thus, while South Africa's formal language policies aim to support linguistic diversity, the practical realities reflect a struggle between policy intentions and entrenched socio-economic and cultural beliefs, mirroring Spolsky's framework of language policy as a reflection of both top-down management and

grassroots beliefs.

## 2.4 SOUTH AFRICA'S LINGUISTIC PROFILE

South Africa has an unequalled language setting in terms of complexity and diversity (see Figure 2). The eleven languages designated as official in South Africa are Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, and isiZulu (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). As seen in identification, ethnicity, and social ties, these languages reflect the nation's complex socio-political structure and diversified cultural legacy (Kamwangamalu, 2003). The figure below shows an overview of the languages spoken in South Africa as of 2016 through a community survey that was conducted by Stats SA. It is noted that Stats SA is only set to hand over Census 2022 results in October 2023, thus the data below.

**Figure 2:** The 11 official languages of South Africa

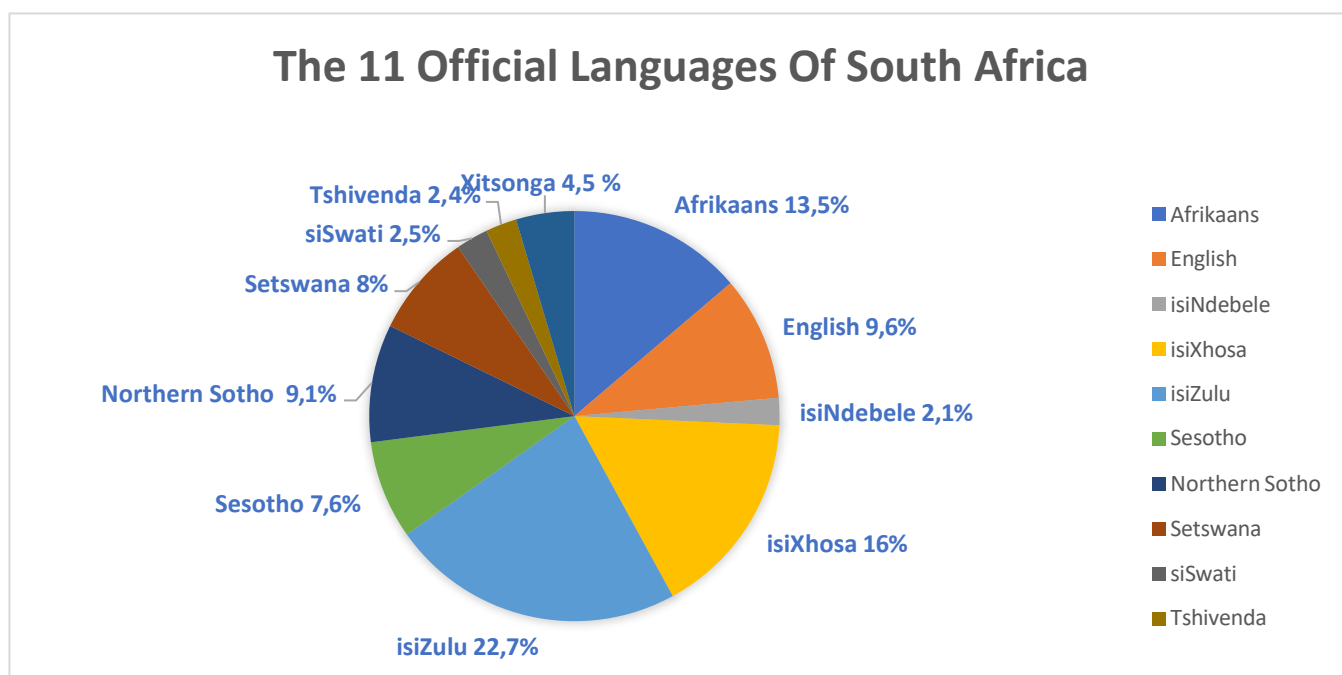


Figure 2 data source: Statistics South Africa 2016

Although English is merely the mother tongue of a vast minority of the population, global historical forces have caused it to replace other languages as the standard in business, academia, and government in regions that include but are not limited to South Africa

(De Klerk, 2000). It is important to keep in mind that despite its lingua franca status and power, not everyone in South Africa is a native English speaker. For instance, KwaZulu-Natal has a large isiZulu-speaking population, while the Western and Northern Capes have a large Afrikaans-speaking population (Statistics South Africa, 2022).

isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Sesotho are just a few of the indigenous African languages that make up South Africa's largest linguistic group. However, historically speaking, Alexander (2007) notes that these languages have been insufficiently utilised in crucial areas like education. According to Desai (2016), the reality of language policy application in education in South Africa is identical to that of other post-colonial era countries, as there are still few sectors in which African languages are formally employed. This raises issues of linguistic inequality, where the marginalisation of indigenous African languages in schools may be the result of a lack of funding and support (Webb, 2002).

South Africa has a high rate of multilingualism, with many people fluent in two or more languages (Banda, 2009). This fact illustrates South Africans' notable linguistic adaptability and emphasises the possibilities for inclusive, multilingual educational paradigms. Nevertheless, despite the constitutional mandate to equally advance all official languages, there continue to be issues with linguist attitudes, the execution of language policies, as well as resource distribution (Mesthrie, 2002). Therefore, comprehending and navigating South Africa's multilingual educational landscape depends on examining these difficulties within the country's distinctive linguistic context.

#### **2.4.1 South Africa's geographic and demographic context**

It is essential to thoroughly comprehend South Africa's geographic and demographic characteristics in this debate. According to the 2022 census, South Africa has a population of 60,6 million with four main race groups designated under apartheid: black, white, Indian and Coloured. The black population is heterogenous and is further divided into cultural and linguistic sub-categories of the Nguni, Sotho-Tswana and Venda-Tsonga groups. Similarly, the white population is divided into sub-categories of Afrikaans and English groups, respectively. As a consequently highly diversified nation in terms of language, culture, and socioeconomic conditions (South Africa frequently has the very highest Gini coefficient globally), the geography and demographics of South Africa have

a direct impact on the country's educational landscape, particularly in terms of language policy.

Geographically, South Africa's diversity is echoed in its diverse landscapes, which range across its various metropolitan centres and abundant rural communities. The location of a school has a significant impact on the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and the language policies put in place. Urban areas, particularly major cities such as Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town, usually encourage a multilingual environment, which – as stands to reason – results in an increased demand for instruction in numerous languages. Conversely, rural communities often rely for the most part on a native language, necessitating a unique set of language policies that are regionally sensitive in their mandate.

The demographics of South Africa are defined by its multicultural and multilingual society. According to the national census, it is typical for individuals to be bilingual or even multilingual, as the country acknowledges eleven official languages. The makeup of the population in terms of linguistic diversity differs significantly among provinces and within communities, which influences language attitudes and the enactment of language policies in schools. For example, Alexander (2023) states that the main language of the Eastern cape is isiXhosa, as 78,8% of its population are speakers of the language, while the main language of the Free State province is Sesotho, as 64% of the provinces' population are speakers of this language (see Table 3).

**Table 2:** The languages spoken in South Africa's nine provinces

<b>Province</b>	<b>Main language</b>	<b>Percentage of first language speakers</b>
Eastern Cape	isiXhosa	78,8%
Gauteng	isiZulu	19,8%
Free State	Sesotho	64,2%
Kwazulu-Natal	isiZulu	77,8%
Limpopo	Sepedi	52,9%
Mpumalanga	Siswati	27,7%
Northern Cape	Afrikaans	53,8%
North West	Setswana	63,4%
Western Cap	Afrikaans	49%

Table 2 Data source: Statistics South Africa Census 2022

Research conducted by Klotz (2022) demonstrates that the demographic composition of South Africa is undergoing a substantial transformation as a result of both immigration and internal movements, resulting in the emergence of novel linguistic and cultural patterns that have yet to be fully accounted for in current policies. These investigations suggest that while traditional categorisations continue to hold significance, there exists an urgent necessity to recognise the recent changes in demographics and their effects on language policies and educational approaches. By incorporating these contemporary viewpoints, a more holistic comprehension of how shifting demographic trends impact language policies and educational equality in South Africa can be achieved.

Moreover, South Africa's socioeconomic conditions are a crucial component of its demographic context. In assessing this assertion, Taylor and Yu (2023) allude to the interconnectedness amongst socio-economic conditions and capabilities. For instance, schools with sufficient resources in affluent communities offer a variety of language options than schools with insufficient resources in disadvantaged communities. Similarly, Taylor and Yu (2023:6) point out that parents from schools with sufficient



resources are more likely to participate in the school community, thereby improve the standard of education. Research demonstrated that there is a common relationship between socioeconomic status and educational opportunities and resources, including language acquisition.

## **2.5 LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

Language planning is defined by Cooper (1989:45) as deliberate actions intended to affect people's behaviour in terms of language learning, structure, or functional allocation of language codes. Language planning in a broader context has recently increasingly altered its emphasis to address the global challenges that include language endangerment/precarity, and specifically, the unprecedented domination by English of globalisation itself (Romaine, 2021). Language issues in underdeveloped nations served initially as the focus of the interdisciplinary field of language planning and policy (LPLP), but have since been broadened to include language issues involving individuals, families, and other organisations at the micro-level (Romaine, 2021).

Language planning was once thought of as a collaborative endeavour between politicians and linguists, and it was researched as a field of study concentrating on these acts (Ferguson, 2006). Politicians making judgements on language were seen as engaging in political intervention (Asrifan, 2021). However, the phrases "language planning" and "language policy" are now frequently used interchangeably, and they are both considered to fall under the umbrella of language planning and policy (LPP) as a more comprehensive field. This change reflects the understanding that language planning and policy involve not just the language practises and decisions made by society at the macro-level, but also those made by people in positions of authority (Language Planning and Policy, LPP).

It is crucial, however, to differentiate between language policy with language planning, as the terms are not interchangeable (Deumert, 2001). Language policy development and distribution, according to Karlsson and Karlsson (2021), ought to be considered as contributing to language planning, rather than constituting it. Cushing (2020:428) continues by defining language policy as "all language-related decisions, attitudes, and behaviours manifested in the form of practises and pedagogies." As a result, a language policy can serve as a model for implementing language planning activities.

Language policies, on the other hand, are a source of contention. According to Shohamy (2006:4), they present methods for enforcing linguistic habits that adhere to national, political, social, and economic goals. From a critical standpoint, the development of language policy frequently replicates dominant power groups' goals to further their agendas, which may well vary from the preservation of collective identities to the maintenance of social and political order.

This understanding of language policies is especially pertinent in the context of South Africa. Historically, the apartheid administration used language policies to impose languages based on political goals, rather than educational necessity (Webb, 2015). This heritage continues to throw a pall over the modern linguistic landscape, in which English, as a language of status and power, is occasionally employed as a weapon for discrimination and manipulation. This historical background requires a sophisticated knowledge of language policy, particularly in Mamelodi, Gauteng, which this research aims to give.

According to the South African Schools Act (1996), which supports additive bilingualism (LiEP, 1997), language planning and policy in South African schools fall under the control of the school governing body (SGB). Learning in one's native tongue while gradually adopting English as a second language is known as 'additive bilingualism'. The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), which was implemented following the drafting of the novel Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, has a mandate to promote the equal use of all languages in South Africa, particularly in the context of language planning and education (Lesupi, 2016).

The guidelines of language planning and policy state that stakeholders in South Africa, such as parents, teachers, and the SGB, decide on the language to be used (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997). Therefore, the onus lies heavily on these stakeholders to promote home languages as LoLT in schools. However, although South Africa's language in education laws is thought to be progressive in theory, Manyike (2014:253) notes that there have been difficulties in putting them into practise. South Africans frequently see home language instruction as useless (Webb, 2006), and a growing substantial number of black middle-class parents choose to register their children in English-medium former Model-C schools (Manyike, 2014). The notion among black South Africans that English is superior to their native languages is reflected in this phenomenon, which has been referred to as an expression of the colonised black psyche (Alexander, 2004). Perry

(2013) describes South Africa's language planning and policy as struggling to completely commit to a multilingual strategy, due to a lack of enforcement capacity.

However, such challenges are not unique to South Africa. A study by Pavón and Pérez (2018) investigated the implementation of multilingual education policies in Spain, a country with significant regional linguistic diversity and varying degrees of policy success. Their research revealed that while Spain has adopted comprehensive policies promoting regional languages alongside Spanish, the actual implementation often falters due to socio-political and economic pressures, similar to the South African context where policies advocating home languages face practical obstacles. This study emphasizes that the disparity between policy intentions and real-world practices is a common issue, reflecting broader challenges in balancing linguistic diversity with prevailing socio-economic and political influences. This underscores the global nature of these challenges and highlights a critical gap in both national and international literature: the need for robust enforcement mechanisms and culturally sensitive approaches to language policy.

## **2.6 LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY**

The language in education policy of South Africa was published in 1997 by the Minister of Basic Education in accordance with Section 6(1) of the Schools Act and Section 3 of the National Education Policy Act. The policy is founded on the acknowledgement of cultural diversity, and the promotion of multilingualism. Before apartheid, a complex interaction of colonial forces and indigenous resistance formed education in South Africa. As a result, throughout this time, the language used in education policy reflected these colonial processes. The Afrikaans language replaced Dutch as the primary language of instruction in the Western Cape after the early Dutch settlers introduced it (Giliomee, 2003).

However, English was adopted as the official language of administration and education in the 19th century, as a result of the transfer of authority from the Dutch to the British. English-medium schools were established in the Cape and then-Natal as a result of British rule in these regions (Desai, 1996). While mission schools in these areas provided some instruction in African languages, English remained the major language of instruction, in part due to the goal to use education to 'civilise' the indigenous

inhabitants (Odendaal, 2012). Education was given in Dutch and then Afrikaans in the interior territories that were governed by the Boer Republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State). There were no formal education programmes for African languages in these locations, despite the fact that the bulk of the population was African (Giliomee, 2003).

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 by the Act of Union complicated the linguistic situation. The Union's constitution established English and Dutch (eventually superseded by Afrikaans) as official languages, thereby solidifying these two languages' hegemony in the field of education (Heugh, 1995). It is important to note that the Act did not include any provisions for African languages, which reflects the exclusion of these languages throughout the colonial era.

A few endeavours, though, were made to teach African languages in the school. The Phelps-Stokes panel, an American philanthropic education body, recommended using mother tongue teaching in the early years of learning for African children (Phillips, 1993). As a result, some mission schools implemented a "dual-medium" system, whereby children in lower primary were taught in African languages and moved to English in upper primary (Phillips, 1993).

Bantu Education, a severely stratified educational system, was established in South Africa during the apartheid era (1948–1994). Language had a key part to play in the racial inequality and segregation that established this system (Cross & Ndlovu, 2004). The policy of mother tongue education was extended to all African schools under Bantu Education. Despite appearing to be progressive, the action was actually intended to further divide ethnic groups and perpetuate social injustices (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

African kids were required to receive their basic education in their native tongues for the first few years of primary school before switching to English or Afrikaans in higher grades under the Bantu Education Act (1953) (Harber, 1997). This was allegedly done in order to sustain racial disparities and restrict access to high-quality education, or, as Harber (1997) describes it, "educating for inequality."

The Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, which mandated Afrikaans as the official language of teaching in African schools and provoked fierce opposition and the historic Soweto Uprising in 1976, was a key turning point (Brookes, 2004). A seismic shift in public opinion and the international criticism of apartheid resulted from this edict, which

was perceived as a direct attack on the dignity and identity of African communities (Brookes, 2004).

African languages were not given enough attention, while Afrikaans and English rapidly took over the educational infrastructures. African languages were restricted to ethnic "homelands" under the pretence of "separate development," and they were not sufficiently developed for use in either higher education, or formal or professional contexts (Alexander, 2000). Some may argue that this prevented many of these languages from developing intellectually, and upheld a status quo in which English and Afrikaans were seen as languages of privilege, power, and upward mobility (Alexander, 2000).

In the post-apartheid era, South Africa's language in education policy underwent a significant transition. The newly democratic government of South Africa ratified a novel Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, which recognised eleven official languages in the country with the express purpose of encouraging multilingualism (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The explicit mandate of such language policies was to rectify past injustices, promote unity, and honour diversity. These included the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997, which advocated for mother-tongue instruction in the early grades and the addition of at least one additional language beginning in the third grade (Department of Education, 1997).

Despite these forward-thinking policies, implementation has proven difficult. Numerous institutions continue to use English as the language of instruction and instruction, resulting in the marginalisation of native languages (Kamwangamalu, 2000). The dichotomy between policy and practice is the result of socioeconomic realities in which English is perceived as the key to upward mobility and global opportunity (Heugh, 2002).

The South African government introduced the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) in 2013, mandating the learning of an African language in all institutions (Department of Basic Education, 2013) in an effort to promote multilingualism. However, teacher capacity and availability of resources have posed significant implementation challenges since (Webb, 2015)

Current debates regarding language policy in education centre on striking a balance between the promotion of multilingualism and indigenous languages and the implementation of these policies in a country as complex and diverse as South Africa (Desai, 2020). While these debates persist, it is evident that language policy in

education is essential for fostering social cohesion, redressing past injustices, and promoting quality education for all South Africans (Prah, 2009).

The challenge lies in bridging this gap, as Spolsky's framework suggests, by addressing both the top-down policy implementations and the grassroots beliefs that influence language practices. This is evidenced by ongoing difficulties in policy execution, as highlighted by the struggles with teacher capacity and resource availability for initiatives like the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL). Thus, Spolsky's theory underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates both policy and societal attitudes to effectively promote and implement multilingual education in South Africa.

## **2.7 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS**

As a distinctive human trait, language sets us apart from all other living entities, serving as the prime conduit for human communication (Melander and Dalarna, 2003). It is through language that humans can effectively reason, express, communicate, transmit information, and manage our social world. As Trask (2003) underscores, without language, humanity would be devoid of any innovation. Finegan (2014) explains in this regard that language is a system of communication for humans, combining meanings with expressions in an intricate network of sounds that have been refined over time. Interestingly, language transcends merely transmitting meaning; it often mirrors a speaker's personal characteristics, reflecting their beliefs, behaviour, and consequently, their attitudes (McKenzie, 2010).

Attitude has a significant role to play in the study of language. Studies show that language attitudes are deeply intertwined with individuals' perceptions and societal influences. For example, Baker (2001) delved into the relationship between language choices and the perceived prestige of a language in the global market and found that attitude often plays a pivotal role in whether individuals lean towards using dominant languages or minority ones. Gaining an in-depth understanding of these complex dynamics is crucial, as language attitudes have a direct impact on the decisions people make regarding the languages they speak and the way they behave linguistically. Kircher and Fox (2019), also highlight the importance of delving into linguistic attitudes by acknowledging the social implications attached to different language varieties. This

approach offers valuable insights into the deeper significance of using home languages as LoLT within various social contexts which involve key stakeholders like parents, educators, and SGB.

There are copious studies in the social sciences that concentrate on attitudes and perceptions about languages, such as that of Mutodi and Ngirande (2014), who researched students' perceptions, and McKenzie's (2010) investigation on the psychology of English as a global language. Attitude refers to the way a person feels, thinks, and acts (toward) (Ngidi, 2007). According to Abidin (2012:119), an individual's attitude "...is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioural beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes."

A person's attitude is their propensity to react favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, event, or any other discernible aspect of their reality. Therefore, a person will respond favourably to something when they have a positive attitude about it, and vice versa. For instance, it is frequently stated that students who have a negative attitude toward the Afrikaans language typically tend to perform poorly in it. In this way, a person's attitude is essentially a manifestation of their attractor and repellent qualities.

Attitudes are commensurate with perception. MacDonald (2011:3) defines perception as an individual expression of a person's worldview, which is influenced by a variety of societal factors. Our perception constitutes the way we perceive our surroundings and the beliefs we affix to things like people, music, and social issues, among others. Similarly, Markus and Kitayama (1991) note that individuals of various cultures and backgrounds will perceive others and themselves differently. In this regard, language affects our perception of reality, and impacts our conduct. My perception of language, for instance, is that isiZulu, isiNdebele, and isiXhosa all belong to the same language, as a result I can learn one and understand all of them.

Language attitudes and perceptions are important in components of language learning and teaching. Baker (2001) asserts that people's language choices are influenced by their attitude and perception of the language. Individuals may choose a majority language over a minor language if they believe the former has a high position and is thus significant in the global market. According to Curdt-Christiansen (2009), individuals' conceptions of a language and the significance they place on its role in education frequently reveal themselves in both explicit and implicit language actions. Another

study, conducted by Giles and Billings (2004), discovered that speakers' language perceptions not only influence their language behaviours, but also how others perceive the language, influencing decision-making in a number of crucial social and applied situations.

Language attitudes and perception are socially constructed, shaped through diverse experiences and interactions with others, including parents, teachers, friends, neighbours, and even social media influences (Kircher and Zipp, 2022). They can be transferred among individuals as they interact within a setting, such as a school. Notably, teachers may initially harbour a positive attitude towards their language, but as they become part of a larger group, they tend to adopt the attitudes of the dominant group, showing preference for the dominant language.

Furthermore, language attitudes and perceptions are reflected in an individuals' language choices. The common issues of language attitudes research are language choice, or even people's thoughts on language change within a certain group, their perspectives on the employment of standard or non-standard forms of language, and loyalty to one's own language. Language attitudes and views can also arise in domains other than education, such as socio-political and economic considerations.

As language is closely linked to social identity, it often leads to people reacting to it as indicative of the personal and social traits of the user. This idea is reinforced by Kircher and Fox (2019:848), who posit that understanding linguistic attitudes depends on comprehending the social connotations that specific language varieties hold for those familiar with them. Thus, a closer examination of the parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions about home languages as LoLT encompass comprehending the social connotations that their home languages mean to them.

### **2.7.1 Attitudes and perceptions of SGB, parents and teachers**

According to research conducted by Kostoulas-Makrakis (1995) and Gardner (1999), societal influences and upbringing have a significant impact on attitudes towards and perceptions of language. When making important judgements about personal perspectives on issues like family, friends, security, and nationhood, individual perceptions and attitudes can play a significant role (Kruglanski, Baldner, Chernikova, Lo Destro, & Pierro, 2018). Perceptions and attitudes are acknowledged as a major



factor in languages, and the field of education is no exception.

According to Epstein's theory of parental engagement, school governing bodies (SGB), parents and teachers are key decision-makers in schools, and their attitudes and perceptions are therefore crucial in language-related matters. These stakeholders' perspectives can encourage a good attitude towards language, guiding choices on preferred and learned languages, and facilitating the easier process of language learning.

### **2.7.1.1 School governing bodies' views and perceptions**

Although school governing bodies (SGBs) have a significant impact on language policies and practises in schools, little research has been done on how they see and interpret the learning of home languages. The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) has given SGBs a significant role in defining language policy at the school level in South Africa, thereby increasing the influence of their attitudes towards home language instruction (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2009).

Few studies have focused on SGBs' attitudes and perceptions regarding home languages as LoLT, despite the fact that there is a body of study on their position in school management and governance. While the SGBs role in language policy has been taken into consideration to some extent, few studies have focused on them. Given the impact SGBs have on educational achievements, this gap in the literature proves noteworthy (Heystek, 2004).

A small number of studies have focused on SGB members' perspectives on linguistic issues. For instance, Webb (2002) found that some SGBs favour English as their principal language of instruction because they think it has more economic value. This is consistent with Heugh's (2009) findings, according to which English competence is frequently seen as a necessary prerequisite for greater academic and professional possibilities. However, there are many viewpoints and attitudes among SGB members, which are frequently impacted by individual prejudices, sociocultural contexts, and a lack of understanding of the benefits of studying one's native language in a school setting (Heystek, 2004; Sibanda, 2014).

The South African Schools Act (1996) gives SGB members the authority to choose the language policy for their schools, which means they play a significant role. Given this

power to make decisions, SGB members' views on home languages as LoLT could have a big impact on home languages as LoLT implementation (Grieva and Chouvarda, 2012).

Studies show that SGBs' views on languages of teaching and learning can significantly affect how language policy is carried out. According to Kamwangamalu (2000), SGB members' opinions towards home languages often have an impact on how highly mother-tongue education is regarded and promoted in schools. The author also highlights how many SGBs are uninformed of the intellectual, cultural, and sociopolitical benefits of learning one's original language (Kamwangamalu, 2000; Alexander, 2000).

Furthermore, SGB decisions on language regulations may have an impact beyond of the single school. According to De Kadt (2005), language decisions made by SGBs have an impact on a region's broader linguistic landscape, and can alter public perceptions of specific languages. This highlights the importance of studying SGB perspectives because their choices can either support or undermine established linguistic hierarchies and ideologies (Webb, 2002).

#### **2.7.1.2 Parents' views and perspectives**

Similarly, parents' views and perceptions are equally crucial in decisions relating to languages of learning and teaching in schools. Parental attitudes and perceptions have often shed light on intriguing contradictions which are related to fostering children's good attitudes towards languages. In KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, a survey was conducted by Ngidi (2007) to examine the attitudes of learners, educators and parents on the use of English as a language of learning and teaching and in selected schools. The results of the survey indicate that most parents were content with their children learning in English rather than their mother tongue. However, when parents were asked to share their views on their children communicating in English at home, only 27% of these parents approved of their children using English in their households. This contradiction is imperative to note, as it indicates that, although parents in KwaZulu-Natal embrace English as a language of instruction, they do not seem to have a place for English in the home.

Similarly, Arua and Magocha (2002) conducted a study in Botswana to examine the patterns of language use and language reference of some children and their parents. The study revealed that 67% of children who were proficient in Setswana preferred to

be taught in it. However, the results indicated that most of the parents who were interviewed in the same study preferred their children to learn in English. Another study by Buthelezi (2002) discovered that parents consistently thought learning in English to be the best course of action. As Epstein's theory of parental involvement suggests, such perspectives can guide choices on preferred languages and facilitate the easier process of children's language learning.

### **2.7.1.3 Teachers' views and perceptions**

Teachers play a crucial role in decisions relating to languages of learning and teaching in schools in South Africa. Their views and perceptions are important as they are the ones directly involved in the teaching and learning process, and therefore have a deep understanding of the practical implications of language choice on learning outcomes. This is particularly significant in a multilingual and multicultural context like South Africa, where language is closely tied to identity and social cohesion.

Research has shown that teachers' views and perceptions can influence language policy implementation in schools. A study by Probyn and Swart (2013) highlighted that teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism and language diversity can impact their willingness to teach in different languages and support bilingual education initiatives. This underscores the importance of considering teachers' perspectives when making decisions about languages of teaching and learning. Furthermore, teachers' own language proficiency and comfort in using certain languages as mediums of instruction can also shape their preferences and practices in the classroom. A study by Heugh et al. (2002) emphasized the need for teachers to be adequately prepared and supported in teaching in multilingual settings, as their competencies in different languages can impact the quality of education provided to students.

In addition, teachers' perceptions of the role of language in education and its impact on students' academic success can influence their advocacy for particular language policies in schools. A study by Chimbutane (2013) highlighted how teachers' beliefs about the relationship between language, identity, and learning can shape their preferences for linguistic practices in the classroom. Therefore, teachers' views and perceptions are vital in decisions relating to languages of learning and teaching in schools in South Africa. Their insights can provide valuable input into language policy development and implementation, ensuring that language choices are responsive to the

diverse linguistic needs of learners and supportive of their academic success. It is essential for policymakers and education leaders to engage with teachers as stakeholders in these processes, to ensure that language policies are effective and equitable for all students.

## **2.8 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS**

The stakeholder ties in language planning and policy in South African schools are both intricate and varied. In determining linguistic preferences and choices, parents, teachers, and school governing body (SGB) members all play significant roles. The interactions between these parties affect linguistic decisions and academic results. For inclusive language policies that promote educational fairness and respect linguistic variety, it is essential to comprehend and take into account the various views, attitudes, and demands of different stakeholders.

### **2.8.1 Relationship between the educators and parents**

Many researchers, such as Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:139), acknowledge the crucial significance that strong relationships between parents and teachers have in children's growth and education. A partnership between parents and teachers encourages parents' understanding of children's school experiences. Additionally, studies have indicated that motivated parents are a key component of successful students' academic performance (Sanders and Sheldon, 2009). The goal of this extensive partnership between parents and teachers is to give a child the finest educational experience possible. It entails mutual understanding, communication, engagement, and collaboration.

The relationship between educators and parents is based on communication. Educators can inform parents on curriculum, teaching techniques, their child's academic performance and behaviour in school through regular, clear, and open communication channels. Similarly, parents can provide useful information on their child's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning styles. Communication must be two-way, courteous, and constant in order to be effective.

Active parental involvement in a child's education is essential. This involvement might range from attending parent-teacher meetings, to helping with homework and school projects. According to Sheldon (2009), learners succeed when there is a good working relationship between the parents, teachers, and the learners themselves. Active parental involvement in a child's education not only enriches the relationship with educators, but also improves the child's engagement and performance in school.

Working together to support and enhance the child's learning is what collaboration between educators and parents entails. Collaboration on the construction of individualised education plans (IEPs), discussion of learning strategies that may be reinforced at home, and addressing any challenges or barriers that may be impeding the child's growth are all examples of this. A strong collaborative partnership promotes a sense of shared responsibility for the child's education.

To conclude, trust and respect are the foundations of a good relationship between educators and parents. Educators must recognise parents' position as main educators of their children, and parents must have faith in educators' skill and dedication. This mutual trust and respect produce a fruitful collaboration in which both parties feel appreciated and heard.

### **2.8.2 Relationship between SGB members and the school community**

The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) has lent SGBs a significant role in defining language policy at the school level in South Africa, thereby increasing the influence of their attitudes towards home language instruction (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2009). Therefore, the interaction between members of the SGB and the larger school community is crucial in determining the operational and strategic direction of home languages as LoLT in schools. Furthermore, according to Epstein's theory of parental involvement, the partnership between the SGB and the school community is vital for identifying and integrating services and resources that enhance the educational environment. It is a dynamic relationship with a lot of different components, such as effective governance, teamwork, communication, community involvement, and mutual respect.

The SGB is in charge of making the important choices that determine how the school complies with regulations and legislation relevant to education. The effectiveness of

their governance immediately affects the general running of the school and the level of instruction it provides. Collaborating closely with other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, students, and non-teaching staff, is crucial for SGB members. This collaborative relationship makes it easier to make decisions, solve problems, and develop projects that will boost the school's overall performance.

The importance of communication between the SGB and the school community cannot be overstated. The school community must be kept up to date on all developments, policies, and potential changes. By doing this, it is ensured that everyone who has an interest in the school feels informed, and is able to participate. Another crucial aspect of the interaction between SGB members and the school community is encouraging and promoting community participation. Participating in school events with the community develops a sense of ownership and accountability, improving students' overall educational experiences.

Mutual respect constitutes the foundation of a strong connection between SGB members and the school community (principal, teachers and administrators). It recognises the significant contribution each stakeholder makes to children's education. According to Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:149), members of the school community are "...required to have reliable, confidential, open and honest relationships with parents", as such, the SGB. This entails respect for other people's beliefs, and their inherent dignity. Both the SGB and the school community must respect each other's perspectives and the governing role of the SGB.

## **2.9 LANGUAGE PREFERENCES OF STAKEHOLDERS**

As societies become more diverse, researchers such as Kuncze (2022) continue exploring the issue of language use and preference among many stakeholders in educational settings, which is a dynamic field of study. Various elements, such as social, political, economic, and educational considerations, are reported to have an impact on stakeholders' linguistic preferences (De Klerk, 2002). Based on their experiences and roles within the educational system, each stakeholder has an own viewpoint on language use and choice.

According to Kasanga (2007), stakeholders such as teachers usually prefer languages that promote instructional clarity and student comprehension. The linguistic diversity of their students may require them to find a balance between adhering to institutional language policies and using learners' home languages to clarify concepts. For instance, while the language of learning and teaching is English in most township schools, code-switching is frequently used by educators in such multilingual contexts to accommodate learners in the learning process.

Parents, who are another significant group of stakeholders, frequently favour the languages they believe will offer their children the best chances for the future (De Klerk, 2002; Nakamura, 2020). This tendency frequently favours languages that are thought to have greater social and economic capital, like English in many situations. According to Probyn (2009), English is frequently chosen as the language of teaching as it is believed to have worldwide importance. This does not, however, diminish the importance that parents may place on their native languages, which is partly influenced by history in a South African context, particularly when it comes to preserving cultural history and identity (Banda, 2000).

Teachers wield enormous power over language learning as essential players in the educational system. Their language attitudes and beliefs can have a significant impact on pupils' language development and educational performance. According to a study conducted by Ngidi (2007) on stakeholders' attitudes towards English as a LoLT, South African teachers showed a positive attitude towards English language instruction because of its perceived societal and economic relevance. Learners did not share the same views, however. Learners instead indicated a desire to learn in their mother tongue, albeit acknowledging the global demand for English proficiency. It is therefore critical to comprehend teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding home languages, as well as the problems they confront when implementing multilingual education practices.

The direct beneficiaries of language initiatives, learners, also exhibit distinctive language use and preferences. Their preferred languages frequently reflect their social identities and the effects of their surrounding environment (Makalela, 2015). For example, learners who attend a former Model-C school in a suburb in Pretoria often come from middle class homes. These learners have parents who can communicate effectively in English, as well as teachers who are able to communicate effectively in English. As former Model-C schools in Pretoria are generally linguistically highly diverse, learners

find themselves using English as a lingua franca to adjust to the environment, or in some cases, as a way “fit in” with their peers.

In the case of the learners in Mahlasedi-Masana Primary school, whose parents and teachers were the focus of this study, the same can be said. Although these learners are in a homogenous linguistics environment, they still perceive English as a language of success and global exposure. Therefore, learners are also aware of the importance of English and other widely used languages for academic success and future professional possibilities, according to Heugh (2009).

In conclusion, those in charge of making decisions about school language policies, such as SGBs, frequently base their language choices on a combination of the aforementioned considerations, striking a balance between parental expectations, student needs, and the practicalities of educational delivery.

### **2.9.1 Parents' Language Preferences**

Parents play a crucial role in shaping language choices for their children's education. Grieva and Chouvarda (2012) emphasize how parents' attitudes towards languages affect their preferences for the language of instruction for their children. According to available research, parents frequently favour English over other languages because they believe it has societal and economic benefit (Ngidi, 2007). According to Grieva and Chouvarda (2012), this preference may be the result of parents' beliefs that English provides their kids more opportunities for both education and job.

The colonial history and the notion that speaking English is a badge of success and distinction also have an impact on parents' decisions to send their children to an English-medium school (Alexander, 2004). In order for their children to have access to opportunities for social and economic mobility, parents may assume that learning English is the key. Strong English language skills are usually associated with more favourable work prospects, higher income levels, and more social standing in South African society (Manyike, 2014). Parents prioritise training their children in English in order to give them a competitive edge in the future.

It is important to realise that variables other than financial aspects affect parents' language preferences. Grieva and Chouvarda (2012) emphasise the importance of parents considering other aspects such as the quality of instruction, the availability of



resources and assistance in the child's preferred language, and the desire for their children to keep a link to their cultural heritage. Parents may occasionally prefer that their children study in their mother tongue in order to preserve cultural identity and provide a sense of belonging (Ngidi, 2007). The desire to protect the linguistic and cultural diversity of South African society drives these arguments.

Epstein's theory of parental involvement further emphasizes the critical role of parents in shaping educational outcomes through their engagement and expectations. This framework can be applied to understand the language preferences of various stakeholders in South African schools. According to Epstein, parents' involvement significantly influences their children's educational experiences and success, including their language preferences. Parents, influenced by their own linguistic backgrounds and the demands of their educational environments, reflect the broader societal belief that proficiency in English provides better future opportunities (Grieva & Chouvarda, 2012).

This preference aligns with Epstein's theory, which suggests that parents' beliefs about language impact their involvement in educational decisions, driving them to prioritize English to enhance their children's prospects. Therefore, by integrating Epstein's theory, we can better understand how these stakeholders' involvement and preferences intersect with broader educational policies and practices, revealing the complexities of implementing effective language policies in South Africa's diverse educational landscape.

### **2.9.2 Teachers' Language Preferences**

Teachers, as key participants in the education system, also have their own language preferences when it comes to teaching and learning. According to Ngidi (2007), teachers in South Africa generally have favourable views towards pupils who are studying the English language and are cognisant of the significance of this subject in a wider economic and social context. According to Chouvarda and Griva (2012), proficiency in English is seen as a prerequisite for success in both education and the workplace. Teachers are aware that enhanced educational possibilities and future prospects can rest on their pupils' skill in English communication.

However, studies also demonstrate that teachers value their learners' home languages and are aware of the benefits of using them as a foundation for learning (Probyn, 2001).

Particularly when learners have poor competency in the target language, teachers frequently use students' mother tongues in the classroom to explain concepts and foster understanding (Ngidi, 2007). This method is consistent with studies that highlights the need of enhancing learners' existing linguistic and cultural competence in order to enhance their academic success (Baker, 2000).

It is crucial to keep in mind that teachers' linguistic choices may also be impacted by their own language skills and cultural upbringing. According to Probyn (2001:251), many teachers in South Africa do not speak English as their native tongue. Their teaching methods and preferred languages are influenced by their individual linguistic backgrounds and experiences. To ensure effective communication and promote meaningful learning experiences, teachers may feel more at ease speaking their mother tongue or a combination of languages in the classroom.

### **2.9.3 SGB Members' Language Preferences**

School Governing Body (SGB) members have the authority to make decisions regarding language policies at schools, including the language of instruction. SGB members' preferences can have a big impact on the languages used in educational settings. According to research conducted by Manyike (2014), SGB members frequently think about things like the perceived status and economic importance of particular languages when making decisions.

SGB members may give higher priority to languages that they believe will provide pupils with better educational results and future chances. Due to its economic importance and global relevance, English is frequently chosen as a first language (Manyike, 2014). SGB members could think that giving pupils instruction in English makes them more employable and gives them the language skills they need for success in college and the workplace.

The SGB members must take into account the interests and needs of various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students, as they are also representatives of the school community. The promotion of multilingualism and accommodating the language variety within the school community must coexist in harmony (LiEP, 1997). This necessitates careful consideration of both the maintenance of cultural identity and the scholastic benefits of mother tongue training.

Parents, teachers, and SGB members in South African schools all have different language preferences, which are influenced by a number of different variables. Probyn (2001) asserts that language attitudes and preferences have been influenced for a long time by the historical backdrop of apartheid, with its enforced segregation and marginalisation of African languages. Manyike (2014) further adds that English and Afrikaans continue to have a big impact on the educational system as languages of privilege and power. The colonial past, social considerations, and opinions about the significance of language all have a role in the predominance of languages used in South African schools.

In addition, sociological and economic variables influence language preferences. The perceived value of an English-medium education has been impacted by globalisation and the growing significance of English as a worldwide language (Grieva and Chouvarda, 2012). The choice for English as the language of instruction is influenced by the desire for social and economic mobility, access to greater employment prospects, and increased socioeconomic standing (Ngidi, 2007).

Observably, language preferences vary among parents, teachers, and SGB members in South African schools, which affects their decisions about the formal language of teaching. Numerous factors, including as historical background, economic considerations, cultural identity, and views of linguistic value, have an impact on these preferences. To create inclusive language policies that advance educational justice and take into account the linguistic diversity within South African culture, it is crucial to comprehend these preferences.

The existing literature highlights a prevailing preference among parents, teachers, and School Governing Body (SGB) members for English over other languages in the context of language of learning and teaching (LoLT). This trend suggests a strong inclination towards English, likely due to its perceived usefulness and status in the broader socio-economic landscape. However, this literature predominantly covers various regions and contexts, and while it provides a general picture, it may not fully capture the nuances of attitudes and perceptions in specific local settings, such as township primary schools in Mamelodi, South Africa.

Therefore, the primary contribution of this study lies in its focus on a specific locality-Mamelodi. This context is crucial as it may present unique socio-cultural and economic

factors influencing attitudes towards home languages. The study aims to provide a localized perspective that might differ from the general trends observed elsewhere. Understanding these local nuances is essential for developing targeted educational strategies that address the specific needs and preferences of the community. Therefore, this study is relevant because it offers a detailed examination of local attitudes towards home languages in a context that may differ from those studied in existing literature.

## **2.10 SYNTHESIS**

The literature study, in its final analysis, sheds light on research on using home languages as LoLT, the theoretical framework as well as an overview of South Africa's linguistic context; giving attention to the country's linguistic history, demographics, and its people. The chapter further provided a discuss the language policies of South Africa and reasons for undertaking the route of the official languages in education. A deliberation of the attitudes and perspectives of key figures in the field of education towards languages in general and their home languages in particular is also provided. The preference for English among parents, teachers, and School Governing Body (SGB) members in South African educational settings holds significant implications for educational policy and practice. As evidenced by various studies, this preference is largely influenced by the perceived socio-economic benefits associated with English proficiency, which is regarded as a gateway to better educational and professional opportunities.

This widespread preference underscores a broader societal inclination towards English as a key language for success, driven by both historical contexts and contemporary socio-economic factors. However, this preference must be balanced with the need to respect and preserve linguistic diversity, particularly in multilingual environments where home languages also play a crucial role in educational and cultural contexts. Thus, understanding these preferences and their underlying motivations is essential for developing inclusive language policies that cater to the diverse needs of students while fostering their cultural heritage. This study aims to further investigate the linguistic attitudes and perceptions that have changed over the past ten years, notably among African parents as suggested by Arua and Magocha, (2002).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that were employed in this study. The current study sought to explore the current attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT in a township school in Mamelodi. The chapter begins with a presentation of the research methodology, research paradigm, research design and approach, principles of trustworthiness, and the population and sampling procedures thereafter. Furthermore, the data management and analysis, data collection procedures and instruments, and the demographics information are discussed, followed by the ethical considerations that are relevant to this study. The chapter provides the roadmap that was followed in the quest to attain the research objectives.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the steps and strategies that a researcher systematically undertakes to create a study that guarantees genuine and trustworthy findings that address the objectives of the study (Bahati, 2021). The research methodology follows the process of adhering to the methods, techniques, and strategies for acquiring and analysing the data in a research study (Abu-Taieh, Al Hadid & Mouatasim, 2020). Understanding research methodology entails comprehending all aspects of the research process, such as the research procedure, its context, philosophical underpinnings, ethics and the prediction of phenomena. Consequently, the research methodology covers the research techniques that were employed during the research process. Figure 5 reflects a diagrammatic summary of the research methodology employed in the study.

**Figure 5:** The research methodology



### 3.2.1 Research Paradigm

Researchers have different assumptions and beliefs about what they consider as reality and how they view the world. What the researcher believes about reality influences every decision that will be made in the study. These beliefs are reflected in the researcher's paradigm of choice which consists of the research philosophy and the research methodology. A research paradigm reflects the researcher's beliefs, and these beliefs are largely influenced by the researcher's past experiences, political perspectives, upbringing and at times religion. A research paradigm is defined by Sheppard (2020:20) as the researcher's perspective on the world that is used to conceptualize or explain a phenomenon, often in relation to a particular topic. As the researcher seeks to discover the 'truth' according to the views of the participants, the research paradigm provides a road map to the discovery of 'truth' and how to

undertake research in the discovery of 'truth'. It is the research paradigm that guides how knowledge is formed, studied, and interpreted (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

According to Kuhn (1970) research paradigms consist of three characteristics. Firstly, Kuhn (1970:43) states that paradigms serve as models for how research is conducted in a particular field of study. Secondly, paradigms are often beliefs that are shared by researchers who agree on the most important research questions to ask and the best ways to answer them scientifically. Lastly, paradigms view constructivism and realism as distinctive belief systems that have an impact on how research questions are posed and addressed in scientific research (Kuhn 1970:43). Scholars habitually ascribe to two major research paradigms: the positivist and constructivist views (Ulz, 2023). The positivist view holds that true knowledge can only be accomplished through experiment and measurements to describe an experience (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). This paradigm places emphasis on deductive reasoning, testing of hypotheses and using calculations to draw conclusions. The constructivist view on the contrary, holds that reality cannot exist without people and that human participants are key to accomplish knowledge and patterns of meaning (Tubey, Rotich & Bengat, 2015). The constructivist paradigm places emphasis on the individual and the way in which they perceive their world.

Since knowledge on parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions was collected from human participants who are members of a school society in the current study, it was fitting to ascribe the study to the constructivist view, particularly the social constructivist perspective. This study adopts the constructivist view to explore the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT. The social constructionist paradigm holds that 'truth' is socially constructed and that people create their own realities. Through the lens of the socio-constructionism paradigm, the researcher examined how parents, teachers and SGB members constructed their own realities through their perceptions and gain understanding of what has been observed (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). Exploring the reasons why parents, teachers and SGB members prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes will enhance a deeper understanding of language use in education and give insight to what roles these stakeholders assign to languages in their children's education.

**Table 3:** Sheppard (2020:24) summarizes each of the paradigms discussed above:

Paradigm	Emphasis	Assumption
Positivism	Objectivity, hypotheses, calculations, deductive reasoning.	Society should be studied scientifically.
Constructivism	Places emphasis on the individual and how they create their reality.	People perceive their social roles in the context of relationships, which affects how they later view their own roles as well as the roles of others.

The current study’s methodology reflects the constructivist paradigm by employing qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, which are well-suited for exploring and understanding the subjective attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers, and SGB members regarding home languages as LoLT. The choice of qualitative methods allows for a rich, contextual understanding of how these stakeholders construct their realities and preferences in education, thereby ensuring that the research findings are deeply rooted in the participants’ perspectives. This alignment between the constructivist paradigm and the chosen methodology ensures that the study’s findings are both credible and reflective of the social constructs of the participants, thus effectively addressing the research questions posed.

### **3.2.2 Elements of a paradigm**

#### **Ontology**

A research paradigm is governed by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Ontology is a Greek word that refers to the study of ‘being’ and all that exists in the world that researchers can gain knowledge of (Moon and Blackman, 2017). According to



Sheppard (2020), ontology comprises a range of complex and perplexing inquiries, including questions such as:

- What is the meaning of life?
- What, if any, exists outside our physical world?
- What are the categories of reality?
- Is there an objective reality?
- What does the word 'to be' mean?

A researcher may view reality from a realist ontology, where there is only a single reality or from a relativist ontology where according to Guba & Lincoln (1994) multiple realities and intangible mental constructs exist based on one's experience (cited in Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013:257). As the constructivist paradigm holds that there are multiple realities, this study will be based on a relativist ontology. From a relativist point of view, there are multiple versions of reality and that an individual's reality depends on the meaning that they attach to truth. Parents, teachers and SGB members interpret the world in different ways that make sense to them, and their experiences shape their perspective of the world. A comprehensive understanding of these stakeholder's reality therefore can evolve depending on their experiences. This implies that reality cannot be generalised but may only be transferred to similar contexts, unlike the positivist paradigm which aims to generalise findings as reality is measured.

## **Epistemology**

Epistemology refers to the study of 'knowledge' of all that exists in the world and the methods involved in knowledge acquisition. Kamal (2019) describes it as the plan of action by which the researcher undertakes to know the truth or simply put, to answer the question: 'how do we know what we know?'. Whereas ontology deals with the questions of "what is", epistemology, on the other hand, does not address the question of what is but rather the question of how do we know what is? (Sheppard, 2020). The epistemology is the vehicle to discover knowledge of 'truth' (ontology). In this study, knowledge is seen as intuitive, and stems from stakeholders' beliefs about home languages as LoLT.

Based on the social constructivist view, knowledge of 'truth' is generated through social interaction, which denotes that knowledge is generated by the human participants in this study. For 'truth' pertaining to home languages as LoLT to be accomplished, parents, teachers and the SGB members therefore are key contributors to discovering what languages are preferred in the learning process, through their perceived experiences. As opposed to the positivist epistemology which views reality as objective, epistemology to the constructivist is subjective. Whereas the researcher and the objects are separate entities in the former, the researcher and the participants in the latter are a single entity as their collaboration leads to the discover of 'truth'.

The researcher's ontological and epistemological views are co-dependent as the researcher's belief about reality influences their relationship with what is being studied. Furthermore, the researcher's ontological and epistemological views guide the researcher throughout the study, influence the ways in which the researcher gathers data and ultimately provide the researcher with principles of thinking that are needed to obtain knowledge (Moon and Blackman, 2017).

### **3.3 Research Design and Approach**

The research design refers to the complete plan for collecting and analysing data in the study (De Vos 1998: 123). The goal of the research design is to give a study a suitable framework and to provide the guidelines to be followed when conducting the research (Abu-Taieh, Al Hadid & Mouatasim, 2020). A research design is defined by Griffee,(2012) as a framework or blueprint of the research which incorporates both internal and external reasoning. The research design specifies the parts of the research project, how these parts are arranged and how the parts of the research project function. The research design in this study provides a framework that allows the researcher to resolve the identified research problem and successfully interpret the findings of the research. While the research methodology refers to the detailed steps that are used to collect and analyse data, the research design refers to the overall plan for data collection and analysis in the study (Polit & Hungler 1997: 461).

Research designs in the social sciences include phenomenological research, narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, explanatory research and case studies

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018:51). From the research designs mentioned above, an explanatory research design was used in this study to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the SGB towards home languages as LoLT. The rationale for the use of an explanatory design to achieve the aim and objectives of the current study. Explanatory research generally seeks to explain “why things are the way they are” (Casula, Rangarajan, Shields, 2020:17). Therefore, the current research study was explanatory as the researcher sought to understand “why” parents, teachers and SGB members prefer certain languages to be used for teaching and learning. The researcher intended to delve deeper into the dimensions of the research problem to understand “why things are the way they are” regarding home languages as LoLT in education. This was done by reviewing the literature, examining the language in education policy document and the South African School’s Acts, and conducting in-person interviews with parents, teachers, and the SGB.

### **3.3.1 Qualitative research approach**

In the research domain, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods are viewed as the three major approaches. Quantitative research, according to Creswell (2009), seeks to explain social phenomena through examining variables and the relationship between these variables. The variables in quantitative research are analysed by applying mathematical and statistical methods. Qualitative research on the contrary, is exploratory and maintains that reality is constructed by research participants and not predetermined (Beanlands & Vishnevsky, 2004). On the other hand, a mixed research method design is a combined research approach that draws on both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single project (Leavy, 2017) elaborate this statement-briefly.

Drawing from the discussion above, a qualitative research approach is deemed suitable for this study as I sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of parents, teachers and the SGB members’ truths regarding their stance on home languages as LoLT, based on how they have constructed their reality. As a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth and personal interaction with those directly involved, this study aimed to provide an enhanced understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of parents, teachers and the SGB members, which can help develop or refine theory (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery & Sheikh, 2011). Sheppard (2020:12) states that when

conducting research from a qualitative approach "...behaviour only has meaning in the context in which it occurs". This makes this approach ideal for this study as I sought to understand these stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions in the context in which they occur.

Creswell (2009) further adds that a qualitative approach is beneficial for comprehending the meaning that individuals assign to a human situation, which adds to what this study aims to achieve through understanding what meanings these stakeholders assign to home languages as LoLT. The objectives of this study were addressed by investigating the perceptions that these stakeholders hold towards home languages as LoLT and to understand why they prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes. Since I was responsible for collecting the primary data as the researcher, a qualitative approach provided the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the participants in their natural environment.

### **3.3.2 The Case Study**

The explanatory research design led to a single-case study design, where individuals who are parents, teachers and SGB members at the school provided data based on a particular topic for the study. A case study is an empirical analysis of a case or phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). A case study seeks to examine a phenomenon in a real-life context by using data from multiple sources and uses theory to generalize results from the study (Griffiee, 2012). Stake (1995:1) explains that Case studies are frequently used because of their similarity and distinctiveness. When conducting a case study, the researcher comes into the scene eager to set aside many preconceptions in order to have an authentic understanding of how they go about their daily lives and activities.

Moreover, the case studies are employed when the researcher aims to create a rich depiction of what transpired within the confines of the case by carefully choosing and presenting descriptions and analyses of dialogue, events, and other information drawn from the entire data set (Faltis, 1997:145). The main reason for employing a case study approach in this study was the opportunity of close collaboration between the participants and the researcher. The case study approach allowed the researcher to work closely with the participants.

Through a case study, participants could relate their views of reality within their context, which gave the researcher better understanding of the phenomena at hand. The researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the participants by collecting detailed information as they actively participated during the data collection period. Mackey & Gass (2005:5) affirm that case studies in language research give a comprehensive account of language use in a particular setting.

### **3.4 Trustworthiness in qualitative research**

The term “trustworthiness” was used by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to refer to a study’s reliability and validity. While rigor is evaluated by determining the validity and reliability in a quantitative study, rigor is evaluated by determining the study’s trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Connelly (2016) defines trustworthiness as the level of confidence in the methods employed in the study to maintain its quality. Qualitative researchers strive towards the goal of trustworthiness as it enables the researcher to demonstrate a degree of uniformity in the research methods employed over time. One should anticipate different outcomes from different qualitative researchers depending on the day, the place, and the different writing style that each researcher employs. Therefore, it is for this reason that qualitative research relies heavily on trustworthiness that comes from the “thick descriptions” that the researcher provides. Stahl and King (2020:26) describe these “thick descriptions” as “...texts so rich in details that the event or the object of description is palpable.” Lincoln and Guba (1985:289) outline the criteria for trustworthiness in a qualitative study which are credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the congruency of the research findings. The congruence of the research findings entails the extensive comprehension of the relationship between the reported findings to consider how they relate to one another. A commonly used method to promote credibility is through triangulation. According to Stahl and King (2020:27), the process of triangulation involves the utilization of multiple sources of data or practices from the field in order to repeatedly identify distinct patterns. The process of reproducing similar results across multiple data sources is distinct from reproducibility

in a priori empirical research. The study employed two techniques to increase the credibility of the results. Firstly, triangulation through a combination of different sources such as the LiEP (1997), SASA, CAPS, Constitution and interviews were used to strengthen credibility. Secondly, the methods of collecting and analysing data that are utilized in this study were described in such detail that they give a complete and accurate understanding of the data collection procedures.

### **Dependability**

The second criterion for trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability is concerned with the consistency of the results within the study; It refers to the “trust” in the trustworthiness. This may involve actions such as asking a senior colleague in the Department of English Studies to read my field notes after I have collected the data to verify that the conclusions I have made about the data. Furthermore, activities such as peer reviewing in qualitative research provides the researcher with an in-depth analysis prior to the publication of the study. The researcher established dependability by providing a detailed description of the study methodology and research design, which will allow the study to be repeated. Reliability in this study was ensured by using effective data collection methodologies and procedures.

### **Transferability**

Another criterion of trustworthiness in qualitative researcher is transferability. This refers to the thick description of participants, the research context, and methods for data collection in qualitative research that allows your study to be applied to other contexts. The word “patterns” is used since a qualitative study cannot be replicated as one would with a quantitative study. For example, the current study uses research by Ngidi (2007) on language attitudes and perceptions of parents in KwaZulu Natal, to develop greater understanding of language attitudes and perceptions of parents in Mamelodi. Transferability was applied in the research by using the same methods of data collection with different demographics and a different place.

## **Conformability**

The final criterion for trustworthiness in a qualitative study is conformability. According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), confirmability can only be established once the three above-mentioned criteria for trustworthiness have been achieved. Conformability is established when the researcher examines how their perceptions or biases may influence their findings. The researcher has to allow the participants to lead the research to attain a level of accuracy that is as close to objective reality as possible. Conformability was established in the study with the researcher “following” as the participants responded, by requesting clarifications from participants using probes, as opposed to leading the interviews. Conformability is usually associated with positivism and is seldomly used in qualitative research as the intense involvement of researchers in the study has the potential to contaminate the natural environments.

### **3.5 Population and sampling procedures**

According to Satishprakash (2020:1) population refers to the group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. In simple terms, the term “population” refers to the entire group of people in the study that share the same characteristics under for which generalizable conclusions from the research can be made. As mentioned in chapter two, the target population in the current study was represented by parents and teachers of a culturally diverse township primary school in Mamelodi. The criterion for choosing this school is the school’s location and its linguistic diversity (Census, 2011). This school is located in a township and accommodates 1200 learners from most black South African linguistic backgrounds.

The school offers teaching and learning in five diverse South African vernacular languages from grade R to seven. The five home language classes at the school are the isiZulu, isiNdebele, Setswana, Sepedi and Xitsonga classes. This is commensurate with Mamelodi’s language ecology as found in the Census. You can find these details about this township’s language situation. These languages are used as languages of learning and teaching in the first three years of school (grades one to three) while English is simultaneously used as a first additional language. As soon as learners reach grade four, English becomes the main language of learning and teaching for most learning areas (Social Sciences, Life Skills, English, Mathematics, Natural Science and

Technology) while their home language is only taught as a subject.

While the population refers to the entire group of people who share the same characteristics, the sample is only a subset of the population that will represent the population (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:341). Sampling, therefore, is the process of carefully selecting respondents based on factors such as the research site and the limited number of respondents. Sampling in a qualitative study is aimed at finding individuals who can provide the researcher with a rich understanding on the phenomena under study in order to advance what is already known about the phenomena. In this perspective, sampling in a qualitative study is purposeful.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling refers to a sampling technique where the researcher chooses the sample based on convenience or other criteria rather than randomly selecting the sample (McCombes, 2023). The fundamental characteristic of non-probability sampling techniques is that samples are chosen subjectively by the researcher, as opposed to randomly. In contrast to probability sampling, non-probability sampling involves considerably simpler, faster, and less expensive unit selection processes. Using non-probability sampling techniques, the researcher can present a strong theoretical basis for selecting cases they used for their sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornbill, 2012).

Purposive sampling is best described as selective sampling, as subjects are selected as a result of the valuable information they can provide. In this regard, the researcher had a goal in mind when selecting participants (Plowright, 2011), and that goal was to find participants who were parents, teachers and members of the SGB community at Mahlasedi Masana primary school, whose home language was a native South African language. Carefully choosing a sample based on its characteristics assists with providing reliable and comprehensive information about the sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

The selection of parents, teachers including those who are members of the SGB was done through non-probability procedure of availability. I used pseudonyms in this research to protect participant's privacy. I followed the ethical guidelines set out by the University of South Africa. I filled out a research ethics application form and sent it to the UNISA Research ethics committee and the Department of Basic Education's ethical committee. Subsequently, I obtained permission from UNISA's Research ethics office and the DBE to conduct interviews with parents, teachers, and SGBs at Mahlasedi



Masana primary school.

The selection of parents, teachers and SGB members was done purposefully. A total of 26 participants from the school were selected to form part of the sample. The inclusion criterion for the study sample is that participants must either be parents of learners at the school, teachers or SGB members of Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School. The exclusion criterion for the study sample is that participants must not be under the age of 18. The process of research participant recruitment includes identifying, targeting, and enrolling potential participants, as well as providing them with information about the study and gauging their interest in participating (Patel, 2003). The recruitment process involved identifying the school of interest through the internet and making contact with the school principal as they had a better connection with the participants whom I wished to recruit. Following the principal's instructions, the deputy principal assisted in identifying participants who accurately reflect the target population and meet the study's sample size and position specifications. After the deputy principal informed the prospective participants of the study via a WhatsApp message, the prospective participants' children were subsequently provided with letters of participation to take home and present to their parents. The deputy principal arranged a venue, the date and the times for meeting each participant at the school.

According to Vasileiou, Barnett & Thorpe (2018), there is no straightforward answer to how many participants should be interviewed in a study but recommends that qualitative samples sizes should be small enough to give rich data and large enough to give a "richly textured understanding". In this view, data saturation is the determinant factor for sample size in qualitative studies. Data saturation "...is when, in qualitative data collection, the researcher stops collecting data because fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties" (Creswell, 2018:335). Therefore, reaching a point of saturation will indicate that the sample is adequate.

The SGB members were included in the study as they can provide more detailed responses from their perspective since they are more au fait with the school policies, more specifically the language policy and how it is to be applied at the school. Language teachers are the only teachers who were included in the study as they are more knowledgeable about home languages as LoLT and implement the language policy through teaching. Parents of learners in grades 4-7 were chosen and accessed through their children's class teachers. Parents who were not part of the SGB were particularly

included, as their children are directly affected by receiving education in both English and their home language and, are major decision makers in terms of choosing a primary school for their children.

### **3.6 Data Management and analysis**

This section provides the data management and analysis methods that were employed to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB members of Mahlasedi-Masana primary school. Research data management pertains to the procedures one follows in order to collect, handle, utilize, store, and distribute the data supporting your study (Spichtinger & Siren, 2018:13). The key elements of data management include storing data, organising data, documenting data, quality controls, preserving data and sharing data. Managing data effectively increases efficiency as this can save time and money for the researcher (Anderson, 2007:478). Managing data also preserves the integrity of ones research as data can be referenced and verified. Data analysis in qualitative research refers to an interactive process of systematically organising and sorting large amounts of transcripts to provide an illuminating description of phenomena (Noble and Smith, 2014).

Since the qualitative data in this study was presented in the form of words reflected in the Constitution of South Africa, SASA, LiEP, CAPS, and the responses from interviews, these responses were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis to identify any themes and the meanings of the themes (Sheppard, 2020). The data management and analysis process “does not proceed tidily or in a linear fashion but is more of a spiral process; it entails reducing the volume of the information, sorting out significant from irrelevant facts, identifying patterns and trends, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what was revealed by the data” (de Vos et al., 2005:333).

#### **3.6.1 Thematic analysis of qualitative data**

As mentioned, the qualitative data in this study was presented in the form of words reflected in the interview responses of parents, teachers and SGB members. The interview responses were then transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis to identify any themes and the meanings of the themes (Sheppard, 2020). Thematic

analysis was utilized as it is a technique for analysing qualitative data in which allows the researcher to carefully analyse the data to find recurring themes, topics, notions, and patterns of meaning (Caulfield, 2022). Thematic analysis is pertinent to this study because it promotes the emergence of themes and gives a more thorough description of the experiences of the parents, teachers, and SGB by concentrating on the themes that emerge from the data.

There are two main methods for conducting thematic analysis: inductive and deductive. According to Proudfoot (2023), the deductive element involves using pre-ordinate themes based on a theoretical framework developed from literature review. Conversely, the inductive element involves generating themes directly from the data. In this regard, the inductive thematic analysis was used as I began the analysis without any preconceived notions of the codes and themes that would arise, allowing them to surface naturally from the data.

While there are several ways to go about thematic analysis, the most popular method involves eight steps that were proposed by Tesch (in de Vos, 1998: 343-344):

Step 1:

The researcher reads the transcripts carefully and make notes on the side.

Step 2:

The researcher selects one document (interview response transcript) and asks themselves “what is this about?” and subsequently write any thoughts on the side.

Step 3:

Once the researcher has completed the task of asking themselves what each interview transcript is about, they will create a list of topics. Similar topics will be grouped together according to themes.

Step 4:

The researcher takes the list of topics and applies it to the data. The topics are then abbreviated as codes. These topics are coded with different colours and subsequently written next to the matching segments of the texts.

Step 5:

The researcher categorizes the topics by choosing the most descriptive wordings and subsequently grouping similar topics together. Lines are drawn between topics to show interrelationships.

Step 6:

The researcher decides on an official theme for the topics and subsequently names the themes.

Step 7:

The researcher will gather the data from each category in one place and do a preliminary analysis.

Step 8:

If there is a need, the researcher will recode the data at hand.

In this regard, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading the transcripts and subsequently asking relevant questions that arose. Thereafter, the researcher generated codes based on how the data was understood. The researcher then clustered together similar codes under new headings thus creating themes (Boyatzis, 1998). Lastly, the researcher abbreviated each theme and assembled the data materials under each respective theme. These themes were reviewed and reworked to produce a structured report of analysis. Following this process as proposed by Tesch (in de Vos, 1998) led to an extensive interpretation of data.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedures and Instruments**

Data collection procedures as identified by Creswell & Creswell (2018:262), provide an account of how the researchers identified the selected individuals, provides a detailed discussion of the strategies used to recruit individuals and indicate the types of data to be collected. There are four primary types of data collection instruments in qualitative research, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. The data collection instruments in qualitative research are qualitative observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020).In

this study qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to collect data from the identified participants.

### **3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews**

The main sources of data for this study were one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Interviews are two-way conversations between an interviewer and a respondent, through which the interviewer aims to learn about the opinions, beliefs, behaviours and ideas of the respondent (Tshuma, 2016). Interviews were used to collect data in this study as they are structured dialogues that find meaningful information from participants (Griffiee, 2012). Amongst the several advantages of using interviews are that interviews are user friendly and natural as they entail conversation or talking.

Through interviews, participants can go into depth and provide detailed and historical information on their attitudes and perceptions of languages in education and the reasons for their choices. Moreover, interviews allow the researcher to be in full control of the questioning line (Creswell, 2014). The interviews were used to answer the following research questions: what are parents', teachers' and the SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT and why do parents, teachers and the SGB members prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes.

The interview questions were semi-structured. According to Gill, Stewart, and Treasure (2008: 291–295) semi-structured interview questions "...consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail."

Griffiee (2012) asserts that although semi structured interview questions are predetermined, they are accommodating as they allow the interviewer to add follow-up questions and even ask the interviewee for clarification. In this view, the interview questions that were posed were open-ended, allowing for in-depth information to be given by respondents. Sheppard (2020) states that using open-ended questions in interviews demands more of participants than using closed-ended questions as participants responses are authentic; participants use their own words and sentences when they respond. Furthermore, the use of open-ended interview questions allowed the researcher to probe the respondents for further information on their thoughts.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) also adds that interview questions should also include probes as a reminder for the researcher to ask for more information. Probes allow the researcher to net useful information and to expand the duration of the interview. The interviews gathered the views of participants and shed light on their experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards the use of home languages in an educational setting.

It is essential for the researcher to know what information they are looking for when collecting data as a typical qualitative dataset tends to be very long and unfocused, resulting in the collection of too much data. In this perspective, a pilot study was conducted with one parent, teacher and SGB member who took part in the study before the official interviews was conducted. Dörnyei (2007:125) notes that inexperienced researchers are often faced with the challenge of generating useful data as qualitative data often expands at a fast rate due to a bulk of information such as records of field notes, documents, indemnity forms and recordings. Therefore, it was important to carefully select useful data during the data collection phase to retain focus. The official interviews for this study were conducted with each individual parent, teacher and SGB member in person in the staff room at the school. These interview sessions were recorded with a voice recorder to allow for accurate recording of responses.

Based on the objectives of the study, the interview questions were classified into three groups. The first group probed into the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at a primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng. The second group of questions sought to elicit the participants' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in education. The last group of questions explored the reasons why the participants preferred children to use certain languages for learning purposes.

### **3.7.2 Document Analysis**

The second source of data for this study were the language policy documents that are used at the school. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis refers to a logical process for assessing written and digital documents. During the process of analysis, the researcher looks for the presence of certain words or concepts which are related to the topic at hand. The words are then analysed for meanings and relationships, and inferences are made about the text. Consequently, the Constitution of South Africa (1997) Curriculum and Assessment Policy (2012), the Language in Education Policy (1997) and South African School's Act (1996) were analysed as a form of triangulation to

compliment the information that was gained from the interviews in the current study. Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2011) note that by examining a research subject from various angles, qualitative researchers can verify and confirm the validity of their studies through the process of triangulation.

The policy documents and Acts that were analysed firmly establish the protection of both the formerly marginalized indigenous languages and the eleven official languages. Firstly, Section 29(2) of the Constitution maintains that everyone has the right to receive education in the languages of their choice in public educational institutions. In the same light, Section 6(2) of the South African Schools Act 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) adds that the governing body of a school should determine the language policy of a school and programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages. The third document, which is the LiEP, aims to pursue a language policy supportive of “additive multilingualism” by promoting the learners’ home language, while providing access to other languages. And lastly, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE, 2010) explicitly states that learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible, emphasising the additive approach to the promotion of multilingualism.

Document analysis was used in this study for triangulation, its efficiency, cost-effectiveness and the readily availability of the documents. The researcher makes an effort to present "a confluence of evidence that promotes believability" by triangulating data using document analysis (Eisner, 1991:110). In this regard, the researcher in exploring the roles assigned to home languages in education by parents, teachers and SGB members, examined the Constitution, CAPS, LiEP, and the SASA to gain insight into the policy implementation provisions regarding home languages as languages of learning and teaching in South Africa. The CAPS was examined to understand the conditions of practical language accessibility in education, particularly languages of learning. The SASA was carefully scrutinised to understand the roles that different stakeholders play in the decisions concerning the individual schools’ language policies, whereas the LiEP was carefully examined to understand the roles of home languages in education.

The Constitution, CAPS, LiEP and the SASA were retrieved from the internet and subsequently read and analysed thematically. As the abovementioned policies contain words, the process of analysing the document included making sense of the text and synthesising the text in the documents (Bowen, 2009). In this study, documents were analysed to determine the role of home languages as LoLT. Data which was obtained through document analysis was organized into primary themes through thematic analysis (Labuschagne, 2003).

### **3.8 Demographics information**

Each study must have a thorough understanding of the demographics of its participants to guarantee that the data collected is representative of the population under study and to offer background for the results. A wide range of people from the Mamelodi township took part in this study, each bringing a unique perspective to the table.

Data was collected from parents who had children in grades 1-7. Like it happens in many studies, some challenges were experienced in the field when two parents were not accessible and were only available telephonically. When the interview took place, each participant had to state their age, gender, race, home language and highest level of education, even if their participation was not contingent on their level of education. The participants' responses were given labels to maintain confidentiality.

When presenting the data gathered from the interviews, the respondents were labelled and methodically categorized according to their role, gender and age. For example, I used (Tm1) to indicate that this is the first "Teacher Male" respondent while Tf1 indicated that this was the first "Teacher Female" respondent. These responses were arranged according to their age, where the eldest respondent in each category was placed first. A similar approach was applied to the parents and SGB's labels. For example, (Pf3) for Parent Female 3 and (Sf2) for SGB female 2. Furthermore, data collected from document analysis was labelled using the same approach. I used (DA1) to refer to the LiEP, (DA2) to refer to the CAPS document and (DA3) to refer to the SASA.



In this study ten educators (n=10) participated in semi-structured interviews (See Appendix J). Table 4 Illustrates the profiles of the educator interviewees:

**Table 4: Profiles of educator interviewees**

Respondents' labels	Age range	Gender	Home language
Tm1	>45	Male	Northern Sotho
Tm2	>25-34	Male	isiZulu
Tf1	>45	Female	Northern Sotho
Tf2	>45	Female	Setswana
Tf3	>45	Female	Xitsonga
Tf4	>45	Female	isiZulu
Tf5	>35-44	Female	Northern Sotho
Tf6	>35-44	Female	isiZulu
Tf7	>25-34	Female	Xitsonga
Tf8	>18-24	Female	Northern Sotho

Ten parents (n=10) participated in semi-structured interviews (See Appendix K) Table 5 Illustrates the profiles of the parent interviewees:

**Table 5: Profiles of parent interviewees**

Respondents' labels	Age range	Gender	Home language
Pm1	>45	Male	isiZulu
Pm2	35-44	Male	Mamelodi Pidgin
Pm3	25-34	Male	Northern Sotho
Pf1	>45	Female	Northern Sotho
Pf2	35-44	Female	English
Pf3	35-44	Female	chiShona
Pf4	35-44	Female	Tshivenda
Pf5	25-34	Female	Northern Sotho
Pf6	25-34	Female	Xitsonga
Pf7	25-34	Female	Xitsonga

Six SGB members (n=6) participated in semi-structured interviews (See Appendix L) Table 6 illustrates the profiles of the SGB interviewees:

**Table 6: Profile of SGB interviewees**

Respondents' labels	Age range	Gender	Home language
Sm1	>45	Male	Northern Sotho
Sm2	35-44	Male	Northern Sotho
Sm3	35-44	Male	Tshivenda
Sf1	35-44	Female	Northern Sotho
Sf2	35-44	Female	Northern Sotho
Sf3	25-34	Female	Xitsonga

The overall demographics are as follows: most (42%) of the participants are between the ages of 35 and 44 while the least (4%) was between the ages of 18 and 24 (Table 4.1). There were more female participants (69%) who took part in the research than males (31%). Furthermore, while the number of participants who hold a matric qualification or higher are more (70%), the number of participants who do not have matric are less (30%). The majority of the participants' (42%) home languages are Northern Sotho while the minority (8%) identified their home languages as Tshivenda and Mamelodi Pidgin (SePitori) respectively.

### **3.9 Researcher positionality**

In line with the constructivist paradigm, the methodology in this study actively addresses the relationship between the researcher and the participants by fostering a collaborative and interactive research environment. The constructivist approach emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and engagement between the researcher and participants. In this study, I positioned myself as an active participant in the research process, recognizing that my interactions with the participants would shape the data collected. This involved adopting an open and reflexive stance, where I continuously reflected on how my background, beliefs, and interactions might influence the participants' responses and the interpretation of their

perspectives. By engaging in in-depth, semi-structured interviews and maintaining an empathetic and non-judgmental approach, I aimed to create a space where participants felt comfortable sharing their personal experiences and views. This approach ensures that the findings reflect a nuanced understanding of the multiple realities of the stakeholders, rather than imposing an external interpretation on their experiences.

Regarding my positionality, I align with the constructivist paradigm. This perspective shapes my approach to research, as I believe that reality is subjective and constructed through social interactions and individual experiences. Unlike positivism, which seeks objective measurements and generalizable truths, my constructivist stance acknowledges that each participant's reality is unique and context-dependent. This belief guided my methodology, ensuring that the study focused on capturing and understanding the diverse perspectives of parents, teachers, and SGB members within their specific educational contexts. By embracing constructivism, I aimed to reveal the multiple, subjective realities of the participants and understand how their experiences and perceptions shape their attitudes towards home languages as LoLT.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

The term 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' which refers to an individual's character and guiding beliefs. Research ethics therefore relate to the researcher's moral compass which includes the researcher's sense of accountability, honesty and trustworthiness throughout the research process (Leavy, 2017:24). As research concerns people's lives, it is the researcher's duty to ensure that aspects such as legal requirements, integrity, protection of participants from potential harm and confidentiality are taken into consideration. Dörnyei (2007:71) believes that researchers ought to give serious consideration to research ethics but still maintain balance by not being too serious as some legislators are. This implies that the researcher must prioritise research ethics but also remain flexible throughout the study. The following ethical principles were applied in this study.

## **Informed consent**

When conducting any type of research, it is imperative that the researcher obtains informed consent for the data. According to Bhandari (2022), informed consent refers to the process where all possible participants understand and have access to all the information necessary for them to determine whether they would like to participate or not. The researcher informed these participants about the aims of the study, the nature of the study, the possible risks involved throughout the study and research participants' right to opt out from the study. It was imperative for the research participants to be sufficiently informed about the research as this strengthened trust and confidence throughout the process. Thereafter, participants signed a consent form prior to the interviews. In accordance with the University of South Africa's guidelines for ethical considerations, an ethical clearance certificate (RE 240816-052) was obtained from the University and written consent was also obtained from the Department of Education, the school principal and the SGB members. An application letter was sent to the district director and the school principal requesting permission to conduct research at the specific school.

A face-to-face meeting was conducted with the principal of the school to explain the nature of the study. Upon approval, the school was contacted and arrangements of dates and assistance with sampling were discussed. A letter was sent to the selected parents, teachers and the school's SBG to inform them of the intended research.

## **Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity**

Confidentiality refers to a situation where a researcher knows the participant's identity but takes the appropriate precautions to prevent that identity from being known to or discovered by others (Eungoo & Hang, 2021). The researcher should strive to keep all information that is shared during the interviews confidential and refrain from disclosing of the participant's identity either accidentally or deliberately. The parents, teachers and SGB members in this study were informed that their names would not be recorded anywhere, and that no one would be able to connect the participants to the answers they give.

Participants were also be informed that their answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, such as the supervisor, the

transcriber, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. In addition, participants' responses were also be given a code alphabet, or a pseudonym and were referred to in this way in the data. Once the interviews are conducted and data was collected, the anonymity of the respondents was still protected. For example, when coding the data, names of respondents were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity and confidentiality. Creswell (2014:96) advises that data should be discarded after a period of five years. In this perspective, the data will be discarded at a point where it is no longer needed. Discarding the data aids to prevent misappropriate usage.

### **Honesty and Trust**

Honesty and integrity underpin ethical practices in the process of data collection and analysis in a qualitative study (Given, 2008). According to Watts (2008), honesty in qualitative research is marked by the researcher's transparency and can be viewed as a form of "straightforwardness" or "moral uprightness" that opposes deliberate deception and duplicity. If the research findings are presented with honesty and integrity, it may be possible to determine whether it is necessary to conduct additional research on the subject or look into potential solutions that could address the problem at hand (Eungoo & Hwang, 2021). Strict adherence to all ethical guidelines was a benchmark for honesty and trustworthiness in this study. The researcher refrained from deceiving the participants by conducting the interviews in the manner that was discussed and agreed upon with the participants.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Voluntary participation means that research participants agree to participate in the study voluntarily and are not subjected to any pressure (Bhandari, 2022). Parents, teachers and SGB members were informed that the study is voluntary and that they were under no obligation to consent to participation. Participants were also informed that they would need to sign a written consent form. Participants were further informed of their freedom to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. The study was conducted in accordance with the University of South Africa's guidelines for ethical consideration

## **Beneficence**

The term "beneficence" refers to moral behaviour that involves acting in ways that are helpful to others while advancing their wellbeing and safety. (Pieper & Thomson, 2016). Minimizing harm is a significant aspect of qualitative research (Eungoo & Hwang, 2021). Harm may come in many forms such as psychological harm, social harm, physical harm of legal harm (Bhandari (2022)). Psychological harm can occur when the researcher asks sensitive questions which evoke undesirable emotions while social harm may occur when the researcher embarrasses the participant in public. Physical harm refers to any physical discomfort or pain that might be caused by the research and legal harm can occur if the researcher discloses private information about the participants.

This research posed no harm to the participants. The research participants were protected from any harm and their wellbeing was upheld throughout the research process. The research was conducted for the purpose of contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the field of multilingualism and approaches to home languages as LoLT in schools in South Africa.

### **3.11 Synthesis**

This chapter presented the most suitable methodology to explore the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT. The design was shaped by the research question in this study, which required the collection of interview responses on the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB members, and the gathering of qualitative data pertaining to the roles assigned to home languages in education from the LiEP. To achieve the notion of multiple realities in this study, the methodology was designed to embrace the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants. In addition, triangulation which was achieved through the use of document analysis in addition to the semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders at the research site. By adopting a constructivist paradigm, the research recognizes that reality is constructed through individual experiences and social interactions.

The qualitative approach, particularly the use of in-depth interviews and case studies, allows for capturing a rich array of perspectives from parents, teachers, and SGB members. These methods enable participants to express their unique viewpoints and provide insights into how they interpret their educational context and language preferences. The study's reliance on qualitative data collection techniques, such as detailed interviews, ensures that the diverse realities of participants are represented and analyzed. This approach aligns with the relativist ontology that underpins the research, acknowledging that each participant's reality is shaped by personal experiences and social interactions. Consequently, the study does not seek to generalize findings but rather to understand and present the multiple, context-specific realities of the participants, thereby achieving a nuanced depiction of their collective and individual perspectives. The next chapter presents the findings from both the Constitution, the LiEP, SASA, and interview responses.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The key focus of this chapter is to present the findings of the data collected from semi-structured interviews with educators, SGBs and parents, and the documents that were analysed to uncover the participants' attitudes and perceptions on home languages as LoLT. The main purpose of this study was to explore the current attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT at a township primary school in Mamelodi. In this chapter data obtained through qualitative methods is presented. The data of the parents' interviews (n=10) will be presented first, followed by the data from teachers' interviews (n=10), and that of the SGB (n=6). The relevant information from the policies reviewed will be incorporated into the data collected from the interviews. The study primarily used the purposeful sampling technique to choose participants and the sources used for document analysis. Furthermore, data was analysed thematically through examining the interview transcripts and the policy documents that are used in teaching home languages.

The responses of parents, teachers, and SGB towards home language instruction were used to extract emerging themes and patterns from the data. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are parents, teachers and the SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at a primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng?
2. What are parents, teachers and the SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in an educational environment?
3. Why do parents, teachers and the SGB members prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes?



## **Attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB's towards home language instruction.**

To establish the attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB towards home languages as languages of learning and teaching, an interview schedule was administered to parents, teachers, and SGB. The interview schedule appears as Appendix K.

### **4.2 Findings from Parents Interviews (n=10)**

The following themes are discussed:

- Language use at home
- Exposure to the language policy
- Home language use in the classroom

#### **4.2.1 Language use at home**

The first set of questions sought to understand the language situation in the homes of these parents as it was likely to influence their attitudes and perceptions towards home language instruction. Since the background and setting of each parent differed, the responses were also varied. One of the questions posed in the parent interviews was "*What other languages can you speak fluently, besides your home language?*" While all parents indicated that they spoke one or more vernacular African language in addition to their L1, what was notable was that these parents stated that they could also speak English fluently. Examples of some of the parent respondents' responses are indicated below:

*"I can speak IsiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi and I'm fluent in English"* (Pf3)

Another parent, (Pf7) added that ...

*"English, Setswana, Sepedi and the other one is siSwati"* (Pf7)

While participants such as (Pf3) and (Pf7) indicated that they were fluent in more than one vernacular language, another parent had limited vernacular language use. This participant mentioned the following:

*"I speak English and SeSotho sometimes."* (Pf1)

The responses above indicate that parents of learners at the school are multilingual speakers and are fluent in more than one vernacular South African language, including English. Learners at this school are therefore exposed to multiple languages due to their environment at home. What was concerning from the information that was provided by parents was that although parents stated that they were fluent in English, it was evident through the interviews that English was not their strongest language as I had to rephrase or translate the questions for parents to understand what I was saying. This is in contrast with some of the parents who had claimed that they spoke English fluently. What could be deduced is that some parents' proficiency in English was limited, which implied that their children could be disadvantaged linguistically since their language of instruction is English. Learning is a process that requires direct support from parents as the first educators of their children and these learners currently have little exposure to English at home. It became apparent that parents' language use and practices mirrored the classroom realities where communication between learners and their teachers occurred in more than one language, including a language that learners themselves had not mastered and have limited proficiency in.

A follow-up question was posed to establish the language of communication between parents and children at home. Parents were asked to identify the language that was spoken with their children in their home and to indicate their views about communicating in English at home. The following question was posed: *"Which language do you use to communicate with your children at home and why?"* Most parents used a combination of their home language and an additional language while a few parents indicated that they communicated with their children solely in their home language. One parent commented as follows:

*"I use my language, IsiNdebele because they understand me easily when I speak to them."* (Pf1)

On the other hand, some parents indicated that they use two languages to communicate with their children in their homes:

*“I use Swati and Zulu most of the time because she’s (the child) doing Zulu at school and then at home we are Swati but we’re trying to communicate with her more with Zulu so that she can be fluent with the language.” (Pf3)*

One parent substantiated the above statement with the following response:

*“I use English and Zulu because Zulu is her home language and English is her second language of which in her academics, she has to pass Zulu, Maths and English.” (Pf7)*

An interesting comment was raised by (Pf5) regarding the language she used to communicate with her child at home. This is what she said:

*“I communicate with my child in Setswana simply because both my husband and I, we grew up in a community where we were speaking in Setswana language. So, we brought that into our house as well” ( Pf5)*

Upon examination of these responses, it became evident that most parents use their home languages to communicate with their children at home. In this regard, the home language serves an informative function, expressive function and directive function (Katilit, 2021:237), highlighting how home languages aid in effective communication and understanding between parents and children. Informative language functions as a means to effectively convey ideas and disseminate information to an intended audience. Expressive language, on the other hand, is employed to articulate personal viewpoints, emotions, and individual encounters. Directive language encompasses a particular manner of speech that provides explicit instructions and guidance on how others should conduct themselves. The ease with which children understand their parents’ instructions when communicating in their own language is highlighted by participant (Pf1). Parents use their home language to ensure that they are clearly understood by their children as they relay information, express themselves and as they direct children in any given situation.

In some instances, parents choose to communicate in a dominant language over their home language to accommodate the learners’ academic needs. This was supported by participant (Pf7) and (Pf3), who used a combination of their home language and the language of instruction to help strengthen their child’s academic language proficiency. Participant (Pf5) emphasised the value of language as a channel for identity maintenance. She identified Sepedi as her home language but uses Setswana

to communicate with her child at home because it is the language that she grew up speaking. The home language in this regard is not just a communication tool but also a representation of individuals' shared histories, practises, and cultural legacies. Therefore in some homes, the language use is a mixture of one or more languages to accommodate learners' linguistic academic or geographical needs.

Parents were further asked to indicate their views about communicating in English at home. The responses indicate contrasting perspectives. Some parents portrayed a favourable attitude toward using English as a language of communication in their homes, while others criticized the idea:

*"I honestly think that it is so terrible because why would you now inherit something that you did not even grow up with. We use a language that we grew up with and that is normal because it is in our roots."* (Pf5)

Another parent added:

*"It's not good because the child will forget their culture when they are doing things at home."* (Pf3)

Upon examination of these responses, it becomes evident that parents have an awareness of how language and culture are interwoven. The comment made by participant (Pf3) highlights the close relationship between language and cultural history and is consistent with research showing that language serves as a storehouse for cultural memory (Fishman, 2001).

Some parents such as participant (Pf1) and (Pf7) had contrasting views regarding communicating with English at home.

*"I think we must start to communicate with them with English at home so they can learn to speak English."* (Pf1)

Another parent added to what (Pf1) expressed:

*"It's for her future. Whenever she goes to visit somewhere and finds people who only speak English, she wouldn't feel left out. She can communicate and join the conversation with them."* (Pf7)

These parents (Pf1) and (Pf7) show a positive attitude towards using English in their homes. They base their reasons on improving learner proficiency in the language and view English as a tool for communication in the global society. The competency and fluency of one's home language in comparison to other languages is critical in forming attitudes towards language usage in learning. The outcomes of the research under this theme demonstrated that parents' views of proficiency impacted their choices for language usage in their home context substantially. The emerging theme from the findings above is **language use at home**.

The competency and fluency of one's home language in comparison to other languages is critical in forming attitudes towards language usage in learning. When parents were asked if speaking English had any benefits for their children and to share what those benefits were, there were mixed responses. Most parents agreed that English had benefits for their children. A few parents, however, did not see how speaking English would benefit their children. The following views were expressed by one of the parents who did not agree:

*“No, English doesn’t have any benefits. Number one, we live in a township where most of the kids will be found playing with their friends. It wouldn’t have any effect.”* (Pf6)

The comment made by (Pf6) that English does not have any benefits for children stems from the fact that many children in townships do not use English outside of their school environment. Therefore, since English serves no purpose for learners in their daily interactions in social contexts, this gives enough reason for some parents to believe that it has no benefits to learners.

However, for the parents who believed that speaking English as opposed to the home language had many benefits to learners, particularly regarding their future, they expressed the following views:

*“Yeah, it does. When meeting new people from outside of our country, its better to have a common language.”* (Pf3)

*“Yes it has huge benefits to learners, for example. English is a business language. When you go to interviews and when you go to the workplace, everything is done in English.”* (Pf2)

*“Yes it does. If they speak our language all the time, its going to be problem for them to find a job when they grow up.” (Pf1)*

Parent (Pf3), (Pf1), and (Pf2) stated that English is beneficial for learners when they interact with the global community.

One of the main benefits of English as expressed by parents is that it is a language of economics. English language proficiency is seen to have advantages in the job market; therefore, parents associate socioeconomic success with proficiency in English. As such, knowing how to speak English will assist their children during interviews to secure employment.

In the same light, parents were asked to provide their opinion regarding the view that learning how to speak English prepares one for higher education. The results indicated that parents did not entirely agree with this notion, basing their reasoning on the idea that one may be able to speak English but not necessarily understand the content being taught (Pf3). Another participant (Pf6) alluded that it all comes down to understanding what is being taught as opposed to the learners’ ability to articulate themselves in English:

*“No, I don’t agree that speaking in English prepares one for higher education. Uhhm, I think the content of the work that the child must learn is the important thing to understand when it comes to higher education.” (Pf6)*

*“No. You can speak English, but you can’t sometimes understand in the book when you are writing.” (Pf3)*

A complicated language environment is produced two sides of the same coin, which is towards economic pragmatism on the one face and the opposition to English as a tool for critical thinking on the other. Upon examination of these answers, it is clear that most parents generally hold the opinion that increased language ability— particularly in English—is correlated with improved economic prospects and social mobility. This view is not unique to the Mamelodi community; rather, it reflects a worldwide tendency where English is often linked to upward mobility and development because of its preeminent position in academia, industry, and international communication. There is a belief in certain languages providing better opportunities for future success.

#### 4.2.2 Exposure to the language policy

To establish parents' awareness of the school language policy and its purpose thereof, parents were asked a three questions pertaining to the language policy. First, parents were questioned about the existence of a language policy at the school. They were subsequently asked what they thought was the purpose of the policy and lastly, if they had received official notice of the school language policy. The following questions were posed to parents, *"According to your knowledge, what is a language policy?"* A follow-up question was also asked *"Does your child's school have a language policy and why do you think that is?"*.

The findings indicated that the majority of parents had no idea what a language policy was, as a result, they were unaware of the existence of the school's language policy- which was startling. The following views regarding language policy were expressed by parents:

*"No. What is a language policy?"* (Pm1)

Similarly, participant (Pf3) expressed the following sentiments:

*"I don't know what a language policy is."* (Pf3)

The finding above raised an important point that is worth noting. Parents are either uninformed or oblivious about issues pertaining to the languages of instruction at the school. Mphahlele and Buthelezi (2024) posit that stakeholders such as the department of Education often implement policies with the assumption that parents are well informed and exposed to such information. Once again, the need for successful implementation of home languages as LoLT education in schools relies on its endorsement by all stakeholders, and not only the government.

Nevertheless, there was an exception of one parent (Pf7) who had an idea of what a language policy was:

*"Yes, they do have a policy. Because they have to accommodate each and every child who is here in the schoolyard. Because in the school we have many home languages. It's Zulu, Sepedi and Tsonga. So that's why we have the policy so that we can try to accommodate the kids who are in the schoolyard."* (Pf7)

A follow-up question required parents to state if they had been informed about the language policy at the school: “*Are parents officially informed about the language policy at the school?*” Once again, the respondents confirmed that they were not informed about the policies at the school. Some of the responses were as follows:

*“We were not told about the language policy at our kids school but we knew which language to expect.”* (Pf6)

*“Never. No. we never get it. Especially in January when school reopen or December when we’re fetching the reports.”* (Pf3)

The responses above indicate that respondents lack knowledge regarding the official policy which encourages home languages as LoLT. Additionally, these parents made no mention of the South African Schools Act of 1996 which addresses issues of governance in the schools. This lack of awareness hinders their ability to engage with the school’s language policies and fulfill their role in accordance with Epstein’s Model of Parental Involvement. The typologies of parental involvement as stated by Epstein (1995:704) acknowledges parents as key decision-makers in matters pertaining to the language policy and advocates for an open line of communication between the parents and the school. This indicates that languages are imposed on parents as there is no discussion regarding such policies. The emerging theme in this regard is **knowledge about school language policies**.

The gap in parental knowledge about language policies could stem from several factors such as communication channels and educational background. The methods used to inform parents about language policies may not be reaching them effectively. This could be due to language barriers, insufficient outreach, or ineffective communication strategies. Furthermore, parents’ unfamiliarity with school policies might also reflect broader educational inequities and a lack of engagement with formal educational structures. This aligns with the findings of Epstein (1995) that emphasize the need for better communication and involvement strategies.

#### **4.2.3 Home language use in the classroom**

Prior to informing them about the school’s language policy, parents were asked to provide their opinion on how home languages should be used in the classroom. The



majority of parents felt that their home languages were irrelevant and had no use in the classroom, basing their reasons on communication barriers. Parents echoed their sentiments in the statements below:

*“It should be used outside the classroom. You know now with the mixed language school, I think English is a common language for everybody. Imagine they speaking many different languages, they don’t even understand each other. I believe English is best in the classroom.”* (Pf2)

*“I think when it’s vernac only”* (Pf1)

Upon examining the responses provided by parents, there was a general consensus that home languages did not have a place in the classroom for formal use. To most parents, English was more significant and more meaningful, and should be the main language of communication in the classroom while the home language should only be used for socialising and during the home language period. It may be that since participants (Pf1) and (Pf2) were more knowledgeable with matters, their adverse connotation of home languages may stem from their association of English as a language of economic and social mobility. Such parents have chosen to reserve their mother tongue in everyday family and social contexts but not for formal use. Therefore, the emerging theme on the findings above is **learners’ language use in the classroom.**

Furthermore, during the interviews, the researcher asked the parents about the official language policies pertaining to languages in education as The Schools Act of 1996 does stipulate the responsibility of the parents regarding the school’s language policy. The primary objective of this discussion was to explore the parents’ understanding of the policy’s role in supporting multilingual education and to address their previously held beliefs about the irrelevance of home languages in the classroom. The need for this emerged from the initial findings above, which revealed that many parents were unaware of the language policy and its implications. It was interesting that nearly all the parents interviewed now changed their minds about the lack of relevance of their home languages in the classroom. They now expressed a strong belief in the significance of teaching and using their own languages as a language of instruction. When parents were asked if their children were currently being educated in their home language as well as to share if they felt that it was the right decision, an overwhelming majority of the parents were now in support of home language instruction. Some of them acknowledged that

their children were not taught in their home languages and elaborated that they did not support this approach of teaching in English. The narrative had changed since they were informed about the language policy. Parents stated that using the child's home language as the language of instruction would improve learning. Pf1, expressed this idea in the statement that follows:

*"My child is taught in mostly English and not home language. This is not right. I believe that our home language reflects our identity. It's essential for our children to learn and be proficient in it." – (Pm1)*

Another parent who shared a similar sentiment with (Pm1) had this to say:

*"My child is not taught in his home language. I feel that it is not fair on them." (Pf3)*

Additionally, another parent displayed feelings of frustration with the issue of no home language instruction at the school, and just like (Pm1) and (Pm3) she also felt that it was completely wrong not to teach children in their home language. The comment below is a confirmation of that sentiment:

*"No, my child is not learning in our home language. This is wrong. As a parent, I believe our home language connects my child to our roots. It's not just about schooling [academics]; it's about identity." – (Pf4)*

Examining the responses that are mentioned above, parents showed a positive attitude towards home languages as LoLT. (Pm1) brought attention to the strong focus on the relationship between identity and home language. The same can be said for participant Pf4, who links their home language to their identity.

This opinion is in line with the literature, which contends that language serves as a sign of cultural and individual identity in addition to serving as a communication tool (Ngugi, 1986). Likewise, in the culturally diverse setting of Mamelodi, the home language is not just a communication tool but also a representation of shared histories, practises, and cultural legacies.

Upon exposing parents to information about the official language policies, parents were further asked to share their thoughts about the idea of learners being taught in their home languages from grade one to 12. Most parents were now in support of this notion. They cited that teaching learners in their home languages would have a positive impact

in their education. Parents expressed the following:

*“Learners will produce good grades. Children understand their home language from day one and they speak everything in their home language. They won’t have to switch to English when studying subjects like accounting. Nothing will be difficult for them. It will always be easier for them to adjust.”* (Pf3)

Some parents also cited that home languages can now be used in broader economic spaces. One parent shared her opinion:

*“We live in a democratic world. It will be much better for our kids because when we grew up we were told that we supposed to know English and Afrikaans because when you go to interviews they will talk to you in English or Afrikaans. But we live in a democratic world where you can even talk in your home language in an interview. So home languages will be useful.”* (Pf7)

Other parents had views that opposed what parents such as (Pf7) stated. This parent expressed her views:

*“Their home language? Continuously? I think it’s better if we mix languages of learning and teaching.”* (Pf5)

Examining these answers, a certain pattern becomes apparent. Parents such as (Pf3), perceive specific benefits of teaching learners in their home language, while some parents show disapproval for home languages as LoLT. According to participant (Pf3) and (Pf7), one of the benefits of learning in the home language is that it eliminates the need to constantly switch between English and the home language. As per these parents' observations, learners exert considerable effort in translating subject matter from English to their home language, particularly in specialized subjects such as accounting. Learning in their mother tongue would negate this challenge. However, some parents believe that the current bilingual approach to language learning, where learners are exposed to both English and their home language, remains the better option.

The educational effect of home languages as LoLT emerged as a key subject in the research, with a focus on its impact on academic achievement and understanding. Parents were asked to weigh in on the potential effects of home language instruction on learners' academic achievement. The majority of parents concurred, based on the

results, that teaching learners in their home language will improve their grades. Parents made the following remarks, to name a few:

*“Absolutely. Imagine if you were to do Mathematics in your language. You would simply understand what you were learning. Sometimes other English words are just too bombastic. You find that the question is simple but because it’s in English, it’s so hard for the child to understand. So, it will definitely improve the learner’s grades.”*  
(Pf5)

*“Their marks will be higher. Let’s say they teach Maths in your home language, you will understand it much more better than in English. Sometimes you find that English is more difficult. You can find it difficult to understand content in English but when they explain it in your home language it becomes much more easier.”* (Pf3)

The difficulty of comprehending and understanding English words was raised by parents. Parents believe that at times the learning material tends to be straightforward, however, learners’ limited English vocabulary knowledge becomes a barrier for comprehension and understanding the learning material. Participants (Pf5) and (Pf3) associate learners’ advanced vocabulary knowledge with the ability to comprehend content and view advanced vocabulary as a prerequisite for academic performance. As a result, learning difficult concepts in subjects such as Mathematics could be easier if learned in the home language, as learners have advanced vocabulary knowledge in their home language when compared to English. For example, one of the participants’ response was as follows:

*“Yes. I think learner grades will improve because he would understand more compared to when they are taught in English. If you look at our children’s performance, home language is better than English.”* (Pf7)

All of the responses, when analysed, showed a favourable association between academic success and home languages as LoLT. Participants emphasised the transforming potential of home languages as LoLT, and agreed with this attitude. The difficulty of understanding English terminology as suggested by participants is more evidence of the advantages of home language education.

### 4.3 Findings from teacher interviews (n=10)

The interviews were meant to understand the teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards home language instruction. The following themes are discussed:

- **Learners' language use in the classroom.**
- **Impact of home language instruction on learners' performance.**

#### 4.3.1 Learners' language use in the classroom.

To establish teachers' attitudes toward home languages as LoLT, teachers were asked if the learners at the school were currently being educated in their home language and to share if they felt that it was the right decision. This was the question that was posed to the teachers, "*Are learners currently being educated in their home language and what are your feelings regarding this decision?*" The responses from most teachers indicated that teachers had a positive attitude toward using home languages only during the home language lesson but not across all learning areas. One teacher commented as follows:

*"Learners are only taught in their home language during the home language period. I feel that's right."* (Tf6)

The statement by (Tf6) gives the impression that some teachers have accepted that home languages should only be taught in the home language period.

Further responses from some teachers confirmed that learners were not educated in their home language. Teachers approved of this as they believed that home languages would not serve learners in the future. However, the views expressed by (Tm1) below indicate that some teachers do not believe that teaching learners in English is right however, they see English as a suitable language for teaching and learning. These kinds of attitudes suggest that teachers who comply with the existing policy would be carrying out their obligations of implementing the policy, rather than genuinely embracing the benefits of the policy. The following comment was expressed by one of the teachers:

*"Learners are educated in English because let me say, in grade seven, they are doing nine learning areas. Eight learning areas are being taught in English because that is*

*the language of teaching and learning. So they [learners] should be taught in English so that they can be conversant with this language. Because obviously, from primary and beyond, they will be taught in that language. So they must get used to that language from this primary level. It is not right but I think English is appropriate for teaching and learning.” Tm1*

To add to the sentiment stated above, teachers acknowledged that they rely heavily on code-switching due to the abrupt language change that learners experience from grade three to grade four. Code-switching refers to the utilization of two languages during a single dialogue exchange to promote mutual understanding between learners and teacher (Shinga and Pillay, 2021). Participant (Tf1) expressed that the transition between grade three and grade four was not smooth. This is what he had to say:

*“For example, I’m [also] teaching Mathematics in grade four. We have a problem because they are teaching Mathematics in Sepedi in grade three. When they get to grade four, I’m teaching them in English. They taught them how to use the term *hlakantsha* to refer to addition. When they go to grade four, we say addition. That’s where the problem lies. It becomes worse when it comes to problem solving. When they have to deal with numbers which include words then it’s a problem.” (Tf1)*

The views expressed by participant (Tf1) reiterated the challenge faced by teachers of non-native English speakers. Learners have limited vocabulary in the English language. It may be that learners are not proficient in their home language when they are introduced to English in grade four. It is crucial to remember that the shift from the home language to the first additional language has to be orderly and steady. Premature language acquisition may result in restricted cognitive development and weak understanding in both the home language and the target language, according to Heugh (2002).

Regarding language use in the classroom, teachers were asked if learners were free to use their language of choice during the learning process. In this regard, when the teachers were asked, *“In your opinion, are learners free to use their language of choice during the learning process?”* All the teachers confirmed that learners were free to use their language of choice during the learning process.

*“Presently, learners use their language of choice in all classes, especially if there are no teachers. They make a noise in their home language.” (Tm2)*

The response by participant (Tf8) complements the comment made by (Tm2) who also stated that learners were free to use their language of choice in the classroom during the learning process:

*“Children are free to use their language of choice in the classroom.” (Tf8)*

Furthermore, the languages that were used by learners for interaction were a combination of English and their home languages. The response above by (Tm2) may suggest that learners use their home language as a means to express their opinions liberally. It can therefore be concluded that learners’ use of home languages fosters effortless collaboration and understanding as learners interact freely around others who share the same home language as they do.

A further comment that was in alignment with (Tm2) and (Tf8)’s views but rather surprising was as follows:

*“Yes, they are free. And we are also doing code switching for them to understand better. Where they don’t understand, we end up code switch to the language that they understand better, which is their home language. And then here in Mamelodi, I think it’s a Mamelodi lingo that they understand better. We don’t have that specifically home language because there are a lot of different ethnic groups in one place. We end up creating our own language to understand each other. It is helping because the children understand much better.” (Tf2)*

In light of the responses provided above, the results indicate that instructional engagement in classrooms comprised a combination of learners’ vernacular languages and English. This again confirms statement made earlier that language use and practices by parents mirrors the classroom realities where communication between learners and their teachers occurred in more than one language.

Although all the teachers agree that learners are indeed free to use their language of choice during the learning process, another teacher expressed his concern with this idea. This is what he said:

*“Yes, but if we permit them to use their own language, the problem will be in writing*

*because the question paper is not structured in everyone's home language. If every child is allowed to use his or her home language, and the question paper consists of six pages, the paper will now consist of about 20 something pages. So what will happen?" (Tm2)*

The above comment seems to suggest that some teachers believe that there would be an additional workload of preparing learning materials if learners were to be allowed to use their languages of choice during the learning process. It is therefore probable that teachers are not exploring this route because of the added workload it may come with.

Teachers were further asked to disclose if learners were free to use their language of choice as a LOI as stipulated by the Department of Education, their responses varied. Most teachers (60%) articulated that learners were not allowed to exercise their right to receive education in their language of choice and that this was not practiced at the school.

*"No. The best thing is that they must use English." (Tf6)"No. We also have children from other countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique at our school. We cannot offer those languages here at school. So hence they end up taking what we have disregarding the policy that is in place." (Tf4)*

The ease of communication, as articulated by educators is one of the reasons why learners are not allowed to exercise their right to receive education in their language of choice. According to teachers, English is the best language to use for communication in the classroom. Furthermore, it seems that teachers are aware of the right for learners to receive education in their language of choice, as participant (Tf4) mentions "...disregarding of the policy that is in place". Although some teachers such as (Tm1) and (Tf2) also confirmed that learners were not allowed to use their language of choice for learning purposes, they were in support of this practice. This is what they had to say:

*"No. I call it a short-term solution with a long-term problem. What will happen to learner when they get to tertiary level? Will they learn the specific module in their language? English is the language of instruction and the main language of communication globally. It is best for learners to use English." (Tm1)*

*"No. Learners are taught in English. This is okay. As we speak, English and Afrikaans dominate in higher education and the corporate world. We can't ignore that reality." (Tf2)*



Upon examination of the answers articulated by participants such as (Tm1) and (Tf2), it is clear that participants generally hold the opinion that increased language ability—particularly in English—is correlated with improved educational prospects and social mobility. Teachers were mainly concerned about the challenges that learners would face in tertiary if they were to learn in other languages and not in English. This view is not unique to the Mamelodi community; rather, it reflects a worldwide tendency where English is often linked to upward mobility because of its preeminent position in academia, industry, and international communication (Crystal, 2003).

However, some teachers had contrasting views:

*“No, it is not. Let’s give the child the opportunity to learn with their mother’s language so that it can be easy for them to understand. As time goes on, maybe they can introduce English when they understand their home language much better.”* (Tf3)

Examining this response, a certain pattern becomes apparent. Concerns over children's academic performance while not receiving instruction in their home language are voiced by teachers such as participant (Tf3). This attitude from the teachers is not surprising since they are the ones that are experiencing the consequences of home language teaching or teaching other subjects in a language that is not the learners' home language. These results are consistent with the work of Cummins (1981), who asserts that learning a second language may be greatly aided by one's ability to speak one's home language. Additionally, Thomas and Collier (2002) discovered that students who were taught in their mother tongue for a longer amount of time before switching to a second language did better than their counterparts who were immersed in the language right away. Therefore, the emerging theme on the findings above is **home language use in the classroom**.

The preference for English among teachers may be influenced by the perceived utility and educational practices. Teachers may view English as essential for academic success and future opportunities, consistent with its global status as highlighted by Rao (2019). This could overshadow the perceived benefits of home language instruction. In addition, there may be a systemic bias towards English in educational practices, driven

by policies or curriculum requirements that prioritize English for its global advantages.

#### **4.3.2 Impact of home language instruction on learners' performance**

With an emphasis on its effects on academic achievement and comprehension, the research revealed the educational impact of home languages as LoLT. Teachers were asked to comment on how they thought home languages as LoLT might affect their learners' academic performance. The following question was posed to teachers: *“What do you think is the impact of HL on learners' academic performance? Do you think learners' grades will improve if all their subjects are taught in their Home Language?”* Based on the results, a number of teachers (70%) agreed that teaching students all their subjects in their mother tongue will raise their grades. Among the things that teachers said were the following:

*“I think it will improve. Because just as I explained it, everyone understands their home language. Each and every time, you are using your home language. If I use words like multiply, some learners don't understand. Their marks will improve but in future it will be a problem. (Tm1)*

Again, the challenge of comprehension and understanding that was noted by parents earlier in this study is also expressed by teachers. Teachers believe that learners do not understand English and that learners would perform better academically if all subjects were taught in their home language. Because English is a second language for all learners at the school, educators maintain the belief that it requires a substantial period for learners to comprehend and utilize it proficiently, as expressed by this participant:

*“Yeah think their marks will improve because English is the second language to them. Is the first additional language to them. Then most of them, they don't even understand it. It. You understand something when you are a little bit older. We used to make a poem in Africans about my lazy sister. I only understood it when I was big. Oh, they was talking about this girl who was fat and lazy, but we used to recite it, just not knowing the meaning. You see, if I was reciting it in my home language, I would understand. But they are speaking about this girl that she's lazy. So if at some point, it might assist to improve the learners performance and marks.” (Tf2)*

However, there were concerns over the use of home languages for the learners' entire education. In this regard, teachers were asked to share their thoughts about learners being taught in their home language from grade one to 12. Some respondents displayed a lack of certainty with this idea:

*"If we teach these kids from grade R to 12 in their home language, what will happen when they have to enter the university level because everything is done in English."* (Tm1)

Most teachers however, showed a favourable attitude towards the notion of teaching learners in their home language from grade one to 12. These are some of the responses:

*"I think that the child will perform much better in some subjects. It because English is our language of teaching, It's not our home language, which is a language of understanding."* (Tf2)

Another teacher shared the same sentiments:

*"Yeah ne. It was going to be a good thing because I know they will excel. But remember it is also difficult in some ways, which means there will still be some barriers there and there."* (Tf6)

The findings revealed that most of the teacher responses pointed to a favourable relationship between academic success and home languages as LoLT. Participant (Tf2) emphasized the transformative power of learning one's home tongue and agrees with this perspective. Further evidence for the advantages of home language instruction comes from the difficulties in understanding English terminology, as shown by (Tf2).

There is complex interplay between cultural, educational, and international factors in home languages as LoLT. Hornberger's (2003) assertion that stakeholders in bilingual education often have different priorities that are influenced by their experiences and responsibilities. While some teachers concentrate on pedagogical achievements, other teachers place a high value on cultural and identity ties, while some may consider the wider consequences for education and society.

To determine their attitude on speaking English as opposed to their home languages,

the following question was posed to parents: *Do you think speaking English as opposed to home language has any benefits?* Some comments were as follows:

*“Yes. When learners speak in English, it means whenever they get a question paper or whenever they see any article, they can read it, analyse it and understand what’s going on.”* (Tf6)

*Yes, it has benefits because when you engage outside of home, you can communicate with other people effectively.”* (Tf2)

*“To communicate with any like nowadays there is a technology, things, et cetera, et cetera. So if he or she knows how to talk, it helps them to enter inside the technology.”* (Tm2)

The findings above indicate that teachers believe that speaking English as opposed to the home language has benefits to learners. The use of English, as expressed by teachers is beneficial for learners’ academics. Knowing how to speak English, according to participants such as (Tf6) has pedagogical benefits and improves reading, analysing and comprehension of texts. This viewpoint is consistent with the prior discussion on the larger subject of cultural relevance and the significance of English as a language global. Teachers, as noted by participants (Tf2) and (Tm2), are aware of the worldwide significance of English while participant (Tf6) acknowledges the pedagogical benefits of speaking in English. The remarks made by participant (Tm2) and (Tf2) further supports the advantages of a speaking English for global competitiveness in contemporary times where technology dominates. This corresponds with research conducted by Rao (2019:7) who reported that knowing how to speak English has numerous benefits as it is the only major language that spreads across various industries such as scientific research, the internet, commerce, travel, media and entertainment, to name a few. Therefore, the emerging theme on the findings above is **the impact of home language instruction on learners’ performance.**

#### **4.4 Findings from SGB Interviews (n=6)**

The interviews were meant to understand the SGBs’ attitudes and perceptions towards home language instruction. The following themes were identified for discussion:

- **Knowledge about school language policy**
- **SGBs' views concerning languages of learning and teaching.**

#### **4.4.1 Knowledge of the school's language policy**

Regarding school language policies, SGBs were asked to state if the school had a language policy and why they believe there was a need for the school to have a language policy. Most of the SGB stated that the school does indeed have a language policy, however they had different ideas about why the school has a language policy. The following are comments expressed by SGB members regarding the presence of a language policy at the school:

*“Yes, we have a language policy. The policy is there to state that we use English as our language of learning and teaching and home languages during the home language period.”* (Sf2)

Some SGBs are not well adverse with the function of language policies at school as the main stakeholders who are responsible for drafting and implementing language policies:

*“Yes. It has a language policy. I think it's because they just want them to know their home language.”* (Sf1)

A similar response that was provided by (Sf1) is noted with the response provided by (Sm3) below:

*“Yeah, they have language policies because what the policy says is that the learner will be taught in English, which will be treated as the learner's language. It's a language policy.”* (Sm3)

However, one member of the SGB stated that the school did not have a language policy and that it was something that they never thought about. This was alarming, coming from an SGB. This suggests that the governing members of a school may not be heavily involved in language planning activities, despite the requirement set forth by the School Act. Additionally, it might imply that these members of the governing body lack training on how to execute their responsibilities concerning language education policy. This is

evident in the following comment:

*“No, there’s no language policy. Maybe it is something that we never thought about.”*

The comments made by the SGB members regarding the school’s language policy give an indication that not all governing body are well conversant with the purpose of having a school language policy. Furthermore, the statement made by (Sm1) may also reveal that SGB are not in control with regard to formulating language policies in schools in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them by the SASA. The SASA clearly stipulates that the SGB is responsible for formulating language policies in their respective schools.

The SGB were further asked if parents and teachers were officially informed about the language policy used at the school. Th governing body maintained its stand that other stakeholders within the school community were informed about the language policy:

*“Yes, we do tell them.” (Sf1)*

*“Yes. I think when you register your child, they will always inform you that the medium of communication language of the school is English and you must try to communicate with your child so that they can improve the language because they know that they come from various ethnic groups.” (Sf3)*

*“Yes, during meetings. I am also a parent at this school. Parents know that we use English when we teach, even though they know that we code-switch sometimes because our school is not a model c.” (Sf2)*

Once again, participant (Sm1) indicated that he does not remember the school nor the SGB informing parents about the language policy.

*“I do not know anything about informing parents about policies.” (Sm1)*

When these comments are examined, it becomes clear that there are disparities in stakeholders’ viewpoints. The SGB affirms that parents are informed of the language policies at the initial stages of registering their children at the school and also during parent meetings. Parents on the other hand clearly stated earlier that they did not know anything about the language policies. Consequently, the language policy has been ignored and its effective implementation impeded thereof. Therefore, the emerging

theme on the findings above is the **knowledge about school language policies**.

To shed more light on the issue of decision-making for languages of learning and teaching, SGBs were asked to voice which stakeholders they think should be involved in decisions regarding languages of learning and teaching at the school. Most of them voiced that parents should be involved in decisions LoLT decision-making. One SGB commented as follows:

*“I think parents and teachers should be involved.”* (Sf2)

Another SGB member had a similar view:

*“I think parents; they should be involved.”* (Sf3)

SGB (Sf1) is also in agreement with (Sf2) and (Sf3) but added that learners, as stakeholders who are directly affected by such decisions, should also be involved in these discussions. She expressed herself as follows:

*“I think parents are the ones that should be involved. The learners should also be part of the conversation to decide what language they want to be taught in.”* (Sf1)

The above comments suggest that the SGB is in agreement with the involvement of parents in decisions relating to LoLT. This may imply that parents are left out when stakeholders such as the DBE and school principals make language decisions at schools.

When the SGB was also asked if the learners at the school were currently being educated in their home language and to share if they felt that it was the right decision, they expressed varied views- some similar to the parents and teachers'. Their responses were also divided into two parts: responses from SGBs who have children in the foundation phase, where learners are taught in their home language and responses of SGBs with children in the intermediate phase, where learners are taught in English.

Some of the SGBs (17%) expressed a negative attitude towards using home languages as languages of learning and teaching based on their experiences of home languages as LoLT, while some SGBs (50%) based their reasoning on the importance of English

for their children's future. This comment was articulated by a SGB who has a child in the foundation phase:

*"Yes, children are currently being educated in their home language. I don't feel that it is right. For example, the kids are currently learning Maths in Sepedi and they don't know anything in English. Whenever you ask them Maths questions in English, they become confused. They need to know English for their future. They are already in grade three and I feel like it is already late for them to learn Maths in English."* (Sf1)

SGBs, as noted by participant (Sf1), are aware of the worldwide significance of English. The response provided by (Sf1) further reveals that home languages as LoLT also poses some challenges in the lower grades, especially when it comes to other learning areas like Mathematics. Learners become used to learning in their home language by the time they get to grade three, that it becomes very difficult for their parents to explain concepts to them in English.

The responses below are from the SGB who have learners in the intermediate phase and SGBs who are teachers in the intermediate phase.

When SGBs were asked if learners were educated in their home language and to share if they felt it was the right decision, their reactions differed.

*"Learners are taught in English. I do not think it is the way to go. The school should focus on strengthening the students' home language proficiency first. Once they are confident, introducing other languages becomes easier."* – (Sm1)

The remark made by participant (Sm1) supports the advantages of a solid foundation in the home language for schooling. These findings suggest that a solid foundation in one's home language might serve as a launchpad for learning additional languages, facilitating a more seamless transfer and enhanced comprehension.

This SGB had a different view to (Sm1) and he expressed the following:

*"No, my children are educated in English. For me, it's 100% correct. Maybe in detail for that, it's because I was taught in my home language because I went to a location school. It took me time to be where I am because I was not fluent in English."* (Sm3)



Another response from (Sf2) raised an important issue that needs close attention:

*"Yes, but only for home language (denoting the home language period). I don't feel it's right. I teach them Zulu as a home language but it's not even their home language. They speak Sepedi in Mamelodi. It's difficult to teach Zulu. I even feel like Zulu is supposed to be their first additional language because they only speak it in my class."*

–(Sf2)

This response by (Sf3) who is also a teacher in the intermediate phase, reveals that the learners had minimal interaction in their home languages as they were only exposed to their home language during the home language period. This made it difficult to teach home language as these learners need more exposure to the language. She further added that some learners who are placed in certain home language classes such as the Zulu class were not even home language speakers of that home language, which may add denote that SGBs believe that more time needs to be allocated to home languages in learning.

The overall perceptions held by most SGBs towards home languages as LoLT are positive, even though a few (17%) of them expressed conflicting views. The comment from participant (Sm1) highlights the value of learners having a strong foundation in the home language. This is in contrast to the views expressed by participant (Sm2) who voiced that home languages may disadvantage learners in the long run, linking this reason to his personal experience of struggling to comprehend the English language. This respondent's experience and sentiments could be viewed as valid, however, research by Heugh (1999:127) has shown that it is beneficial for learners to be exposed to their home languages. In this regard, some SGBs also echoed that it is essential for learners to have a strong foundation in their home language before they are introduced to additional languages.

#### **4.4.2 SGB's views concerning languages of learning and teaching**

The SGB were also asked to share their thoughts about the idea of learners being taught in their home languages from grade one to 12. Most SGB members showed disapproval of this notion. They cited that teaching learners in their home languages would not have a positive impact in their education, basing their reasons on the learners' future prospects. SGB stated the following:

*“They can pass but the problem will arise when they need to communicate with other races.” (Sm1)*

Another SGB member showed more concern about the practical challenges that the learner’s will face if they were to be taught in their home language for their entire schooling. One SGB had the following to say:

*“I think you’ll really be destroying the learner because he’s going to challenge the future after grade 12 and go to university. He must present what he has learned. He will meet bosses and board members from various backgrounds. How will he address them in his African language? But in English, it’ll be just straightforward.” (Sm3)*

Some SGBs answered with hesitation:

*“Maybe the results will improve if they are taught in their home language from grade one to 12 because sometimes its not that they don’t know the content but it’s that they don’t understand the question in English.” (Sf2)*

While other SGBs such as (Sf1) clearly stated their disapproval of home languages as LoLT for learners’ schooling:

*“I don’t think university uses languages like Sepedi for their modules. It is an inconvenience for the child for when they get to university. They will struggle with everything.” (Sf1)*

Unlike parents, the overall thoughts held by the SGB for home languages to be used for learners’ entire schooling are negative.

SGBs were also asked to give their opinion on what the impact of home languages as LoLT may be on learner academic performance. According to the results, most SGB members agree that learners’ grade will improve if they would be taught in their home language. These are some of the comments made by the SGB:

*“Their marks will improve. Many children are disadvantaged when learning in English but if you explain in Sotho, they’d understand.” (Sm1)*

Another member of the SGB shared the same sentiments as (Sm1):

*“Yes I think their grades will improve. But only if start from foundation phase right*

*through to grade 12, and not teach them in their home language from foundation phase until now (grade four) as it is currently done. It is confusing them because we are starting afresh. I have to start teaching them concepts that they already know in English because they those concepts were previously taught in their home language.”*  
Sf2

Some SGB members were not in favour of this idea. This SGB expressed his opinion as follows:

*“I don’t think learners’ grades will improve. We have 11 official languages. Practically speaking, how many learners are we going to put in a class for each language? Now we have to build almost 11 schools in one environment which can cater for each language. It’s going to be difficult.”* (Sm3)

Most of the replies, when analysed, showed a favourable association between academic success and home languages as LoLT. Participant (Sf2), whose own experience with her class emphasises the transforming potential of home languages as LoLT, agrees with this attitude. The increased engagement and self-assurance among assertion that learners understand better when concepts are explained in their home language, as noted by participant (Sm1), is more evidence of the advantages of home language education. The complexities that arise when using home languages for learning is emphasised by participant (Sm3), who suggests that home languages as LoLT will not be beneficial to learners. The emerging theme on the findings above is **the SGB’s views concerning languages of learning and teaching.**

Governing body members were also asked if speaking English had any benefits for their children and to share what those benefits may be, most governing body agreed with the notion. The following views are expressed by the governing body:

*“Yes. It does have benefits. Everything these days is written in English.”* (Sf1)

*“Yeah, it think so. I can give an example. I can speak Afrikaans also and when I’m in the shopping with my wife and maybe accidentally I approach someone, maybe a white person and I speak Afrikaans to them, he or she listens very quickly to me because I speak Afrikaans with him, you understand? And that’s where I see it’s important that we must know their languages. It becomes easy to communicate with other people.”* (Sf3)

The difficulties experienced by educators as they attempt to manage best practises for teaching are again brought to light by the pressures that participant (Sf2) has expressed. Participant (Sf2), who serves in the governing body but is also a teacher at the school echoed:

*“No. They don’t understand English. Most of the subjects they use English. The terms that we use in class are difficult. Even if it’s assessments, we have to explain in their home language so that they can understand. I’m also teaching them Maths but when it’s assessment, sometimes I code-switch because I want them to understand the instruction on their assessment.”* (Sf2)

Some participants constantly emphasised the value of language as a channel for cultural transmission and identity maintenance:

*“It is not important for them to speak English. A child will forget their home language.”* (Sm1)

Since 2003, UNESCO has promoted language variety preservation as a way to protect intangible cultural property. Participant (Sm1)’s opinion, which emphasize the inherent relevance of home languages in maintaining cultural identity, are in line with this global viewpoint. These responses highlights the potential of finding a middle ground where academic success is maintained and linguistic variety is embraced.

With this in mind, the SGBs were asked to give their opinion on the view that learning how to speak English prepares one for higher education. The results indicated showed that most SGBs agreed with this view:

*“I agree 100%”* (Sm1)

*“Yes. I agree with that.”* (Sf3)

*“Yeah, it think so. For example, I started learning English at Varsity because at home, we were not taught English at our schools. I was not good in English. If maybe I was in model c schools, maybe I will be somewhere right now, not even a teacher. I think it is better for learners to be taught in English to know how to speak English in Varsity.”* (Sf2)

The responses provided by the participants confirm the general belief that being proficient in a language, particularly English, is not only important for communication

but also has a significant impact in preparing learners for higher education. Furthermore, participant (Sf2) points out how English is viewed by society as a language of intellect, education, and possibilities for the future. This participant even goes as far as saying that their life might have been better had they known how to speak English at an earlier stage. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1991) findings, which proposed that language functions as a kind of symbolic capital that bestows status and prestige onto its speakers.

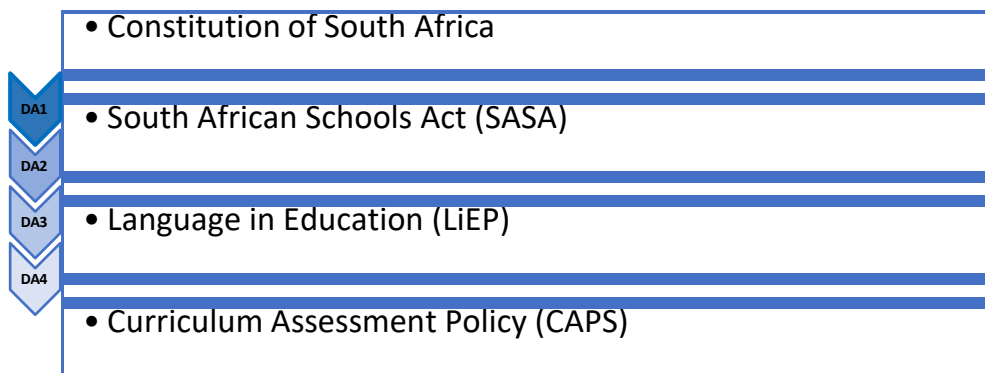
There is a discrepancy between the SGB's assertion that parents are informed about language policies and parents' actual lack of awareness. This gap suggests that despite the SGB's efforts, the communication regarding language policies may be ineffective or insufficiently engaging, leading to poor implementation and awareness. There may be issues in how policies are communicated and implemented. While the SGB may have intentions to inform parents, the actual process might be flawed or inadequately executed. Further reasons such as socioeconomic factors and cultural differences may impact parents' engagement with school policies, contributing to a disconnect between policy intentions and actual parental awareness.

#### **4.5 Document Analysis**

Document Analysis is a systematic process of reviewing printed and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009). Similarly, policy document analysis is a systematic research process that is used to examine the nature of a policy and to examine both its contents and its objectives (Cardno, 2028:625). In this regard, the following documents were reviewed with a special focus on how they impacted the language policy at school level: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (In Section 29(2)), LiEP (Section 3(4)(m)), SASA (Section 6(2)) and CAPS (DBE, 2010). In this regard, the South African Constitution recognises all 11 official languages and states that all languages must be treated equitably, while the SASA calls for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages. Similarly, the LiEP promotes the use of previously disadvantaged languages through the promotion of additive bilingualism, while the CAPS drives the implementation of the previously disadvantaged languages. The four documents were examined to gain insight on home languages as LoLT in schools and how they should be implemented.

The policies were also reviewed to gain understanding regarding the purpose of the policies, the stakeholders involved in implementing the policies and to determine if these objectives were reflected in the policy implementation at the school. In this regard, the language dynamics at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary align with the constitutional guidelines, as the languages of teaching and learning are drawn from the official repertoire of 11 official languages in South Africa. However, it was observed that language teaching and learning at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary school was not consistent with the SASA, LiEP and CAPS, which promote that use and implementation of previously disadvantaged languages as LoLT. English is highly favoured as a language of teaching and learning by educator participants in this study, as observed.

An analysis of the data will be followed by a brief interpretation of the findings in each case. The documents were given the following codes:



#### 4.5.1 The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996)

Section 6 of the Constitution outlines provisions aimed at advancing the official languages of South Africa, given the historical marginalization experienced by African languages. The official languages of South Africa are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has interpreted this stipulation to signify that learners are permitted to choose any of the recognized languages of South Africa, as outlined in Section 6(1) of the Constitution. In this regard, learners at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary school may choose to learn in any of the abovementioned official languages, should they wish to do so. Currently, learners at Mahlasedi-Masana primary school are only provided the option of choosing their home language as an additional language while English is used as the main language of learning. Correspondingly,

Section 9(3) of the Constitution specifically prohibits any form of unjustifiable discrimination based on the listed grounds, such as race and language.

Section 29(2) of The Constitution stipulates:

*“Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where education in that language is reasonably practicable.”* (The Constitution, Section 29(2))

As the highest law in South Africa, this Act includes a provision aimed at promoting multilingualism. It establishes the principle that all individuals have the right to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice at public educational schools, provided that such education in the chosen language is realistically practical. Hence, parents, teachers and SGB members may choose to use their home languages as languages of learning in public schools.

#### **4.5.2 South African School’s Act (Act 84 of 1996)**

The SASA (1996) was established to address matters pertaining to the language policy in schools on two standings. Firstly, it establishes the norms and standards, which are determined by the Minister of Basic Education. Secondly, the SASA (1996) provides guidelines for the formulation of language policy specific to each school and places this activity under the authority of each school’s respective governing body. In this regard, parents and the governing body at Mahlasedi-Masana primary are responsible for formulating a language policy that caters for the linguistic needs of the school’s surrounding community. Through the Act, the governing body has the opportunity to choose a language policy that promotes their own home languages. This is what it states:

*“The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the Constitution. In determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes”* (South African Schools Act, Section 6(2))

Despite the fact that this language policy statement allows for a great deal of home language-based learning, it also grants parents and educators the option to pick English as the primary language of teaching rather than one of the mother tongues. As a result, there is a common practice in township schools of using the home language from grades one to three and a subsequent switch to English from grade four onwards. This is the case observed at Mahlasedi-Masana primary school. Learners are instructed in their home language during the initial three years of primary education, after which they transition to English as the language of instruction for the remainder of their primary schooling. This denotes that learners who are mother tongue speakers of African languages switch to a foreign language, while learners who are English home language speakers enjoy the privilege of completing their education in their home language. Thus, the SASA enables parents an exclusive opportunity to communicate their desired language preferences and choices. The active involvement of parents is crucial for ensuring effective educational environment and quality education.

#### **4.5.3 Language in Education Policy (LiEP)**

The Language in Education Policy (1997) was published in terms of Section 6(1) of the Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and Section 3 of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996). The policy was founded upon the acknowledgement of linguistic diversity and the advocacy for multilingualism. The primary objective of the LiEP is to actively promote a language policy that fosters the development of conceptual understanding among students. This is achieved by implementing an additive multilingualism approach within the education system.

Regarding home languages, the LiEP aims to encourage mother tongue education while still providing learners with the opportunity to be exposed to global languages such as



English. This is what it states:

*“The underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s).” (DoE, 1997c: 2)*

The LiEP clearly acknowledges home languages as vital tools for learning. However, it is imperative to note that the LiEP follows the route of additive bilingualism, which promotes proficiency in both home language and an additional language. This form of instruction is different from subtractive bilingualism which favours home language over additional languages. The current practice in most township schools is contrary to what is stated in the LiEP; English is maintained while providing access to the effective acquisition of the home language. It was perplexing to note that this was also the case at Mahlasedi-Masana primary, as home languages were only taught in the foundation phase, while English took the dominant role as a LoLT thereafter.

The LiEP goes on further to state that parents, as primary care givers may choose the learner’s language of learning by stating the following:

*“The learner must choose the language of teaching upon application for admission to a particular school.” (DoE, 1997d: 2)*

According to the LiEP, parents and learners are the main stakeholders that are involved in choosing the LoLT. The LiEP further obligates the SGB to determine the languages to be utilized for educational purposes within the school, selecting from the 11 officially recognized languages in South Africa. As the policy states, when a learner applies for admission to a specific school, they are obliged to select a language of instruction. If the chosen language of instruction is available at the school and there is ample capacity, the school must accept the applicant. In the event that the learner's preferred language of instruction is not offered by any school within the school district, the learner has the option to request the provincial education department to facilitate the provision of their desired language of instruction. Given this provision, one may assume that these stakeholders would choose their home language as LoLT. Parents at

Mahlasedi-Masana primary however, have articulated that they choose their language based on the options provided by the school, rather than basing their choice on their own preference.

#### **4.5.4 CAPS document**

The CAPS document is a comprehensive policy document that was introduced by the DBE in January 2012 as an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement. The document outlines the learning and teaching policy for South African schools from grade R to grade 12 for all the subjects recognised in the curriculum. One of the founding principles of CAPS is to address historical disparities in access to education and ensure that every learner in the school community has the same opportunity for education. This includes the equal access to education through the language that the learner prefers to learn it. The CAPS document pointed out the following:

*“The cognitive level of the home language should be such that it may be used as a language of learning and teaching.” (DBE, 2010)*

The statement above implies that learners of Mahlasedi-Masana primary, as English home language learners, ought to be at a particular cognitive level in English before it can be used as a LoLT. However, as mentioned, most learners' home language is not English. This may suggest that learners are not cognitively ready when they are introduced to learning in English as they are mostly exposed to their home language before they join formal schooling.

The CAPS further provides guidance on languages of learning and teaching in schools. It states that:

*“The learner’s home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible.” (DA2)*

The aforementioned legislation acknowledges the crucial significance of home languages as languages of learning and teaching. However, many schools such as Mahlasedi-Masana have continued to choose English as a language of learning and

teaching and not the learners' home language. Teachers at the school however, have articulated that they frequently code-switch to explain new concepts to learners, as some learners grapple with understanding new concepts that are presented in English. Learners who receive instruction in a language that they can comprehend are more likely to excel academically. Therefore, it is imperative that schools provide multilingual education based on mother tongue so that kids can grow to their full potential as people.

#### **4.6 Synthesis**

In this chapter, I presented the main findings obtained from the interviews conducted with parents, teachers and governing body members. The findings from the parents interviews indicated that parents were not in support of home languages as LoLT before they were exposed to the information contained in the LiEP, specifically the learners' right to learn in their language of choice. Upon finding out about the LiEP's stance on home languages as LoLT, parents yielded toward the idea of the positive aspects of home languages as LoLT. In terms of the parents and educators' attitudes towards home language instruction, most of them displayed enthusiasm about English as a language for wider communication. Some viewed home languages as being beneficial for cultural identity and cultural maintenance. Some of the relevant clauses from the mentioned documents were scrutinised to understand the parents and the educators' preferences about home language instruction. The next chapter provides a discussion of the findings, recommendations based on the main findings and the conclusion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on presentation, analysis and interpretation of the findings of the current study on attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT. I also identified emerging themes from the data collected in chapter 3. To begin with, the current chapter provides an overview and synopsis of all the chapters of the study. Afterwards, a discussion of the findings presented and analysed in the previous chapter with regard to the emerging themes and in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two is presented.

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the present attitudes and perceptions of parents, educators, and School Governing Body (SGB) members regarding the use of home (native) languages as LoLT at a primary school in the township of Mamelodi, South Africa. In this study, chapter 1 provided a description of the background to the study, definition of the concepts used in the topic and an outline of all the chapters within the study. Subsequently, chapter 2 reviewed the literature pertinent to this study, discussed the two identified theoretical frameworks and their relevance to the study. Afterwards, chapter 3 presented the identified qualitative methodology used to execute this study. The methodology included the research objectives, research paradigms, research design and a case study approach. Finally, chapter 4 presented the analysis and interpretation of the findings of this study and highlighted emerging themes from the analysed data.

The current Chapter 5 discusses the common themes that emerged in the responses to the research questions. The broad concepts and theories pertinent to this study are linked to the themes. Then, the first research question that elicited information related to parents, teachers and the SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at a primary school in Mamelodi, Gauteng are addressed (§5.2). The second research question that sought to answer the question on parents, teachers and the SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in an

educational environment follows (§5.3). The third and final question sought to answer the research question on parents, teachers and the SGB members' preference for the children's languages for learning purposes (§5.4). The findings emanating from the research questions are synthesised (§5.5), and a presentation of the main contributions to the study is discussed (§5.6). The limitations of the study (§5.7) are presented before the recommendations (§5.8) emanating from the study, followed by a conclusion (§5.9) of the study.

## **5.2 Themes from the findings**

The following emerging themes are the principal issues that were extrapolated from the data from the parent interviews, the teacher interviews, and the interviews with the SGB members:

- Language use at home
- Home language use in the classroom
- Learners' language use in the classroom
- Impact of home language instruction on learners' performance
- Knowledge about school language policies
- SGBs' views concerning LoLT

### **5.2.1 Language use at home**

Findings from parent interviews developed into the theme of Language use at home. In this regard, exploring the language use at home among learners and their parents offered valuable insights into the complex interplay between language proficiency, cultural identity, and attitudes towards home languages as LoLT. The Constitution of South Africa recognises 11 languages plus sign language as official. This was reflected in the research findings which revealed the prevalence of multilingualism among parents, with most demonstrating fluency in their home language(s) as well as English. However, despite self-reported fluency in English by most parents, the interviews revealed fluctuating levels of English proficiency among parents. This is commensurate with the research by Sugarman and Lazarín (2020:2) who found that one of the barriers to support home learning was a result of parents' limited English proficiency. This raises

concerns about the potential linguistic disadvantage experienced by learners whose primary language of instruction is English at school, particularly when parents struggle to effectively support English language learning at home. Such gaps in language proficiency highlight the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between home and school language environments. In this regard, limited parental proficiency in English could hinder effective communication and support for English language learning at home, thus impacting learners' linguistic development and academic success (Sugarman and Lazarín, 2020:11).

The research findings also revealed that parents use a combination of their home language and additional languages for communication with their children at home. The respondents' choice of language(s) was influenced by factors such as cultural heritage, academic needs, and geographic context. For example, parents stated that they speak "Sepitori" (Mamelodi pidgin) as a home language as it was the language of the local community. Some parents emphasized the importance of maintaining their home language as a means of preserving cultural identity, while others strategically integrated English to support their children's academic language proficiency. These findings underscore the complex nature of language use within households and the diverse motivations driving language choices.

The research findings revealed contrasting attitudes among parents regarding the use of English as a primary language of communication at home. While some parents expressed concerns about potential cultural loss and advocated for prioritizing the home language, others viewed English as essential for their children's future success in a globalized society. These opposing perspectives reflect an understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and socioeconomic aspirations within the community. This is commensurate with the research by Brock-Uthe (2007) who found that parents' desire for their children to acquire proficiency in English was driven by the social and economic aspirations.

The analysis of research findings provides valuable insights into the language use at home among parents of learners. These findings emphasize the importance of culturally inclusive language policies that empower learners to thrive in linguistically diverse environments. Moreover, the findings shed light on the critical role of parental

involvement and support in fostering language development and academic success among learners.

### **5.2.2 Home language use in the classroom**

Findings from parent, teacher and SGB interviews developed into the theme of home language use in the classroom. Considering that the classroom setting at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary comprised learners from different linguistic backgrounds, respondents believed that firstly, learning in the home language was not practical as it would be impossible for teachers to accommodate all home languages. For example, the school would have to create more classes to accommodate all the learners who are speakers of the many home languages which are currently not taught at the school. Secondly, the findings unveiled teachers' apprehensions regarding future obstacles that students would encounter in higher education when studying in their home language. Finally, many learners do not receive enough practice to read, write and speak in their home languages. Learners are only exposed to home languages as LoLT from grade one to three, and thereafter switch to English in grade four.

The last two statements provided by teachers and parents, of inadequate reading practice and obstacles in higher education, align with the concept of English 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 2018). According to Phillipson (2018), English has exerted its influence over numerous nations globally, causing indigenous languages to be relegated to secondary roles. As indicated in Chapter Two, this circumstance is not exclusive to South Africa. To exemplify, Henriksen (2010) noted favourable attitudes towards English as opposed to their home language among both educators, parents and learners in Mozambican schools. In a similar vein, Alhamani (2021) observed a decline in the prevalence of traditional languages within the Arabic-speaking community, specifically in higher education. In the study, Alhamani (2021) noted that lecturers believe that using English as a medium of instruction had no impact on students' examination performance.

Parents, however, struggled with this contradiction. While parents were aware of the emotional and cognitive advantages of home languages as LoLT, they were concerned

about their children's future:

*"I want my child to know our language"* one parent said. *"However, I am concerned that kids may be left behind in society"* (Pf3). Such issues mirror wider linguistic conflicts, in which the functional use of a language often clashes with its integrative or cultural value (Fishman, 2001).

The responses of the SGB indicate their stance on the challenges of home languages as LoLT. Some governing body members are aware of the challenges of implementing home languages as LoLT through personal experiences, as some of the older participants are products of home languages as LoLT. They are aware of the value of English as a language that "plays a dominant role in almost all the fields in the present globalized worlds" (Rao, 2019:65). In this regard, the attitudes of some governing body members point to the evidence that implementing home languages as LoLT contends with the negative perceptions held by participants surrounding home languages as LoLT, due to the influence imposed by English, which is deemed to be the language associated with economic affairs. There is a belief amongst some participants that the lack of attainment of their desired level of success can be attributed to the fact that they pursued their education in their home language. For this reason, these results highlight the significance of encouraging the exclusive use of home languages in earlier years for pedagogical benefits and the introduction of English only as a subject in the intermediate phase to meet the need of participating in a global economy.

### **5.2.3 Learners' language use in the classroom**

The findings from the parent and teacher interviews developed into the theme of the learners' language use in the classroom. CAPS aims to address historical disparities in education and ensure equitable access to learning opportunities, including language education. It acknowledges the cognitive significance of home languages and advocates for their use in learning and teaching where feasible. However, the observed practice of prioritizing English over home languages suggests a disconnect between policy directives and implementation. While teachers at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary acknowledge the importance of home languages, challenges in language proficiency and academic performance prompt a shift towards English instruction, undermining the CAPS's emphasis on multilingual education.



Regarding language proficiency, teachers attested that the sudden jump from home language to English as LoLT from grade four onwards posed numerous challenges. Firstly, most learners are unable to speak nor read and write in what mostly is a new language to them (English), making it difficult for learners to work to their fullest academic potential. Secondly, there is a barrier in communication between learners and educators as learners come into the classroom with limited English vocabulary from the foundation phase, which presents the implication of language being an obstacle to learning as opposed to being a tool to aid learning. For example, a Sepedi speaking learner whose LoLT was Sepedi from grade one to three will come into the grade four classroom where the LoLT is now English. The learner is expected to switch from using Sepedi for all the learning areas in grade three to using English for all the learning areas in grade four. In this regard, the learner's home language cannot be optimally utilized, which then becomes a barrier to communication. Thus, the preference by certain teachers of using home languages as LoLT is justified since it necessitates that LoLT should be aligned with the language which the learner brings into the classroom.

The theme further revealed that the current use of English as the LoLT resulted in a hindrance to effective communication between learners and their parents as they progress to higher grades. Consequently, parents faced difficulties in providing support to their children in their academic work. One of the fundamental principles in Epstein's theory of development pertains to learning that occurs at home. Parents are expected to provide environments that support learning in the home through constant communication with teachers, monitoring of homework and monitoring of learner progress (Epstein, 2011). The theme revealed that parents showed minimal participation in their children's academic work at home as the LoLT was a challenge. All the members of the SGB and parents are not English home language speakers. Therefore, in the same manner that these learners are excluded from a fair curriculum according to teachers, parents too are excluded from actively participating in their children's education as they cannot fully collaborate, thus eliminating their role as significant role players in education. This corresponds with the research by Kalaycı and Öz (2018:832) who found that parents believed their understanding of the language of communication used by the school enhanced their active involvement in

their children's education. In this regard, home languages as LoLT can enhance active participation by parents.

The results of the study also indicated that learners have a limited vocabulary of the English language, as reported by both teachers and parents. These learners struggle to comprehend the academic content provided in class, impeding their ability to engage in deep learning. Moreover, learners consider English texts to be difficult, leading parents to believe that their children's academic performance would improve if they were taught in their home language. This assumption is supported by the parents' observation that learners excel in the home language subject but underperform in other subjects that are taught in English.

It is noteworthy that learners possess an extensive vocabulary in their mother tongue, which makes the acquisition of new concepts easier. This aligns with the conclusions drawn by Wang and Xiang (2016:2208) that vocabulary holds a pivotal position in the process of acquiring language skills, and its significance in second language acquisition cannot be understated. The development of linguistic proficiency relies heavily on the acquisition and mastery of vocabulary. As a result, learners are disadvantaged when compared to learners whose home language is English.

When compared to learners who are home language speakers of English, African learners are faced with issues such as decoding the language before grasping the content, as expressed by participant one of the teacher respondents (Desai, 2012). Language should be an enabling tool for academic performance; however, the exclusion of home languages as LoLT is equivalent to giving African home language speaking learners a heavy bag and telling them that they are running an equal race with their English home language speaking peers who do not carry this heavy load. To answer to the abovementioned research question, parents, teachers, and the governing body maintain the belief that home languages as LoLT could play a pivotal role in fostering greater parental engagement and narrowing the great language jump from Grade Three to Four.

#### **5.2.4 Impact of home language instruction on learners' performance**

The findings from the interviews revealed certain parents, teachers and SGB members'

awareness of the pedagogical benefits associated with home languages as LoLT. Teachers are aware of and clearly articulate the advantages of using home languages as a LoLT in the classroom. Some teachers maintain that home languages play a pivotal role in facilitating effective communication between educators and learners. In as much as parents voiced their concerns about the practicality of implementing home languages as LoLT, it was mutually recognized by some parents and members of the SGB that home languages as LoLT possessed the capability to enhance academic achievements among learners. Home languages as LoLT is believed to facilitate learners' comprehension of their educational materials, as suggested by both parents and governing bodies. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by UNESCO (1953:11) that the learner's home language functions as an instinctive mechanism for expression and comprehension within their mind. From a sociological perspective, it serves as a means of identification with their community. Moreover, from an educational standpoint, the learner acquires knowledge more efficiently through their native language compared to an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

Furthermore, the findings reveal the positive effects of home languages as LoLT in academic performance and comprehension, from the teachers' perspective. Teachers view home languages as LoLT as a tool for the academic achievement of learners. The use of code-switching by teachers to assist learners with understanding new concepts emphasises that learners understand better in a language they know. Mweli (2019:191) emphasizes that teachers who use this approach give learners the opportunity to learn from a place of empowerment within a language they are proficient in and a language that aligns with their cultural background. Through the use of home languages, both learners and teachers benefit as teachers can fully explain the content in their language and learners can develop a deep understanding of the content.

The abovementioned discussion reveals parents, teachers and governing body's understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT. The vast majority of parents, teachers, and school governing bodies acknowledge the value of learning in the home language, as it enhances cognitive processing and the assimilation of new information. Using their home language fosters a conducive socio-emotional atmosphere, thereby establishing fundamental conditions for acquiring knowledge (Taylor and Yu, 2003). As a result, when learners learn using their home language, they approach their tasks with confidence, as they are using a language that they are proficient in. According to teachers, they resort to the learners' home languages when learners struggle to

comprehend the subject matter being taught. The answer to the research question is that parents, teachers, and the governing body maintain the belief that the purpose of home language instruction is to augment learners' comprehension of their schoolwork, thereby facilitating their comprehension of the educational material being imparted.

When this information about stakeholders' language preferences is compared to current research by Mweli (2019) for example, they show a striking consistency with worldwide trends in multilingual education. The advantages of home languages as LoLT are widely recognised by these stakeholders, both in terms of cognitive development and cultural preservation (Bialystok, 2001). However, pragmatic concerns of English as a dominating global language cannot be ignored, particularly in post-colonial settings such as South Africa, where language choices are intricately connected with historical, sociopolitical, and economic circumstances (Probyn, 2001).

### **5.2.5 Knowledge about school language policies**

The SASA empowers School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to determine language policies at schools, subject to constitutional provisions. Section 6(2) provides flexibility for SGBs to promote multilingualism through various means, including offering multiple languages as mediums of instruction. However, the actual implementation of language policies may not fully reflect this flexibility. At Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School, while SGBs have the autonomy to formulate language policies, the prevailing practice of transitioning to English after the foundation phase contradicts the spirit of promoting multilingualism as outlined in SASA. This suggests a gap between policy intent and implementation, wherein English predominance persists despite policy provisions for linguistic diversity.

The theme, Knowledge about school language, also showed the SGB had insufficient training on how to apply the school's language policy, let alone how to draft the language policy. The findings from the interviews reveal that SGB members, as a component that deals with school policies, lacked knowledge regarding the purpose of a school language policy or its existence in some instances. This was evidence that the SGB had a limited understanding of the LiEP's stance on home languages as LoLT and the educational impact of home languages as LoLT on learners' cognitive skills and critical thinking. As the main drivers of policies in schools, Stavans and Narkiss (2003:139) suggest that through language policies, the governing body decides "whether languages are going to be taught equally in formal and informal education, and above all how the

planning and policy making occurs.”

The statement provided aligns with the concept of acquisition language planning, as indicated in chapter two, where the stakeholders in education apply “deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, and functional allocations of their linguistic codes” (Cooper, 1989:45). The SGB plays a role in deciding how languages should be used in education and for how long. Moreover, the SGB must ensure that previously marginalized languages are elevated and treated fairly. For example, a study by Henricks (2010) on how languages in education should be used in Mozambique highlighted the goal of acquisition planning, which encompassed the dissemination of diverse languages, notably Portuguese, English, and the Mozambican National Languages. It also entailed the nurturing and enhancement of linguistic skills, the promotion of academic progress, and the facilitation of L1 educational support. In a similar vein, Spolsky (2004) emphasizes that the elements of acquisition language planning pertain to the beliefs and ideologies associated with language, as well as any deliberate endeavours to alter or impact such practices through language intervention, planning, or management.

The LiEP (1997) subscribes to a view that learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from the kind of structured bilingual education present in dual-medium programs and calls for SGB members to facilitate the expansion of home language education to encompass the intermediate phase. One would therefore expect the SGB as the parent representatives at the school to have some awareness of some of the benefits of home languages as LoLT, thereby promoting its use in agreement with the LiEP (1997). It can therefore be concluded that for parents and teachers to have the right understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT, the SGB needs to be trained on how to draft and facilitate the implementation of home languages.

### **5.2.6 SGB’s views concerning languages of learning at teaching**

The research findings further revealed the sentiments of parents, teachers, and SGB members towards home languages as LoLT and the importance of home languages as LoLT in preserving cultural identity and heritage. While teachers acknowledged the

benefits of home languages as LoLT in education, parents and SGB support the use of English alongside their home language due to its cultural significance. Parents and SGB posit that teachers should come up with strategies to use English alongside home languages for learning and teaching to avoid compromising their cultural identity or home languages.

The study's revelation that most parents and SGB members prefer learners to use both English and home languages as a LoLT is highly significant in terms of cultural identity. In this regard, this theme revealed that there is a strong link between home languages and cultural identity. As one parent put it, "*It's not just about schooling [academics]; it's about identity*" (participant Pf4). This emotion is consistent with Cummins' (2000:11) claim that language is inextricably related to a person's sense of self and belonging. As a result, the focus on home language in education goes beyond academic concerns, functioning as a conduit for cultural preservation and identity affirmation (Banda, 2000).

Language is entangled with different cultural beliefs from different perceptions of the world (Babito, 2015:15). This implies that language is the vehicle that people use to transmit their cultural knowledge and perceptions of the world. Language is a fundamental cultural construct that serves as a bridge between the way we see our world in our minds and our perception of the world. As we interact with the world, these perceptions become the reference point which we draw conclusions upon.

In comparison to previous research such as Webb (2012), the study's results highlight the balance between global ambitions and local reality. While there is an apparent worldwide drive towards English, there is a rising acknowledgment of the significance of other South African linguistic varieties and the cognitive, cultural, and economic advantages they provide (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). It was astonishing to learn that there were teachers who viewed English as an extension of the Eurocentric culture. These teachers believe that English destroys the strong cultural identity that the learners bring into the classroom while giving strength to a language that is foreign to the learner. However, this is not the case as both English and home languages serve a vital role for learners' academic and future aspirations. This is commensurate with the research by Drisko (2022:744) who found that learners who used both English and their home language demonstrated notable superiority in cognitive skills and social skills compared to their monolingual English-only counterparts.

Since parents and SGB members believe that learners would learn best when taught in their home language alongside English, one can conclude that this perception is a reflection of how they view the world based on the cultural knowledge they express through language. For example, children are raised by families whose cultures are entrenched in children's minds through language. These children then come to school with the cultural knowledge that is transmitted through language and learn new concepts using this knowledge as a point of reference. Owing to this, it is of the utmost importance that the teaching practises are aligned with the language that learners know, which is embedded in their cultural knowledge. This was further emphasized by one of the respondents who expressed that the learners' home language is the solid foundation which they build on to explain concepts in the classroom, which in turn aids the learner by facilitating understanding, leading to academic success.

The theme further revealed that parents, teachers and SGB members were in agreement with the notion that certain languages such as English are languages for economic and social mobility, thus providing better opportunities for future success. As mentioned earlier in chapter two, this observation is not unique to South Africa. In China for example, the current official policy regarding the teaching of English has granted it the status of a mandatory subject from grade three to higher education (Hu & Hing, 2012:126). Not only does China's leadership recognizes the significance of the English language's essential role in connecting with the global community, but also recognizes its significance for serving as the international language for trade and finance.

In as much as these stakeholders initially portrayed a strong cultural veneration for home languages as LoLT, this cultural veneration is balanced by the pragmatic awareness of English as a route to larger socioeconomic prospects. Most parents believe that English will open doors of opportunities for their children as it is a language that is spoken globally.

Parents believe that home languages have limited use in the context of global economic advancement. This mirrors Brock-Utne's (1997) observations on the African educational landscape, where parents often grapple with the tension between cultural preservation and economic pragmatism.

The involvement of external stakeholders, notably the general school community and policymakers, also emerged as an important subject during the interviews. "*There is a societal pressure to adjust to English*" as (Participant Tf6) observed. "*Even though we, as educators, see the relevance of home language teaching, there is an external push towards English, which is often viewed as the language of development*" (Participant Tf6). This is consistent with Kamwangamalu's (2000) findings, which stress the social prestige associated with English in post-colonial African settings.

The results also showed a rising tendency among younger parents, who, possibly driven by globalisation and internet connectedness, saw bilingualism as a need rather than a choice. One of the younger participants articulated that knowing multiple languages was mandatory in today's world. This is consistent with De Klerk's (2002) findings, according to which younger generations in South Africa increasingly see bilingualism as a tool for global engagement.

The Constitution of South Africa underscores the significance of linguistic diversity and promotes multilingualism as a fundamental right. Section 29(2) emphasizes individuals' rights to receive education in their chosen official language(s) where feasible. This provision theoretically allows learners to receive education in their home languages in public schools. In this regard, teachers acknowledge the importance of the knowledge gained from teaching in the home language, but they also recognize the necessity of equipping students for a world that is interconnected and globally competitive. This is consistent with Heugh's (2009) research, which emphasises the pedagogical advantages of home languages as LoLT, particularly during the formative years, while also noting the inevitable shift to English as the primary language of instruction in order to prepare pupils for issues faced by the global community. However, discrepancies arise when observed practices favour English as the primary language of instruction, particularly after grade three. While the Constitution establishes principles of multilingualism and non-discrimination, its translation into effective language policies at the school level remains a challenge.



In summary, the study of Mahlasedi-Masana's parents, teachers and governing bodies' attitudes and perceptions toward home languages as LoLT has provided critical light on the intricate workings of South African language educational settings. The perspectives of educators, parents, and SGB members have brought attention to the difficulties and possibilities that come with encouraging home languages as LoLT. Although the cultural and cognitive advantages of learning a home language are widely acknowledged, issues about economic mobility and social pressures favouring dominant languages still exist.

Since South Africa's adoption of a multilingual approach to education using 'mother-tongue based' bilingual education, the promotion the equal treatment of languages in education through the maintenance of home languages as LoLT still remains a challenge. As clearly voiced, any learners have yet to benefit from the promise of equal access to education in their home languages as enshrined in numerous legislative instruments such as the South African School's Act.

It is clear that the issue of language in education reflects deeper socio-cultural factors than it does pedagogy. The results of this research highlight the need of a comprehensive strategy for teaching learners in the home languages, one that considers the goals of the community, the real-world difficulties that teachers encounter, and the larger sociopolitical environment of South Africa.

### **5.3 Synthesis of the answers from the research questions**

#### **Research Question 1: What are parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT?**

The attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School in Mamelodi, Gauteng, are complex and multifaceted. While some parents express a desire for their children to learn in their home languages, others prioritize English for its perceived future benefits. Teachers, on the other hand, show a preference for English as the language of instruction, often citing concerns about learners' proficiency and academic performance. School Governing Body (SGB) members displayed awareness and engagement regarding home languages as LoLT, with some acknowledging its importance while others prioritized other factors in language policy formulation. Overall, the prevailing sentiment among stakeholders

leans towards English instruction, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards language and education. However, the discrepancies highlight the need for further research and dialogue to address the complexities of language policy and practice in South African schools.

**Research Question 2: What are parents, teachers and the SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in an educational environment?**

Parents, teachers, and SGB members at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School demonstrate a vague understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in an educational environment. While many acknowledge the cognitive and cultural benefits of home language instruction, practical considerations such as teaching capacity, language proficiency and future opportunities often influence decision-making. Additionally, stakeholders recognize the importance of promoting multilingualism and preserving linguistic diversity, as emphasized in policy documents such as the Constitution and the Language in Education Policy. However, challenges in implementation, including resource limitations and societal attitudes towards particular languages, present barriers to fully realizing the potential of home languages as LoLT in South African schools.

**Research Question 3: Why do parents, teachers and the SGB members prefer their children to use certain languages for learning purposes?**

The preferences of parents, teachers, and SGB members regarding language use for learning purposes are influenced by a combination of factors, including perceived future opportunities, language proficiency, and cultural identity. Parents may prioritize English instruction for its perceived economic and social advantages, aligning with global trends towards English proficiency. Teachers, on the other hand, may advocate for home languages as LoLT out of recognition of its cognitive benefits and cultural relevance. SGB members, while tasked with formulating language policies, may prioritize practical considerations such as resource allocation and community preferences. However, underlying these preferences are wider societal attitudes towards languages and the perceived status of certain languages, which may shape decision-making at the school level. As such, efforts to promote multilingual education must address these dynamics

to ensure equitable language opportunities for all learners.

#### **5.4 Main contributions of the study**

Heugh and Stroud (2020) emphasize the need for alternative multilingual approaches to home languages as LoLT in education following their claim that the DOE has failed to put the policy into practice; even after implementation proposals were continuously brought forth. The findings of this study therefore, will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of multilingualism and approaches to multilingualism in South African schools.

Furthermore, the study will influence policy direction around home languages as LoLT and teaching, by revealing key tenets aspects of stakeholders' perceptions in promoting home languages as LoLT. An empirical study on the language attitudes and perceptions of these stakeholders can assist language planners and government to comprehend observed linguistic behaviours in education, the language choices of multilingual communities, language loyalty and language prestige in the respective speech community (Obiols, 2002). As attitude and perception have a direct influence on behaviour, knowing what views parents, teachers and the SGB have towards a language may assist with improving learner achievement. For example, if these stakeholders have a negative attitude towards languages, it may give an indication of the level of difficulty or ease (even resistance) that is experienced by learners when learning a particular language (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014).

Furthermore, Griva and Couvarda (2012) motivate that studying the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders involved in the child's education is imperative since these stakeholders are able to contribute to conversations pertaining to language status as well as have an influence on all the language policy decisions. Such reasons place these stakeholders in a position to determine a new path for multilingual education. This research will enable further research projects in areas of language use in schools and the attitudes and perceptions of parents and other stakeholders in township schools towards their home languages in education. A current study in this field may indicate the expected future growth of African languages in South Africa and how they can be used in communication and education.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

As with any instrument of collecting data in research, interviews have drawbacks. For example, during interviews, participants' responses could have been misunderstood or unheard as they may have had an opinion but not be able to articulate themselves in a clear way. Furthermore, the chosen method of sampling (non-probability sampling) does not allow for the results in this study to be generalised as only a few members of the population form part of the sample.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made based on the research findings:

### **5.6.1 Recommendation 1: Encourage early childhood learning in home languages**

One can attest to the fact that a child's home language is crucial for early learning success. Therefore, it is important for children to be taught in the language they not only know best but also be exposed to home languages as LoLT in early childhood education, to strengthen their language and literacy foundation. This in turn, will strengthen the acquisition of an additional language as and when it is introduced in the intermediate phase of primary education. Furthermore, since teachers build new knowledge on the knowledge that learners come into the classroom with, the transition between the home and the classroom becomes effortless. Learners become more engaged when they are taught in a language that they understand, thus enhancing learner confidence and encourages engagement with the learning material.

Furthermore, the findings also revealed that parents are less involved in their children's education with language being described as a stumbling block for parents. When parents and the broader community are involved in their children's education, it encourages a great improvement in learner academic achievement. Therefore, children who learn in their home languages can be assisted by their parents at home in a language that is understood by the teacher, parent and learner. For example,

children can be assisted with reading at home. Children who are assisted at home are with reading are more likely to develop confidence and fluency in reading.

### **5.6.2 Recommendation 2: DBE support in training teachers**

The research findings indicate that teachers experience challenges of implementing both home languages alongside English, in accordance with policy. Therefore, teachers ought to be trained on how they can practically utilize home languages alongside English to maximise learning in the classroom, in a manner that aligns to the policy. Teachers need to be exposed to innovative instructional strategies that allow both home languages to thrive, especially when English is introduced in grade four. Teachers should further be deployed in the positions which they are sufficiently trained for, and not merely where there is a need at the school. This is the case in some schools as teachers are not always proficient in the languages they teach, thus creating a ripple effect of substandard language skills on the learners. Therefore, there is a need for continuous development through workshops for teachers to refine their skills and equip them with instructional strategies to teach these languages simultaneously, without compromising any of the languages.

### **5.6.3 Recommendation 3: DBE support in training SGB members**

The South African Schools Act has given the power of decisions pertaining to languages of learning and teaching to the SGB members of each respective school. Therefore, it is imperative that SGB members are well informed and adequately trained in issues relating to language policies. The department of education needs to provide training and practical guidance for SGB members on how language policies can be drafted, implemented and reviewed in accordance with the LiEP. Current SGB training is focused on financial aspects of management, therefore training should be provided to each new SGB cohort on matters related to language policy in government schools. Furthermore, SGB members need to be exposed to issues and trends pertaining languages in education in South Africa, as this will assist them when making decisions relating to language policy implementation in schools. This can be accomplished

through workshops and close collaboration between the DBE and schools, that train SGB members before they assume responsibility every three years.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the complex attitudes and perceptions towards home languages as LoLT among parents, teachers, and SGB members at Mahlasedi-Masana Primary School in Mamelodi, Gauteng. While stakeholders acknowledge the benefits of home language instruction, practical considerations and societal pressures often dictate language policy and practice. The literature review and the findings of the research show that while parents, teachers and the governing body recognise the numerous benefits of maintaining learners' home language proficiency, concerns persist regarding economical opportunities and societal expectations which often prioritize the use of dominant languages such as English. Additionally, there are ongoing debates about the role that mother tongue plays in the classroom and the appropriate level at which an additional language should be introduced.

The study highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to language education that considers the goals of the community, challenges faced by educators, and broader socio-political factors in South Africa. Moreover, the study further emphasises the need for parents to be more informed about school language policies and the benefits of home languages as LoLT. The recommendations provided offer actionable steps for promoting home languages as LoLT and fostering a more inclusive and empowering language education environment. By addressing these issues, we can work towards achieving linguistic fairness and justice in education, ensuring equitable language opportunities for all learners in South Africa. In this regard, current research is advocating for home language instruction from early grades up to higher education in the South African context.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A (Ethical Clearance Certificate)



#### COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

12 June 2023

Dear Ms Keamogetse Moganedi

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # :  
53846559\_CREC\_CHS\_2023

**Decision:**  
Ethics Approval from 12 June 2023  
to 12 June 2024

**Researcher(s):** Name: Ms. K. Moganedi  
Contact details: [53846559@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:53846559@mylife.unisa.ac.za)  
**Supervisor(s):** Name: Dr. V. Hlatshwayo  
Contact details: [hlatsv@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hlatsv@unisa.ac.za)  
**Co-Supervisor:** Name: Dr. S. Shange  
Contact details: [ezengetc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ezengetc@unisa.ac.za)

**Title:** The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in South Africa.

**Degree Purpose:** Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The 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 should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
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4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regard to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's Act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. De-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes if the condition that the research projects are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identified research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**12 June 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number J846559\_CREC\_C:HS\_W21 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the involved research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature: 

Prof. KIB KIBWANA  
 CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson  
 Email: kibkib@unisa.ac.za  
 Tel: (012)429 8210

Signature: PP 

Prof. ZZ NKOZI  
 Acting-Chairperson: CHS  
 E-mail: zznkosi@unisa.ac.za  
 Tel: 012 429 6758

## Appendix B (Gauteng Department of Education Permission Letter)



**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS IN  
PRETORIA EAST- TSHWANE SOUTH DISTRICT**

Title of Research: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a primary school in South Africa.

Date: January 2023

Attention: The District Director

Department: The Department of Basic Education

Dear Ms. Galego

My name is Keamogetse Moganedi, and I am doing research towards a degree of Master of English Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, under the supervision of Dr Hlatshwayo and Dr Shange in the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a primary school in South Africa.

The aim of the study is to explore the attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home language learning. This study wishes to examine parents, teachers SGB members' understanding of the role of home language learning in education. It is envisaged that the findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of multilingualism and innovative approaches to home language learning in schools in South Africa.

I hereby request your permission to conduct virtual one-on-one interviews with ten parents, ten teachers and ten SGB members of the school (inclusive of the principal, 1 School Management Team member and eight parents who are part of the SGB). Data will be collected using semi-structured one-on-one interviews. I have attached the ethical clearance certificate from the University's Ethics Review Committee with this letter. Your consideration of this request will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)



Yours sincerely,

---

Ms. Keamogetse Mogianooi  
Master's Student  
Cell: 081 587 7338  
Supervisor: Dr V Hlatshwayo & Dr T Shange  
Phone: 011 429 4150



University of Limpopo  
Private Bag 32 UNISA 0003  
Tlokweng, Limpopo  
Tel: 011 429 4150

## Appendix C (GDE Research Request Form)



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For admin. Use only:

Ret no.:

Enquiries: 011 35450775/1379

GumaniMkhalo@unisa.ac.za Busi Mchunu

### GOE RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

#### 1. PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

1.1   Details of the Researcher	
a) Surname and Initials:	MOGANEIDIKT
b) First Names:	KEAMOGETSE
c) Title (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms):	MIS
d) Student Number:	53846ti6:9
e) SA ID Number:	91] [18290589088
f) Work permit no. (If not SA citizen)	

1.2   Private Contact Details	
a. Home Address	c. Postal Address (if different)
23 AUGRABIES ROAD	
IMOHLEKHE: OF RIDIGL ESTATE	
IMOHLEKHE: OF	
b. Postal Code: 0081	d. Postal Code:
e. Cell:	f. Cell: 081 587 7338
g. Fax:	h. E-mail: <a href="mailto:emog:ankt@unisa.ac.za">emog:ankt@unisa.ac.za</a>

#### 2. PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH!

## Appendix D (GDE Research Approval Letter)



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/4/4/1/2

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	18 May 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2023/166
Name of Researcher:	Mogamedi KT
Address of Researcher:	23 Augrabies Road Mooikloof Ridge Estate Mooikloof
Telephone Number:	081 587 7338
Email address:	<a href="mailto:emogankt@unisa.ac.za">emogankt@unisa.ac.za</a>
Research Topic:	The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in South Africa.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

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

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

*(Signature) 18/05/2023*  
The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

*Making education a societal priority*

#### **Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: [Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za)

Website: [www.education.gpg.gov.za](http://www.education.gpg.gov.za)

## Appendix E (Permission Letter to the Principal)



### RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COINDUCT RESEARCH AT MAHLASEOII-MASANA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Title of Research: **The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in Mamelodi, South Africa.**

Date: June 2023

Attention: The Principal

Department: The Department of Basic Education - Mamelodi-Masana Primary School

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Keamogetse Moganedi, and I am doing research towards a degree of Master of English Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, under the supervision of Dr Hlatshwayo and Dr Shange in the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in the study entitled: **The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in South Africa.**

The aim of the study is to explore the attitudes and perceptions held by parents, teachers and SGB members towards home language learning. Furthermore, this study intends to examine parents, teachers and SGB members' understanding of the role of home language learning in education. The study will focus on the views of ten parents, ten teachers and ten SGB members of the school. There will be a total of approximately 30 participants in the research study. Data will be collected using semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

Your school has been selected because of its linguistic diversity and the large demographics of the learners and staff. Your participation would provide meaningful insight into understanding the current stance of parental and teacher attitudes and perceptions towards home language learning in schools. The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that an understanding of these stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions towards languages of learning and teaching in schools will be taken into consideration by government and may have an influence on language



UNISA  
Private Bag 1171  
Mabopane, 001  
Tel: +27 (0) 11 429 1111  
Fax: +27 (0) 11 419 4100  
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policy decisions at higher levels of government. This means that decisions that are made by government may finally reflect the views of individuals who are affected by those decisions.

There are no potential risks and/or discomforts in this study, hence the importance of signing the consent form. I have attached the consent form on the next page. It will be kept confidential.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

---

Ms. Keamogetse Moganedi  
Master's Student  
Cell: 081 587 7338  
Supervisor: Dr V Hlotshwaiyo, & Dr T Shange Ph. one:  
012 429 6665



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## Appendix F (Participant Information Sheet for SGB Members)



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR SGB MEMBERS

**Date:** June 2023

**Title:** The Attitudes And Perceptions Of Parents, Teachers And School Governing Body Members Towards Home Language Learning In A Township Primary School In Mamelodi, South Africa.

#### DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is **Keamogetse Moganedi**, and I am doing research towards a degree of Master of English Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, under the supervision of Dr Hlatshwayo and Dr Shange in the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in South Africa.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

We are conducting this research to collect information on the current attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the school governing body towards home language learning in a township school.

#### WHY BEING AM I INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

School governing body members play an important role in the home language maintenance in schools and in choices regarding the language policy at the school. As language is the vehicle that learners, parents and teachers use to engage in the learning and teaching process, it is imperative to study how it is used and its purpose in schooling. It is essential that the views of the school governing body are noted and taken into consideration. You have been chosen because we believe your participation in this research project will benefit the purpose of this study.



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The prospective participants in the study include ten parents, ten teachers and ten SGB members of the school, comprising of the principal of your school, 1 School Management Team member and eight parents who are part of the SGB. There will be a total of approximately 30 participants in the research study.

#### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves in-depth semi-structured interviews for parents, teachers and SGB members, and document analysis of the Language in Education Policy. The interview questions will focus on how teachers perceive home language learning and the roles that should be assigned to home languages in schools. Similar questions will also be asked in the semi-structured interviews with the parents and the SGB members to obtain their attitudes and perceptions on home language learning.

Some of the questions that will be explored in the interviews include:

1. What other language/s can you speak fluently, besides your home language?
2. Is your child currently being educated in their home language?
3. Which stakeholders do you think should be involved in decisions regarding languages of learning and teaching at the school?

Time allocation: The duration of the semi-structured interviews will be from 20 minutes to 30 minutes per respondent.

#### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is that parental perceptions and attitudes towards languages of learning and teaching in schools will be taken into consideration by government and the SGB may have an influence on language policy decisions at higher levels of government. This study may also give an indication of the expected future growth of African languages in South Africa and how they can be used in communication and education.



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**ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

This research falls under the low-risk category according to research ethics risk assessment tool. Therefore, there is no potential level of discomfort to the participants in this study. No information will be linked to any participant.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your personal such as your name will not be recorded. Your responses will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. As the researcher who's conducting the study, I will have access to the data.

The completed research documents will be kept for a period of 5 years to protect the interested parties and to ensure findings/results will be used for research purposes only. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the supervisor, the transcriber, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes such as, a research report or article journal. Privacy will however, be protected – the report may be submitted for publication but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Your responses will be stored by the researchers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the Office of the first co-principal investigator at the University of South Africa for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**



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There are no incentives for this study.

#### HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has not yet received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the at Unisa. Once available, a copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher once it has been granted.

#### HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Ms Keamogetse Moganedi on 081 587 7338 or email [emoqankt@unisa.ac.za](mailto:emoqankt@unisa.ac.za). The findings are accessible for five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr **Vivienne Hlatshwayo** on 012 429 6954/ [hlatsv@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hlatsv@unisa.ac.za) or Dr **Thembeke Shange** on 012 429 6954/ [ezengetc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ezengetc@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.  
Thank you.

Ms KT Moganedi  
Master's student



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
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## Appendix G (Participant Information Sheet for Parents)



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

**Date:** June 2023

**Title:** The Attitudes And Perceptions Of Parents, Teachers And School Governing Body Members Towards Home Language Learning In A Township Primary School In Mamelodi, South Africa.

#### DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is **Keamogetse Moganedi**, and I am doing research towards a degree of Master of English Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, under the supervision of Dr Hlatshwayo and Dr Shange in the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in Mamelodi, South Africa.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

We are conducting this research to collect information on the current attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the school governing body towards home language learning in a township school.

#### WHY BEING AM I INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Parents play an important role in the home language maintenance and in choices regarding their children's education. As language is the vehicle that learners, parents and teachers use to engage in the learning and teaching process, it is imperative to study how it is used and its purpose in schooling. It is essential that the views of parents and the school community are noted and taken into consideration. You have been chosen because we believe your participation in this research project will benefit the purpose of this study.

The prospective participants in the study include ten parents, ten teachers and ten SGB members of the school, comprising of the principal of your school, 1 School Management Team member



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PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
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## Appendix H (Participant Information Sheet for Teachers)



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

**Date:** June 2023

**Title:** The Attitudes And Perceptions Of Parents, Teachers And School Governing Body Members Towards Home Language Learning In A Township Primary School In Mamelodi, South Africa.

#### DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is **Keamogetse Moganedi**, and I am doing research towards a degree of Master of English Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, under the supervision of Dr Hlatshwayo and Dr Shange in the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and school governing body members towards home language learning in a township primary school in South Africa.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

We are conducting this research to collect information on the current attitudes and perceptions of parents, teachers and the school governing body towards home language learning in a township school.

#### WHY BEING AM I INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

School governing body members play an important role in the home language maintenance in schools and in choices regarding the language policy at the school. As language is the vehicle that learners, parents and teachers use to engage in the learning and teaching process, it is imperative to study how it is used and its purpose in schooling. It is essential that the views of the school governing body are noted and taken into consideration. You have been chosen because we believe your participation in this research project will benefit the purpose of this study.

The prospective participants in the study include ten parents, ten teachers and ten SGB members of the school, comprising of the principal of your school, 1 School Management Team member



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PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
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## Appendix I (Informed Consent Form)

REPLY SLIP: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, S. SEBULELA (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.


I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.


I agree to the recording of the online interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

Participant Signature..... ..... Date. 15/06/23

Researcher's Name & Surname KEAMOGETSE MOGANEDI (please print)

Researcher's signature 

Date: June 2023

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Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
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## Appendix J: Interview Guide Questions



### Interview Schedule for Parents

#### 1. Opening

- A. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands] My name is Kea Moganedi. As I am conducting a study on the attitudes of parents, teacher and SGB members towards home language learning, The school deputy principal thought it would be a good idea to interview you.
- B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your background, your opinions, some experiences you have had, and some of your thoughts relating to home language learning in order I learn more about the perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders and share this information in the study.
- C. (Motivation) I hope to use this information to help understand the current attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders in education towards home languages as LoLT by speaking to you and by knowing you better.
- D. (Time line) The interview should take about 15 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about your background.)

1.	What is your age?	<input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 45 and above
2.	What gender do you identify with?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
3.	Please specify your race.	<input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Coloured <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify), _____
4.	What is your highest level of education obtained?	<input type="checkbox"/> less than Grade 12 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 (Matric) <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Higher degree
5.	Where is your home located?	<input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Township <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify), _____
6.	What is your home language?	_____



(Transition: I will now ask you some questions about how your child uses language to communicate in their day-to-day interactions)

II. Body  
Questions

Research objective 1: *Examine parents, teachers and SGB members' attitudes and perceptions towards home language learning at a primary school in Mamefodi, Gauteng.*

1. What other language/can you speak fluently, besides your home language?
2. Is your child currently being educated in their home language? Do you feel that that is right?
3. Does your child's school have a language policy? Why do you **think** that is?
4. Which language do you use when communicating with your children at home? if so why, or if not, why not?
5. What are your views about communicating in English at home?
6. Should learners be encouraged to communicate in English at home? Please explain.
7. Do you think speaking English as opposed to home language has any benefits to the learners? What may those benefits be?

Research objective 2: *Explore parents, teachers SGB members' understanding of the role of home languages as LoLT in education.*

8. **Are** parents officially informed about the language policies at the school? How did you contribute to this conclusion?
9. Which stakeholders do you think should be involved in decisions regarding languages of learning and teaching at the school?
10. The Department of Education's language policy states that all children should be free to use their languages of choice in classrooms. Do you think this is currently practiced at your school? What do you think is the best case scenario?
11. What do you think is the impact of home language instruction in learners' academic performance? Do you agree that learners' grades **will** improve if all their subjects are taught in their home languages? Please explain.

Research objective 3: *Establish why parents, teachers and SGB members prefer children to use certain languages for re-aming purposes.*

12. In your opinion, are learners free to use their language of choice during the learning process? What is your biggest fear regarding this?
13. How should home languages be used in the classroom? What are this situation's pros and cons?
14. Can you share your thoughts about learners being taught in their home language for their entire education (Grade 1-12)? Please elaborate.
15. Do you agree/disagree with the view that learning how to speak English prepares one for higher education?

(Transition: Well it has been a pleasure finding out more about you. Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.)



111Closing

- A. (Summarize) Your home language is\_ . You use do not use your home language to communicate with your child at home. Your child is/is not currently being taught in their home language. You believe/do not believe s;takeholders should be involved in decisions regarding languages-of learning and teaching at the school. You think/do not think learners should be taught in their home language for their entire school education.
- B. (Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you took for this interview, r\_ Is there anything else you **think** would be helpful for me to know r1egarding your perception on home languages as LoLT?
- C. (Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to call you at home if I have any more questions? Thanks again

Interview questions for teachers and SGB members

I. Opening

- E. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands] My name is Kea Moganedi. As I am conducting a study on the attitudes of parents, teacher and SGB members towards home language learning, The school deputy principal thought it would be a good idea to interview you\_
- F. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your background, your opinions, some experiences you have had, and some-of your thoughts relating to home language learning in order to learn more about the perceptions and attitudes of s;takeholders and share this information in the study..
- G. (Motivation) I hope to use this information to help understand the current attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders in education towards home language learning by speaking to you and by knowing you better.
- H. (Time Line) The interview should take about 15 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about your background.)

1.	What is your age?	<input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 45 and above
2.	What gender do you identify with?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other: .....
3.	Please specify your race.	<input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Coloured <input type="checkbox"/> Indian



UNISA  
 Private Bag 392, UNISA, South Africa  
 Tel: +2712419 1111 Fax: +2712419 1241 Q4150

### Translated interview questions for parents (Sepedi)

#### Dipotšišo tša poledišano bakeng sa batswadi

##### Dipotšišo

1. Ke polelo/dipolelo dife tše dingwe tseo o ka di boelago ka thelelo, ntle le polelo ya gago ya gae?
2. Naa ngwana wa gago mo nakong ye o rutwa ka polelo ya gabo?
3. Na sekolo sa ngwana wa gago se na le pholisi ya polelo?
4. Na batswadi ba tsebišwa semmušo ka ga melawana ya polelo sekolong?
5. Ke bakgathatema bafe bao o naganago gore ba swanetše go akaretšwa diphethong mabapi le maleme a go ithuta le go ruta sekolong?
6. Pholisi ya polelo ya Kgoro ya Thuto e bolela gore bana ka moka ba swanetše go lokologa go šomiša maleme a bona ao ba a kgethago ka diphapošing tša borutelo. Naa o nagana gore ga bjale se se dirwa sekolong sa gago?
7. Go ya ka wena, na baithuti ba lokologile go šomiša polelo ya bona ya kgetho nakong ya tshepedišo ya go ithuta?
8. Maleme a gae a swanetše go šomišwa bjang ka phapošing ya borutelo?
9. Na o ka abelana dikgopolo tša gago ka ga baithuti bao ba rutwago ka polelo ya gabo bona thutong ya bona ka moka (Mphato wa 1-12)? Hle hlalosa ka botlalo.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
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- 10.0. nagami gore ke kihueitso efe ya thuto ya polelo ya lka gae mosomong wa baithuti dithutong? Nao dumela gore meputso ya bai1huti e tla lkaonafala ge dithuto tsa bona ka molka di rutwa ka maleme ,agabo bona? Ke kgopela le hlalose.
11. Ke polelo efe yeo o e somisago ge o boledisana le bana ba gago ka gae? Ge e ba go le bjalo ke ka bak, i la'ng, goba ge e ba go s, e bjalo, , ke ka baka la'ng go se bjalo?
12. Dipono tsa gago ke dlife mabapi l, e g: o boledisa! lla ka Seisemane ka g, ae?
13. Ina bai1huti ba swa111eitse go hlohle!etswa go boledisana lka Seisemane ka g, ae? Ke kgopela l, e hlalose, e\_
14. Ina o nagana gore go bolela Seisemane go rapana le polelo ya gae go na !e mehola go barut\l'tana? IMehola yeo e lka ba. efe?
15. Ina o dumel, elanaJga o dumelelane le kg;opolo ya gore go if, UJl: ag.; o bolela Seioomane go lolkisetsa moth, ogo ya 117utong ya, goclimo?

Translated interview questions for SGB, members (Seipedi)

Diipotsiso tsa poledis1fnO tsa bamtisi le mialo ko a SGB **Diipotsiso**

1. Ke polelotdipd, elo dife tse dingwe tsoo o ka di bolelago k: a thelelo, ntle le polelo ya gagoya gae?
2. Ina sekolo s, e lla le pholisi ya polelo?
3. Ina batswadi ba tsebiswa semmuso ka ga melawana ya polelo se olong? Hle hlalosa ka botlalo.
4. Ke bagthatema bate bao ga bjale ba a. megago di? heithong mabapi !e maleme a go ithuta le go ruta, sekolong?
5. Pholisi ya. polelo ya lKgoro ya lhuto e bolela g: ore bana lka ritilo'. ka ba swa111etse go loimloga go somisa maleme a bona ao baa kgethago ka diphaposing tsa bOfutelo. INlaa o nagan, agore ga bjale se se dirwa s, elkolong sa gaga?
6. Go ya lka wena, na baithuti !Ya lolkologile go somisa polelo ya bona ya gefuo nalkong ya tshepediso ya g: o ithuta?
7. IMaleme a gae a swanetse g; o somiswa bjang lka phaposing ya borutelo?
8. Ina o ka abelar-. a dilkgopolo tsa gagp lka ga, bailluti bao ba rutwago ka polelo ya gabo bona hllong ya bona, ka molka (Mphato wa 11-12)? Hle hlalosa ka, botlalo.
- 9.0. nagana g; ore ke khueitso efe ya thuto ya polelo ya lka gae mosomong wa baithuti dithutong? Nao dumela gore meputso ya, bai1huti e tla kaonafala ge dithuto tsa bona ka molka di rutwa ka maleme ,agabo bona? Ke kg; opela le hlalose, e\_
10. Ke polelo efe yea o e somisago ge o boledisana le bana ba gago ka gae? Gee ba. go le bjalo ke ka bairn la'ng, goba ge e ba go s, e bjalo, , ke ka baka la'ng go se bjalo?
11. Dipono tsa gago ke dlife mabapi l, e g: o boledism1a lka Seisemane ka g, ae?
12. Ina bai1huti ba sv. ra111eitse go hlohle!etswa go boledisana ka Seisemane ka g, ae? Ke kgopela l, e hlalose, e\_
13. Ina o nagana gore go bolela Seisemane go rapana le polelo ya gae go na !e mehola go barut\l'tana? IMehola yeo e ka ba. efe?
14. Ina o dumel, elanaJga o dumelelane le kg; opolo ya. gore go if, UJl: ag.; o bolela Seioomane go lolkisetsa moth, ogo ya 1hutong ya, goclimo?



Interview questions for Parents/ SiGB

- 1\_ What other languages can you speak fluently, besides your home language?
- 2\_ Is your child currently being educated in their home language? Do you feel that that is right? 3\_ Do you know what a language policy is?
- 4\_ Does your child's school have a language policy? Why do you think that is?
- 5\_ Which language do you use when communicating with your children at home? If so why, or if not, why not?
- 6\_ What are your views about communicating in English at home?
- 7\_ Should learners be encouraged to communicate in English at home? Please explain.
- 8\_ Do you think speaking English as opposed to home language has any benefits to the learners? What may those benefits be?
- 9\_ Are parents officially informed about the language policies at the school? How did you come to this conclusion?
10. Which stakeholders do you think should be involved in decisions regarding languages of learning and teaching at the school?
- 11 The Department of Education's language policy states that all children should be free to use their languages of choice in classrooms. Do you think this is currently practiced at your school? What do you think is the best-case scenario?
12. What do you think is the impact of home language instruction on learners' academic performance? Do you agree that learners' grades will improve if all their subjects are taught in their home languages? Please explain.
13. In your opinion, are learners free to use their language of choice during the learning process? What is your biggest fear regarding this?
14. How should home languages be used in the classroom? What are the pros and cons?
15. Can you share your thoughts about learners being taught in their home language for their entire education (Grade 11-12)? Please elaborate.
16. Do you agree/disagree with the view that learning how to speak English prepares one for higher education?

## Appendix K (Interview Transcripts)

Parent A

Speaker 1

Right. Thank you. So page number one, what other languages can you speak fluently besides your home language?

Speaker 2

I can speak Tsonga, Sotho, Zulu, Afrikaans, English.

Speaker 1

That's a lot. Number two, is your child currently being educated in their home language? Do you feel that that is right?

Speaker 2

No, my children are educated in English.

Speaker 1

English. Do you feel it is right?

Speaker 2

Yeah. I think for me I think it's hundred percent correct. Hundred percent correct.

Speaker 1

Okay. Why?

Speaker 2

In detail for that is because they are brightness. If I remember about myself I was in the community school or location school and I was taught with my language. So it took me time to be what I am than they were what they are with the very same tongue that I'm speaking. They can challenge me, they can communicate with me very easily. Then I could not, because by then, you know, it was difficult and with due respect to parents again, I could not talk to my parents so easily. Now they can talk to me in English and I think it also assist some of the vulgar words are not very heard in English than in your home language. Understand.

Speaker 1

Okay, thank, thanks. Number three, does your child's school have a language policy?

Speaker 2

Yeah, they have the language policies.

Speaker 1

Why do you think that they have a language policy?

Speaker 2

Yeah, because what they've said is the learner will be given, will be taught in English, which it'll be translated as the learner's language. But the learner is a Venda by birth, now automatically, as I say,

## Appendix L (Document Analysis Schedule)

### Schedule for analysing the LIEP

1. The policy states the date of release.  
Comments:  

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2. The purpose of the policy is outlined on the policy.  
Comments:  

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3. The values that underpin or guide the policy are stated.  
Comments:  

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4. The stakeholders involved in the implementation of the policy are stated.  
Comments:  

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5. The policy provides guidance for implementation and practice in the classroom.  
Comments:  

---
6. Current strengths and positive aspects of the policy in practice.  
Comments:  

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7. Current concerns and negative aspects of the policy in practice.  
Comments:  

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8. There is direction on how policy implementation will be monitored.  
Comments:  

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#### **Discussion:**

## Appendix M (Editing Certificate)

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Date: 2024/9/2

This serves to confirm that the document entitled:

THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL GOVERNING  
BODY TOWARDS HOME LANGUAGES AS A LANGUAGES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN  
A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MAMELODI, SOUTH AFRICA

by

Keamogetse Tsholofelo Moganedi

has been language edited on behalf of its author.

Genevieve Wood  
PhD candidate  
Wits University

# Appendix N (Turnitin Certificate)

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