The Promise of Multilingualism and Education in South Africa : Mirage or Reality ?

Kathleen Heugh

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For the better part of this century educators and commissions of enquiry into the state of education in Africa have concurred that the primary language of the school pupil is the language through which education should occur. As each formerly colonised territory in Africa has achieved independence, policy formulation for the newly independent state has been generated, as might be expected, by the new ruling elite. The last four decades have shown us that very often the articulation of policy, particularly language policy has more to do with a sense of political expediency than reasons of economic or educational development. Over the last ten years scholars on the continent have argued that language policy is not only too government or top-down in orientation (Bamgbose 10), but that it should be integrated into the national plan for development (Chumbow 22), of which economic development is a major component. Other scholars (such as Akinnaso, Siatchitema, and Tripathi) point out that there is often a mismatch between policy and the plan for implementation, particularly with regard to language policy in education. Thus the implementation plan has little potential for achieving the goals of the policy (for example, see Tripathi (38), Heugh (331-333), Tsonope (1998)). The situation in South Africa is one in which a matrix of contradictory threads, both supportive of multilingualism and antithetical to it, have become entangled despite the progressive commitment to equality of language rights in the country's constitution.

Arising out of the resistance movements and escalating educational crisis in the 1980s, a few radical sociolinguists began to review the relationship between language policy in education in South Africa against a backdrop of developments and critiques elsewhere in Africa. The

inability of governments, in general, to articulate and implement policies which would ensure educational success for the majority of school pupils has formed a familiar pattern on this continent, as indeed is the pattern elsewhere. In South Africa, it was Alexander (1989, 1992), in particular and in association with a small NGO, the National Language Project,[1] who recognised the significance of the critiques of Bamgbose and Chumbow and who articulated a set of language planning proposals for post-apartheid South Africa. In these proposals, a triangulation of principles were foregrounded: language planning from below; an integration of language planning with the national development and economic plan; and the rehabilitation of the status and use of African languages in education.

"The International Conference on Democratic Approaches to Language Planning and Standardisation"[2] hosted by the NLP in 1991 facilitated the establishment of a network of sociolinguists and educators in Africa, who were to come together again in 1994 and 1996, this time under the auspices of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA).[3] The purpose was to share ideas about common issues in education on the continent. Other influential voices, notably Phillipson (1988, 1992), Pool, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Tollefson, contributed to the distillation of thought which focused on the multilingual reality of South Africa. At the same time, cognisance of the economic, if not political, hegemony of English in the country and elsewhere on the continent, was taken. The African scholars were disappointed at the failure of the OAU to implement the 1986 Language Plan for Africa, which foregrounded the extensive use of African languages in education across the continent.

Whilst this development was occurring, the political negotiations were largely being conducted between the two main protagonists, the

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[1] This author was a member of the NLP and participated in this process.

[2] The conference was held by the NLP at the University of Cape Town. It was the first occasion when scholars from across the continent were able to attend a sociolinguistic conference in South Africa after a lengthy period of academic and other boycotts directed against the government.

[3] This NGO, attached to the University of Cape Town, was established by Alexander in 1992 and advanced the earlier work of the NLP.

ANC and the National Party (NP), whose interests in language issues were entirely different, not only from each other but also from the progressive linguists. The National Party's strongest political base was from within the white Afrikaans speaking community and where the language-culture/ethnicity-identity relationship was of enormous significance. The bottom line for the NP was that in order to provide the psychological guarantee to the Afrikaner people that they would remain intact as an ethnic group, the official status of Afrikaans would have to be preserved. In other words, Afrikaans was seen as the defining characteristic of this group. A related issue, for the Afrikaner nationalists, was the lingering fear of the hegemony of English. It had been this fear, exacerbated during the early years of the twentieth century, under the stewardship of Milner for Britain's colonial rule, that had crystallised language as an essential ingredient of Afrikaner nationalism. At the point of political transition, the fear of English hegemony resurfaced. For the ANC, however, there were two positions towards language/s:

— the public position embraced the notion that all languages should be regarded as equal in the same way that all cultures and religions should be regarded as equal, and consonant with the ANC's *Freedom Charter* of 1955;

— the less public position towards language is the ANC's acceptance of the *de facto* hegemony of English, which predates the *Freedom Charter* and has its origins in the early history of the movement and resistance to oppression in South Africa (Alexander 1989: 28-31).[4]

The Language Commission, as the ANC's official mouthpiece on language policy, was both to inform and consult with the public on language matters (Crawhall 20-23). The Commission as a sub-structure of the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture, released a document, "African National Congress Policy Considerations" (1992) which includes the following:

> [T]he ANC supports the deliberate fostering of multilingualism in schools, adult education programmes, in the workplace and in all sectors of public life...

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[4] See also "English to get ANC's vote" in *City Press* 1992, quoted in Heugh.

> Though language experts argue that initial education is best conducted through the "mother tongue" . . . , large sections of black urban communities have already pressurised primary schools into beginning with English as the medium of instruction from day one. . . . Any language policy must reflect the voice of the people and this voice is more important that any model which emerges.

The ambiguities here were a reflection of those current in the broader context of South African society with regard to the weight given the role of English vis-à-vis African languages. Furthermore, that these ambiguities are themselves present in the South African society cannot be denied. They are a manifestation of the degree to which the South African consciousness had been colonised first by British imperialism and later by a neo-colonial reaction to apartheid. That the ambiguities should be accepted uncritically by a political movement whose raison d'être is/was social transformation, is difficult to understand.

On the very eve of the finalisation of the interim Constitution (1993) the two major political groups settled on a compromise: the equal status of eleven official languages. This met the ANC's public commitment to the equal status of all languages, even though the eleven identified included only a selection of the country's repertoire of languages. It also satisfied the NP's determination to retain the official status of Afrikaans. Purely by accident rather than by design, this arrangement appeared to be consonant with the language policy/planning voices "from below". It created a momentary illusion of a support for multilingualism, a limitation of the hegemony of English in South Africa, and most importantly, a commitment to the promotion and development of African languages. This was given further weight in the constitution through a provision to establish a Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) to create the conditions for the promotion of multilingualism and the further development of African languages. In addition, the position of Afrikaans was further protected, in theory, through a clause which was designed to ensure that the official status of Afrikaans would not be diminished.

In order to give effect to arguably the most progressive language clauses of any constitution, the newly elected Government of National Unity (GNU) needed to flesh out, in clear terms, a set of guidelines and regulations for a language policy based on the principles enshrined in the

Constitution. Guidance needed to be provided for each government department on how to make proactive, practical and efficient sense of the clauses and honour the commitment toward the equal status of eleven languages. However, a national language policy has not yet been spelt out, and in its absence, the hegemony of English has, by default if not by design, been allowed to increase significantly. Litmus tests in this regard are: a) the increasing predominance of English in the national parliamentary and government discourse; b) the disproportionate increase of English broadcasting time on the national television service, SABCTV, and significant reduction of time for Afrikaans, with little effective increase of time for the other nine official languages.

On the other hand, there has been an exciting window of opportunity during which the diverse political and educational interests seemed to coalesce. This is not to say that there have been no promising developments over the last five years—there most definitely have, but without significant structural support through a combined effort of both government and civil society, these initiatives are likely to wither.

The Minister for Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Ben Ngubane, did commission a task group, under the chairmanship of Neville Alexander to draw up a comprehensive outline of a language plan for South Africa. The Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) through a widely consultative process, which drew on the voices from below, produced a report in 1996 outlining the principles upon which a national language policy should be based as well as a flexible plan for implementation. Unfortunately, after its submission to the minister in August 1996, he was replaced and the report was set aside for eighteen months. It was then resuscitated and is in the process, under a new minister, of being reinterpreted as a plan from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. The consultative essence of the original report has been lost in the ensuing process.

The Pan South African Language Board was established in April 1996, as an apparently independent structure whose responsibility it would be to advise and monitor all government language policy and planning developments as well as to create the conditions for the

development of previously marginalised languages. However, the structural conditions under which it was to operate has not facilitated the independence necessary to fulfil its functions. It has fallen under the financial control of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) and it has taken until December 1998 for it to have permission to appoint office staff, occupy offices and begin to allocate funds for language development issues. By late 1997, the new minister, Lionel Mtshali, was engaged in a process of amending the legislation under which PANSALB exists in order to limit its autonomy and in order to facilitate a mechanism for the minister to make policy decisions which PANSALB would then be obliged to effect. Thus the initial optimism for the opportunity for democratic language policy and planning processes to flourish has been somewhat dampened. In addition, the proposed amendments to the PANSALB Act, which are being contested by PANSALB, include an attempt to shift the responsibility for status planning from government to the language board. In other words, what would happen is that through the proposed legislation, central government would be absolved from effecting the official status of the eleven languages. This would become the responsibility of PANSALB. Thus should the official status for eleven languages be seen to malfunction, PANSALB, with a limited budget determined by central government, would carry the responsibility.

A recent contribution from a member of Language Subcommittee of the National Assembly's Portfolio Committee for Arts and Culture, Professor C. T. M. Marivate, is perhaps indicative of government's real commitment to multilingualism and extending the functional use of African languages: "We have multilingualism now. The constitution has made provision for the language board. Now we must get on with English. Our students must have English."

A second round of negotiations after the elections of 1994 led to a refining of the constitution. During this process, the language clauses requiring the equal treatment of eleven languages were diluted.

> ... [each of the eleven languages named] shall be the official South African languages at national level, and conditions shall be created for their development and for the promotion of their equal use and enjoyment. (1993 Constitution)

The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, si Swati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu (1996 Constitution).

Significantly, the reference to "equal use and enjoyment" disappeared. This would make it possible to have a flexible interpretation of what would be necessary in terms of official status.

Parliament itself, during 1998 proposed a mechanism for effecting the constitutional commitment to the official status of eleven languages by proposing that English be entrenched as the dominant working language with a monthly rotational use of one of the other ten languages. This proposal was rejected and the revised proposal before parliament involves the use of four working languages. All the while, the position of English is strengthened through use and the former position of Afrikaans declines despite a new found lobby for multilingualism from the ranks of the white Afrikaans speaking politicians. The lobby for the Afrikaans language has gravitated towards the support of multilingualism in general, because it has been understood by the Freedom Front (a right wing political party), in particular, that the position of Afrikaans will be best protected through an approach which supports the increased functional use of African languages, and a joint effort to stave off the hegemony of English.

Nearly five years after the interim constitution took effect, the promise of a vibrant and linguistically diverse country looks disappointing. On the one hand this comes as no surprise if one has scoured the literature on the political-economy and structural forces at play, for example:

> [T]he nature of politics may be influenced by the fact that linguistic competition is one of the determinants of political success . . . those who have political power over language use it to get political power, with the result that the ideal of democratic government is never achieved. (Pool 31)

In particular, the structural forces which militate against the use of African languages in education are enormously powerful, and since these

obviously have an impact elsewhere on the continent, South Africa cannot be immune to them.

> The process of colonial education had the general effect of marginalising most African languages in favour of Euro-languages, creating an imperialist linguistic configuration that came to legitimise and reproduce the unequal division of power and resources... (Mazrui 35).

> [T]he World Bank's prescriptions continue to place heavy emphasis on the reduction of government subsidies in education, though such subsidies are indispensable to the promotion of instruction in the local languages... under Word Bank-IMF structural adjustment programmes, the only path open to African nations is the adoption of the imperial languages from the very outset of a child's education (Mazrui 40).

At this point it seems useful to visit a particularly illuminating observation of Skutnabb-Kangas: "In overtly liberal/intercultural rhetoric the implicit assumptions are often covertly assimilationist vis-à-vis integration/ethnicity" (15). She further argues that very often the term integration is used when in fact the process of assimilation is what is meant. The newly elected government in South Africa, as it happens, is liberal and espouses intercultural and integrationist principles. Whilst on the one hand it embraces the notion of an African Renaissance, it does so through the medium of English. Government ministers deliver their messages to the public in English, despite the fact that probably only 20% of the population have the necessary proficiency in this language to engage adequately with this information. Thus if integration is intended, the path chosen is via an assimilationist strategy which is more likely to achieve assimilation for a minority into a small English speaking middle class than for the integration of communities at large. Bamgbose situates this issue in the context of education in Africa in general, African languages can be used successfully,

> provided that there is a strong will to do so. The alternative of not using African languages in education is ultimately more costly and less democratic as well as wasteful to both human and material development. (13)

In particular, the developments in the national Department of Education are a significant indicator of an ambiguous relationship with change as cosmetic and assimilationist and change which is radically

transformative. The Chief Director of Education Planning, Bobby Soobrayan, argues that: "Transformation and equity priorities are inextricably linked to overcoming the inefficiencies with which the education system is currently confronted" (2).

He admits that currently there is a disproportionate allocation of the education budget which is earmarked simply for salaries. Despite a 25% increase on education through the provincial governments during the 1996/97 financial year, most of this went into salary increases. Very little went into non-personnel costs. Personnel costs increased by 37% in the three-year period 1995-1998, whereas non-personnel expenditure increased by only 0,5%, which is a decline in real terms.

Very few people will deny that the success of the educational improvement strategies is contingent on an appropriately qualified and committed educator cadre. However, the present situation where personnel cost appears to be "crowding out" non-personnel inputs is clearly incompatible with education improvement .... current inefficiencies of expenditure will ... also dilute our capacity to realise important policy goals .... International research has consistently shown that attempts to improve the quality of education are contingent on an adequate level of non-personnel inputs to the system. (Soobrayan 2)

As it happens, whilst salary increases for teachers appear to have grown disproportionately, there is a glaring personnel problem in regard to the level of underpreparedness for teachers to teach in any system, least of all one which is attempting transformation. The level of teacher underqualification in 1994 was as follows:

African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
45,5%	41,13%	7,35%	1%	35,8

(SAIRR 122)

An urgent requirement is in-service teacher education across the board.

Nevertheless, with regard to transformative activities, the Department of Education, at the end of 1995, set about initiating two major interventions which were to bring about change in order to ensure equity in education: "For the first time ever, high quality education will be available for everyone — irrespective of age, gender, race, colour, religion, ability or language" (National Department of Education: 1997a 2).

These interventions were in the areas of curriculum change and language in education policy. The first point to be made with regard to these two initiatives is that they developed along separate and parallel lines. At no point was there any serious attempt to integrate the two processes. In terms of the curriculum changes, language for the most part has been confined to one of eight learning areas. The essence of the role of language in learning across the curriculum was omitted from the deliberations until the final stages of the drafting of the new curriculum, when a draft version of the language in education policy was added to the curriculum document in February 1977. *Curriculum 2005* was released to the public in February 1977, in English only, and it was only in July 1977 that the new language in education policy was finalised. An important part of the curriculum document deals with support material for teachers and learners. At no point are the implications regarding materials development in African languages spelt out or even acknowledged. Related implications for terminology development and the need for bilingual/multilingual teacher education/training are not acknowledged. For the most part the curriculum was developed as if, by default, the target language would be English for all school learners. To date, the curriculum documents have not been translated into the African languages.

Nevertheless, the language in education policy announced a few months later is based on the notion of additive bilingualism, and promotes the use of the home language alongside an additional language (which for most students will mean English). In other words the policy, by implication is geared towards the promotion of African languages alongside English, for the duration of the school system. Notably, in addition, South African Sign Language has been identified as a twelfth official language for educational purposes. This is the first time the natural language of the deaf has been included in a national language in education policy and it

deserves international recognition. At face value the new policy appears encouraging. It is exactly what had been proposed over a decade of intensive lobbying from the NGO educational sector.[5] The Department of Education consulted this NGO sector during a two year period (1995-1997) as it developed its proposal for a new language in education policy. Subsequent to the policy announcement in mid-1997 the department began a tentative process of searching for an implementation plan. However, there is a fundamental problem with this process, and the issues of terminology development, text-book and materials production in all eleven official languages of the country, and bilingual/multilingual teacher training to give effect to the new language policy have yet to be acknowledged in a proactive manner. If one considers the budgetary arrangements, it is obvious that if there is little provision for what is termed "non-personnel" costs, these areas will remain under-resourced, and hence no implementation plan will emerge.

Returning to the curriculum developments, however, it is almost inconceivable that despite ninety years of commissions and reports on education reaffirming the centrality of language in education on this continent, the role of language in the learning process, across the entire spectrum of education, was again underestimated at this critical point in South Africa's history. What makes this all the more extraordinary is that the *Final Report of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG)* (DACST 124-132) focussed particularly on the need for a multilingual approach to language in education and made significant recommendations for the realisation of this. The sub-committee responsible for this included senior members of the Department of Education, who were also those responsible for finalising language in education policy. Thus there was no way that the Department was unaware that languages across the curriculum needed to be integrated into curriculum development. Partly it is a reflection of political expediency which required the appearance of rapid change in education in order to fulfil election promises made in the days prior to the 1994 election. Partly it is a reflection of the larger structural

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[5] Particularly in the work of the National Language Project and its journal, the *Language Projects' Review*, later *Bua!* between 1987-1996; and the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa from 1992 onwards. (See Heugh, Siegrühn & Plüddemann 1995).

forces which, in the end, support the language(s) of rule only, and this is why the curriculum planners found themselves confined to a paradigm which anticipated that there would be a single main language of education, namely English. The prospects of an effective implementation of the new curriculum and language in education policy which have not been conceived of together and are not fundamentally integrated are dismal. In any event, in the absence of comprehensive in-service teacher education to better equip teachers with the basics of contemporary pedagogy as well as the requirements of a new curriculum and language policy, there are few grounds for optimism at any level. The most likely scenario which will play itself out is that the curriculum as it has been conceived will take precedence over the language policy in terms of an implementation plan. However, until such time as both curriculum and language policy are re-examined together, it is unlikely that the majority of African language speaking students in school will succeed. The gap between the middle class and the working class will not narrow since most students will continue to remain linguistically excluded from meaningful access to learning.

The bottom line is that until there are materials (text-books) in each of the learning areas from Grades 1-12 in all eleven official languages, and until matriculation examinations can be written through each of these languages, there can be no equality of education in South Africa. Since, however, the language policy is based on additive bilingualism which means that in all likelihood the majority of students[6] will have English as their second language of learning, there also has to be massive in-service teacher-training to equip the majority of teachers with bilingual teaching skills, plus an adequate proficiency in English for teaching purposes. The current level of the English language proficiency of teachers is entirely inadequate for effective teaching and learning to occur. Similarly, the majority of teachers who are English-speaking do not have the required proficiency in a second language to teach in schools

[6] Of the students who are hearing, about 80% of students are African language speaking; about 15% are Afrikaans speaking and probably only about 5% who are English speaking. Many deaf children are currently not in school, but the new language in education policy regards South African Sign Language as the 12th official language for educational purposes. This still has to be put to effect.

which implement an additive approach to bilingualism. In essence then, the best that can be expected of the apparent changes in education are that a small number of African language speaking students will find that they are able to become assimilated into an essentially English dominant education system. Social and education integration cannot at this point be effected if matters continue along this cul-de-sac.

To be fair, the Department of Education cannot be held entirely responsible for the current state of affairs. The structural forces beyond the education sector play a significant role determining which pressures to bring to bear on the national department. A point which does need to be made, though, is that whilst the financial arrangements within national education as well as the provincial departments of education leave little room for a financial investment in African language development or in-service teacher education, there is every reason to explore every avenue of possible transformation. A recent study by Vawda and Patrinos (1998), surprisingly from the World Bank, argue that these costs when managed on a regionally co-operative basis are manageable. What is required is a shift from an insular and inwardly looking approach to one which is more flexible and able to establish joint, cost-efficient, projects across the region. We share every one of our official African languages, including Afrikaans, with neighbouring countries in the SADC region. The requisite co-operation would require the support of government as a whole, not merely the Department of Education. In particular, it requires a recognition of language policy within a national economic and development plan.

As argued vigorously by Chumbow, Bamgbose (1987) and Alexander (1992) national language policy should be integrated with the development of a strategic vision for the national and economic development plan. So, whilst the influence of the radical sociolinguists have had intermittent success on some levels in South Africa, this crucial aspect has not found favour in the national economic plans for South Africa. The *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) of 1994, as well as its successor, the *Growth, Employment and Redistribution: A Macro-Economic Strategy* (GEAR) of 1996 have neither integrated nor included language policy and planning. Had the language issue been taken more seriously by government in the domain of development and economic

reconstruction, then it is possible that the financing of education and the prioritisation of funds in education may have been reconsidered. The development and economic planners, however, followed the uncritical view of the common sense misconceptions about English vis-à-vis the other languages.

Government's view is both a reflection of and is reflected by the powerful private sector which is largely operational through English and to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. Access to the job market in an economic decline is limited and it is particularly limited to persons with a proficiency in English. The formal sector is caught in a paradigm which has accepted, uncritically, the notion that English is the most important, if not only, international language of trade. South Africa's economic decline can be traced to a number of issues. In my view, one of these is a paralysis of vision and an inability to see beyond the past and possibly the present. Unlike other countries, such as New Zealand, which twenty-five years ago began to reorientate itself towards a global market, South Africa Limited, as a result of political conservatism, economic and academic sanctions has simply not kept up with global trends and realities. The private sector did not notice, as did Australia a decade ago, that the share of World Trade enjoyed by the English speaking countries between 1960 and 1987 declined considerably whilst the converse was true for countries whose language/s were other than English (Stanley 32). At a recent workshop on "Multilingualism and Economic Development" held at the University of Pretoria (23 November 1998), both James Blignault, a South African specialist in development economics and Barry Vorster, the executive director for economic development in the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Council, expressed their scepticism of the possible role for languages other than English in the mainstream economy of the country. Both of these economists professed themselves to be Afrikaans speakers who had always believed in the positive role for Afrikaans in the national economy. Both claimed to have come to believe with reluctance that there was for the foreseeable future, space for only English in the economy.

Blignault cited his first hand knowledge of Zulu speakers in KwaZulu-Natal whose home language prevented them from access to the job market outside of rural areas. Vorster referred to what he termed the

"contagion of the Eastern market illness" and its effect on the South African economy which is now experiencing negative growth. His argument was that in a volatile global market, South Africa needs to focus on preserving what there is and become competitive within a global market place which has space for "three languages, currently English, Spanish and French." Since in his view, English is the language of the South African economy, "we are talking one language."

Both Blignault and Vorster reflect an overwhelming pessimism about the country's economic situation. A survey of the print media over the last two weeks reveals a litany of dejected forecasts, with a noticeable absence of a positive vision.[7] Government has not been able to identify a clear vision and point the way ahead, and the private sector seems unable to do this either.

Were an emboldened government or private sector initiative able to grasp the recommendations of the LANGTAG Report regarding exploratory activities into the possible relationship between African languages and economic rejuvenation in this country, it might be possible to forge a positive vision for the future. The work of Djité and others who argue that development in Africa will not proceed without the use of African languages, not only for mainstream educational purposes but also for local and regional economic activity is particularly pertinent and needs to be seriously considered. Certainly, small-scale initiatives from the NGO sector might forge ahead but these are certainly not sufficient to bring about significant change.

In summary, then, we find ourselves in a situation where there is no significant commitment from either government or the private sector towards the functional rehabilitation of the use of African languages across every level of social activity. It is certainly absent from the upper

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[7] "Double Dose of Bad News Hits Economy: SA Heading for Official Recession after GDP Declines 2.3% in Third Quarte" (*Business Day*, 24 November 1998).
"Economy Sent Reeling as GDP Slips" (Getz in *Business Report*, 24 Nov.)
"South Africa's Economic Engine Is Beating a Little Too Slowly" (Schoch in *Business Report*, 24 November 1998).
"Recession Will Hang over SA 'Well into 1999'" (von Lieres in *Cape Times*, 2 December 1998).

levels of the political and economic discourse, and consequently there is precious little hope that a promising language in education policy will take effect. Economic issues are presently further compounding the already ambiguous position towards extending the functional use of African languages and these for the moment are possibly disguising additional political forces resistant to relinquishing the language of rule. There are two faint possibilities for optimism. The private sector may independently discover that English is not the only language of international trade, and that possibly small to medium size exporters to neighbouring countries may discover the advantage of using the languages of target markets. Alternatively, in the run-up to the next election, the major political party may just discover the importance of language to a varied electorate.

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Appendix

Education Statistics in South Africa

PASS RATES AT MATRICULATION LEVEL

year	African language speaking students	% pass rate	(Overall total plus % pass rate)
1955	595	43,5	
1976* (Soweto)	9 595	83,7	
1982	70 241	48,4	
1992	342 038	44	448 491 (56%)
1994	392 434	49	495 408 (58%)
1997			550 233 (47,4%)

(Statistics compiled from: SAIRR 101; Hartshorne 69, 72; Department of Education 1998.)

* Until 1976, African language speaking students had mother tongue instruction for 8 years. After Soweto this was reduced to 4 years with a sudden switch to English medium.