

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

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# Education Policy in South Africa: the language implications

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Language Policy interpreted through  
Curriculum

Kathleen Heugh, HSRC

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# Language in Education Policy, 14 July 1997

- The National Education Policy Act, 1996:  
Section 3(4)(m)
- The South African Schools Act, 1996:  
Section 6(1) Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy
- Proposed amendments, 2005
- Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band, 1998
- Language in Education Policy Implementation Plan, 2001
- Revised National Curriculum Statements, 2002

# The South African Schools Act, 1996

## Section 6 Language policy of public schools

- (1) ... the Minister may ... after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, determine norms and standards for language policy in public schools.
  - *Detailed in 1997 policy see 5.2.2-5.2.4– now under review [language preference not to declared with application]*
- (2) The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the Constitution, this Act and any applicable provincial law.
  - *Proposals to (de)limit power of SGBs*
- (3) No form of racial discrimination may be practised in implementing policy ...
  - *Different stakeholder positions*
- (4) A recognised Sign Language has the status of an official language for purposes of learning at a public school.
  - *Left on back burner – no action*

# Language in education policy 1997 in 2005

## Key Features:

- Promote multilingualism, development of all languages
- Home language PLUS second official language; additive bi/multi-lingual approach & models
- Support languages of religion, international trade and communication, SA Sign Language

## Systemic Planning required:

Implementation Plan 1998, 2001

- Little progress - *inequity alert*
- No implementation = same as before - possible only in Afrikaans and English – *inequity alert*
- Suggestions to reduce number of language options – *inequity alert; economic & development inertia*

# Assessment policy, Language policy Implementation and RNCS

- Uneven curricular provisions, assessment criteria and standards had to be overhauled, transformed
- discriminatory linguistic policies and practices
- Tests can thus be inclined towards both explicit and implicit forms of gatekeeping functions
- former public examinations lacked (construct) validity,
- Unpredictability of alternative assessment (McNamara 1998)
  1. Medium of instruction
  2. Language levels for FAL, SAL
- Continuous Assess:
  - Portfolios: Socio-economic variables
- GETC/FETC
  - Linguistic variables replicate *invalidity*

# Core features of L Policy reinterpreted in Curriculum Documents

- Terminology  
Slippage/Ambiguity/Misinterpretation
- Mother Tongue Medium
  - limited to Foundation Phase
- Results in Academic requirements which cannot be met
- 'Languages Learning Area ... follows ... additive or incremental approach to multilingualism....'
- '...the Foundation Phase teacher ... ensure that language is used across the curriculum'
- Additive multilingualism ... learners can then transfer these skills to their Additional language
  - Examples all early-exit MTE at @ Gr 3 for AL- speakers
- Devel. equivalent proficiencies by Gr 9
- Outdated & contradictory language learning theory [Second language acquisition]

# Carefully advanced (con)fusion of 2 incompatible language models

1. Language Education Policy Implementation Plan 2001
  2. RNCS Overview 2002
  3. RNCS First Additional Language 2002
  4. RNCS Teacher's Guide for Foundation Phase 2003
  5. Training of Intermediate Phase Curriculum advisors 2004
- Unscientific 'data'
    - many students have more than one home language – therefore additive bi-multilingual education not possible
  - Early-exit not additive – advanced
    - MTE foundation phase only
    - Maths, Science and Technology in English from Grade 4
  - 3.5 hrs of language training

# Cost-benefit implications for teacher education

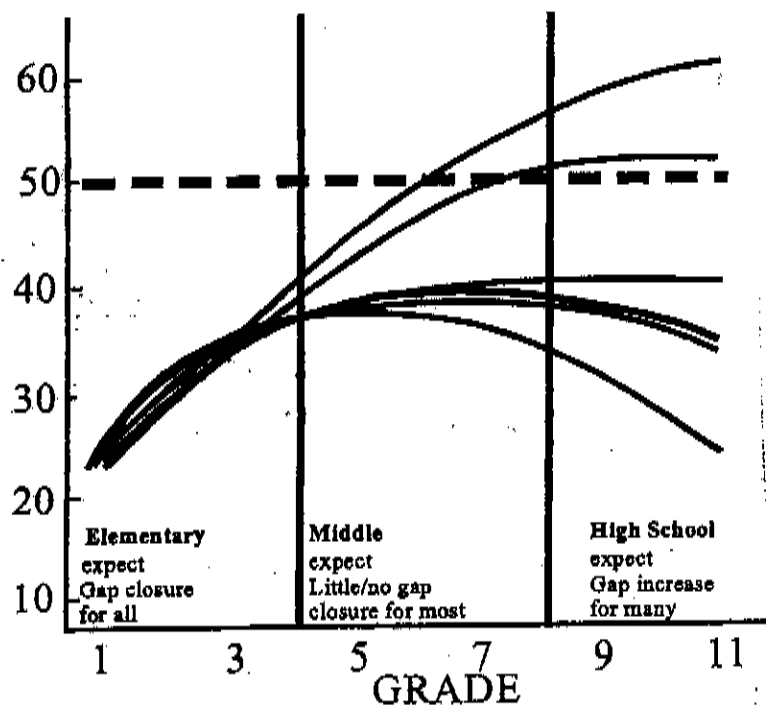
Early-exit		AL/L1 plus L2 medium		AL/L1 plus L2 subject	
100% teachers from Grade 4-12 – upgrade Eng/Fr/Port/Span proficiency		Upgrade 50% teachers E/F/P/S proficiency		Upgrade 15% of teachers E/F/P/S proficiency	
100% L2 methodology		50% teachers AL/L1 methodology + 50% L2 methodology		85% AL/L1 methodology + 15% L2 methodology	
100% teachers content upgrade		100% teachers content upgrade		100% teachers content upgrade	
Cost	Value	Cost	Value	Cost	Value
high	low	medium	high	lowest	high



# Expected Scores for L2 (Subject)- different well-resourced models by Gr 11-12

70							
60							
50							
40							
30							
20							
10							
0%							
	L2 only	L2+ L2 cont	L1-2/3yr Early-exit	Early-Exit + L2 content	L1 6/7yr Late-exit	L1 6/7yr + Dual medium	L1med + L2 subj Gr 1-12

# Projected Outcomes per language model



Dual medium- pupils from 2 language backgrounds

Dual medium – Same L1

Late-exit L1, transition to L2

Early-exit L1, transition to L2  
L2 only plus L2 content

L2 only, plus L2 pull-out

[Thomas & Collier 2001; Ramirez et all 1991;  
Bamgbose 2005, etc]

Reading scores in L2

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# Evaluation of the language in education policy for schools

- Inept/inadequate interpretation through the Implementation plan, curriculum documents
- Little actual policy implementation – convergence and implementation of policy reverse = negative backwash
- Equity in Inequity – for all linguistic groups and levels; & with negative repercussions for all sectors of society