



# **An Implementation of Subject Policy is a Key to Effective Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Siswati Language**

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this article are to set out the process and key areas for Siswati Subject Policy (SSP). Siswati is one of the languages in the Republic of South Africa that is granted the official status in terms of Section 6 of the Constitution. It is learned, taught and spoken at various provinces. The subject policy focuses on the development and management of the language from the theoretical understanding of its concepts to their practical stance. The policy is also expected to reinforce the government's responsibilities of establishing the language infrastructures, providing equitable access to it and, enhancing language participation. The language subject policy covers all aspects of micro and macro linguistics, literature and onomastics. It covers teaching and learning, research, administration and community engagement. It is, however, more specific to focus on language in society and society in language, approaches and analytic strategies of the language as well as social interaction.

**Keywords:** *Approaches and analytic strategies; equitable access; development and management; implementation process; teaching and learning.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are number of ways to look at the definition and analysis of language. Lewis and Slade [1] put forth these definitions and approaches to language:

- It is defined as system of signs for the communication of meaning. From this perspective, language is described as code or rule-governed systems of signs.
- It is a social phenomenon and is studied as a form of social interactions.

The concept 'language' describes a system of signs that is used for communication. The concept 'communication' refers to the social relationship and the way language is used to communicate and transmit meaning in society context [2].

A classroom is a special setting designed and meant for teaching and learning activities, especially during the contact hours of each working day. The head of schools and their school management teams are expected to make classifications at the beginning of each year whereby each educator is given subjects to teach. The distribution of the subjects is based on the specialised qualifications of educators. This is aimed at producing good results at the end of the year [3].

The researcher undertook this study to encourage educators teaching Siswati at secondary schools to formulate and implement subject policies. A subject policy serves as a guiding document in that subject which is binding the educators and learners together in the best interest of the subject. Readers of this research work will benefit by knowing how subject policies are drawn and implemented in the classroom. The implementation of subject policies has an impact in bringing about discipline and order in a subject. When educators consult with their learners in drawing subject policies, this is democracy in practice. With subject policies in place, Siswati educators would be able to run their lessons easily.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Huysamen [4], Kumar [5] and Creswell [6] view qualitative research as a means of exploring and understanding the procedures, data collection,

interpretation and analysis of data. It examines the relationship among the variables.

Subject teachers are expected to draw their own subject policies, supported by their respective heads departments. Subject policies are drawn with their learners at the beginning of each year and only in the class. No educator imposes a subject policy to a learner. Learners are given a chance to say how their subject should be run throughout the year with the proper guidance of their respective educators. Heads of Department support educators in the drawing and implementation of the subject policies. Siswati subject policy is implemented by educators and is placed at places where each learner can see in the classroom or put in their portfolios [3]. The classroom is sustained by creating a good spirit between educators and learners.

The Siswati educators realize that the drawing and implementing subject policy help them to unfold learner's potential such as listening skills, self-reliance and group participatory skills. It encourages the learners to work with their educators with confidence. Educators take into consideration that collective decision making and transparency are key values in their respective subject.

Education in developed countries recognizes the democratic values, such as, human rights, tolerating of other people's opinions. Their school systems are in accordance with the political systems which teach democratic values, attitude and behaviours. These include collective decision making and respecting human rights. Siswati educators, like other subject educators, are given latitudes to draw and implement subject policies that are collectively drawn with learners as potential stakeholders in the classroom. The education system teaches learners to be loyal to their educators. Siswati educators are encouraged to explore issues like indigenous and contemporary topics. Siswati educators enjoy discussing educational issues like subject policies, literature and linguistics aspects with their learners in the classroom. These encourage open discussion which gives high levels of efficiency and trust [7].

Subject policy promotes professionalism. Educators acts as professionals in their executions of their duties at school. They must advance the government priorities such as, promoting democracy at school and respecting learner's human rights. Educators are compelled to serve the interest of learners and must be their

role models. The implementation of subject policies is monitored by school management team. Subject policies are compulsory in every subject.

In South Africa, educators are regarded as managers of their respective classes and subjects. They are facilitators who play a pivotal role in successful group work, developing and implementing subject policies. Educators and learners are always linked by cooperation and feedback. Planning for subject, time table, evaluation, involvement of learners and drawing and implementation of subject policy is a role of the educator. School principals have a duty to see to it that educators have subject policies in all subjects and grades. Such policies are implemented according to their expectations. The subject policies are drawn with learners at the beginning of the year and remained accessible to all class members. The implementation of the subject policies is the responsibility of both educators and learners since it is their product.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Siswati educators in secondary schools are able to draw and implement subject policies as expected by the Department of education. Educators can be supported and assisted on how effectively they can implement the Siswati subject policy. The study is aimed at assisting educators with regard to the implementation of the subject policies in classroom. Empowering educators and learners in sharing their opinions during the drawing of the subject policies is vital.

The school management team will be able to monitor the implementations of subject policies and help to organize regular internal workshops to educators found to be experiencing problems with the implementation of the policies. Heads of departments will also help to control and support educators on the implementation of subject policy.

Van der Westhuizen [8] defines a policy as a resource by which goals are interpreted and certain broad guidelines laid down to serve as basis for decision making. It is a high level overall plan, which embraces the general goals and acceptance producers of any institution or organisation. Policy may either be made at national or provincial levels consists of a guideline to parties. Policy is, however, binding on educators as it effectively constitutes a management instruction to such officials. Policy is therefore, binding on public schools. In the

study, policy will refer to a general plan for subject activities designed to achieve subject objectives. It is also regarded as a set of rules taken by both educators and learners in the classroom [8].

Du Preez [9] regards subject policies as a means of making children citizens of that subject and classroom. As citizens, they should be encouraged to get involved in decision making and setting rules that will guide their behaviour in the subject. Consulting and involving learners in decision making helps learners to inculcate peer group culture and the subject dynamics that encourages fairness, diligence and sense of community in the classroom of Siswati. Subject policy help in developing learner's sense of responsibilities, self-control and promoting innovativeness. Clarke [10] regards subject policies as behavioural rules that govern a particular subject. They are collectively drawn by educators and learners in the classroom. In the study, subject policy will mean collectively agreed upon rules that will guide the behaviour of both educator and learners in Siswati as a subject.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review on the subject policies assists in informing the researcher on what has already been done and what is to be done to the topics being investigated or studied. It also helps the researcher to identify the existing knowledge and develop it further on the topic under study. It helps the researcher to delimit the study properly, read extensively to gather more information with regard to research topic, prevent a duplication of studies that have already been done and determine the methods strategies and techniques to be utilized in the study [11].

The researcher is interested in checking how knowledgeable educators are with regards to the drawing and implementation of subject policies in Siswati as a subject at further Education and Training level.

The implementation for subject policy in Siswati requires proper training. Training is aimed at empowering educators to know how to draw subject policies with their learners and how to monitor their implementation in the classroom. Educators could be trained through the use of internal subject workshops or through departmental subject workshops.

Educators should be trained on how to develop the subject policies using collaborative and consultive processes as, such as determining the need for subject policies, empowering subject educators, drafting of policy statements, gaining support of the policy and converting policies into practice. Training equips educators with skills to achieve the desired educational objectives.

Insufficient training on the implementation of subject policies can result in lack of knowledge and failure to implement it in the classroom. Before the educator could be called to account for failing to submit their subject policies, it should be established as to whether they were offered some trainings on how to draw them or not, if not trained, they must be given time to get trainings to enable them draw proper and practical subject policies. Training can be done at school level by the principal or organised by the Department of Education [12].

Rosnow and Rosenthal [13] attribute the proper implementation of subject policies on the attitude of educator in particular. They claim that the attitudes are the impetus that lead a person to behave in one way or the other. In this research, the researcher will check, amongst the others the educator level of role taking ability, consistency and integrity. The researcher also believes that the success of the implementation of the subject policy in Siswati depends much on the positive attitude of the educators. Lack of knowledge on professional values of subject policies, insufficient skills, fear of change, fear of being unsuccessful, concern about the job positions and spirit of resisting change, are some of challenges faced by educators in effectively developing and implementing subject policies in their subject [14].

The need for subject policy should come from the educator and learners in the classroom. Trained educators should be motivated to do differently in their respective subjects. They must take initiatives in motivating learners on the importance of the policy in their subject and the significance of their participation in the drawing of the policy. A subject policy initiated by both educators and learners is effectively implemented in the classroom since it is a collective instrument to smooth run the subject. Learner's inputs in the drawing process should be considered by the subject teacher for the sake of co-ownership [12].

When drawing the subject policy, Kruger and Van Schalkwyk [15] recommend that educators must

study the provincial and school policy in the classroom practices, review present practice in the classroom, set aside one period formulating the subject policy which will establish principle conduct. The policy should also indicate responsibilities for both educators and learners. The last step is that of putting the policy into practice.

When drawing the Siswati subject policy, subject educators must ensure that the statements are concise, unambiguous and are linked to identifiable practice. Statements should be grouped logically and accordingly. For an example, statements dealing with order in the classroom and those dealing with written works should be clearly separated and clarified by the educator. Siswati educators must make sure that each point is adequately addressing the question. The educators and learners may agree to draw two or more alternative policies to stimulate discussion and to ensure that the final adopted policy is indeed a result from active consultation [15].

Educators and learners should be able to use the following facts to check the credibility of the drawn subject policy:

- The policy statement addresses the needs of the learner.
- The statement gives a clear message.
- The language used in the statement is easy and clear to be understood
- The statement covers all important subject needs.
- There are documents or resources needed to help to understand the policy better or implement it effectively.
- The policy will benefit learners.

Educators are encouraged to use consultative and collectivism as tools to be much closer with their learners. It is aimed at checking areas where educators need support for the development and implementation of the subject policies [8].

### **3.1 The Function of the Teacher in Planning and Providing Support**

In order to provide the support in teaching fraternity, proper planning is needed. The following aspects with regards to the competence of teachers should be considered:

- ability to plan and document their plans

- competency in subject matter relevant to the Siswati language
  - ability to use a range of teaching and learning strategies, methods, approaches and styles
  - ability to find authentic resources to aid teaching and learning
  - ability to manage the classroom and learning environment in instructional leadership and control
  - effectiveness in recording and reporting assessment
  - ability to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching
- Ensure readiness for the previously marginalized official indigenous languages.
  - Initiate and sustain a vibrant discourse on multilingualism with all language communities.
  - Encourage the learning of the official indigenous language to promote national unity and linguistic and cultural diversity
  - Promote good language management for efficient public service administration to meet client experience and needs.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The background on policy issues reflects the beginning of democracy. According to the Constitution adopted on May 1996 and amended on the 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly Section 6(1) stipulates that the official languages of the Republic of South Africa are as follows: Sepedi, Siswati, Sesotho, Setswana, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiZulu and Tshivenda. These official languages in education system bring in teaching and learning as applied into different learning programmes to date. Moreover, all the languages are treated with respect and it is encouraged that learning of more than one language should be the general practice and principle in the society [16]. Most of the authors and researchers have been focusing on the historical use of languages during the apartheid era and other issues related to education and very little has been said on the analysis and evaluation of the use and status of official languages as stated in the Language Policy in Education.

The study will focus on the factors that derailed effective implementation of the Language Policy in the Education system and other related situation is an attempt to add new dimensions which have never been analysed before. It shall also evaluate the use and the status of the primary language in comparison to use and status in the past.

The aims of the Language Policy, are regarded as government's goals for economic, socio-political and educational growth:

- Promote the equitable use of the 11 official languages
- Facilitate equitable access to government services, knowledge and information.

The document defines marginalized language as any official language that is excluded from official use or which its use is discouraged in formal setting. The word marginalized usually implies the low status of the language and possibly the speakers. For example, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Siswati and isiNdebele are regarded as marginalized languages in South Africa.

Language is a tool for communication. It is through language that cultural diversity and social interaction are expressed and constructed. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to think and acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and thought to interact with others and to manage their world. Language proficiency is central to learning across the curriculum as learning takes place through language.

The Department of Education's Language in Education Policy promotes additive multilingualism. This means that learners must learn additional languages at the same time as maintaining and developing their home languages at a high level. Additive multilingualism makes it possible for learners to acquire skills such as reading, writing and speaking in the language in which they are most proficient. They are then able to transfer these skills to additional languages.

The language curriculum aims to raise awareness of the positive value of cultural, linguistic diversity and fosters respect for language and cultures of other people. Learners are encouraged to be sensitive to issues of diversity such as culture, ethnic, racial, class and gender. They are encouraged to challenge bias, stereotypes and discrimination found in any texts.

Learners are given the opportunity to learn languages as home languages or first additional language and second additional languages because learning languages other than their

home languages teaches them to respect languages and cultures of other people and to be able to participate in their communities and the world at large.

The curriculum for languages exposes learners to the opportunities of studying literature, experiences and issues from different perspectives. The curriculum encourages learners to know and to use the technology such as the use of electronic media. By using technologies in the language classroom, teachers can better prepare learners for the kinds of international cross-cultural interactions which are increasingly required for success in academic, vocational or personal life.

The knowledge of country, provincial, institutions language policies will serve as a point departure for the subject's policies. Siswati subject policy needs to be formulated after careful study of other policies.

However, to date, the language policy in education seems not to be successfully implemented. More than two decades being the new language in Education policy on paper, this policy has not yet been systematically implemented and the necessary material have also not been created and published in African languages.

What is actual taking place now is that most schools continue with the prior education system and as a result the African languages are still marginalized on the land of their birth. What is written on paper does not necessarily have results in practice, but there is evidence of mismatch between South Africans multilingual language policies on the one hand and the language practices on the other hand. English language remains the language of teaching and learning. Given the current state of affairs regarding the language practices, it is uncertain on whether the transformation of the language practices and language policies in South Africa are addressing the gaps created by the policies of the apartheid eras.

## 5. CONCLUSION

During the discussions of Siswati subject policy formulation, there are guidelines for compilation of orals and continuous assessment (CASS) marks that need an intensive interrogation. It is compulsory that each educator attends and fully participate during policy workshops for

successful classroom management. The subject policy needs to be systematically implemented and the material be available in targeted language. It is a source of effective teaching and learning.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that subject language policy needs to be drawn before the actual teaching and learning activities take place. It must be drawn after a thorough scrutiny of other institutions' language policies. It is significant that it entails all subject needs such as models for implementing co-operative learning, methods, tools and techniques of assessment tasks. Trainings on subject language policy need to highlight most aspects of planning and management at these three levels: macro, meso and micro planning.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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