

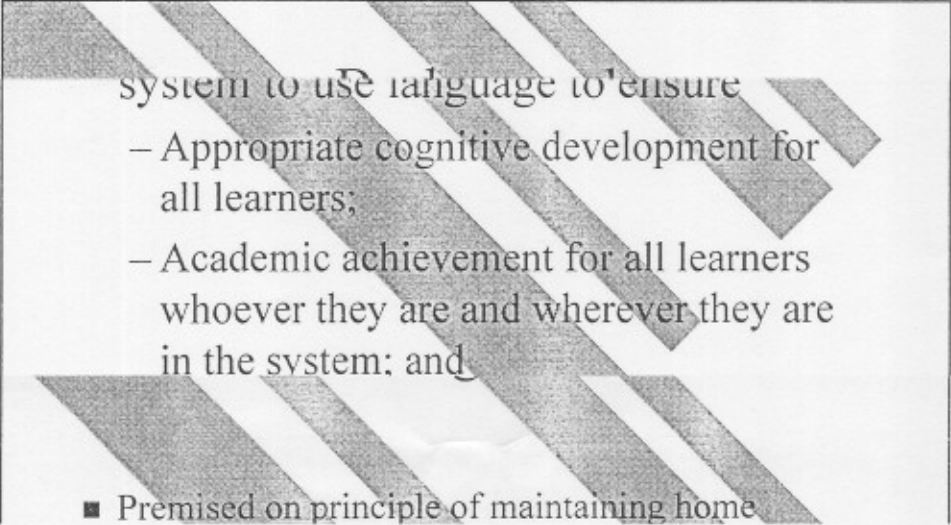
Language Policy in Education

*Presentation to Education Portfolio
Committee*

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Background

- LiEP (read together with the Norms and Standards for language policy in public schools) part of the national plan to
 - Promote multilingualism;
 - Develop all of South Africa's official languages; and
 - Ensure respect for all languages used in the country.



system to use language to ensure

- Appropriate cognitive development for all learners;
- Academic achievement for all learners whoever they are and wherever they are in the system; and

■ Premised on principle of maintaining home

Key principles for implementation

- Learner chooses language of teaching upon application for admission;
- School Governing body required to determine school's language policy and state how it will promote multilingualism;
- Languages as subjects: a) at least one approved language in Grade 1 and 2; b) Offer LOLT and at least one additional approved language as subjects after Grade 3; c) From Grade 10 – 12, at least 2 languages: one as home language and the other as first additional language.

can't be refused for language

lang. of learning & teaching

From the national vision to the classroom

- What do schools understand by the LiEP?
- How has it impacted on practice at school level and in the classroom?
- What makes it possible (or militates against) the policy being implemented as intended?

1. Understanding the policy

- Understood largely in relation to the determination of Language of Learning and Teaching by both schools and officials – very limited reflection on the broader intentions of the policy;
- Dominant view amongst teachers and parents (spoken and unspoken) is that English is the key to a better life and the sooner children are taught in English the better; and
- Many schools feel they are already implementing the language policy as intended and therefore do not need to change anything at their school.

ie. how does it influence cognitive development

2. The policy in schools

- Contextual factors a huge determinant in the uptake of the LiEP.
- In majority of monolingual schools in townships, rural communities and farms – status quo remains. Mother tongue used in first three to four grades and then transition to a LOLT, different from the home language;
- English gaining dominance as a LOI.T (across all schools) being introduced even earlier than before, but in some instances (in Limpopo, for example) English as a medium of learning now used from as early as Grade R.
- English as a subject being introduced as early as Grade 1 and sometimes in Grade R.

ie Limpopo

you need to get literacy in home-language before moving on to new language

The policy in schools

- Very few schools with own policies beyond determining the LOLT of the school, however
- Most schools that have had to admit learners from different backgrounds engaging more with LiEP issues even where there is no formally adopted language policy at the school;
- More affluent schools more inclined to have formally adopted language policies
- Limited evidence of strengthening of indigenous languages although growing evidence of their use across schools to help children understand what is being taught.

Challenges to implementation

- Genuine lack of understanding of policy intentions; *not malice*
- Attitudes of both teachers and parents:
 - View of education in home language as inferior persists;
 - Belief that there is a limited role for Indigenous languages in a developing SA;
 - Limitations of indigenous languages as languages of learning ingrained.
- No real support to schools for the implementation. The LiEP largely remains at the level of intention and at worst, rhetoric;
- Innovation at primary level not matched by similar readiness to strengthen indigenous languages in High Schools.

they think just picking language is enough

The pedagogical case

- Both national, regional and international studies draw a direct link between language of learning and academic achievement (recent Systemic Evaluation achievement in LOLT at 38%, with 6 out of 10 learners not achieving; the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality II study of 14 southern African countries (2002) – only 14,6% had reached required level of literacy at grade 6;
- Achievement in Mathematics and Science in Systemic Evaluations both at Grade 3 and 6, as well as in the TIMMS study equally low.

The pedagogical case

- “Language is not everything but without language everything is nothing”.

Ekkehard Wolff (2006)

Re-stating the DoE's intention's captured through the LiEP

- At the center is the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue whilst having access to a global language, i.e. English;
- Supports the maintenance of home languages through additive bilingual curriculum delivery;
- Encourages research to inform policy and practice e.g current teaching of English in SA schools informed by international research on ESD teaching which not necessarily speaks to a L2 as a LOLT (learners in Grade 3 with 500 – 600 words instead of between 5 000 and 7 000 required across the curriculum.)

O = English as a 2nd language

Conclusion

- LiEP presents a genuine opportunity to change practice in schools for the better and DoE will focus on strengthening its implementation and supporting innovation and research ;
- There may be gaps in the policy but biggest challenge is in making it work and strengthening teaching of languages overall;
- Weak implementation as well as a lack of understanding of the underlying principles leading to a widening of gap in academic achievement between the predominantly better off and better resourced, and the historically under resourced.