

## **Managing Instructional Challenges: Strategies Employed By Teachers in Supporting Multilingual Primary School Learners in South Africa**

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### **ABSTRACT**

We investigated strategies employed by teachers in supporting non-isiXhosa speaking primary school learners in South Africa's Mthatha district. IsiXhosa is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in the schools. This qualitative study adopted a case study design. Data were collected from seven purposively sampled teachers using face-to-face tape recorded interviews. Data were thematically analysed. Results revealed that teachers employed the generic teaching strategies mainly grouping and code-switching. Barriers militating against effective learning and teaching included: using isiXhosa, learner absenteeism and indiscipline, and limited parental involvement. We implore teachers to use multi-pronged teaching strategies in linguistically diverse classrooms alongside implementing the national language policy.

**Keywords:** Teaching Strategies, Code Switching, Multilingual, Primary Schools, Teacher, isiXhosa. South Africa.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching young learners such as non-mother-tongue speakers from diverse backgrounds is a daunting task requiring a lot preparation from the teacher. In trying to meet the needs of all learners in classrooms, teachers need to explore several teaching strategies. This could assist them overcome challenges such as language usage, absenteeism and indiscipline. This study sought to investigate strategies employed by teachers in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners in primary schools of the Mthatha Education District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The Constitution of the Government of South Africa (1996) recognises isiXhosa as one of the several official languages and implores the inhabitants to raise the profile or status of indigenous languages. According to the South African Department of Education (2002), the importance of the mother-tongue as a language of instruction was assumed to enhance learning. In the light of this benefit, the teaching of learners using their learners' mother-tongue/home language in primary schools (Magwa, 2010; Phiri, Kagunda and Mabhena, 2013) could develop and provide

a sound base for learning additional languages. The South African Department of Education (DoE) (2002) recommended that the learners' mother-tongue/home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible. Heugh (2001) opined that the Language in Education Policy required capacity, competence and support. This implies that, for a language to be taught effectively, teachers should have the capacity to teach it, and should have adequate policy support.

Magwa (2010) bemoans the lack of language policies in most African countries. Fortunately in South Africa, The Constitution recognises ten Indigenous African languages as official. More so, provinces are empowered to promulgate and regulate language related polices. The Department of Education (DoE, South Africa) still needs a language policy implementation plan aimed at promoting additive multilingualism. In practice, learners are encouraged to learn additional languages while, concomitantly maintaining and developing their home languages. Maintaining their home language could enable them to transfer the language skills to their additional language (Constitution of South Africa, 1996; Western Cape DoE, 2001). The primary challenge of the South African language policy however, remains in its implementation in the education sector. The Language-in-Education Policy (Government of South Africa 1997) gave the right to each learner to seek instruction in his or

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her mother-tongue, where this was feasible. Evidence on the ground suggests that this practice though enshrined in the Language in Education Policy (South African Government 1997), does not seem to be observed by all South African schools. The challenge lies at the implementation stage where there is no uniform practice. Foley (2002) confirms that some institutions do not use learners' mother tongue as the language of teaching and learning because of complexities associated with multilingualism.

### Theoretical Background

Instructional methods are the ways that information are presented to learners to achieve specific educational goals (Cruz, 2013; Dhillon and Wanjiru, 2013; Phiri, Kagunda, and Mabhena. 2013). They are the methods that allow learners access to information during teaching. Such methods fall into two categories mainly: teacher-centered approaches and learner-centered approaches. Literature shows that there is no one best approach to instruction (Shuell 1996; Komachali and Khodareza, 2012; Clarke, 2013; Guvender, 2013; Yangin and Sidekli, 2013). In teaching and learning sessions, some goals are better suited to teacher-centered approaches while others clearly needed learner-centered approaches. Some writers condemn the use of teacher-centered approaches (Stoddard, Connell, Stofflett and Peck, 1993). Teacher-centered instruction has been criticised as ineffective and grounded in behaviourism (Stoddard et al 1993), though it can be delivered effectively (Eggen and Kauchak, 2001).

The understanding of learners varies and can be enhanced and sustained by teachers. This is because they learn in three main ways namely: visually, auditory and kinesthetically (Frankel, 2009). Visual learners learn by looking at, or seeing something. In this regard, vocabulary flash cards (Komachali and Khodareza, 2012) for instance, were found to be effective. Auditory learners learn by hearing it or being told about it. Kinesthetic learners learn by actually doing/experiencing something. It is important to make sure that one's teaching strategies include all types of learners. Researchers seem to agree that not all learners learn alike (Komachali and Khodareza, 2012; Hussein, 2013). Based on this knowledge, differentiated teaching strategies are essential in ensuring that all learners are taken care of. Tomlinson (2001) argued that a differentiated instruction approach is critical to teaching and learning as it gives learners

multiple options for taking information and making sense of ideas. According to Tomlinson (2001), differentiated instruction is a teaching theory based on the notion that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse learners in classrooms. To differentiate instruction was to recognise learners' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests; and to react responsively. Such a differentiated instruction to teaching and learning enables learners with differing abilities to co-exist in the same class (Tomlinson, 2001).

The intent of differentiating instruction encapsulates each learner's growth and success by meeting individual needs in the learning process. The point is, teachers should not rely on one teaching strategy since learners have different learning styles. An understanding of, and implementation of many teaching strategies in linguistically diverse classrooms improves teaching and learning especially since each learner has a preferred way of learning.

In selecting teaching methods, teachers need not consider only the ability of the group and stage of development of the majority of learners, but also their experience, interests, language and background knowledge (Dean, 1994; Hussein, 2013). With regard to what could be considered by teachers in selecting teaching methods for their classes, Gravett and Geyser (2004) concurred with Dean (1994). They suggest the following aspects:

- (a) Learning as an active process in which the learners should be involved.
- (b) More effective learning if the learner is actively involved and understands what must be learned.
- (c) Individual differences regarding objectives, values, beliefs and motives that influence learning.
- (d) Immediate reinforcement in promoting learning.
- (e) A variety of learning experiences offered to the learner.

Teachers are therefore, at liberty to select various teaching strategies based on their training, experiences and situational circumstances. Gravett and Geyser (2004) and Phiri, Kagunda and Mabhena. (2013) state that a variety of teaching strategies are essential to give all learners equal opportunities to learn and demonstrate their learning. As such, there are various teaching strategies that could benefit learners in multilingual classrooms.

Schreiner (2010) identified differentiated instruction

as a method of helping more learners in diverse classroom settings for experiential success. A Malaysian study by Ahmad (2009) found that teachers employed code switching as a means of providing learners with the opportunities to communicate and enhance learners' understanding of concepts. South African studies (Setati and Adler, 2000; Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo, 2002 and Uys, 2010), considered code switching as a tool that could provide spontaneous and reactive discussion of concepts by learners and teachers in their main language. This implies that learners are afforded an opportunity to grasp concepts. De Witt and Stocksdieck (2008) affirmed that taking learners outside of their traditional classroom for educational purposes offered a wide range of powerful learning outcomes. This implies that real life experiences and simulations could assist the linguistically diverse learners.

As noted by Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg (2004), effective teaching and learning is compromised where learners do not speak the language of instruction. A study by Brice and Roseberry-McKibbin (1999) investigated the impact of team teaching to English language learners with language learning disabilities. The results of their study indicated that involving specialists on the basis of learner's impairment was an effective way of improving learning. Their findings also showed that the involvement of the relevant personnel could enhance the learning of learners. Such involvement could entail team teaching in partnership with relevant physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and language therapists to improve learning. Bruffee (1993) viewed such cooperative learning as enhancing social interactions. Bruffee (1993) demonstrated that when cooperative learning was used as a teaching strategy, learners were stimulated to learn.

Active learning is another strategy that teachers can use to enhance learning. It is the process through which the learner is involved in his/her learning. Faust and Paulson (1998:4) say it is

“any learning activity thing engaged by students in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture... This includes everything from listening practices, which help the students to absorb what they hear, to short writing exercises in which students react to lecture material, to complex group exercises where students apply course material to "real life" situations and/or to new problems”.

On the other hand, active learning is described by

Meyers and Jones (1993) as a teaching strategy that enables learners to talk and listen, read and write. It appears that employing active learning as a teaching strategy could be effective as learners' listening skills could be enhanced. Training learners to listen and reflect could improve their learning. This implies that learners are actively involved if they are afforded an opportunity to listen and reflect.

With respect to the discussion method, Larson (2000), opines that it involves structured conversation among people, particularly learners. Larson (2000) argued that in the discussion method, people are afforded an opportunity to present, evaluate understand similar and different views about the topic of a lesson. Many educational outcomes were attained when teachers employed the discussion method compared to the traditional lecture method (Garside, 1996). The discussion method enables the linguistically diverse learners to share views and problem solving skills and school related matters. This means that when learners are provided with an opportunity to share their views and skills of solving problems, learning could be improved. Townsend's (1993) study showed that the learners have a propensity to elaborate comments fully to their peers than to the teacher.

A deeper and fairly challenging strategy is presenting case scenarios to the learners. Lorri (2009) suggested that case studies were useful as a teaching strategy especially when applied to diverse learners, who, when presented with real-life problems managed to apply classroom knowledge to real life situations. In all cases, learners become active in the teaching and learning sessions.

### **Goals of the Study**

The study sought to investigate strategies employed by teachers to support the non-isiXhosa speaking learners in South Africa's Mthatha district primary schools. The following questions guided the study:

- (i) What strategies are employed by Mthatha primary school teachers to support the non-isiXhosa speaking learners?
- (ii) What challenges do Mthatha primary school teachers face in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners?
- (iii) How do Mthatha primary school teachers overcome the challenges they face in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners?

### Experimental Procedure

The researchers adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy development, improvement of educational practice, illumination of social issues, and action stimulus (McMillan and Schumacher 2014). The researchers chose qualitative research design as an attempt to delve deeper into issues meant to improve educational practices in schools.

### Participants and Setting

In McMillan and Schumacher's (2014) view, a sample refers to individuals who voluntarily participate in an investigation, and from whom the data are collected. Seven teachers drawn from one conveniently selected Mthatha district primary school constituted the sample. The seven teachers were conveniently selected on the basis of their vast teaching experience. Of these, six were females teaching between grades 1 and grade 6. The remaining one, a male, and principal was responsible for teaching Language and Life Orientation subjects from grade 7 to 9. It was hoped and assumed that this representative sample would enable the researchers to unravel details about the study area.

### Instrument

The researchers used structured interviews to gather the data from each member constituting the sample. These face-to-face interviews were tape recorded. An interview schedule or guide with questions aligned to the research questions was used to solicit answers from the participants.

### Procedure for data collection

Initially, the researchers sought permission to conduct the study from the Eastern Cape Province's Department of Education. This was after the researchers had secured ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare. The researchers sought the participation of the teachers and school principal of the study school through a consent letter requesting them to participate in the study. The participants were also provided with informed consent forms from the University of Fort Hare. They duly completed, signed and surrendered these to the principal researcher. The participants were assured that their teaching time would not be disrupted and that pseudonyms were to be used to protect their identities. The interviews were tape recorded and conducted in English. Each session lasted 20 minutes per interviewee. This enabled the principal researcher to playback the captured data for transcription and authentication.

### Result

#### Instructional Strategies Employed By Mthatha Primary School Teachers

The participants were asked to divulge the strategies that they employed in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners in their classrooms. Five themes emerged from the responses provided by teachers who participated in the study. These themes were as follows: grouping of non-isiXhosa speaking learners, story-telling, teaching aids, homework, code switching and parental involvement.

#### Grouping of non-isiXhosa learners

Three (3) out of the seven (7) respondents indicated that they group the non-isiXhosa speaking learners with isiXhosa learners during teaching and learning sessions. One of the respondents (P1) declared that the grouping of non-isiXhosa and isiXhosa speaking learners enables the different to interact and learn from one another. When the researcher asked respondent P1 about the strategies she employed when teaching in her classroom she stated, "*I group the isiXhosa learners with non-isiXhosa learners so that they can learn from each other.*" Respondents P2 and P5 concurred. Respondent P5 argued that she mixed the non-isiXhosa speaking learners with isiXhosa speaking learners arguing that she has big numbers in her class. She put it in this way: "*I have this big number of learners in my class.*" All supported the notion of grouping of learners as working for them and the learners.

#### Story-telling

One of the respondents indicated that she used story-telling as teaching strategy. She put it in this way, "*I do stories to make them understand.*" National Story telling Network (2006) revealed that story-telling was an interactive art of conveying words, images, sounds and actions while encouraging the listeners imagination ,and instilling knowledge and oral values. Arthur, Grainger and Wray (2009) were of the opinion that through using stories, a community of inquiry in the classroom is created.

#### Using teaching aids

It was divulged by the three interviewees that they used 'flash cards' when teaching in a diverse multilingual classrooms. Respondents P2, P4, and P5 supported the use of teaching aids as the strategy that is vital for diverse learners. The following data confirm their submission:

Respondent P2 "*I use flash cards.*"

Respondent P4 "*I use visual aids.*"

Respondent P5, *“I use flash cards.”*

These interviewees showed that they use teaching aids as a teaching strategy to support the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. They based their logic on their teaching experience and qualifications. Such attributes motivated them to consider the use of teaching aids as one of the teaching strategies that could assist non-isiXhosa speaking learners. Data at our disposal confirmed that the participants have Honours degrees in Education. We therefore assumed that they were in better position to utilise the teaching aids than those without such literacy levels.

#### ***Giving homework to learners***

Two of the seven respondents advanced the argument that homework played a crucial role in the teaching and learning of linguistically diverse classrooms. Respondent P6 indicated that, *“learners go home with vowels, and consonants to build up words.”* On the other hand, respondent P5 answered in this fashion, *“learners go home with vowels and consonants to build words in isiXhosa language.”* Based on other data related to this theme, learners seemed to be lazy in doing their homework.

#### ***Code switching***

The data indicated that one of the interviewed teachers (P2) cited code switching as a teaching strategy she uses to support the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. She said that code switching was an effective teaching strategy for a multilingual classroom. Respondent P2 said, *“I consider their previous knowledge by code-switching.”*

#### ***Parental involvement***

Parental involvement was cited by Respondent P1 as teaching strategy that was assisting her in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. Respondent P1 said, *“I ask their parents to assist them.”* Arthur, et al. (2009) argued that home is crucial in enhancing the learners' knowledge. A study by Epstein et al (2002), showed parental involvement as playing a crucial role in children's academic progress.

#### **Challenges faced by Mthatha teachers in supporting non-isiXhosa learners**

Sub-question 2 probed the respondents' regarding the challenges encountered when teaching in “multilingually diverse” classroom. It emerged from our research that teachers are faced with numerous challenges in dealing with these culturally diverse classes. The language of

teaching and learning was cited as a challenge that impacted negatively on instruction. Respondent P1 submitted, *“They do not understand the language and you have to go back to their level by means of code-switching.”* Respondent P2 answered, *“Some learners have problems in grasping some concepts.”* Respondent P3 replied, *“There are spelling problems”*. Respondent P4 replied, *“They have problems in pronouncing the click sounds (‘q’ and ‘k’)”*. The three teachers agreed that it became the teacher's challenge managing and working with them.

Furthermore, the preceding challenge was exacerbated in that the non-isiXhosa speaking learners had a tendency of bunking school lessons. They lost on teaching and learning time. Respondent P5 indicated that the bunking of school lessons by learners was a challenge confronting their school. She eloquently put it. *“One of the challenges in rural areas is absenteeism.”* Such a practice militates against academic success (Rothman, 2001). Indiscipline amongst some non-isiXhosa speaking learners was also cited as a challenge that hindered teachers from supporting them. Learner indiscipline manifested itself in several ways. Respondent P6 commented that, *“They want to stay alone. They do not mix with isiXhosa speaking learners. They think that they are better. Their behaviour is bad not like isiXhosa speaking learners.”* Respondents P3 and P7 added by concurring that, *“The learners do not do their homework.”* Most respondents concurred that indiscipline existed amongst the non-isiXhosa speaking learners is common. The relationships between learners and attendant social behaviours have a major impact on how well learners learn the isiXhosa language and how well all learners learn other subjects. It is in that regard that Peterson and Skiba (2001) opined that efficient and effective learning are influenced by positive learner's behaviour.

#### **Managing Instructional Challenges**

The third research question explored Mthatha teachers' responses to the above cited challenges. We sought to investigate if some systems were in place to counter the challenges they experience in a diverse classroom. Respondent P5 indicated that she groups (mixes) the non-isiXhosa speaking learners with isiXhosa speaking learners. She stated, *“I group the isiXhosa learners with non-isiXhosa learners so that they can learn from each other.”* Three of the seven participants claimed that they involved parents. Respondent P5

answered, *“They go home with these vowels to build some words.”* Respondents P2 and P5 concurred that homework were fruitful in overcoming the challenges faced by teachers in multilingual classrooms. Respondent P2 replied, *“I give them homework.”*

It was disclosed by respondent P6 that the School Management Teams (SMTs) are involved in addressing the challenges experienced by teachers in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. Respondent P6 replied, *“I communicate the problem with the SMT.”* In the current study, a member of the SMTs was included specifically to tap into his experiences regarding the existence of non-isiXhosa speaking learners in classrooms (data not reported herein). We sought his opinion regarding teachers’ involvement in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. A critical strategy was reported by respondent P4 who submitted that she extends instructional time and did individualisation. She put it in this way, *“I extend time and do individualisation.”* Another respondent also showed the commitment of teachers when she argued that they conducted peer teaching and extra classes. Respondent P1 replied, *“We have some time after school, so we teach them after school. We give more time to the non-isiXhosa learners.”* Participant P3 similarly said, *“I try to make them understand the click sounds. I extend time and do individualisation.”* The responses of the three demonstrated their dedication and commitment by ensuring that the non-isiXhosa speaking learners’ get specialised tuition in multilingual contexts.

Tapping from the experiences of colleagues, more than attending staff development workshops was cited as a useful strategy also. Asked if workshops assisted her in managing the instructional process, respondent P6 said *“Not specifically. I have 25 years of teaching experience in predominantly non-English speaking area. I attended many workshops; I draw on from the experience of colleagues.”* Her response suggests that she never attended workshops that empowered her with necessary support to overcome challenges experienced in multilingual classroom. Instead, the support of colleagues was profound in that regard. In buttressing her view, the respondent argued that, *“as a teacher, you need to improvise, seek advice from other teachers. Support is limited due to lack of funds to purchase teaching and learning aids required to assist learners.”* A fourth respondent P4 boasted that *“My school is good in teamwork. They allow you to do whatever you want to*

*introduce to the school as far as it is good for the learners at school.”* A collegial approach was found to be useful in this regard.

## Discussion

Teachers in the Mthatha district of South Africa adopted several strategies in managing instruction in multilingual contexts. From the preceding data, it was deduced that teachers initially grouped (mixed) non-isiXhosa speaking learners with isiXhosa speaking learners during teaching and learning sessions. The data that showed that non-isiXhosa speaking learners and isiXhosa speaking learners are grouped together particularly by qualified female teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience. The grouping of the non-isiXhosa speaking learners with isiXhosa speaking learners during teaching and learning sessions in the respondents’ classrooms was vital in achieving educational goals. The grouping of learners on the basis of different language backgrounds presented an opportunity to learners to get to know each other and to establish common ground, share common problems and common feelings. By grouping linguistically diverse learners the educational goals from Grade 1 to 6 of being able to write, read and count were realised. Killen (2009) and Kelly (2009) concurred when they opined that mixing groups on the basis of their different language background tended to generate wide viewpoints and ideas. Killen (2009) added that the grouping of learners could improve the learners’ oral communication skills and enabled learners to master the subject matter.

Story telling was a critical strategy employed by one of the respondents. Through it, learners would get an opportunity to use critical thinking. Koppett and Richter (2000) believed that storytelling enhanced and developed critical thinking and judgement in learners. Gargiulo (2006) posited that stories are the most efficient way of storing, retrieving and conveying information. Using teaching media (aids) was also submitted as a strategy used in the instructional mileau. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) argued that teaching aids played an important role in facilitating the learner’s learning abilities. Sadker and Zitlerman (2007) showed that fifty percent (50%) of learner population learnt best by seeing information. Sadker and Zitlerman (2007) further affirmed that empiricism holds that sensory experience is the source of knowledge. Using teaching aids were also useful as words alone could not convey message (Meier

and Van Wyk 2006). In the same vein, Komachali and Khodareza (2012) saw vocabulary flash cards as cementing vocabulary knowledge in learners through visual perception.

Giving learners some homework was also cited by the respondents. The usefulness of this strategy was dependent on the cooperation between the school and the home (parents). It could be assumed that the use of homework was positively associated with teachers' teaching experience, age and qualification. Such characteristics helped cement positive outcomes in the non-isiXhosa speaking learners in coping with learning and teaching. Jayanthi et al (1997) posited that homework was widely recognized as important in academic success. It was further expressed that teachers have long used homework to provide additional learning time, informing parents of their children's progress, strengthening study and organisational skills of learners (Jayanthi, et al., 1997).

Regarding code switching, a respondent confirmed its use in managing instruction. Cole (1998), Setati and Adler (2000), Setati et al. (2002) and Uys (2010) views on code switching as useful in directing learners' attention to new knowledge by making use of native tongue such as isiXhosa is thus confirmed. It was Setati et al (2002), that viewed code switching as a tool that provided spontaneous and reactive discussion of concepts by learners and teachers in their main language such as isiXhosa in our case. This implies that when learners are taught in their local language or mother tongue, their learning abilities and academic achievement are enhanced. These 'hybrid learning experiences' (Cruz, 2013) provided for a rich learning experience. A study by Carpenter (2006) suggested that teaching strategies should be mixed to accommodate the learning differences among learners. This implies that learners are afforded an opportunity to grasp concepts through sense perception.

The study also showed that the respondents faced challenges in supporting the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. The respondents reported that non-isiXhosa speaking learners were struggling to understand teaching conducted in a language that was not their mother tongue. The interviewees claimed that the non-isiXhosa speaking learners had continued word/spelling problems when isiXhosa was used as a medium of instruction. The South African language policy provides for the teaching of learners in their mother tongue during their formative school years. The multilingual nature of some classrooms

compromises the intents of the policy. Our study confirms Lemmer, Meier and Van Wyk (2006), Hussein (2013) and Phiri, Kagunda and Mabhena (2013) observations that teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching and managing learners of unfamiliar languages, cultures and background. To manage this aspect, Phiri, Kagunda and Mabhena (2013) recommended the adoption of a model and policy that fostered multilingual competencies and achievement. Magwa (2010) called for the promulgation and adoption of an Integrated Multilingual Policy [IMP] that place indigenous languages at the centre of the development agenda, and that give the people a clear identity. Such an identity is somewhat blurred in the Mthatha area. Other cited problems pertained to learner absenteeism and indiscipline. Perhaps, absenteeism stemmed from the frustration that goes with the failure to master the language of instruction and that/those of classmates. These challenges impacted on language concept acquisition.

In addressing the identified challenges the respondents recognised the limited strategies at their disposal. Such measures did not adequately curb the challenges experienced by them in teaching and learning of a diverse classroom. The measures included giving homework and involving SMT members in the learning of learners. The SMT addresses both instructional and administrative issues in schools in liaison with the school principals and teachers. Other respondents indicated that they tapped on the experiences of the experienced staff members. These were said to offer useful instructional strategies. This last strategy seems to suggest that there are no formal and collectively agreed systems in place to support the teachers in diverse classroom regarding managing multilingual teaching challenges.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the foregoing, we concluded South African primary school teachers adopted several strategies in managing the teaching of multilingual learners. They mixed (grouped) linguistically diverse learners so that the latter could learn from the symbiosis. Other teachers used teaching techniques such as storytelling and flash cards to improve the grammar of the learners. Code switching was also useful. For effective teaching and learning to occur in classrooms, usage of a variety of teaching strategies could enhance learning. Secondly, our study unraveled some challenges

encountered by teachers. Chief among these was the language of instruction that was found to present challenges to the learners (e.g. spelling errors). Absenteeism and indiscipline were also cited as challenges faced by the teachers. Finally, our study showed that teachers were not formally supported to deal with multilingual classes. The teachers employed their own survival tactics such as giving homework and asking for advice from experienced colleagues. Other teachers utilised School Management Teams by way of seeking for advice.

### Recommendations

In this section, the recommendations are discussed in light of the findings that emerged from the research questions.

One of the questions sought to determine the strategies used by teachers to support the non-isiXhosa speaking learners. The data showed that there were fewer teaching strategies that are used by the respondents. These 'home grown' (self-initiated) strategies call for a more formal approach to tackling this aspect. The study recommends that teachers should be taken to workshops that would empower them with how to implement the variety of teaching strategies, teaching aids and assessment strategies to diverse linguistically classrooms. We recommend that teachers be engaged in an on-going formal training to meet the technological and educational challenges presented by linguistically diverse learners. A joint effort by the stakeholders of education i.e.

Department of Education(DoE), teachers, Non-governmental organisations and parents should work hand in hand in empowering teachers with skills to handle diverse linguistically classrooms.

Schools should strengthen their management policies that address absenteeism and indiscipline among learners and teachers. Disciplinary committees should ensure that the school policy pertaining to absenteeism and indiscipline is observed to curtail possible and attendant challenges. Teachers should commit themselves to providing instructional support to the slow but progressing learners by investing extra hours of individualised attention. We strongly recommend the using of code switching in managing instructional processes since most studies show its efficacy in language and concept mastery. This implies that teachers should be flexible in the use of a medium of instruction that ensures that quality teaching is achievable. Parents should be actively involved in their children's education because education is a societal matter that calls for a collective approach if learners are to benefit academically. Finally, we challenge teachers to master the home language\ of their learners to mitigate instructional challenges presented by multilingual contexts.

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## توظيف الاستراتيجيات من قبل المعلمين بهدف دعم المدارس الأولية متعددة اللغات في جنوب إفريقيا

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### ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في الاستراتيجيات المعدة من قبل المعلمين بهدف دعم المدارس متعددة اللغات في إقليم ماثا بجنوب إفريقيا. واعتمدت في ذلك على المعلومات التي تم جمعها من قبل سبعة معلمين مستخدمين في ذلك التسجيلات الصوتية عن طريق المقابلات التي تم إجراؤها وجها لوجه.  
الكلمات الدالة: استراتيجيات، المعلمين، جنوب إفريقيا.

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