Language empowerment and intellectualisation through multilingual higher education in South Africa

Pamela Maseko and H Ekkehard Wolff

The context

South African society is characterised by particular challenges relating to practically all types of multilingualism: territorial, institutional, societal and individual. In facing these challenges, South Africa is similar to other African postcolonies where, as a result of their political histories, a de jure language policy hegemonically imposes an official language which is foreign to the majority of the population. This makes the linguistic situation in the postcolonies quite distinct from that in the former colonial motherlands, such as the UK and other European countries, where the official language is the mother tongue (MT) of the vast majority of the population (albeit as the result of historical processes of equally hegemonic imposition, even if only to impose a ‘standard’ variety on a multitude of dialects). This European policy model of hegemonic monolingualism has been uncritically adopted by many post-independent African countries despite the completely different sociocultural and sociolinguistic ecology in which language policies in Africa must function, including in the higher education (HE) terrain. Following the overthrow of apartheid and guided by the country’s new Constitution, South Africa has broken with the European colonialist tradition and has opted for a remarkable, multilingual official language policy which is unique in allowing for 11 official languages: nine indigenous African languages (of ‘Bantu’ linguistic stock) plus the two former hegemonic languages of European provenance, English and Afrikaans.

Multilingualism in South African society in general, and in HE in particular, is understood to be the accepted parallel use of several languages either by individual speakers with different language backgrounds and linguistic biographies, or by whole communities of speakers who have settled for patterns of communicative behaviour which are characterised by using more than one language functionally in different domains and for different purposes. Parallel use of more than one language may take different forms and instantiations, involving respective mono-, bi- and trilingual discourse patterns, including practices like code-meshing or code-switching and nonce-borrowings, now referred to as ‘translanguaging’. Such multilingual communication practices, albeit common in day-to-day verbal interaction among multilingual individuals, were regarded
with disapproval and were excluded from the domains of formal education. Often in the colonial and even postcolonial African school reality, children were explicitly forbidden to use their mother tongues or home languages (L1) on school premises and were punished when caught doing so.

The normative ideology behind such approaches to language is deeply rooted in received Eurocentric notions and attitudes that regard standard languages (somehow reflecting an idealised purist ‘ancestral code’) as superior to any vernacular or dialect varieties and therefore proclaim them as exclusive mediums of instruction in formal education. Applied to the multilingual (and mostly diglossic) situation in African colonies and postcolonies, this approach amounted and still amounts to a fatal status rivalry between standard languages of European provenance and indigenous African vernaculars, the latter being implicitly or explicitly denied any value and suitability for official use in government and administration, including formal education. The resulting ‘polyglossic’ situation in Africa after independence, therefore, was characterised by the dominance of the ex-colonial, foreign, but high-status language over the low prestige indigenous languages which were used, if at all and mainly in former British-ruled territories, only for lower primary education up to a maximum of four years (Alexander 1989). Higher education, often including both secondary and tertiary education, was retained as an exclusive domain for languages of European provenance.

The democratic change in South Africa in 1994 saw the desegregation of HE and consequently an accelerated increase in linguistic and cultural diversity among the student population. Students can be assumed to enter university with varying repertoires and levels of competence in the number and choice of languages at their disposal and more or less effective patterns of practising individual multilingualism. These constitute so far largely under-researched and underestimated challenges for effective and efficient language-in-education policies, and pedagogic and didactic practices.

As described in more detail in chapter 3, in the past, South African HE was characterised by official bilingualism which, by the de jure or de facto language policy of individual institutions of higher learning, restricted the choice of medium of instruction (MoI) to two languages only: English or Afrikaans. Mindful of the past discriminatory policies towards speakers of languages other than English (LOTE) and Afrikaans, the state has over the years developed language policy frameworks emphasising multilingualism and equity of access and success for all students in HE. As indicated in the previous chapter, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, the Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) (MoE 2002) and, more recently, the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training (DHET 2013) are some of the relevant policy documents.

Even though post-apartheid language policy provides for legitimisation and valuing of African languages in HE, evidence shows that the use of English as a common language of learning and teaching (LoLT) continues to create differential educational experience and treatment, with very large numbers of students who have indigenous African language backgrounds effectively being denied...
meaningful participation and success in HE. Apart from the language issue, their sociocultural backgrounds and experiences play only an insignificant or no role at all in the learning process. While there are other factors that affect students’ access to and success in HE (for example schooling background and socioeconomic status), studies undertaken at various universities both locally and internationally illustrate that choice of LoLT can facilitate cognition and learning and, consequently, lead to success in education, in particular when using a language which students have fully mastered, either as L1 or second language (L2) (Cummins 1981, 2000; Dlodlo 1999; Heugh 2000; Wolff 2002; Kapp and Bangeni 2009, 2011; Dalvit 2010; Madiba 2010, 2012). These studies show quite clearly that given the large number of African language students who fail or drop out of the system prematurely, ‘educational failure is linguistic failure’ (Stubbs 2002) most of the time. Thus in multilingual contexts such as South Africa, the issue of choice of LoLT is among the most decisive for success or failure across the whole education system.

Although some intervention strategies are emerging, generally indigenous African languages are neglected in HE, not only as subjects or mediums of instruction, but also as valuable resources for learning, teaching and research practices. It is in this context that the Report on the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences (DHET 2011) recommends an investigation into the role that indigenous African languages can play in facilitating concept formation, as well as what knowledge in these languages could influence teaching, learning and research practices.

Tapping into hitherto underused human capital resources for optimised mass education is of high relevance, especially for South Africa’s economic prospects. This becomes particularly apparent in the light of the following figures. While university enrolment is growing very fast in Africa, it is still only seven per cent of the relevant age group who are at university today; the world average is 30%. Further, those seven per cent who are at university face serious problems in achieving their goals, not least because of learning problems due to the choice of language of instruction. Ngcobo (2014: 123) quotes a DoE report on black students’ performance, according to which 70% of first-year students drop out, and, of the remaining 30%, only 14% pass examinations to enter their second year. The graduation rate in the 20- to 24-year age group is only five per cent. One reason, as can be assumed, is low academic literacy in the language of learning (English/L2). This general picture is corroborated by Du Plessis and Gerber (2012) in their study on the academic preparedness of students, which reveals high levels of student failure and increasing drop-out rates. This is attributed to a general underpreparedness due to lack of English proficiency, mathematical ability and effective study skills.

Lack of proficiency in English, which is the almost exclusive LoLT in the tertiary education system, can be unequivocally related to deficits in or lack of previous teaching of and through the African MT languages of the students with African language background. This is borne out by countless experimental projects and classes across the globe (Ouane and Glanz 2010). Yet, apart from academic curricula focusing on the linguistics and philology of African languages up to PhD level, with research conducted and theses written in African languages,
there appear to be no programmes on record that use, exclusively or in a multi-
lingual model (together with, for example, English or Portuguese), African lan-
guages for academic subjects outside Linguistics and Philology. If PhD theses can
be written on highly technical issues of, for instance, Yoruba or Kiswahili linguist-
ic and literary and philosophical aspects of African literatures and cosmologies,
there is little reason to assume that the same languages would fail in address-
ing comparably elaborate and technical issues in any other academic discipline,
including mathematics and the natural sciences. However, in the absence of sus-
tainable African language teaching throughout most of pre-tertiary education, it
seems that African language use in HE is not an option since students, primary
and secondary cycle teachers and university lecturers would be underprepared
to use African languages adequately for teaching purposes. In addition, the lack
of adequate pedagogical materials for using African languages as the language of
learning and teaching on any level beyond lower primary or foundation phase is
yet another challenge to be met.

The disregard for African languages in HE manifests particularly in the
throughput of African-language-speaking students, which is low compared to
the number that gains access to HE. An exploratory study undertaken at Rhodes
University in a Cell Biology course tracks students over a three-year period and
establishes that there is a five per cent margin in the students’ performance,
where students speaking LOTE achieve marks five per cent lower, on aver-
age, than those speaking English, the language of tuition in the institution.
Furthermore, investigations initiated by the Department of Higher Education
and Training (DHET) report that students speaking LOTE experience linguistic
discrimination (DHET 2008).

Considering, on the one hand, the cognitive and sociocultural benefits of
language in education, and the relationship between education and human
development, on the other (Wolff 2002; Obanya 2004; Djité 2008), it is unfor-
tunate that the present language practices in South African HE, which legitimise
and overvalue English, are in fact perpetuating the social inequalities of the past,
rather than enabling the social transformation envisaged in the Constitution.
Twenty years after democracy, reflecting on the efficacy of the legislative policies
that were formulated to facilitate social transformation becomes a necessity. The
language-in-education policies, and particularly those applicable to HE, recog-
nise the potential and critical role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the
transformation of South African society. On the other hand, it remains a fact
that, at the same time, only 14% of professors at South African universities are
black.1

Apart from language-related problems in teaching and learning, there are
equally disastrous effects on knowledge production in Africa, particularly sub-
Saharan Africa. With particular emphasis on the role of universities for the
overall development process in Africa, Botman (2013: n.p.) points out:

Africa still sits low on the United Nations Development Programme’s
Human Development Index. We have to ensure that the continent’s
rapid economic progress results in sustained human development. This
is where universities come in. Higher education forms a critical pillar of
sustainable human development … In the past, both in academia and political and economic practice, higher education and universities have not always been seen in this light.

In the previous century, the World Bank decided that development efforts in Africa should be refocused on primary education, which resulted in a dramatic decrease of 82% in per capita public spending on higher education between 1980 and the first decade of the 21st century.

Luckily, there were eventually arguments for relinking universities to development. The sociologist Manuel Castells wrote a paper describing the university as ‘the engine of development’. And in 2001, the World Bank started embracing the role of higher education in the knowledge economy …

In the 2012–13 list of the world’s 400 leading universities compiled by Britain’s *Times Higher Education* magazine Africa has only four universities. More importantly, the entire continent has not a single top 100 entrant.

If one compares Africa with Asia: in 2002 East Asia and the Pacific accounted for 25,391 scientific publications and 65,506 patent applications, while the comparable figures for sub-Saharan Africa were 3,696 and 101, according to the World Bank.

The argument is supported by research conducted under the auspices of the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (Ouane and Glanz 2010: 5):

New research findings are increasingly pointing to the negative consequences of these policies: low-quality education and the marginalization of the continent … Africa’s marginalization is reinforced by its almost complete exclusion from knowledge creation and production worldwide. It consumes, sometimes uncritically, information and knowledge produced elsewhere through languages unknown to the majority of its population …

Africa has the smallest share in scholarly publishing, which is mirrored by the international Social Science Citation Index which, despite its cultural bias, covers the world’s leading scholarly science and technical journals in more than 100 academic disciplines. One per cent of the citations in the Index are from Africa. The publicly accessible knowledge production of African scholars takes place outside Africa.

The UNESCO Science Report of 2005 indicated that Africa is contributing only 0.4 per cent of the international gross expenditure on research and science development, and of this, South Africa covers 90 per cent.
Alexander (2003: 28) points out the total underestimation of the role of language in all of this:

The failure of post-colonial African states to base their educational systems on the home languages or at the very least on the languages of the immediate community of the child, more than any other policy or practice, explains the fundamental mediocrity of intellectual production on the continent.

The reasons for underperformance and the long-standing obstacles to adequate HE across Africa have been demonstrated in countless scholarly contributions by sociolinguists and educationists from Africa and elsewhere over the last half a century and have become axiomatic wisdom among experts:

• The continued existence of underperforming systems in the primary and secondary cycles of education in general, and in particular regarding language teaching and language proficiency in the LoLT of foreign origin.
• The prevailing die-hard language attitudes among the often uninformed stakeholders in education who uncritically favour languages of European provenance (plus Arabic) and reject any options for the use of African languages in education beyond the lower primary level.
• African governments’ lack of political will to change colonial language policies for fear of jeopardising the benevolence of members of the ‘donor community’ (often the former colonial master) if they do so.
• The tendency of African governments to perpetuate the uncritical imposition of inadequate ex-colonial models of education onto African postcolonial societies with totally different sociolinguistic profiles.

The effects of this general African picture can also be seen in South Africa, despite the ‘revolutionary’ language policy allowing for 11 official languages. South Africa still shows the reflexes of a postcolonial, polyglossia-based class divide involving one or two hegemonic exoglossic languages (English and to a lesser extent Afrikaans), accompanied by the imposition of these as special-purpose languages for HE, thereby creating an apartheid privilege for a native English-speaking (or Afrikaans-speaking) minority. For mother-tongue speakers of African languages, access to quality education thus remains based on the elitist principle of their L2 language competence. What is needed is an innovative political as well as pedagogical agenda which would launch the following actions with their expected outcomes:

• Accept the gnoseological significance of language choice for education in order to exploit and profit from the worldwide-attested advantages of MT as medium of instruction for (deep) learning and sustainable knowledge transfer.
• Introduce MT-based multilingual additive models for all educational cycles (and not just for lower primary level) in order to establish and maintain an adequate and genuine African language policy based on the pre-existing multilingual competencies of the learners.
Part One: African language empowerment

- Enable community involvement and cultural sensitivity in curriculum design to facilitate linkage between classroom activities and the out-of-school reality of the learners.
- Ensure adequate finances and infrastructure to support the provision of adequate African language pedagogical materials both for teaching African language MTs as a subject and for teaching all subjects through African languages.
- Reorganise and improve teacher training in line with relevant sociolinguistic and pedagogical distinctions between foreign and African language competencies, pedagogy and didactics.
- Establish human language technology to provide up-to-date technical support that will make it possible to fully exploit the potentials of e- and m-teaching and distance-learning facilities, including solar-powered devices for use in remote rural areas.

Language empowerment by intellectualisation

Apparently inspired by work in the Philippines, Finlayson and Madiba (2002) and later Alexander (2005, 2007) successfully introduced the term ‘intellectualisation’ for terminological use in Applied African Sociolinguistics. The intention was to replace somewhat worn-out terms with sometimes negative connotations, such as ‘lexical modernisation’, ‘lexical development’, ‘lexical innovation’, ‘lexical expansion’ and so on. More appropriate for use in public discourse, the term ‘intellectualisation’ encapsulates both what the issue is and who should do something about it. What is at issue are the high-status ‘intellectual’ domains of verbal communication for which, in the past, indigenous ‘home’ languages were considered unfit, and the primary agents of the intellectualisation process are those intellectuals, most specifically at universities, who are MT speakers of the languages in question.

Language intellectualisation is based on the now axiomatic wisdom in Applied Sociolinguistics that language development is language use. The frequently deplored lack of specialised terminology for modern science-based communication in African languages often turns out to be a smokescreen to veil the lack of effort by teachers and lecturers to use their own languages for (higher) learning and teaching. Many a good teacher in African schools on the ground does so simply in order to establish and maintain active learner involvement and classroom dialogue, and thus to create better learning effects.

Furthermore, the term ‘intellectualisation’ avoids negative implications such as that present-day MT languages are underdeveloped (so they must be ‘developed’), or that they are not modern (so they must be ‘modernised’), or have too limited and too traditional a lexicon (so they need lexical ‘expansion’ and ‘innovation’) and that the lexical inventories are somewhat incomplete and must, therefore, be ‘planned’ to become fit for new communicative challenges. Importantly, the term addresses the language attitudes of MT- or L2-speaking ‘intellectuals’ who are the driving force of sociocultural transformation. Intellectualisation, therefore, targets intellectual speakers who have never or rarely used their MT to conduct their intellectual and professional interactions.
The term also implies that the process of intellectualising a language is best achieved through
• education from pre-school to university level and beyond (Sibayan 1999) and encompassing any subject field or academic discipline;
• public use by powerful and prestigious members of society, like intellectuals (professors, teachers, journalists, writers and poets, judges and lawyers) and politicians; and
• visibility in the public space as an integral part of the ‘linguistic landscape’, including road signs, commercial and official sign boards, all media and so on.

The ultimate aim of intellectualising languages is to empower their speakers and achieve equity in their status and functions by exploiting all dimensions of human language, in particular its teleological dimension, its communitary dimension and its gnoseological dimension (Ehlich 2009).

Currently in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, we can speak of an on-going ‘experimental phase’, often with ministerial support, in designing multilingual curricula and practising multilingual strategies to enhance teaching and learning outcomes, particularly as regards not only successful but also excellent performance in examinations and in getting academic degrees. This implies, at university level for instance,
• MT courses (ideally for all academic subjects) at undergraduate and graduate levels;
• African language L2 courses to establish and enhance academic literacy for non-MT speakers in all the official languages of South Africa;
• piloting various strategies of dual-medium, bi- or trilingual translanguaging classroom practices; and
• developing human language technology support for MT pedagogy and didactics, both within the classroom and for multilingual text processing outside the classroom (for example examination papers and theses).

What is needed is the expansion of this experimental phase to include as many African languages and universities in Africa, especially South Africa, as possible, in view of the generalisation of MT-based multilingual approaches to education at all levels for all institutions of learning. This is further supported by the work of the NRF SARCHI African Languages Chair and the Catalytic Project on Concept Formation in African Languages, discussed in chapter 1.

Applied African Sociolinguistics looks back on countless theoretical and empirical studies regarding multilingualism in education, not only across Africa but worldwide. The lessons to be drawn from these studies are received wisdom among experts, but have not gained wider currency among all stakeholders in education, from parents and teachers to governmental and parliamentary institutions. Still, the major task remains to raise awareness and knowledge about the theoretical and practical interface between multilingualism and educational success and, in the words of the doyen of African sociolinguistics, Ayorinde Bamgbose (1991) from the University of Ibadan, to help stakeholders replace ‘uninformed choices’ with ‘informed choices’.
The first and most important lesson to be drawn is to accept that exclusive exoglossic monolingual models do not work in Africa. In other words, English only, French only, Portuguese only, Arabic only approaches must be discontinued. Rather, inclusive models of MT-based multilingualism are highly promising and are recommended for generalisation across all levels of education. Note that the fear of ‘Babylonic’ language chaos due to the number of African MTs is a largely overestimated problem since the inclusive, MT-based, multilingual model will also work with indigenous lingua francas or L2s, including the many cross-border languages in Africa, which the widely multilingual children have already mastered upon school entry. This means that the actual number of languages needed in education is smaller than is generally feared by those who worry about the financial and organisational logistics.

Since proficiency in a foreign or L3, exoglossic language of wider communication is viewed by most stakeholders to be one of the major targets of education in Africa, adequate foreign language teaching and learning is one of the most vitally important of all educational activities. The second important lesson to be learnt from past worldwide experience, therefore, is that the desired L3 proficiency is best acquired when taught through the MT, and not by using this L3 as the MoI for all subjects at the earliest transition point. Therefore, investing more time, effort, human resources and financial means in teaching, for instance, more English to learners at school by using it as the MoI will fail to reach the desired results for two major reasons: (i) the prevailing poor quality of language teachers at both lower and higher levels of teaching, and (ii) the fact that teaching more English will sideline the adequate teaching of the MT which is the most effective medium through which to acquire not only subject knowledge, but also competencies in the foreign language. English is and remains, for the vast majority of Africans, a foreign language and, for educational purposes, must be treated as such. Using English or any other L3 as the sole language of instruction will turn it into a language of destruction, preventing the full cognitive and creative intellectual development of students and thus defeating the whole purpose of formal education. MT-based multilingual education is the only adequate approach in the context of genuine African multilingualism, involving both African and non-African languages.

Multilingualism in higher education in South Africa: discourse and practice

Since 2010, given the lack of progress in implementing the language legislation enshrined in the Constitution, the DHET has engaged in intense and focused debates on the position of indigenous African languages in HE, particularly on the role they play in the teaching, learning and research practices of this sector. It is in this context that in 2012 the DHET minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, established the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Development of African Languages in Higher Education. Its task was to examine the state of teaching, learning and research in indigenous African languages in HE, to review language policy...
Language empowerment through multilingual higher education

Applicable to the sector, to investigate barriers to the implementation of multilingualism embracing African language teaching and learning practices, as well as to make recommendations regarding interventions that could be adopted to entrench multilingualism in HE.

In addressing the issues above, the following section provides an overview of the history of indigenous African languages in South African HE. It also looks critically at the legislative framework for the promotion of indigenous African languages in HE and reviews the compliance of HEIs with the provisions of legislative policy. It gives an overview of the current practices of HEIs with regard to teaching, learning and research in African languages and highlights good interventions/model practices as well as their shortcomings.

Historical review of the ‘development’ of African languages in South African HE

In received and largely Eurocentric discourse on the language question in Africa, indigenous African languages as opposed to the ex-colonial languages were long considered to be ‘underdeveloped’. This stemmed from the social-Darwinist bottom line of Western discourse on Africa in general: its peoples, cultures and languages. The Western-style education and educational content received by the colonial and postcolonial African elites tended to cement such Eurocentric perspectives, which led to the linguistic and cultural alienation of the so-called modern elites who took over the colonial states in Africa. The degradation of African languages and the refusal to use them in any official domain, including HE, has been identified as a major explanation for intellectual mediocrity and economic underperformance in particularly sub-Saharan Africa. Hence the ideological, political and pedagogical motivation to intellectualise African languages, particularly for use in HE contexts.

In this historical context, one of the primary motivations for ‘development’ of any language is to create value in it for its MT speakers, and also for speakers of other languages. We will therefore look briefly at the sociocultural, cognitive and economic value of a language in an African postcolonial context.

Firstly, the sociocultural value is the worth of the language as an expression of the proud identity, culture and heritage of its speakers without a concomitant feeling of inferiority and marginalisation. (This corresponds to what Konrad Ehlich [2009] refers to as the communitary dimension of language.) Secondly, the cognitive value of a language is that it provides its speakers with the ability to produce and consume knowledge, especially in the learning process, where their language is used as a reservoir from which they can draw in the process of learning. Madiba (2010) argues that in the learning process, using one’s primary language to access knowledge presented in another language provides a foundation for contextualising newly acquired knowledge within pre-existing knowledge, and should enable students to produce new knowledge in both content subjects and languages they learn. So in learning they also become producers and not only consumers of knowledge. (This line of argument corresponds to what Ehlich [2009] refers to as the gnoseological dimension of language.) Lastly, the economic value in this context refers to the extent to which one’s
language makes it easier for one to get a job and become a productive participant in the labour market. It is this value of language that impacts directly not only on human resource development but also on individual intellectual and professional growth and consequently on social transformation (Alexander 2013). According to Alexander (2013), the value of a language is created by proactive measures; a language does not acquire it automatically. He concludes that education plays a critical role in this regard, and that this construction of value for languages is a reflection and a reproduction of the socioeconomic status of the people who speak it (Wolff 2002; Alexander 2013).

In reviewing the history of the development of indigenous African languages beyond secondary schooling, especially for use in high-function domains such as HE, one needs to consider the extent to which these languages are judged as desirable and valuable in human life for sociocultural, cognitive and economic benefits, especially for the benefit of those who speak them as primary languages. In this regard Alexander (2013: 108) states:

Unless African languages are given market value, that is, unless their instrumentality for processes of production, exchange and distribution is enhanced, no amount of policy change ... can guarantee their use in high functions and, thus, eventual escape from dominance and hegemony of English ... [The] current language-medium practices cause cognitive impoverishment and, consequently, necessitate investment in compensatory on-the-job training ... This wastefulness would have been avoidable if there had been a national development plan in which reform of education and economic development planning were integrated.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that it was primarily the Christian missionaries who, from the early 1800s, pioneered the transition of indigenous African languages from oral into written form. This early development was of instrumental value to them ‘to win souls through the Christian biblical message in the languages closest to the hearts and minds of Africans’ (Prah 2009: 22). They codified the languages, wrote descriptive grammars and dictionaries and initiated the translation of texts into them, especially biblical texts and primers to evangelise and educate those whose hearts had been ‘pierced’ by the ‘Word’. Interestingly, however, whereas the imported Western belief system of Christianity has taken strong roots across Africa, the same is not true for Western-style education. Dlodlo (1999: 321, quoted by Alexander 2010: 11) advances a challenging explanation which underlines the impact of knowledge and value transfer in the languages of the recipient populations, for instance by translation, as opposed to the less successful transfer in untranslated languages foreign to them:

The success of the indigenisation of Christianity in Africa as opposed to the failure of education, especially of mathematical and science education, probably relates to the fact that the Bible and other texts of Christian faith were made available – through translation – in the languages of the people of Africa, whereas, with rare exceptions, most educational materials were available only in the European languages.
Makalima (1981) comments that missionaries must be commended for converting the hitherto oral languages into print, but wonders whether the current complications around the development of African languages could in fact be a consequence of the initial purpose for which these languages were developed. Makalima (1981) and Miti (2009) state that they were of instrumental and functional value to the missionaries themselves, and, except for the language itself, very little reflected the culture or the worldview of the Africans. Therefore, their development was for narrow rather than expansive purposes, deliberately disregarding the richness of the culture and the worldview of the speakers (Prah 2009).

The role of the early literate black elite in the development of African languages is often underplayed. In the middle of the nineteenth century, as black people acquired literacy, they started to write texts reflecting their own cultures, worldviews and experiences, using newspapers to escape regulation from missionary-controlled publishing houses (Odendaal 1984; Opland 2003; Limb 2012). Early African language and/or multilingual newspapers such as Isigidimi samaXhosa (1870–1888), Abantu-Batho (1912–1931), Imvo Zabantsundu (1884–1994), some of which started publishing in the 1830s and continued for over a century, were dominated by these black intellectuals who made major contributions to the development of African languages and literature. It is unfortunate that these texts are lying in archives and not informing present discourses on the development of African languages and literature.

In retrospect, one can see how the apartheid era, following on almost directly from the colonial/missionary era, had a double-edged effect on African languages in South Africa. On the one hand, in the political and ideological framework of the notorious Bantu education system, the ‘development’ of African languages was severely restricted to serve the basic communication needs of an equally restrictively skilled labour force which would keep black Africans ‘in place’ (as a labour force and domestic service with some basic education). This deliberately excluded access to post-basic or even higher education which might lead to threats and/or attempts to undermine the supremacy of the ruling whites. In terms of corpus planning and use in lower education, on the other hand, the system allowed foundations to be laid, albeit within narrowly defined limits, for African languages to receive professional linguistic attention and pedagogical grounding, including the development and use of sound pedagogical materials. Thus the apartheid era saw an accelerated development of indigenous African languages, even though the development was carefully orchestrated within the intentions of asserting the value of Afrikaans, and relegating African languages to lower levels of education and practical subjects (Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh 2004). Legislative policy was carefully formulated, followed by strategic implementation strategies. In terms of legislation, the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 saw the extended use of the MT in schools. Status planning saw the elevation of the status of African languages in education, and corpus planning saw terminology development and textbook production (Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh 2004). It was during this period (the 1960s) that language-specific language boards were established, each being responsible for overseeing the development of the
specified language. The boards fell under the auspices of the Bantu Education Department, and were mainly constituted by its inspectorate. In addition, language-specific radio stations were established. Clearly, whatever their contribution to African language development, apartheid-era language policies and practices were designed to entrench the ideology of separateness and the superiority of Afrikaans and English.

From the 1920s, ‘Bantu languages’ departments were established in various universities across the country to lay the linguistic and educational foundations of what later became known as ‘Bantu education’. This was a parallel development to, and in no way academically and interpersonally independent of, the establishment of Afrikanistik (African Linguistics) in German-speaking academia in Europe, in particular at institutions of higher education in Berlin (since 1885), Leipzig (since 1900) and Hamburg (since 1908), as well as at the University of Vienna in Austria. In some, if not many, instances, they started off as part of Anthropology and then evolved into Bantu Studies, then Bantu Languages and, perhaps for reasons of ‘political correctness’, became African Languages.

Led by mainly white non-native speakers of African languages, most of whom came from disciplines such as Anthropology, the research activities of these departments centred on early structuralist approaches to the study of African languages and literatures, using English and Afrikaans as a medium, apart from also teaching these languages as additional languages to speakers of other languages. A survey of early research seems to indicate that non-native speakers of the languages focused on structural linguistics with a special focus on syntax, phonology and morphology, while MT speakers in the departments focused on the semantics and literatures of these languages.

The history of the development of African languages shows that missionaries and the apartheid government contributed significantly to language planning activities such as language codification, translation, materials development and other general language development activities. However, in both cases the indications are that, in the case of the missionaries, it was for the instrumental benefit of the missionaries, while for the apartheid government, it was to advance the system of divide and rule and Afrikaner supremacy.

In the meantime, the development of Afrikaans was systematic and vigorous, with the state investing resources and infrastructure in its development across domains, and as a language of scientific discourse or scholarship. The development (that is, intellectualisation) of Afrikaans centred on the following issues (Giliomee 2003):

- mobilising Afrikaans-speaking intellectuals to promote speaking and writing in Afrikaans;
- establishing an academy to drive the development of Afrikaans as a scientific language;
- organising the clergy and politicians to provide support for the elevation and use of the language in their domains;
- introducing Afrikaans as a MoI throughout all levels of education;
• establishing lexicography units to drive the development of dictionaries in various disciplines for different levels of education; and
• promoting a print culture.

While African languages were incidentally developed during this time, it was not in a manner that instilled pride in the functional value of the languages to their speakers, quite contrary to the case of Afrikaans. They were not developed and promoted to be of cognitive benefit to their speakers, especially in the learning process, nor were they seen as valuable tools for their human development. Knowledge embedded in these languages was also not viewed as valuable enough to be shared in high-function domains such as formal education. African language (and other language) speakers’ negative attitudes to African languages and their overvaluing of English could arguably be the result of this persistent devaluing (Alexander 2013).

Before 1994, and certainly after the National Party became the ruling party in 1948, all organs of state advanced the language agenda of the state throughout the apartheid period. With the realisation of democracy in 1994, legislation for meaningful social transformation became necessary. Legislative language policy applicable to higher education stipulates transformation in the following critical areas:
• multilingualism;
• equity of participation by all in acquiring and producing knowledge in HE;
• equity of opportunity for success;
• non-discrimination in access;
• redress of past political injustices; and
• social cohesion.

Language legislation for promoting multilingualism in higher education

Mindful of the past deliberately selective development of the indigenous African languages, legislative policy provides for these languages to be developed as languages of scholarship in and from which students can learn. It also promotes proficiency in English, the current dominant language of tuition in HE, for students to whom English is an additional language. In practice, however, unlike in the past political dispensation, multilingualism has not been established in HE. Instead of enhancing multilingualism, monolinguism which favours English is becoming a norm, with indigenous African languages becoming marginalised (Madiba 2012; Alexander 2013; Maseko 2014a).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) confers on all the right to quality education. Quality education is generally understood as effective teaching and learning that empowers individuals to be producers and consumers of knowledge that nurtures diversity and the need to understand the worldviews of others, while encouraging rootedness in one’s own culture. Central to the provisions of the Constitution is the issue of access and success. The Constitution states that language, race and other markers that have been used to discriminate
against certain groups of people in the past, should not hinder their access and success in education (Maseko 2014b).

Whilerecognising the position of English as the dominant language of academia in South Africa, maintenance of the status quo is seen as a threat to equity and the success of students who are LOTE speakers; who have gained physical access to HE but not epistemic access. In education, epistemic access is generally understood as access to the conceptual platform from which the learner is able to construct new knowledge out of pre-existing knowledge and knowledge presented in the learning process. This is further supported by the empirical data presented in chapter 10 of this book.

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Development of Indigenous African Languages as MoIs, also known as the Ndebele Report (DoE 2003), states that it is not enough that these languages are declared official languages but that they should also receive recognition of their status. Their use at all levels of education is of paramount importance as this encourages investment in the language. It states that with the era of technology, the use of languages in technological (and other HE disciplines) is also significant to enable their growth. In view of the LPHE (MoE 2002), the report concludes by recommending that, in the promotion and development of indigenous languages in higher education, South African universities should:

- ensure the sustainability of all indigenous South African languages;
- select, according to region, one or more indigenous languages to develop for use as MoIs in HE, as well as short-, medium- and long-term implementation frameworks;
- promote communicative competence of students in at least one indigenous language and encourage the labour market to make such competence an imperative, especially for civil service or state institutions;
- promote partnerships between HEIs and the private sector in identifying and translating key texts into indigenous language/s selected for development by that institution; and
- ensure institutional collaborations, especially where languages selected are common, to ensure acceleration of work and non-replication of effort.

Furthermore, the development of African languages at universities features strongly in the 2008 report of the ministerial committee on transformation in public higher education institutions (DHET 2008). The report notes the continuation of challenges faced by students who are not English L1 speakers at universities. It also indicates that the implementation approach to the parallel-medium language policies in place in a number of historically Afrikaans-medium institutions needs to be reconsidered as the present practices discriminate against African language students. Thus, the committee recommends that the minister initiates a broad review of obstacles facing the implementation of effective language policies and practices in higher education institutions, including a study of the application of equitable language policies found in countries with similar social differences to those of South Africa.
The White Paper for Post-school Education and Training (DHET 2013) recognises the unfortunate position of African languages in South African HE and consequently in the departments of African Languages, and acknowledges this as a threat to linguistic diversity, as well as to the survival of African languages. The White Paper provides for African languages to be taught across disciplines at universities, and therefore makes the following proposals and recommendations:

- African language proficiency should be included as a requirement in professional training.
- Universities should provide teacher training that focuses on MT education for teachers of African languages in order to implement properly the Department of Basic Education’s mother-tongue policy for primary school learners.
- Universities should encourage students to take a course in an African language as part of their curriculum, both for proficiency and to elevate the status of African languages in the country.

Review of the compliance of HE with the provisions of language legislation

The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 provides that, subject to the language policy determined by the minister, councils of universities should, in agreement with their senates, formulate their institutional language policy. Such policy, as articulated in the LPHE, was to be published and submitted to the Ministry of Education or a designated organisation (such as the Pan South African Language Board [PanSALB]) by the end of March 2003. In their institutional language policy, each institution was to provide a plan on how they proposed to advance, through language, the key goals of social transformation, particularly in relation to equity of access, success and participation in HE. The Act acknowledges the autonomy of HEIs in South Africa but implores the institutions to design their policy in alignment with national and provincial policy on language. HEIs were also to account to the Ministry about such policy.

Many of the universities have responded to this call, and their policy provisions are largely aligned to the requirements of national policy. However, institutional language practices regarding indigenous African languages do not reflect the provisions of their policies. An overview of the language choices of institutions reveals the following:

- South African HEIs recognise multilingualism in their policies. Institutions which provide for English as LoLT still profess respect for multilingualism even though there is no clear articulation about which languages are involved, and how this multilingualism will be accommodated in the teaching and other practices of the HEI.
- Generally, all institutions with published policies have English as the language of academic discourse and wider communication. They also generally include an expression in principle of their commitment to facilitate the English academic proficiency of students for whom the LoLT is an additional language.
• Institutional language policies make a commitment to providing multilingual language resources, including but not limited to multilingual discipline terminology lists, glossary lists and dictionaries.
• As far as indigenous African languages are concerned, attention in most language policies is placed on their acquisition as additional languages for speakers of other languages, and their use in facilitating academic proficiency.
• The role of African Languages departments, as the primary academic custodians of African language scholarship, is not highlighted in many of the policies, and there is a decline of interest in research on African languages, evidenced by a gradual decline in student numbers in many of the institutions.
• Linked to the above is the common silence about medium- to long-term plans for the development of indigenous languages (identified as official languages at institutional level) as languages of academia/mediums of instruction.
• Missing in many of the institutional policies is a clear policy implementation plan with measurable goals and steps on how these would be achieved over the short, medium and long term. There is also no mention of strategies for a monitoring and evaluation process.
• Observation of institutional practices on issues related to language indicate that there have been research-based initiatives looking at the potential role of mother tongues in facilitating effective learning for students who are LOTE speakers. However, these seem uncoordinated, and findings from such research do not seem to influence general institutional policy or teaching and research practices of the institutions concerned.

The state of African language teaching, learning and research in South African HE
Even though teaching, learning and research of indigenous African languages in HE is affirmed through legislation, the general trend is that African Languages departments, as traditional custodians of the teaching of and research in African languages, are not reflecting the positive effects intended by the policy. Some observations are:
• Whereas research should be blossoming in language studies, recent trends reflect the opposite: some departments have been threatened with closure and student numbers are declining, which means that sustaining scholarship in African languages may be under threat.
• Generally universities teach African languages in an asocial manner, without reflecting the practices and worldviews of the people who speak those languages. This suggests that scholarship in African languages has not broken away from the context in which it was conceived, namely, preserving the focus on structural study of the languages and their literatures as initially developed under a Eurocentric colonial perspective.
• Except in a few instances, the general trend is that in historically white universities, the African languages are taught in English or Afrikaans for both MT speakers and speakers of other languages, a matter of great concern for
development of African languages, especially regarding the development of their metalanguage.

- African languages in South African HE are taught in two streams: as home languages and as additional languages. By and large, there are relatively higher enrolments of students taking them as additional languages (but only at first-year level) than those taking them as home languages. There is low retention, for both MT and additional language speakers, beyond first year.
- Students studying African languages as home languages lack basic language knowledge and skills (basic literacy skills) that they should have acquired at school, and teaching at university tends to focus on remedying the consequences of students’ under-preparedness as a result of deficient schooling.
- There is no teacher training in African languages. In other words, the training does not provide student teachers with pedagogical knowledge and skills related to teaching African languages as home or additional languages. Whereas there is research providing narratives on pedagogic issues related to learning in multilingual contexts, there is a lack of credible research on how multilingualism can be used for cognition in contexts where an African language is the learner’s primary language.
- At postgraduate level, research is presented mostly through the medium of another language. There is a shift in focus in postgraduate research at university: a scan of theses examined at five institutions indicated a focus on applied language studies and on sociolinguistics, particularly issues on language policy and planning in education. The findings and recommendations from this research, however, do not seem to influence the policy or practices of institutions.
- Mindful of the need to reposition the teaching of South African African languages, some universities have taken initiatives to formulate, design and implement programmes to advance scholarship in African languages.

The role of the publishing industry in the development of African languages in HE

Education has to be supported by resources such as books, and the publishing industry is pivotal in the production of these resources. As illustrated with the development of Afrikaans, corpus expansion, including the development of creative and non-creative works, dictionaries and so on, is crucial to the intellectualisation of any language. In the university context, academic journals are important for the dissemination of work.

The state of publishing in African languages must be divided into two broad subsectors to be understood correctly: the first is African language publishing for educational purposes, which can be further divided into basic and higher education. The other is publishing for general and pleasure reading; this can be further divided into early and adult literacy.

A glance at the catalogues of leading national publishers shows that publishing in African languages to support higher education is lacklustre. Textbooks to support curricula in African languages are non-existent, regardless of the imperative from national legislation to accelerate production of books with the goal...
of developing African languages as intellectual languages. The reasons for the publishers’ reluctance to produce books in African languages for the higher education sector reflect, again, the commercialisation of the industry.

In publishing for HE, carefully crafted strategies should aim to publish, firstly, in order to intellectualise African languages, and secondly, to instil a culture of reading in adults. There are exceptionally good classics in African languages for general reading, and the fact that the Department of Arts and Culture has been republishing some of these is a step in the right direction.

One of the strategies used by publishers in developing materials for publishing in African languages is to translate English texts. Whilst this is commendable for growing the language corpus, translators for book publishing need to be trained professionally if the translated products are to add value to the indigenous African languages.

It is clear that the promotion of African languages in education necessitates authorship and publishing in those languages. Publishers, educational institutions and the state need to adopt a strategy for marketing published materials in African languages to ensure sustained commercial viability. Viability should be derived from the cognitive and sociocultural benefits that can be gained by the readers. Clearly, this cannot be restricted to textbooks, but must include broad offers of publications simply for reading pleasure.

General observations

One of the main challenges in the development of African languages in HE is at national level. While there is an outstanding language policy that, at a glance, should ensure development of African languages, the policy lacks an implementation plan, as well as directives on who should lead or drive its implementation (at both national and institutional level for those institutions whose policy has been studied).

Another challenge related to implementation is the issue of monitoring. The LPHE and the Ndebele Report, for example, state clearly what needs to be done by institutions in terms of repositioning African languages in HE. However, there is no monitoring of the extent of compliance with the provisions of policy (also at both national and institutional level).

The study of African languages at university has been a challenge for the last two decades, with the result that African Language departments have trained very few scholars to sustain scholarship in African languages at university or to teach African languages in schools. Very few students have been trained in conventional language areas like linguistics, literature, morphology, phonology, and in applied language studies such as translation studies, interpreting and sociolinguistics. This is a threat to scholarship in African languages. This point is also linked to low interest in postgraduate studies, including teacher training, in African languages. A general survey links this low interest to lack of funding for African language studies, although some universities surveyed experienced a high number of postgraduate student enrolments as a result of scholarships offered through the state. The state’s subsidy policy, however, places all languages towards the bottom of its funding grid. Review of this subsidy policy...
should ensure that it provides leverage for the scientific development of African languages.

At times, institutional priorities do not include the development of African languages. The poor state of African language teaching at schools means that universities inherit students who do not possess the expected competency for further study of these languages. All this has an impact on the kind and quality of research that emerges from African Language departments.

Concern among teaching staff, across disciplines at universities, that language is one of the contributing factors to student underperformance at university has led to a growing body of research on the matter. However, this research does not seem to influence teaching practices which, some believe, although the evidence is inconclusive, is linked to the fact that the majority of staff in HE speak English only.

Related to the point above is that there is no pedagogy informing multilanguage usage to support concept formation in students for whom English is an additional language. Many institutions offer African languages as additional languages but there is no clear indication as to whether learning an African language adds value to the learning experience of students, or whether it is merely a course to fill up the curriculum for a study programme. Students studying African languages as home languages, however, appreciate the opportunity to study their languages, and feel their identity affirmed in an otherwise alienating HE environment.

Contrary to popular belief, when students do not understand concepts in the language of instruction, they try to decipher meaning in their own language. However, English monolingual staff do not often encourage this, nor are they able to support it as a means to facilitate concept formation and deeper learning.

All these challenges need to be understood and weighed against the opportunities and prospects that favour the development of African languages in HE:
• There is a general national interest in African languages in HE.
• There are also initiatives supported by institutional executives, African Languages departments or by individual researchers within institutions to advance the study and development of African languages.
• Research also shows that among scholars in other disciplines, there is a growing consciousness of the link between language and effective learning, and how the acquisition of additional languages can promote social cohesion in professional/vocation-specific disciplines.
• Contrary to popular belief, students want to study African languages.

Recommendations
The fundamental disconnect between the discourse and practice of multilingualism in HE is policy implementation. Thus it is strongly recommended that institutional language policies should have clear implementation plans regarding the development of African languages as languages of teaching, learning and research, as well as clearly indicated processes for the monitoring and evaluation of such plans.
Part One: African language empowerment

RECOMMENDATION ONE: Processes should be put in place to strengthen and enforce implementation of language policy. National and institutional plans should set, as part of their implementation plan, language policy goals which articulate, in no uncertain terms, the development of indigenous African languages as subjects (home language and additional languages), as Mols and as a support for learning. Structures such as Language Units and an Equity and Transformation Office should be set up within universities to monitor and evaluate language policy implementation, and report on the progress at intervals set in the LPHE. The DHET, in turn, should have a unit dedicated to monitoring and evaluating institutional compliance with the provisions of the LPHE.

At national level, promotion of multilingualism is the responsibility of the national government. We should also consider promoting multilingualism according to the linguistic profile of a region, with due attention to not repeating history by creating ‘language homelands’.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Development of indigenous African languages should be a collaborative effort. Institutions should collaborate regionally to develop a language or languages with high concentration in that region, and advance hypotheses around the development and use of African languages.

The implementation of multilingualism, the intellectualisation of African languages as languages of scholarship and pedagogical issues around these need to be undergirded by a theory, developed by African language scholars, of multilanguage acquisition, language development and mother-tongue-based bilingual education. The value of mother-tongue-based education which embraces African languages needs to be backed up by credible research. This research should be based in African contexts – where minority languages (English and Afrikaans in the South African context) have a utilitarian value (in education and the labour market, for example), that is, they are desirable but are foreign and unattainable to the majority of students for whom these languages are second languages.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: Comprehensive research exploring and documenting strategies for intellectualising African languages for use in HE must be undertaken. The focus of such research should be on strategies that could be adopted to achieve quality education for historically disadvantaged students, as well as to promote multilingualism for speakers of other languages, including African languages.

The DHET needs to dedicate funding to support such research, and universities that have demonstrated ‘best language practices’ should lead such research.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: Funding into the research and development of indigenous African languages needs to be increased, and primary funders of HE research, such as the National Research Foundation, need to consider dedicating funding to the development of African languages in HE exclusively.
The waning student interest in African languages and, consequently, the decline in student numbers and threatened closure of some African Language departments needs to be studied scientifically.

**Recommendation Five:** A national study should be conducted to provide empirical evidence on the evolution of African Language departments in South Africa and whether the early history of African languages in HE has any effect on their present teaching, learning and research. The African Languages Association of Southern Africa could support such research.

The level of language skills of students who study African languages in HE is low, and this is an area of concern. The general perception is that this is the result of their being under-prepared at school for tertiary study. Of note in this regard is that four institutions surveyed indicate that in the last ten years, the number of teachers who have a qualification to teach African languages has been low.

**Recommendation Six:** A dynamic partnership should be set up between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and DHET to establish an all-inclusive and participatory exchange between the two ministries, and to rally support for meaningful multilingual education embracing indigenous African languages.

**Recommendation Seven:** Strategies for the teaching of African languages as subjects, as additional languages and as languages of teaching and learning in language-related and other disciplines should be developed. The process of developing and implementing these strategies should be documented in order to construct methodologies and hypotheses around the use of African languages in HE. Such strategies should be accompanied by carefully crafted plans for the development of multilingual resources.

Mutilingualism should be encouraged as a critical requirement for any graduate, and structures such as PanSALB and the National Language Bodies should provide advocacy on the value of multilingualism.

The intellectualisation of African languages is critical to the implementation of multilingualism in HE. This process should be driven by qualified language professionals and carefully coordinated to avoid time- and cost-consuming duplication.

**Recommendation Eight:** We recommend that the DHET supports funding initiatives around terminology planning in HE. There should be postgraduate-studies funding support dedicated to the development of terminology lists and glossaries in African languages.

A strong publishing culture, not only for purposes of basic education, is a strong element of corpus development and is critical in implementing the use of indigenous African languages in HE. Research and other outputs related to the development of indigenous African languages should be published to facilitate
Part One: African language empowerment

dissemination and greater research collaboration. This publishing should be coordinated so that quality is ensured.

**RECOMMENDATION NINE:** Journals that specifically publish scholarly articles in African languages should be established. Other publishing platforms such as e-publishing should be pursued, especially for HE. In addition, a variety of resources to encourage reading for enjoyment should be published.

The value of African languages, as reflected in policy, needs to be reflected in society and embraced by its powerful institutions as languages of, for example, education, business and robust political debate.

**RECOMMENDATION TEN:** The DHET should propose that each university establishes an infrastructure to develop and/or translate key texts in critical disciplines in HE into indigenous African languages, and research their use in pedagogical contexts. Alongside this should be robust research on effective multilanguage usage in pedagogical contexts. The DHET should attach timeframes to the implementation of this recommendation, at the end of which universities should report to the DHET.

**Conclusion**

The history of the development of African languages through the work of missionaries, the language-based homeland system and perhaps even the Bantu education system during the apartheid period, demonstrates the meticulous work done by those concerned with the development of these languages. However, the ulterior motives of all the different role-players of the time prevented these developments from being embraced by, and being of overall benefit to, the language users. During the missionary period, the focus of the development of the indigenous languages was on their use as a tool to convert their speakers to Christianity, and for the missionaries to teach them to speakers of other languages. Later, their development and use was limited to social communication, basic education and the homelands, with Afrikaans and English upheld as languages of power. Their teaching and learning in HE was also pioneered by speakers of other languages, through other media, the focus being on structural linguistics. African intellectuals later participated in advancing scholarship in African languages but within the framework provided by the other-language-speaking pioneers. In essence, the teaching of African languages in HEIs was detached from the speakers of these languages.

In the democratic dispensation, these languages are empowered in policy, but the implementation of their use is sluggish or is met with resistance from various role-players. However, there is an appreciation in various quarters that quality education is primarily facilitated by one’s own language, and that it is also language that can facilitate the social cohesion envisioned in our Constitution.

The history of the development of African languages illustrates that it is possible for these languages to be intellectualised and used once more in domains where they have been used before, such as HE. However, given the history of the
development of African languages, and the hegemony of English, the process must be handled in a manner that does not disadvantage the speakers of these languages, especially in their access to quality education at university. The chapter that follows deals more specifically with the history of language planning in South Africa.

Notes
2. The notion of the ‘gnoseological dimension’ of language which becomes effective in knowledge acquisition and transfer is taken from Ehlich (2009).
3. Much of this section is based on a study conducted for the South African Department of Higher Education and Training in 2012. The purpose of the study was to investigate language practices in South African HE, and specifically to identify barriers to the implementation of indigenous languages in HE teaching, learning and research practices.
4. For a discussion of the dramatic deficits in mainstream development discourse regarding the ‘language factor’, Eurocentric distortions of perception and the prejudice-ridden ideological bias in ‘Western’ perspectives on African languages as they are also shared by members of the postcolonial elites in Africa, see Wolff (2016).
5. Note that the first doctorate ever to be awarded in Hamburg in Afrikanistik/African Linguistics was based on a PhD dissertation by the South African Hans Eiselen, who later became instrumental in the formulation of Bantu education in South Africa. This established a prolific trilateral international cooperation, particularly in Bantu language studies, between German academics (mainly in Hamburg under Professor and Chair Carl Meinhof) and academics in London and in South Africa (Meyer-Bahlburg and Wolff 1986).
6. The label ‘Bantu’ in its original reference was created towards the end of the nineteenth century and was a purely linguistic term to identify a unit of genealogically closely related languages, then but no longer considered a separate language family in Africa, in which the term for ‘human beings’ is commonly *ba-ntu or the like (cf. Kiswahili wa-tu), a fact which formed the basis for the internationally entrenched linguistic label ‘Bantu languages’. Under the impact of (retrospectively: misled evolutionary) racial anthropology in European academia at the time, the term ‘Bantu’ also became used as a non-linguistic label (for instance, as racial type Bantuneger in German anthropological discourse), from which developed its discriminatory and racist usage in the South African context to refer to ‘black Africans’ in general. As a descriptive linguistic term, it bears no discriminatory and definitely no racist implications, but refers to a particular subgroup of languages of the Niger-Congo language phylum whose members, however, are distributed over a conspicuously large part of the African continent.

References


