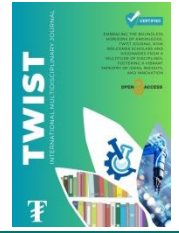# TWIST

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Revitalizing Teacher Development Programs for Indigenous African Languages at a South African University:

Insights from Qualitative Research

Benjamin Seleke*
Department of Adult and Educational Foundations, Walter Sisulu University,
Nelson Mandela Dr, Mthatha, 5100, Eastern Cape, South Africa
[*Corresponding author*]

Nixon J.P. Teis
Department of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technical Education, Walter Sisulu University,
Nelson Mandela Dr, Mthatha, 5100, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Nomasomi Matiso
Department of Adult and Educational Foundations, Walter Sisulu University,
Nelson Mandela Dr, Mthatha, 5100, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Xoliswa Magxala
Department of Initial Primary Teacher Education, Walter Sisulu University,
Nelson Mandela Dr, Mthatha, 5100, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Faith Hlungulu
Department of Initial Primary Teacher Education, Walter Sisulu University,
Eastern Cape, South Africa, Nelson Mandela Dr, Mthatha, 5100, South Africa

Abstract
This qualitative study explores the challenges of teaching Indigenous languages, focusing on English and isiXhosa instruction at one South African university. The research seeks to assess the effectiveness of teacher development programs in preparing educators for multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms. Guided by an interpretive paradigm, the study employed a case study approach to gain in-depth insights into the participants' experiences. The three lecturers—one teaching English and two teaching isiXhosa—were purposively sampled from the Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase Teaching and the Diploma in Adult and Community Education and Training programs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to reflect on their pedagogical practices and institutional challenges. Thematic analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti, identified four key themes: integration of indigenous languages, incorporation of cultural content in pedagogy, institutional support and professional development, and proposed curriculum enhancements. The findings reveal significant challenges, such as the predominance of English as a medium of instruction, the complexities of linguistic diversity, insufficient institutional support, and a lack of culturally relevant teaching resources. Despite these obstacles, the study highlights opportunities for improvement, including adopting multilingual teaching strategies, increased collaboration across faculties, and the need for curriculum flexibility to accommodate diverse student needs. The study concludes that addressing these challenges requires enhanced professional development programs, more significant investment in resource creation for Indigenous languages, and more vital institutional collaboration. These efforts are essential for promoting a more inclusive, culturally responsive, and linguistically diverse education system in South Africa.

Keywords
Teacher Education, Indigenous Languages, Linguistic Diversity, Pedagogical Practices, Curriculum Integration, Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

In post-apartheid South Africa, integrating indigenous African languages into education systems has been a priority to promote multilingualism and cultural identity. This is particularly significant in our study, which is situated at a South African university. The university's location is crucial as it is a microcosm of the more considerable societal challenges and opportunities in language education. However, higher education institutions (HEIs) face persistent challenges in developing teacher education programs that adequately prepare future educators to teach Indigenous languages effectively (Sayed et al., 2019). The use of languages such as isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Sesotho in formal education often contends with English dominance, resulting in limited integration of languages despite the intentions of language policies (Cele, 2021). The growing linguistic diversity in South African classrooms demands well-prepared educators to teach in multilingual and culturally diverse environments. Notably, preparing teachers to meet these demands presents significant challenges. Among these challenges is the ability of educators to balance multilingual instruction while maintaining cultural relevance, especially in contexts with a scarcity of training materials that reflect Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) (Cindi, 2021).

Problem statement

Despite policies promoting indigenous African languages in education, English continues to dominate as the medium of instruction in many institutions (Cele, 2021; Magocha et al., 2019; Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). As a result, pre-service and in-service teachers often lack the competencies to effectively teach African languages or integrate cultural knowledge into their pedagogy. This situation undermines efforts to promote linguistic inclusivity and cultural continuity, which are essential for achieving educational and social transformation. Teacher education programs are expected to address these challenges by equipping educators with the necessary linguistic skills, pedagogical strategies, and cultural competence (Mwila et al., 2022; Romijn et al., 2021; Szelei et al., 2020). The disconnect between policy expectations and practical realities in teacher education programs raises critical questions about the adequacy of current teacher preparation frameworks (Benson, 2019; Knaus et al., 2022; Ojó, 2022; Sathekge, 2022). The study is situated at a South African university where lectures' capacity to teach Indigenous languages is crucial for both Foundation Phase programs and adult education curricula.

Research Questions

Based on the above exposition, the study aims to propose actionable recommendations for revitalizing African language teaching through improved institutional support, professional development, and culturally responsive curricula. To achieve the goal of the study, the underlying two research questions that guided this investigation were:

- *How do lecturers perceive the effectiveness of teacher development programs?*
- *What challenges affect the integration of African languages in teaching?*

This article argues that while some progress has been made, institutional frameworks, professional support, and resources must be enhanced to fully realize the goal of revitalizing African language education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks for Teacher Education in Multilingual Contexts

Teacher development programs in multilingual settings are often grounded in several theoretical frameworks emphasizing the need for language awareness, equity, and culturally responsive pedagogy. One of the leading models is sociocultural theory, which highlights that language mediates learning and occurs in a social context (Alharbi, 2023; van Compernolle, 2021). In multilingual classrooms, language becomes both a tool for interaction and a subject of instruction, meaning that teachers must be adept at facilitating learning across different linguistic and cultural spaces, (Li, 2019; Li & Li, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019).

Another framework to tap into is the Multilingual education (Jones, 2014). This framework encourages the integration of students' home languages into learning to foster inclusivity(Ball & Smith, 2022). This approach, known as translanguaging, allows students and teachers to fluidly switch between languages during instruction, maximizing comprehension and engagement. However, effective translanguaging requires teachers to be equipped with linguistic flexibility and instructional strategies to support diverse learners(Yilmaz, 2021). A search through the literature postulates yet another relevant framework, critical pedagogy(Kareepadath, 2018; Sta, 2021). This framework encourages educators to challenge power dynamics in language education by promoting marginalized languages and cultures (Alim et al., 2020). In multilingual contexts like South Africa, where English continues to dominate educational spaces, teacher education programs must empower educators to disrupt these inequalities and foster linguistic justice by legitimizing indigenous African languages in the classroom. Communicative language teaching (CLT) theory also plays a key role, emphasizing interaction and meaningful communication as the foundation of language learning(Moharana; Qasserras, 2023; Rahmatillah, 2019). Research highlights that many teachers lack the preparation to adopt such methodologies, as most have been trained in monolingual frameworks prioritizing English or Afrikaans (Botha, 2022).

Importance of Cultural Competence in Language Teaching

Integrating cultural competence into language education is essential for meaningful learning, especially in contexts where language and culture are deeply intertwined, such as in African languages. Cultural competence refers to the ability of

educators to understand, respect, and effectively integrate their students' cultural backgrounds into the teaching process(Antón-Solanas et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2023; Sharifi et al., 2019). In teaching African languages, cultural competence extends beyond linguistic proficiency—it requires educators to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, traditions, and ways of knowing that reflect the lived experiences of their students. The research underscores that teaching a language without integrating its cultural elements diminishes students' ability to connect meaningfully with the content (Kumar et al., 2018). Indigenous African languages carry unique cultural knowledge, including proverbs, idioms, and oral traditions, which shape students' identities and worldviews (Dei, 2012; Mchombo, 2016; Osei-Tutu, 2023; Wane & Wane, 2019).

Successfully integrating cultural competence in language teaching requires institutional support and continuous professional development. Many teacher development programs in South Africa face challenges, as educators often lack access to culturally appropriate resources and training (Ball, 2000; Jez et al., 2022). There is also a need for contextualized curricula that allow educators to adapt teaching content to reflect local cultural realities (Boaduo et al., 2011). Without such support, teachers may resort to Eurocentric teaching methods that marginalize indigenous languages and cultures. Cultural competence also demands sensitivity to cultural diversity within languages. For example, isiXhosa, one of the Indigenous languages taught at South African universities, contains regional variations such as isiMpondo and isiThembu(Msutwana, 2019; Ramadiro, 2017; Sigcau, 2023). Educators must recognize and respect these variations to avoid privileging one dialect over others, which could alienate students from different linguistic backgrounds. Intercultural competence—navigating and mediating between different cultural groups—is critical in multilingual classrooms, where students come from diverse linguistic and ethnic communities (Csillik, 2019; Köster, 2020).

Challenges in Teacher Training for African Languages

Linguistic Diversity in Teacher Training
With 11 official languages in South Africa, including multiple Indigenous African languages, educators must be equipped to teach in environments where students may speak various languages and dialects (Brenzinger, 2017; Kaschula, 2021; Mtsatse & Combrinck, 2018). This linguistic diversity introduces complexities into teacher preparation, as educators must not only master the language, they teach but also navigate multilingual classroom dynamics. For example, in isiXhosa-speaking regions, students may speak variations like isiMpondo or isiThembu, which differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax(Sigcau, 2023). Such intra-language diversity complicates teacher training, as educators must ensure inclusivity while managing these linguistic nuances. Compounding this challenge, English often becomes the default medium of instruction in multilingual classrooms to accommodate students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Banda, 2018; Joubert & Sibanda, 2022). Teacher education programs must, therefore, prepare educators to balance the use of multiple languages effectively through strategies like code-switching and translanguaging, but this requires advanced linguistic and pedagogical skills that many educators lack. Furthermore, many pre-service teachers are not adequately exposed to multilingual teaching methodologies during their training, as most programs still rely on monolingual or bilingual frameworks that emphasize English and Afrikaans (Makalela, 2018; Willers, 2022).

Institutional Barriers to Teacher Training in African Languages
Institutional barriers also play a significant role in hindering the practical training of teachers for indigenous language education. One significant barrier is the lack of institutional prioritization of African languages within higher education(Bell & Swart, 2018; Manyike & Shava, 2018). African language departments often operate in isolation, with minimal collaboration with other faculties or departments. This siloed approach limits the development of interdisciplinary programs that could better support teacher training in African languages. Another institutional barrier is the limited availability of culturally relevant teaching resources (Andrianatos, 2019; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). Many teacher education programs lack textbooks, instructional guides, and other materials written in African languages or reflecting indigenous knowledge systems. Educators, therefore, often rely on translations from English, which may not fully capture the cultural nuances of Indigenous languages, leading to a diluted learning experience for students(Ndhlovu & Makalela, 2021). To mitigate against such hindrance, professional development must be ongoing and aligned with teachers' specific challenges in multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms(Penner-Williams et al., 2019).
Notably, there is a mismatch between policy expectations and institutional practices. (Mohohlwane, 2019; Ntentema, 2021). This creates a disconnect between the ideals of multilingualism and the realities on the ground, where teachers find little institutional support for implementing indigenous language instruction. Novice teachers often struggle to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world classroom settings due to a lack of mentorship from experienced educators(Lloyd, 2019; Shank & Santiague, 2022).

CAPS Policy for African Languages in Teacher Education

Overview of the CAPS Policy
The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) represents a critical framework guiding educational practices in South Africa, particularly regarding language instruction. Introduced in 2011, CAPS aims to provide a systematic and coherent approach to teaching and assessment across various subjects, including African languages (Mathebula, 2019). The policy emphasizes the importance of linguistic diversity and cultural relevance, promoting indigenous languages as

mediums of instruction, particularly in foundational education. CAPS outlines specific objectives for teaching African languages, emphasizing the need to develop learners' reading, writing, and oral communication proficiency (DOWEJKO, 2022; Gobodwana, 2023; Maluleke, 2019). This aligns with the broader goals of transforming South African education to reflect its multicultural society.

Implications for Teacher Education
The CAPS policy places significant emphasis on the role of teacher education in realizing its objectives for African languages (Fynn & Ndlovu, 2024; Omodan & Mamaile, 2024; Rapanyane, 2024; Smit, 2024). This requires a pedagogical shift from traditional, grammar-focused approaches to more communicative and context-based methodologies. Research indicates that while some institutions have made strides to incorporate language and cultural education, others continue to emphasize English and Afrikaans, neglecting the specific pedagogical needs associated with teaching African languages (Khohliso et al., 2024; Rais, 2024; Smit, 2024). As a result, pre-service teachers may graduate without adequate preparation to teach in multilingual contexts, undermining the objectives outlined in the CAPS policy. The CAPS policy strongly emphasizes assessment, advocating for regular evaluation of learner progress in African languages (Mpuangnan et al., 2024; Smit, 2024).

Cultural Relevance in CAPS Implementation
A critical aspect of the CAPS policy is its call for culturally relevant pedagogy (Cindi, 2021).The reality of implementing this component in teacher education programs often falls short. Many teacher training institutions lack access to culturally appropriate teaching materials that reflect Indigenous knowledge systems (Cindi, 2021). Consequently, educators may find it challenging to design lessons that resonate with students' cultural identities, undermining the objectives of the CAPS policy. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for ongoing professional development to support educators in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices. While CAPS recognizes the importance of professional development, many institutions provide limited training opportunities focusing on the unique challenges of teaching African languages (Maluleke, 2019; Morolong, 2019).

CAPS Policy Impact
The effective implementation of the CAPS policy in teacher education remains hindered by misalignment between training programs and the policy expectations, limited resources for assessment, and inadequate focus on culturally relevant pedagogy (Magumbo, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and teacher educators to ensure that future educators are adequately prepared to teach African languages in diverse classrooms (Diko & Celliers, 2024). Only through such collaborative efforts can the aspirations of the CAPS policy be fully realized, fostering an inclusive and linguistically rich educational environment that honors South Africa's cultural heritage(Guillaume, 2024; Loots et al., 2024).

Examples of Successful Professional Development Models for Indigenous Language Educators

Collaborative Professional Learning Communities
One effective model for professional development among indigenous language educators is the establishment of Collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Moles, 2023). These communities provide a platform for teachers to engage in collective learning, share resources, and develop best practices. PLCs emphasize collaborative inquiry, where educators come together to discuss challenges and successes in teaching Indigenous languages, fostering a supportive environment for professional growth(Sterling, 2024). For instance, the Language Teachers' Community of Practice in South Africa facilitates regular meetings and workshops on indigenous language pedagogy. Research has shown that such collaborative approaches lead to increased teacher efficacy, improved student outcomes, and enhanced cultural competence among educators(Baisden, 2023; Guerra et al., 2024; Sterling, 2024).

Mentorship and Peer Observation Programs
Mentorship programs that pair experienced educators with novice teachers are another effective professional development model(Smith Washington, 2024). These programs allow new teachers to observe and learn from seasoned colleagues, providing valuable insights into effective language teaching strategies and classroom management techniques. Mentorship fosters a culture of continuous improvement and helps novice educators develop confidence in their instructional practices(Calaguas, 2023). For example, a mentorship program in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa has paired novice isiXhosa teachers with experienced educators who provide guidance and support in lesson planning, assessment, and culturally relevant teaching methods. This model has improved teaching practices and a stronger sense of community among educators (Ben-Amram & Davidovitch, 2024; Keiler et al., 2023).

Culturally Relevant Curriculum Development Workshops
Professional development programs focusing on developing culturally relevant curricula for Indigenous languages are essential for enhancing teaching effectiveness. Workshops aimed at curriculum design encourage teachers to create learning materials that reflect their students' cultural contexts and experiences(Eden et al., 2024; Kilag, Catacutan, et al., 2023). These workshops often involve collaboration with community members, cultural experts, and linguists to ensure

the content is authentic and relevant. An example of this approach is (Kagola, 2023; Matariro; Sondlo, 2023). This project emphasizes the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum, ensuring that language instruction is not only about linguistic proficiency but also cultural identity and heritage(Akintayo, Atobatele, et al., 2024). Research indicates that when educators are actively involved in curriculum development, they are more likely to implement the content effectively in their classrooms, leading to better student learning outcomes (Ajani, 2023; Alanazi et al., 2023; Kilag, Marquita, et al., 2023; Kim, 2024).

Technology-Enhanced Professional Development
Incorporating technology into professional development for indigenous language educators can enhance learning opportunities and accessibility(Rintaningrum, 2023). Online platforms and digital resources enable teachers to engage in self-directed learning, collaborate with peers across regions, and access a wealth of teaching materials. E-learning modules and webinars focused on innovative pedagogical strategies for teaching Indigenous languages can help educators stay current with research and best practices (Sharma & Bhardwaj, 2023; Taiebine, 2023; Williams, 2023). For instance, the African Languages Technology Initiative offers online training courses to equip teachers with digital skills and resources for effectively teaching African languages. These courses cover integrating technology into language instruction, using multimedia resources, and developing online assessments. The flexibility of online training allows educators to participate regardless of their geographic location, increasing accessibility to professional development (Bergene et al., 2023; Sofi-Karim et al., 2023).

Focused Workshops on Linguistic and Cultural Competence
Targeted workshops that address linguistic and cultural competence are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of indigenous language education. These workshops can cover various topics, including strategies for teaching phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary in Indigenous languages and methods for integrating cultural content into lessons(du Plessis & du Plessis, 2023; Makeleni et al., 2023). For example, a series of workshops organized by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) focuses on developing linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness among teachers of African languages(Mpofu, 2023). Participants engage in interactive activities that help them understand the linguistic features of indigenous languages and explore ways to incorporate cultural narratives and local histories into their teaching. This dual focus on language and culture fosters a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping identity and community (Altun, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study design to explore the experiences and perspectives of lecturers teaching English and isiXhosa at a South African university. Qualitative research is well-suited for this inquiry as it allows for an in-depth examination of complex social phenomena, offering rich insights into the pedagogical practices, challenges, and institutional contexts affecting the teaching of Indigenous languages (Gupta, 2024). The case study research design facilitates an exploration of the specific context of a single higher education institution, enabling the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives and detailed narratives that inform broader understandings of teacher development in multilingual settings (Miller et al., 2023). Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, involving three lecturers from the university's education department engaged in the Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase Teaching and the Diploma in Adult and Community Education and Training programs. This sampling ensured that participants had relevant experience and knowledge, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the pedagogical practices and challenges associated with teaching Indigenous languages (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Data collection relied primarily on semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility and depth in capturing participants' experiences and perspectives (Belina, 2023).

Data Analysis
This study employed thematic analysis, a widely utilized qualitative research method that facilitates the identification and interpretation of patterns within qualitative data (Lim, 2024). This method is particularly effective for analyzing semi-structured interview data, as it allows researchers to derive insights from participants' experiences and articulate their perspectives in a structured manner. ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, was employed in this study to support the organization and analysis of interview transcripts (Gupta, 2024).

Ethical Considerations
Ethical considerations are fundamental to research, particularly involving human participants (Elliott, 2023). This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and maintain research integrity, focusing on confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher bias mitigation. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to participants and securely storing all data, thus fostering a trusting environment that encouraged open communication. Informed consent was obtained through a detailed information sheet provided to participants, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time (Elliott, 2023; Gupta, 2024). To mitigate researcher bias, reflexivity was employed, involving critical self-reflection, maintaining a reflective journal throughout the research process, and data triangulation to validate findings (Lim, 2024). These measures aimed to uphold

high standards of integrity and transparency, thereby enhancing the credibility and applicability of the study's findings in the field of language education (Bang, 2024).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Integration of Indigenous Languages
Sub-themes: Language diversity, multilingual strategies, and English as a medium of instruction
The findings related to integrating Indigenous languages in South African education underscore the complexities of multilingual instruction within a linguistically diverse landscape (Diko & Celliers, 2024). The analysis revealed that language diversity, exemplified by the various dialects of isiXhosa, poses significant challenges for educators who must navigate the intricacies of teaching in such varied linguistic contexts. Educators reported employing strategies like code-switching and translanguaging to leverage students' linguistic resources, enhancing comprehension and fostering an inclusive classroom environment. This was evidenced by the comment of one of the participants who said:

> *"It was challenging to teach IsiXhosa because some words just do not have equivalents in English, making explaining concepts difficult. That is why I ended up explaining in English."*

However, despite these efforts, the predominance of English as the medium of instruction emerged as a considerable barrier to effectively integrating Indigenous languages(Mabela & Ditsele, 2024). This reliance on English not only marginalizes Indigenous languages but also reinforces a perception of linguistic hierarchy that devalues the cultural significance of these languages (Chirimuuta, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2015; Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023). Such dynamics highlight the need for a critical examination of educational policies prioritizing English, often at the expense of Indigenous languages, thereby perpetuating inequalities within the educational system(Adedokun et al., 2024).

The discussions surrounding the integration of Indigenous languages reveal that, while educators demonstrate a commitment to promoting linguistic diversity through various pedagogical strategies, they face significant constraints imposed by institutional norms and policies. This was evidenced by one participant saying:

> *"We need to incorporate more diverse content into our curriculum to reflect the cultural richness of our learners."*

The other participant commented:

> *"We are encouraged to teach in Indigenous languages, but the demands of standardized testing make it difficult. The students need to excel in these exams, and since they are in English, it forces us to prioritize English over their home languages in everyday lessons."*

The educators' experiences indicate a disconnect between policy objectives aimed at enhancing the role of Indigenous languages and the realities of classroom practice, where English predominates due to pressures from standardized assessments. This situation necessitates comprehensive policy reforms that align with the principles of multilingualism and acknowledge the value of Indigenous languages as vital components of South Africa's cultural heritage(Hlengwa-Selepe, 2024; Madima & Makananise, 2025). for effective implementation of multilingual strategies, there is an urgent need For institutional support that includes professional development focused on multilingual education and access to culturally relevant teaching resources (Orcasitas-Vicandi & Perales-Fernández-de-Gamboa, 2024). By addressing these challenges and prioritizing promoting Indigenous languages, the education system can empower students to navigate their linguistic identities while fostering a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage (Dada, 2024).

Theme 2: Cultural Content and Pedagogical Practices
Sub-themes: Lexical gaps, cultural sensitivity, and resource challenges.
Integrating cultural content into pedagogical practices is paramount for effective language instruction, particularly in multilingual contexts where language and culture are inextricably linked (Tuimebayeva et al., 2024). The analysis of interview data revealed several critical sub-themes related to this theme, including lexical gaps, cultural sensitivity, and resource challenges. Educators noted that lexical gaps, or the absence of direct translations for certain cultural concepts between indigenous languages and English, pose significant barriers to teaching cultural content effectively. For instance, one lecturer highlighted the difficulties faced when conveying culturally specific ideas or practices that have no equivalent in English. One participant comment:

> *"It's often very challenging to convey culturally specific ideas that have no equivalent in English. These concepts lose much of their depth and significance when we can't find the right words to express them accurately."*

This can lead to a lack of depth in students' language understanding. This disconnect emphasizes the need for teachers to develop innovative pedagogical strategies that bridge these gaps, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the language and its cultural context (Dunham et al., 2024; Harris, 2024).

Cultural sensitivity emerged as another crucial factor influencing pedagogical practices. Educators recognized the importance of teaching the language and embedding cultural narratives, traditions, and values into their instruction. The other participant commented:

> "Activities like sharing our traditions and listening to each other's stories were key in making the cultural aspects come alive during our sessions."

This approach fosters a deeper connection between students and the language, enhancing their motivation and engagement. However, resource challenges were frequently mentioned, as many educators reported a lack of culturally relevant materials and teaching aids reflecting Indigenous languages' rich cultural heritage.

> "We simply do not have enough resources in Indigenous languages—textbooks, learning aids, or even multimedia materials. Without these, it becomes a struggle to fully implement the curriculum as intended, especially when making it culturally relevant."

The reliance on English-centric resources limits the ability of teachers to create authentic learning experiences that resonate with students' cultural identities(Wang, 2021). Without access to adequate teaching materials, educators may inadvertently perpetuate cultural stereotypes or misunderstandings, undermining the goal of promoting cultural competence (Johnson-Hansen, 2021). Addressing these resource challenges is essential for fostering an educational environment where cultural content is seamlessly integrated into language instruction, enriching students' linguistic and cultural learning experiences (Akintayo, Eden, et al., 2024; Kim, 2020; Mulaudzi, 2024; Otajonova, 2024; Siziba & Maseko, 2023; Zaman, 2024).

Theme 3: Institutional Support and Professional Development
Sub-themes: Translation of materials, access to resources, and collaboration across departments.
Institutional support and professional development play pivotal roles in the effective teaching of Indigenous as evidenced by the findings from the interview data languages (Brown, 2021; Chiblow & Meighan, 2022). The analysis revealed several sub-themes, including the translation of materials, access to resources, and the necessity for collaboration across departments. Participants highlighted the importance of translating teaching materials into indigenous languages to facilitate better comprehension and instruction. One lecturer noted:

> "in our department, we are encouraged to translate the key concepts of our student module guide to isiXhosa, but it is still a work in progress. Some translations are incomplete, and that inconsistency makes it hard for us and the learners. It is a barrier—without fully translated materials, we struggle to teach and build proficiency in Indigenous languages effectively."

While some subject matter guides had been translated, these efforts remained in the early stages and were not yet fully effective. The incomplete translation of materials can create barriers for educators and learners, limiting the efficacy of language instruction and hindering the development of proficiency in indigenous languages. This underscores the critical need for institutions to prioritize translating educational resources to ensure equitable access to information for all students (Long et al., 2020; Roux, 2020; Stroud & Kerfoot, 2021; Xulu, 2024).

Access to adequate resources emerged as another significant factor impacting the teaching of indigenous languages. Educators reported facing challenges related to the availability of culturally relevant teaching materials, which are essential for creating authentic learning experiences. The lack of such resources not only hampers pedagogical practices but also undermines the integration of cultural content into language instruction (Diko & Celliers, 2024; Nakidien et al., 2021). Furthermore, the necessity for collaboration across departments was emphasized, as many educators expressed a desire for interdisciplinary partnerships to enhance their teaching practices. Collaborative initiatives that share expertise and resources across different faculties can foster a more comprehensive approach to language education, promoting innovative pedagogical strategies and enriching the learning environment(Hoinle et al., 2021; Markey et al., 2021). Strengthening institutional support through improved resource allocation, comprehensive professional development, and enhanced collaboration can empower educators to effectively teach Indigenous languages, fostering greater linguistic and cultural competency among students(Pascoe & Singh, 2023; Siziba & Nhongo, 2024).

Theme 4: Proposed Curriculum Enhancements
Sub-themes: Continuous professional development, technology integration, and curriculum flexibility.
The need for curriculum enhancements in teaching Indigenous languages emerged as a significant theme from the analysis of interview data, with particular emphasis on continuous professional development, technology integration, and curriculum flexibility. Educators strongly desire ongoing professional development opportunities to refine their pedagogical skills and remain updated on effective teaching methodologies. Continuous professional development is essential for equipping teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to address multilingual classrooms' complexities and effectively teach Indigenous languages(Atobatele et al., 2024; Makolane, 2020; Mulaudzi, 2024). One lecturer noted:

> "*Regular workshops and training sessions on innovative teaching practices can greatly enhance our ability to engage students and promote cultural content*."

This highlights the importance of institutional commitment to providing sustained professional development that aligns with the evolving needs of educators and their students.

Integrating technology into language instruction was identified as a critical factor for enhancing curriculum delivery and engagement. Educators acknowledged that technology could facilitate access to diverse learning resources, foster interactive learning experiences, and support differentiated instruction tailored to individual student needs. For instance, digital platforms and multimedia tools can enhance language learning by providing rich, contextualized content that resonates with students' cultural backgrounds (Bitar & Davidovich, 2024; La Fleur; Li & Lan, 2022; Thomas, 2021). However, effective technology integration requires proper training, ongoing support, and access to reliable technological resources. The importance of curriculum flexibility was emphasized, with participants advocating for adaptable curricula responding to students' diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. This flexibility would enable educators to tailor their instruction to meet the unique needs of their classrooms, facilitating the incorporation of Indigenous languages and cultural content in relevant and meaningful ways (Goforth et al., 2024; Oberg De La Garza et al., 2020).

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Strengthening Professional Development Programs
Creating comprehensive, ongoing training for educators
Creating comprehensive, ongoing training initiatives is essential for equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of multilingual classrooms effectively(Mulaudzi, 2024). These professional development programs should be designed to address the specific challenges identified in the research, including integrating cultural content, using multilingual strategies, and effectively implementing technology in language instruction. First, comprehensive training should focus on developing educators' competencies in culturally responsive teaching practices that emphasize the significance of indigenous languages and cultures. This can include workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning experiences that foster an understanding of linguistic diversity and its impact on student learning. By equipping educators with the tools to create inclusive and culturally relevant curricula, professional development programs can empower them to engage students more effectively and foster a deeper appreciation for their linguistic heritage(Caballero, 2024; Codding et al., 2021; Norman, 2020).

Opportunities for mentorship, peer observation, and shared professional learning communities can enhance the effectiveness of training programs, providing educators with practical insights and strategies that can be implemented in their classrooms(Keiler et al., 2023). Integrating technology into these professional development initiatives will ensure educators are prepared to utilize digital tools and resources to enrich language instruction and enhance student engagement(Hennessy et al., 2022; Hrastinski, 2021). By investing in robust and comprehensive professional development programs, educational institutions can create a supportive environment that empowers educators to teach Indigenous languages effectively. Such initiatives will not only enhance the quality of language education but also contribute to the broader goals of promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity in South African education, ultimately fostering an inclusive learning environment that respects and values the rich linguistic heritage of the country(Alstad, 2022; Cortina & Earl, 2020; Kubacka & D'Addio, 2020).

Promoting Curriculum Flexibility
The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of promoting curriculum flexibility in teaching Indigenous languages(Becerra-Lubies et al., 2021). Curriculum flexibility allows educators to adapt their instructional strategies and content to reflect their learners' linguistic and cultural contexts, ultimately enhancing engagement and promoting a deeper understanding of the language and its cultural significance(Jonker et al., 2020). One key implication is the need for educational policies that support interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling the integration of African languages into subjects beyond language-specific classes. For example, subjects such as history, science, and social studies can incorporate African languages and cultural content, thereby reinforcing the relevance of these languages in students' everyday lives. Such an approach validates Indigenous languages and enriches the educational experience by allowing students to use their home languages in meaningful contexts (Kirss et al., 2021; Maplethorpe, 2023).

 Promoting innovative teaching practices that leverage local cultural knowledge can foster a more engaging and relatable curriculum. Providing teachers with the necessary resources, training, and support to implement these practices will enhance their confidence and effectiveness in delivering a flexible curriculum that embraces the richness of South Africa's linguistic diversity(Erling et al., 2021; Hibbert, 2023; Pillay, 2022).

Developing Culturally Relevant Resources
Increasing investment in creating and distributing teaching materials that reflect the cultural contexts of African languages is essential for enhancing language instruction and fostering meaningful learning experiences(Sithole & Mbukanma, 2024). Culturally relevant resources, such as textbooks, multimedia tools, and learning aids rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, support language acquisition and reinforce students' cultural identities, contributing to a more

inclusive and engaging learning environment(Eden et al., 2024; Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). A critical policy implication is the necessity for government and institutional investment in developing high-quality resources tailored to the needs of educators and learners. This involves collaborating with linguists, educators, cultural experts, and community members to ensure the resources authentically represent the languages and cultures they aim to promote (Akintayo, Eden, et al., 2024).

Without adequate support, there is a risk that culturally relevant materials may be underutilized, limiting their impact on language instruction (Nadelson et al., 2024). Institutions must also ensure that these resources are continuously updated and aligned with evolving pedagogical practices to meet the changing needs of multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms. Developing culturally relevant resources for Indigenous languages is crucial for promoting linguistic inclusivity and cultural continuity within South Africa's education system (Siziba & Maseko, 2024). Strategic investment in creating these resources and professional support for educators will empower teachers to deliver language instruction that resonates with students' lived experiences. This approach will enhance the quality of indigenous language education and contribute to the broader goals of preserving and revitalizing South Africa's rich linguistic heritage(Ajani et al., 2024; Diko & Celliers, 2024).

Institutional Collaboration and Support

Teaching Indigenous languages and promoting cultural competence cannot be confined to language-specific programs alone but must be integrated across the broader academic environment(Tyler, 2023). Collaboration between faculties—such as education, social sciences, health, and engineering—can enhance the relevance of Indigenous languages by embedding them in diverse disciplinary contexts, ensuring that students encounter and engage with these languages throughout their academic journey(Wawrzynski & Garton, 2024). Institutional support should also focus on creating cross-disciplinary initiatives that encourage shared ownership of language promotion across faculties.

The cross-faculty collaboration must be supported by institutional leadership to ensure that resources, policies, and professional development initiatives are aligned with the broader goal of promoting Indigenous languages(Mgqwashu, 2024). Incentivizing interdepartmental projects and research initiatives focusing on language and culture can further strengthen institutional efforts. By building cohesive support networks, institutions can move beyond siloed approaches and create a more unified framework that empowers educators and promotes the sustained use of Indigenous languages throughout higher education(du Plessis & du Plessis, 2023; Nyoni, 2023; Ojong & Addo, 2024). Through collaboration, resource sharing, and leadership-driven initiatives, extending support beyond language departments to other faculties(Bwowe et al., 2024; Lumadi, 2021; Sotashe, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has highlighted the challenges and opportunities of teaching indigenous languages within a South African higher education context. The findings reveal significant obstacles, such as linguistic diversity, the predominance of English as a medium of instruction, and institutional barriers that limit the availability of culturally relevant resources and professional development. However, the study also identifies opportunities for enhancing language instruction, including adopting multilingual strategies, integrating technology, and promoting cross-departmental collaboration. These challenges and opportunities underscore the complex realities educators face in multilingual classrooms and the need for concerted efforts to revitalize indigenous language education. Future studies could investigate how sustained training influences educators' ability to effectively integrate Indigenous languages and cultural content into their teaching. By addressing these areas, future research can help inform policies and practices that foster the sustainable promotion of Indigenous languages in education, ultimately contributing to preserving and revitalizing South Africa's linguistic heritage.

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