MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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“It’s that they participate intellectually mostly in Tshivenḓa”

– Indigenous multilingual education in Vhembe, South Africa –

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Abstract

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 for Quality Education is challenged by estimates that up to 40% of the world's children do not have the capability to learn in their own language (UNESCO 2016). South Africa is addressing this by raising nine of its Indigenous languages, including Tshivenḓa, to official status and incorporating them in formal education (S.A. Const. 1996: ch.1 §6). This research aims to investigate educators' perceptions on the role of Tshivenḓa language education in developing the capabilities of Primary School learners in Vhembe, South Africa. This builds on a large body of evidence in linguistics and multilingual education shows that children learn in a language they are familiar with and home language proficiency lays the foundation for children's learning capabilities (Probyn 2019; Heugh et al 2019:163; Makalela 2016; Ball 2010:122; Cummins 1984; 2001:17) Ngũgĩ (1986) describes how African languages, as expressed through orature and literature, articulates the ethical, moral, and spiritual concepts of people's evolving world-view. However, Ruiz (2010) argues that English has dominated economic justifications for language learning.

This research contributes an understanding of Indigenous multilingual education from a human development perspective. A capabilities framework allows for a diverse range of ends and means to well-being rather than economic means alone. The research found that when teachers were free to respond to the diversity of their learners there was a strong role for Tshivenḓa in quality, inclusive education. Learners' home language connected strongly with capabilities for understanding their origins and culture; connecting with family; and understanding in the classroom; learning *thonifho,* respect; *u tshina*, to dance; and in learning *lungano* folktales. Tshivenḓa also played a small but positive role in participation; emotions; working together and active learning in the classroom. Teachers strengthened these capabilities by code-switching through English language curriculum but only reluctantly due to DBE policy. This study finds strong capacity among teachers to develop more advanced Indigenous language education aligned with an ubuntu Translanguaging approach (Makalela 2016).

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Table of Contents:

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

Nḓivhadzano Introduction

Salungano salungano!
Kale kale ngei tshiritikini tsha Vhembe. Hovha huna vhaṅwe vhadedzi vhafumbili, vha tshi amba nga vhundeme ha luambo lwashu lwa Tshivenḓa. Salungano! Vhana avho vho thoma u tshina zwavhudi, u takalela pfunzo, na vha khou bvela phanḓa kha u dzhenelela kha mbofholowo ya Afrika Tshipembe. Salungano!

Here is a story for the children!
A long time ago in the Vhembe district there were twelve teachers who spoke on the importance of our language Tshivenḓa. It's a story about these children learning to dance, enjoying their education and going forward to participate in the freedom of South Africa.
Here is the story!

With the move to democracy in 1994 South Africa made languages a cornerstone of its constitution establishing 11 official languages, including isiZulu, isiXhosa, Tshivenḓa, and Setswana, and making commitments to elevate their status and be incorporated in formal education (S.A. Const. 1996: ch.1 §6). With 25 years of experience now weaving 9 distinct Indigenous languages into the education system, South Africa has a lot to share with other multi-lingual countries.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 for Quality Education is challenged by estimates that up to 40% of the world's children do not have the capability to learn in their own language (UNESCO 2016). For Indigenous people in particular, language goes to the core of self-determination and inclusive education in target 4.5 (UNDRIP 2007; UN 2015). Yap & Watene (2019: 455) find that the UN's SDG process for building consensus on universal indicators created a framework that was unable to recognise culture, and therefore languages, as central pillars of well-being. This research worked with twelve teachers in Vhembe, South Africa to understand how their use of Tshivenḓa in the classroom helps children develop the capabilities they need towards a life of value (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2011).

1.1 Research Problem

English is a competing priority in South Africa as a common language for engaging in the national and global economy (Heugh 2007). It was the privileged language status of English that gave me the opportunity to teach English first additional language (FAL) at a rural primary

school in Vhembe from 2015-2018. During this time I was dedicated to learning Tshivenḓa, joking with my fellow teachers at lunch time, chatting with locals at inter-village soccer games, and creating a linguistically inclusive classroom to engage grade 4 & 5 students in Tshivenḓa if English was going over their heads. On clear nights I would *'dzedza'* with my host family - a word that captures telling stories under the stars around the cooking fire. Tshivenḓa is a beautiful language and it is wonderful to be with people so at ease in their cultural element. However, talking to a teacher at a workshop in Vhembe one day I heard that their Principal was hoping to extend English as the language of instruction for all grades in an attempt to lift children's performance. Hitching a ride with another teacher to town I learned that there were educators who believed extending Tshivenḓa language instruction would benefit students' learning. The question comes down to what is the role of Tshivenḓa in schools?

1.2 Aims & Objectives

In response to the problem stated above, this research aims to investigate how Tshivenḓa language education has influenced the capabilities of learners in the classroom as expressed by educators in Vhembe using a 'capabilities' or human development approach. The capabilities approach takes a holistic view of well-being that recognises diversity with a view towards equity and people's freedom to live a life of value (Sen 1999; McKnight et al. 2019).

Table 1 *Research Aim & Objectives*

Aim: To investigate educators' perceptions on how Tshivenḓa home language teaching has influenced the capabilities of Primary School learners in Vhembe, South Africa.		
Research Questions:	**Policy Analysis**	**Semi-Structured Interviews**
1. What capabilities do South African educators consider to be valuable for primary school learners?	*Objective 1.1:* To analyse government documents for the desired outcomes of South Africa's democratic system for Primary education.	*Objective 1.2:* To interview Primary school educators about the skills and values that are important for children in Vhembe.
2. What successes and challenges do Primary school learners face when trying to achieve these capabilities?	*Objective 2.1:* To analyse government documents for the means to achieving the stated outcomes, particularly with language policies.	*Objective 2.2:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the successes and challenges they face getting learners to achieve these skills and values.
3. In what ways does home language instruction enable learners to attain these capabilities?	*Objective 3.1:* To analyse the Department of Basic Education's rationale on how the language instruction effects children's learning.	*Objective 3.3:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the ways in which Tshivenḓa language curriculum has expanded the capabilities of their learners.

1.3 Defining Terms:

1.3.1 Language of Instruction

The 'Language of Instruction' is the medium through which teachers teach and learners learn in schools, also referred to as the medium of instruction (MOI). In South Africa it is known as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) (DBE 2010:7). This language can differ depending on who is teaching, who is being taught and what the aim is to learn. South Africa's current LoLT policy stems from the establishment of 11 official languages in the 1996 constitution where "[e]veryone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice" (S.A. Const. 1996: §29(2)).

1.3.2 Mother-Tongue

The languages that we grow up speaking have deep cultural, ethical, social and human aspects that make them integral to who we are, how we engage the world and what our options in life will be (Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty (2008) define one's mother tongue as the "language(s) one learns first, identifies with, and/or is identified by

others as a native speaker of" (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1473). One's mother-tongue is distinct from a heritage language, where someone may grow up speaking English at home but still have family heritage that includes another language (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1473).

1.3.3 Capability

This research uses Amartya Sen's (1999) definition of a 'capability' as something a person has the substantive freedom to do or be. The capability of using Tshivenḓa is the focus because it does not assume what language someone will choose – rather a person's agency to choose is primary and the focus becomes to what extent those who would choose Tshivenḓa are able to enact this choice. There is no one way of being South African. This research investigates the extent to which a child who does identify with the language of Tshivenḓa has the freedom to use that language, among others, in Primary school.

1.3.4 Vhembe

This project is located in the rural Vhembe District of South Africa's northern Limpopo Province. Many people in Vhembe, including the participants in this research, identify as Venda which refers at once to a place, an Indigenous culture and a people – vhaVenda. The Venda culture has origins in the Mapungubwe kingdom (circa 1200 CE) who mined minerals, smithed and traded fine jewellery like the 'Golden Rhino' down the Limpopo river with Africans and outsiders (CAPS SS 2011: 41). At the confluence of rivers between Vhembe, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, Mapungubwe was a site of contact between speakers of Bantu as well as Khoisan languages (Makalela 2015:27). Those who moved North became the Kalanga and Shona in Greater Zimbabwe and those who moved South found alliance with Pedi (Northern Sotho) and Khoisan tribes to establish the many clans of the Venda kingdom (Ibid).

> *"The plural way of dynamic multilingualism can be gleaned from the Limpopo Valley... It is in this connection that African multilingualism is understood to be a continuation of this continuum..." (Makalela 2015:27)*

In this quote, Makalela reflects not only on the common roots of African languages, but the pluralistic ways languages have developed in communities across Limpopo. This continuum of connected languages can be seen in the table below. Of the three languages in the Sotho

language group, Tshivenḓa is most closely related to Sepedi, and the language of Setokwa while not an official language is a distinct language that is on the spectrum between Sepedi and Tshivenḓa.

Table 2 *South African Language Continuum*

Language Groups		11 Official Languages	Other Languages
Southern Bantu		Tshivenḓa	> Setokwa
	Sotho	Sepedi	
		Sesotho	Koi & San Northern Ndebele
		Setswana	
		Xitsonga	
	Nguni	isiNdebele	
		isiZulu	
		isiXhosa	
		siSwati	
	Germanic	Afrikaans	
		English	

Kretzer & Kaschula's (2019) use of 'linguistic landscapes' provides a useful frame for getting an overview of the languages students in Vhembe are exposed to in their everyday lives. Vhembe is a predominantly Tshivenḓa speaking area, with some Shona and Xitsonga speaking families. The main source of media is Phalaphala FM, a Tshivenḓa language radio station, followed by SABC television among the scattering of homes that have a TV. Tshivenḓa is also the dominant language in the nearest large town, Thohoyandou which is the central marketplace of Venda. Government departments and many businesses across the district conduct all formal relationships and written work in English with Tshivenḓa in conversational roles. Churches play a central role in community life and the language of services are on a spectrum from mostly English to mostly Tshivenḓa depending on the Pastor. Traditional Venda singing with Christian themes forms the basis of many hymns in the singing that carries through religious services.

Figure 1 *Map of Vhembe, Limpopo Province*

In the South of Vhembe, in the towns of Makhado and Louis Trichardt, vhaVenda are still the majority and English is potentially a common language with Afrikaans speaking locals. Still there are Afrikaaners who learn Tshivenḓa and vhaVenda who learn Afrikaans. In Polokwane, the capital of Limpopo province, Sepedi is the dominant language that Venda people will pick up to work in the markets, or English for more formal employment. As Heugh observes, in practice many South Africans speak multiple languages through different contexts as a strategy for wider communication (2007: 212). In Johannesburg and Pretoria, a 9hr bus ride south of Vhembe, English is a major language, and still isiZulu and Afrikaans and in fact all of South Africa's languages remain significant here.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

In Chapter One I have framed the issue of Tshivenḓa language education in Vhembe, South Africa as one of quality education, human rights and capabilities in the international development context. My motivation stems from my time teaching in Vhembe and the wonderfully complex multilingual environment that both learners and teachers must navigate.

In Chapter Two I introduce the capabilities approach as theory that really captures the diversity, democratic ideals and goals of social transformation central to education in South Africa today. In Chapter Three I review the literature in multilingual education to theorise learners' home language as an intellectual resource in the classroom. In Chapter Four we travel through the history of language policy in South Africa to understand the motivations that underpin the shift from monolingual to a multilingual approach in the 1996 constitution. In Chapter Five I describe the qualitative methodology that I used to undertake this research and address the ethical concerns of working with human participants. In Chapter Six I outline sections of the constitution and language in education policy that were central findings in the policy analysis. In Chapter Seven I share the insight of teachers in Vhembe, what capabilities they are working towards and how using Tshivenḓa relates to their successes and challenges in with children in the classroom. Finally in Chapter Eight I bring all of these strands of research and insight into a discussion on the ways Tshivenḓa influences the capabilities of learners in Vhembe, South Africa.

Chapter 2. The Capabilities Approach

Introduction

The capabilities approach allows this research to evaluate language choice from a human development perspective. This allows us to capture a broader range of goals for education in the Vhembe context, that would factor in decisions on a balance of languages in schools that will enhance children's capabilities (Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 1). The approach informs this research in three major ways - first of all understanding the various capabilities that contribute to an education of value in South Africa; then examining the different conversion factors that affect the attainment of these capabilities; and finally investigating how the language of instruction affects these particular capabilities in the Vhembe context. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 for Quality Education considers targets 4.1 & 4.2 for children's literacy a fundamental capability for human flourishing (UN 2015). The following sets up a framework of analysis through the capabilities approach in order to address research questions on the role language plays in literacy and quality education.

At the heart of the Capabilities Approach are people, what we can do and be and our capabilities to live a long, healthy and creative life (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2011; Robeyns 2017). Sen (1999) defines poverty as 'capability deprivation' in that people lack the substantial freedom to take actions that would allow them to thrive as a human being. *Substantial freedom*, as Sen defines it, is not just independence from constraints but also, crucially, access to the means to achieve these actions. This approach to development allows us to move beyond measures of economic resources, which are simply one means to a good life, in order to engage the lived experiences of communities themselves (Bockstael and Watene 2016: 267). Given the central role of public reason in identifying the capabilities that we have reason to value in our lives, the approach is fundamentally about people's agency to pursue our aspirations, in the joint aim of human flourishing (Walker 2019: 229). This is in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) "which asserts that Indigenous people must be agents of their own development and set the priorities that they value" (Yap & Yu 2016:317).

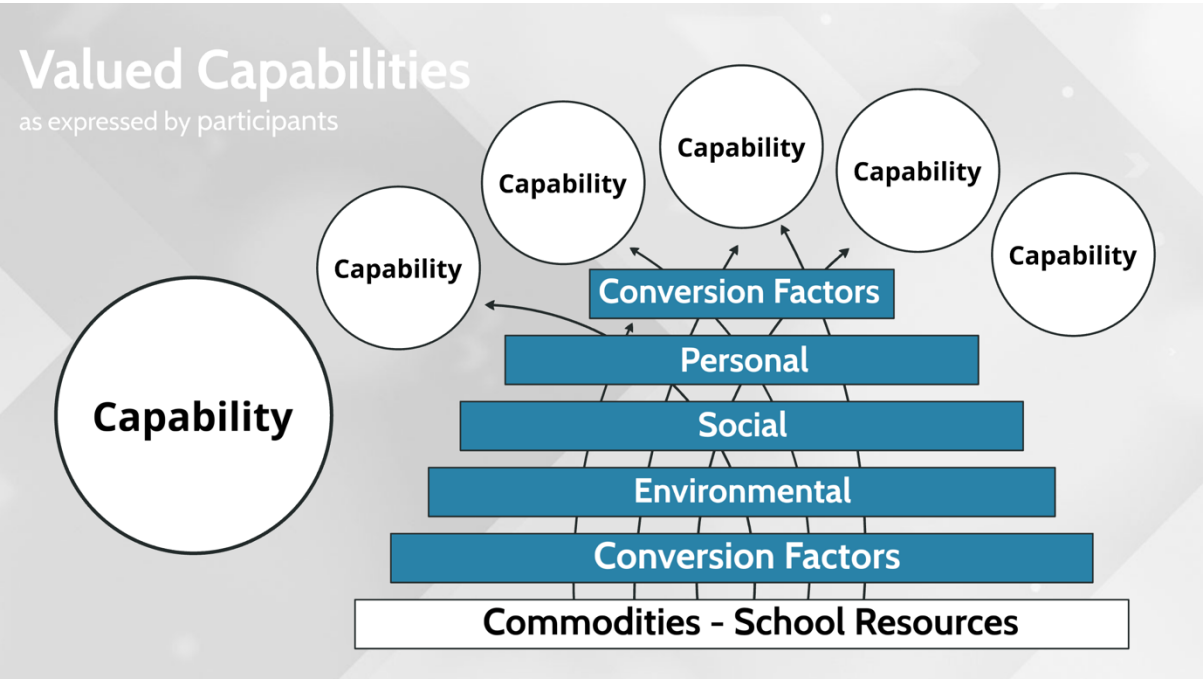
2.1 The Basics of the Capabilities Approach

A capability is something an individual has the real option to do or be (Sen, 1999). While human rights seek to define the fundamental things we should be able to do, capabilities

measure to what extent a person is able to enact that right (Hart 2014:2). The capability is the focus rather than the action (or function), allowing for agency and choice in defining and pursuing the life we have reason to value (Nussbaum 2011:33). The approach analyses not only the resources we have towards functioning in this way, but also our ability to convert those means (commodity set) via conversion factors into action.

This conversion may be limited by factors unique to ourselves, our environment, or society itself and what people (or the law) allow us to do. This analysis gives a great account of human diversity by seeing each person as an end in themselves and focusing on outcomes rather than resourcing (Nussbaum 2011:50).

Figure 2 *Converting Commodities into Capabilities*



2.1.1 Functioning vs. Capability

Central to a capabilities framework are functionings and capabilities. Sen defines functionings as the things a person 'manages to do or be' in the form of their achievements (as cited in Robeyns 2017:49). Capabilities are a person's real opportunity to do those things, regardless

of whether they choose to pursue them. What matters to Sen is that people have the substantive freedom, as capabilities, to live a life they have reason value (1999: 75).

Agency and choice are important for the creative expression of one's life. In terms of languages, there is a difference between choosing not to take a te reo Māori class, and the absence of te reo Māori education where there is no capability of learning the language (Sen 2007:279). This distinction allows for people to choose to forgo one functioning (e.g. French) in order to fulfil another, possibly heritage functioning (te reo). When a colonial government provides no means of being able to access te reo, this lack of what someone may hold as a valued capability (speaking te reo) contributes to deprivation. Sen (2004) says that the value of capabilities must be weighed by people through their practice of critical reason. This approach is also focused on the 'ends' of what people are able to do (speak) and be (Māori) rather than the means (economic) to account for human diversity and our different capacities to convert resources into functionings (Robeyns 2017:59). The concept of capabilities allows us to evaluate whether society is arranged in a way that people are able to live their life through meaningful choices (Nussbaum 2011:34).

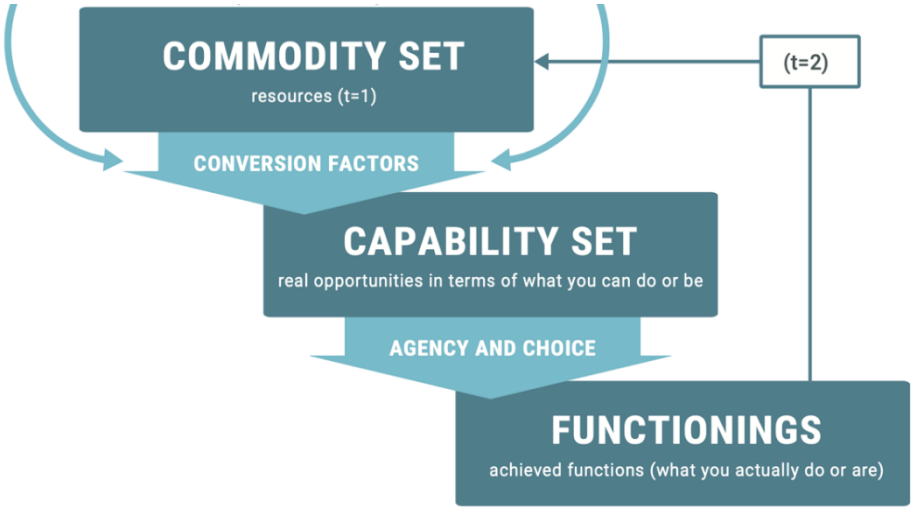
2.1.2 Resources & Conversion Factors

If we begin with the example of the right to basic education, we can immediately identify the entitlement – but the capabilities approach asks whether each child, in all of their diversity, has the same capability to fulfil this right (Hart 2014:2). This requires evaluating certain 'conversion factors', which can differ between groups and individuals, to see if that child is able to convert the resources, such as school facilities, into a basic education (Walker 2019:220). For a child who requires a wheelchair, a school building can either be an obstacle of social exclusion from the life of a school, denying them the capability of attaining a basic education – or built in a way that fosters inclusion. In this way the capabilities approach is not concerned as much with the distribution of resources among children, but on the quality of outcomes, in this case identifying physical mobility as an enabler of basic education. Robeyns explains that within an environment (school) that contains lots of stairs, an able-bodied person has a relatively high conversion factor, whereas someone in a wheelchair has a very low conversion factor for mobility through stairs (Robeyns 2017:56). When a school contains

ramps the child in the wheelchair then has the agency to use them in pursuit of a functioning 'basic education'. The framework is therefore an evaluative space to examine how (via conversion factors) people transform their resources into capabilities as forms of wellbeing and dignity (Yap & Yu 2016:321; Nussbaum 2011:45).

The figure below demonstrates the "Dynamic Model of the Capability Approach Building Blocks" (McKnight et al. 2018:10). The commodity set consists of goods and services, i.e. the resources a person has to put towards an outcome (Sen, 2007, p. 281). A person's commodity set also includes their current functionings, such as their current language abilities (Robeyns 2017:56). Schools can be seen as dynamic capability enablers by providing the resources for children to learn, however children's innate diversity plays a role in whether they can attain a capability (e.g. multiplication) and their own agency and choice in practicing the skill before it becomes a functioning. That functioning (t=2) then becomes a part of the child's commodity set for attaining other capabilities.

Figure 3 *Dynamic Model of the Capability Approach*



Conversion factors take into account people's different abilities to turn resources into outcomes and include age, gender, propensity for language, cultural norms and government policy (Yap & Yu 2016:321). Robeyns (2017:57) splits these into three categories of personal, social and environmental conversion factors. Personal conversion factors cover cognitive abilities through childhood development and the disability spectrum, as well as nutrition and health that contribute to learners' ability to participate in learning activities. Robeyns (2017) explains that

social conversion factors include power relations across gender, class, race and how these are enacted by social norms, public policy, and societal hierarchies. Social conversion factors also include the extent to which a learner feels they are valued within the social setting of the school, as mediated by their relationships with teachers and fellow classmates (Walker 2019:220).

2.2 Capabilities & Education

Sen's support of education as a capability is quite broad which has led many scholars to unpack education as a 'core' capability with a role in enhancing other capabilities (Dejaeghere 2020:18-22; Terzi 2007: 31; Hart 2014:4; McKnight et al. 2018:95). Nussbaum calls this a 'fertile capability' if a certain achievement tends to promote other related capabilities (2011:59). She describes the role of education as the development of children's 'internal capabilities' that are fluid and dynamic, and contribute to their physical and emotional health and capacity for learning (Nussbaum 2011:36). Robeyns (2017:62) notes that it is important to identify specific means to foster particular capabilities for children. Nussbaum uses the concept of 'basic capabilities' to begin talking about "the innate faculties of the person that make later development and training possible" (Nussbaum 2011:39). The goal is that children develop a set of 'combined capabilities' that make for real and valuable choices of employment, political representation and for socialising (Nussbaum 2011:36). Sen agrees, criticising the 'current obsession' of education policy on addressing economic shortfalls, when education should embrace "an appreciation of the importance of freedom and reasoning as well as friendship" (Sen 2006a: 6 as cited in Walker 2019:220). Walker adds that while information communications technology (ICT) has expanded access to bodies of knowledge, it is the pedagogical process that makes learning happen (Walker 2019:229). Nussbaum (2006:389) also notes the importance of pedagogy which is useful as an over-arching conversion factor for turning the resources a school possesses into learning outcomes that create capabilities for young people in education.

The specific capabilities that education should aim for is a discussion as wide as the philosophy of education. The following literature review previews some of the capabilities that scholars of the approach have identified, before interviews can begin discussion on the capabilities that matter in contemporary Vhembe, South Africa.

2.2.1 Education & Democracy

Nussbaum (2006:386) proposes that the three issues of critical thinking, world citizenship, and imaginative understanding are crucial to the development of children's capabilities through education. All three are interrelated in fostering dialogue across cultural boundaries with people who are different from us as democratic citizens (389). Nussbaum's definition of critical thinking builds on Socrates' concept of 'the examined life' where one is able to question and reason logically, not automatically accepting tradition and belief by authority but if they survive reasoned justification (389). World citizenship is about establishing a concept of common humanity through the examination of other people's histories and cultures, not only in other countries but the difficult national and local tensions among relevant religious, ethnic, social, and gender-based groups (391). Imaginative understanding is then about the central role that the humanities and arts, including drama and literature, have in promoting empathy for and understanding of others (395). Cultivating such empathy is what Walker (2019:225) refers to as the development of children's emotional capabilities.

Walker (2019) proposes an 'epistemic capability' in education to establish critical dialogue, of the kind that children are moved from superior and inferior modes of judgement to respect difference and learn to express themselves and empathise with others. She proposes this as a core capability in recognition of the 'irreducible role' of public reasoning in creating capabilities and therefore as a foundation of quality education (229). It is a relational capability that requires learners to recognise each other as worthy interlocutors, with valuable knowledge and perspectives, demanding not only social participation, but critical self-awareness that our comments do not act to exclude and hurt others (226).

2.2.2 Social Transformation

South Africa's move to democracy in 1994 was a moment of elation for people's ability to choose a new direction for the country. The 'agency freedom' that democracy allows was turned into 'agency attainment' in the act of voting in the election (Crocker 2008:151). The capability approach centres the role of democracy in expanding people's opportunities towards social transformation and well-being. It is reflected in Crocker's (2008) framing of the capability approach, where "a person's well-being consists not only of her current states and activities (functionings), which may include the activity of choosing, but also in her freedom or opportunities (capabilities) to function in ways alternative to her current functioning" (151).

With many black South Africans living in poverty, capabilities that would lead to social transformation and alternative functionings were a priority.

Education is often seen as a core capability and a crucial input for development out of poverty (Mohanty 2008:103; Hart 2014:23). While schools develop children's internal capabilities, they are also imbedded in communities that are subject to the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty and all the different factors that contribute to capability depravation. Nussbaum (2011:60) uses the term 'corrosive disadvantage' to describe situations that create knock-on constraints on a person's life and options. A blunt example is that "hungry students do not learn well" (Walker 2019:230). Dreze & Sen (2002: 6) explore the "cyclic nature of the relationship between social discrimination, lack of opportunities, lack of freedom, capability deprivation and poverty," (as cited by Mohanty 2008:102). All of these wider issues speak more to the ways in which we treat each other and construct our social arrangements that can contribute as much to a life of value as the skills we might learn at school to earn better wages.

Hart (2014:4) argues that making connections between learners and the ways they are affected by all of these issues in their social and physical environments is crucial because their education does not stop beyond the school gates. Indeed their experiences outside are often pouring in regardless of what policy makers have put in the curriculum. A child may attend school, but their family and relationships at home and in the community all have a bearing over whether and how they engage in learning (Hart 2014:5). This is to recognise the role that many teachers play as caregivers to the complex lives that children lead in the environment they grow up in. Working with learners on how they connect with their environment and fellow human beings, Hart says, contributes to their own understandings of their wellbeing, agency, and participation in society (2014:4).

To challenge inequalities in education Walker (2019:228) flips the focus from 'labour market skills' to the role of acquiring 'powerful knowledge', such as mathematics, in low income schools to ensure that students are not dependent on the elite and privileged who may use this knowledge to dominate the public or economic sphere. Bantu education in South Africa, for example, was the deliberate culling of powerful knowledge (English, science) from the curriculum of 'black' classified schools by the apartheid government (Mandela, 2003, p. 39). But is it enough to say that having maths, philosophy, etc. and other 'elite' subjects in the curriculum will open up all these capabilities?

Dejaeghere (2020:33) contends that cultivating individual capabilities, even of 'powerful knowledge' are not enough to change the power structures that create and limit people's capabilities in society. Bourdieu & Passeron's (2000) theory of social reproduction in education delves into structures around class (as cited by Hart 2014:23). One issue they bring up in the reproduction of social class are the hierarchies created between superior and inferior ways of being, looking, dressing, and speaking and how this shapes social discrimination, limiting the (capabilities) or 'domains of power' that people (of 'lower' class/gender/dialect) can inhabit in society. This is sharply demonstrated in Arturo Escobar's (1997) deconstruction of the discourse around development. Escobar shows how 'Developed' Western industrial nations are contrasted with 'underdeveloped' third world countries typified by their lack of these (Western) objects of modernity. Escobar concludes that this establishes a set of relations that normalises a top-down destruction of Indigenous ways of life while limiting even the thought of other possibilities to address what he emphasises is the very real material condition of poverty. This is all to say that if 'powerful knowledge' is defined by Western ideas then education can become more of a distraction than a solution to complex and locally embedded issues of poverty.

Rahnema (1997) proposes two paths for countering Western dominance in our thinking about development. The first is to recognise the centrality of political debate to counter flat technical solutions in an arena where people are "free to change the rules and the contexts of change" (p. 385). The second is to incorporate the value of knowledge systems outside of the Western discourse as legitimate epistemologies that build on local strengths and "according to their own culturally defined ethics and aspirations" (Rahnema, 1997: 385). Both of these challenge the "ontological individualism" of the capabilities approach which leads to the next section that considers capabilities and their role in collective action and the relational philosophy of Ubuntu.

2.2.3 Indigenous Capabilities & Ubuntu

Yap and Yu (2016) find that the capabilities approach is complimentary to political action towards Indigenous rights by centring dialogue with participants on "achieving measures of wellbeing they value" (p. 321). This makes the selection of capabilities vital to the overall framing of the research. The aim is for a participatory methodology that ensures that cross-cultural research is able to account for the worldview of participants and ensure findings are

embedded in the cultural context from which they emerge (Yap & Yu 2016:328; Moses & Knutsen 2007:17).

To move towards embracing capabilities of value that may emerge in Vhembe, it is important to understand some of the philosophical context of the region. As a teacher in Mokopane, Limpopo Province, Tavernaro-Haidarian (2019) works to integrate the community's Indigenous values into the everyday instruction of children, "anchored in the relational, cohesive and harmonious assumptions of human relations implicit in ubuntu" (p. 30). 'Ubuntu' in the Nguni languages, 'vhutu' in Tshivenḓa, and 'botho' in the Sotho languages, literally means 'humanity' and encompasses a world-view that is common across Southern Africa's indigenous cultures (Dandala, 2009, p. 260; Mandela, 2011, p. 227; Tutu, 1999, p. 35 as cited by Hoffmann and Metz 2017:157). Hoffmann & Metz (2017:153) examine the tensions between an ubuntu ethic and the capabilities approach by contrasting the individual locus of capabilities with ubuntu's focus on the relations between people as the locus of ethical value.

Ubuntu considers that 'I am because we are' in the sense that our personhood is dependent on our place among and relationships with others. Hoffmann & Metz say that through ubuntu, "human flourishing consists of having the propensity to pursue communal relations with other individuals, or relations of fellowship, such that relationships, or people's capacities for them, have fundamental value." (2017:153). It inspires notions of togetherness, that we cannot survive alone and need others to exist and become who we are (Ibid:157). There is value in harmony among people which is maintained by developing relationships with close attention to everyone's self-understandings, histories, goals and how they differ in order to find common ground (158). Desmond Tutu explains that "harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the summum bonum—the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided" (1999: 34-35 in Ibid). With such relationships at the core of morality and justice, Hoffmann & Metz (2017) find that an ubuntu ethic values interdependence as a "freedom to relate" (p. 158) distinct from an independent 'freedom from' the interference of others. In taking these notions of ubuntu forward, Rapatsa (2016:15) contends that they are integral to the 'normative value system' written into South Africa's democratic constitution.

While ubuntu challenges the individual locus of the capabilities approach, Hoffman & Metz (2017:153) argue that relationality, with its intrinsic ethical value in ubuntu, can be considered

a part of a capability. They make this possible by extending the central role of public deliberation in the selection of capabilities into the properties of some capabilities themselves so they contain an intrinsic relational dimension (Hoffmann and Metz 2017:155). For example a capability to cope with future shocks in an ubuntu context is not simply the possession of assets and insurance but also the extent to which someone is able to depend upon their relations with others (Hoffmann and Metz 2017:156). As these relationships have fundamental value, ubuntu holds that a person becomes more human in their ability to support and be supported by others. While capabilities focus on the individual, certain capabilities can be more or less dependent on relations with others to secure. Recognising that interdependence can be a feature of capabilities, Hoffmann & Metz (2017:161) add that attaining a capability must also consider whether it has been attained at the expense of others. This allows for the distinction between those who have attained capabilities through friendly relations or through acts of oppression and exclusion (Ibid).

Chapter Summary

Teachers work towards realising children's capabilities and this is what education and social transformation is all about. Children are diverse so being effective requires us to be sensitive to the personal conversion factors of learners and also to the social conversion factors about how children relate to our teaching socially in the classroom. Among the many challenges children and teachers face, the language we speak may seem benign but in the following chapter I will argue that the choice of the language of learning and teaching can have a significant impact on the conversion factors to children's learning.

Chapter 3. Multilingual Education

In this chapter, I examine the literature on multilingual education that forms the theory behind South Africa's home language policy for the Foundation Phase. The literature extends from Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) to language socialisation, emotional and psychological issues in language and education. Finally, the chapter looks at the subtractive language consequences of monolingual English curriculum that make the case for two-way multilingual teaching practices such as Translanguaging.

3.1 Language as an Intellectual Resource

Primary school education is referred to as a 'basic capability' for its role in enhancing and making other capabilities possible (Sen, 1999:129; Nussbaum 2011:39; Hart 2014:4). This review finds that home language proficiency lays the foundation for children's learning capabilities, providing the basis for expanding into new concepts and additional languages (Cummins 1984; 2001:17). Achieving functionings, in this case through the language of instruction, depends on a number of what Robeyns (2017:57) describes as personal, social, environmental, and what also emerge as pedagogical conversion factors.

Personal conversion factors include the language(s) one speaks and is able to comprehend. A child's mother tongue is by definition their language of greatest fluency. Home language therefore plays an important role in ensuring learners gain a proper understanding, or 'epistemological access' to the content of their education (Naketsana 2019; Lotz-Sisitka 2009:121; Morrow 2007). The result is that children develop literacy skills quicker in their home language (Cummins 2000; Ball 2010:119). Nonetheless, while curriculum may be in English, in practice, many teachers do code-switch to explain concepts in learners' home language and the research finds this is a positive practice that the field of multilingual education is currently refining (Tao & Liyanage 2020:20).

Social conversion factors are influential through the language(s) we speak with friends and family at home and in the community and extend our emotional connections to learning. Our home language stimulates our critical thinking because it is in our social environment that we are faced with complex communicative needs that force us to develop language skills that allow us to become a competent member of a social group (Duff & May 2017:33). Using home

language in class draws on learners strong connections to place and identity and 'funds of knowledge' from their real life experiences (Heugh et al. 2019:163). Hart (2014:4) argues that these connections learners have between their social and physical environments is crucial for children's educational capabilities. Home language also promotes emotional stability among learners, positive connections with their peers and teacher as well as boosting self-esteem (Back et al. 2020:5). This highlights children's basic capabilities of identity and affiliation as the social bases of self-respect (Nussbaum 2011). It also develops what Walker (2019:225) refers to as children's emotional capabilities, which are foundational in developing empathy for and understanding of others (395).

Learning English is a valued capability as part of South Africa's multilingual education and the evidence challenges two common assumptions about second language learning – the earlier the better and that English immersion is best (Cummins 2007). These 'common sense' assumptions confuse 'language acquisition' as the process that children acquire their mother tongue(s) in, with 'language learning' as the result of direct instruction, most likely at school (Rao et al. 2010:100). Social conversion factors are key because if learners have no direct communicative needs for a language, the consensus is that they will pick up a foreign language quicker only once they have attained 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP) in their home language (Cummins 1984; 2001:17; Ball 2010:122). Additional languages that are not widely spoken at home or in the community take a significant amount of energy and motivation to learn and educators will gain more traction with learners by building off of strong academic grounding in home language (Duff & May 2017; Ball 2010:125).

The personal conversion factor of a learners' dynamic English fluency is significant because if language of instruction is not targeted at an appropriate level, then learners will become frustrated and stop engaging in class (Vygotsky 1978 in Ohta 2005; Lotz-Sisitka 2009:128). Because of the importance of our home language foundation, transitioning to a second language of instruction too early in an 'early exit' model can confuse learners' cognitive development (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1475). This gives rise to the way that an abstract language of instruction can have compounding social effects on learner self-confidence with feelings of shame, humiliation, and anxiety that can lead to low achievement (Back et al.2020:4). English is therefore best learned as a subject while learners' home language foundation is built up (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1470) and contrary to ideas about language immersion the best learning outcomes are achieved when English is balanced with the use of home language

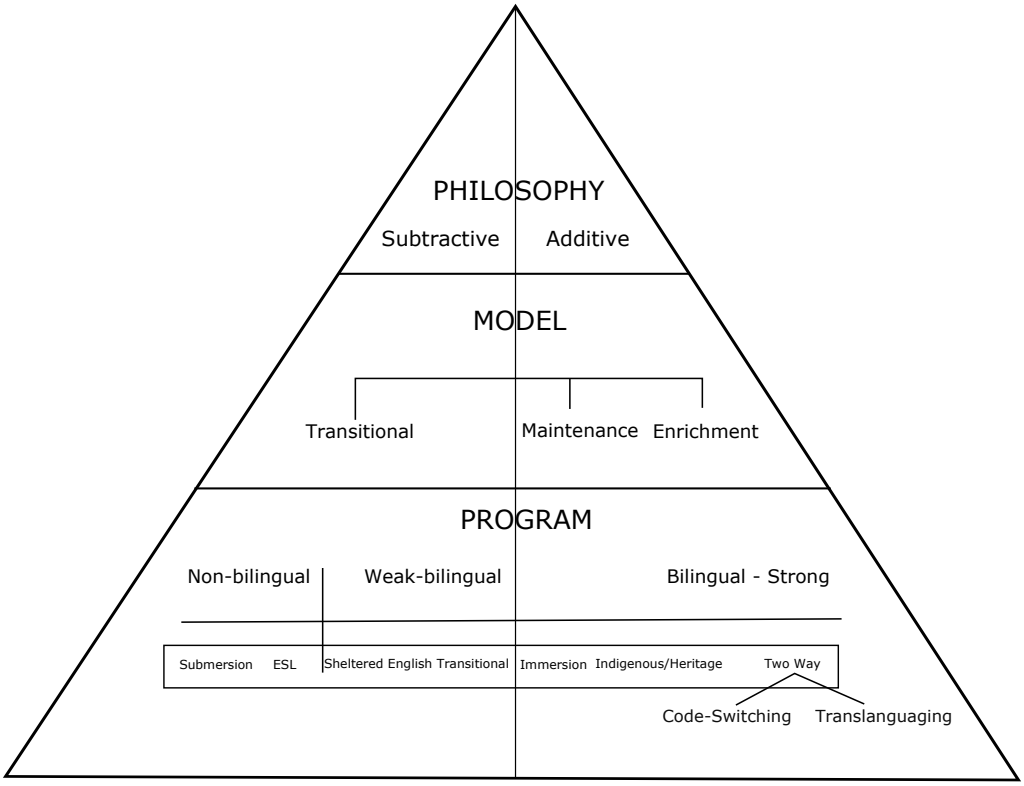
in class giving learners the opportunity to translate back and forth (Cummins 2007:221; Tao & Liyanage 2020:20; Heugh et al.2019:167; Duff & May 2017).

However all of the authors above cite one social conversion factor that seems to dominate, preventing teachers and children from realising the full benefits of bi-lingual education (Cummins 2001; Heugh 2007; Tollefson 2008; Duff & May 2017; Tao & Liyanage 2020). This is the perceived superiority of English as a language of education that perpetuates monolingual practice (Tao & Liyanage 2020:25). This extends structural constraints in the lack of textbooks commissioned in African languages (Liyanage & Walker 2019:9). To break this stalemate Xholisa Guzula in Cape Town is developing Translanguaging as a concept to go beyond code-switching to help teachers actively engage learners in home language while also learning English in the classroom (Guzula 2019:63; García & Wei 2014; Heugh et al.2019:167; Tao & Liyanage 2020:20). Because of the key role of the teacher in this practice we can see Translanguaging as a pedagogical conversion factor that can enhance children's learning. Bilingual education in this form has been shown to be the most effective for establishing learners' functionings in both languages and the different capabilities they offer as well as strengthening learners' basic capability in education, outperforming learners in English-only schools (Cummins 2007:221; Navés 2009:23; Ball 2010:120; May 2016:14; Heugh et al.2019:167).

3.2 Additive vs. Subtractive Language Learning

South Africa's language in education policy is based on a philosophy of additive multilingualism, "the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s)" (DoE 1997:1). To fully embrace an additive approach, this section seeks to understand the consequences of subtractive language learning. The subsequent sections will go in depth on the rationale for maintaining and enriching home language in schools. The final section of this chapter looks at Translanguaging as a Two Way / dual medium model of multilingual education. The diagram below by May (2016) puts these different approaches on a continuum with subtractive language learning on the left moving towards what are proposed as more comprehensive and effective approaches to bilingual education on the right.

Figure 4 *Approaches to Bilingual Education (May 2016:9)*



In the left corner, a submersion model of language teaching seeks assimilation to a dominant language such as English by making it the exclusive language of instruction regardless of a student's mother-tongue (Mohanty 2008:121). When students grow up speaking their own language such as Māori or Tshivenḓa, this approach results in 'subtractive language learning' because it seeks to replace the worldview of the child and her community with that of a 'higher status' language, culture, and way of being (Ngũgĩ 1986). When another language takes on the 'high functions' of education, African languages are left in a position "associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment" (Ngũgĩ, 1986). It becomes an act of dividing and stratifying society as an act of 'symbolic violence' (Rassool, 2007: 142). Subtractive language learning is therefore widely accepted as detrimental to a child's psychological development, linguistic capacity and wider learning outcomes (Naketsana, 2019: 29; Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 6; Mohanty, 2008: 108; UNPFII, 2005: 3; UNESCO, 1953). This situation is what linguists call 'diglossia', where the language of learning is distinct to what the community speaks (Romaine, 2000: 243; Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 6).

In discussing the role of language in education Ngũgĩ (1986) distinguishes the three aspects of language as communication: relations between people through their actions; spoken words; and writing. For children learning in their home language, the language in the community, at home, and at school align and these three elements are in harmony (Ngũgĩ, 1986). "His interaction with nature and with other[s] is expressed in written and spoken symbols or signs which are both a result of that double interaction and a reflection of it. The association of the child's sensibility is with the language of his experience of life" (Ngũgĩ, 1986). When a language like English is elevated to dominate school life this harmony is broken (Ngũgĩ, 1986).

Teweiariki Teaero emphasises that this creates an "alien mode of learning amid a culture where Indigenous forms of learning are still strong in the total environment" (as quoted by Quanchi, 2004: 5). Learning becomes an abstract, not an emotionally felt experience, like separating the mind from the body (Ngũgĩ, 1986). This can fundamentally change the way people see themselves, their culture, livelihoods, and relationship to nature (Ngũgĩ, 1986). Frantz Fanon described the implications on the self-concept for African people, "if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization-or, better, the epidermalization--of this inferiority" (Fanon, 1952: 13). A process that South Africans today refer to as 'internalised oppression' to describe habits of automatic deference to the ideas (or language) of white people (Lephakga, 2012). If, however, we can nurture the harmony between language, self, school and the environment then other languages can be learned and appreciated, from a more linguistically and psychologically grounded perspective (Ngũgĩ, 1986).

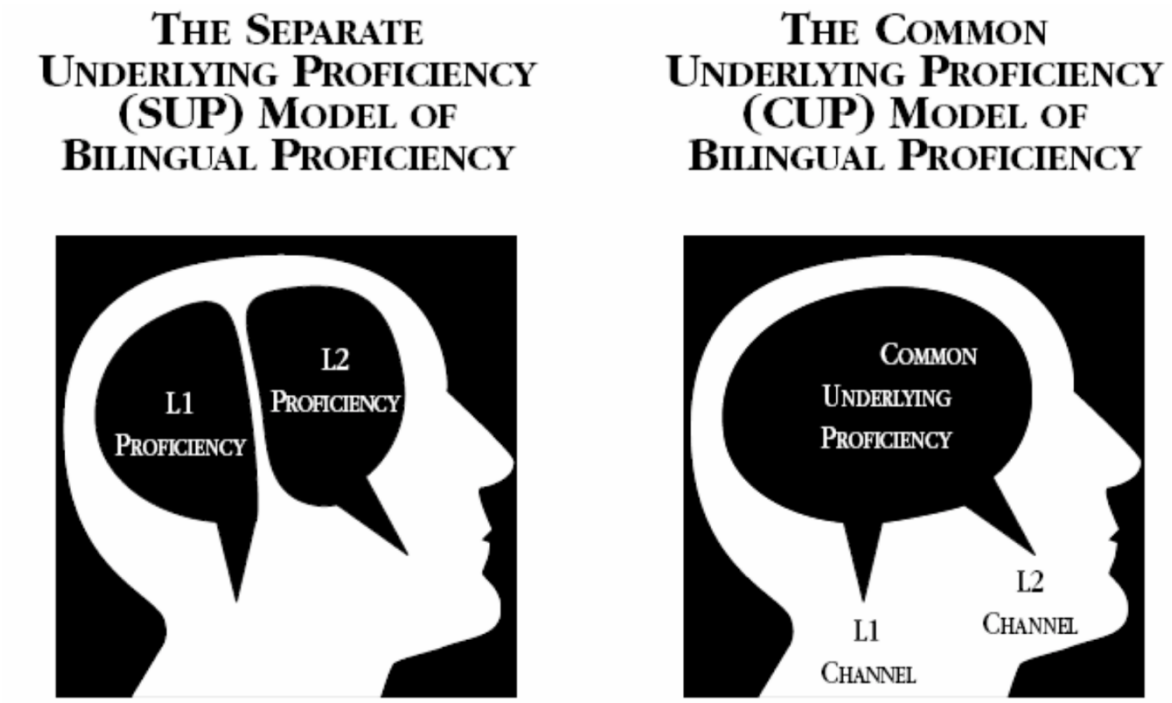
3.3 Home Language Foundation

The language repertoire that a child acquires at home and in the community even before entering school is a core resource to communicate with children and engage them in learning (Cummins 2001:17). This principle is the basis of South Africa's Foundation Phase language policy and is held up by all the papers published in the Multilingual Education Yearbooks of 2019 and 2020 (Liyanage & Walker 2019:10; Tao & Liyanage 2020:20) as well as the latest teaching resources from UNESCO's teacher's guide to reading instruction (UNESCO IICBA 2020:14). Children's home language is rich with their learning from interactions with people and nature and this is embedded with "knowledge about language and of local beliefs, culture, environment, history, livelihoods, safety and well-being" (Ibid). These are what Luis Moll

(1992) calls 'funds of knowledge' that form an important foundation for teachers to build on for further learning about language and the world (as cited by Heugh et al.2019:163; Cummins 2001:17).

There is also growing consensus around the idea that our mother tongue builds the scaffolding needed to effectively learn additional languages (Ball 2010:110). Cummins (2005) refers to Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) to describe how the language we learn growing up sets up an important linguistic foundation for learning a second language. Developing complex and critical education in a child's mother tongue is therefore a crucial part of the puzzle for our new generation to succeed academically in whatever languages come next. This interdependency of language is confirmed in numerous studies, including a 2013 study in the South African Journal of Education (Grosser & Nel 2013:10).

Figure 5 *Common Underlying Proficiency (Cummins 2005:4)*

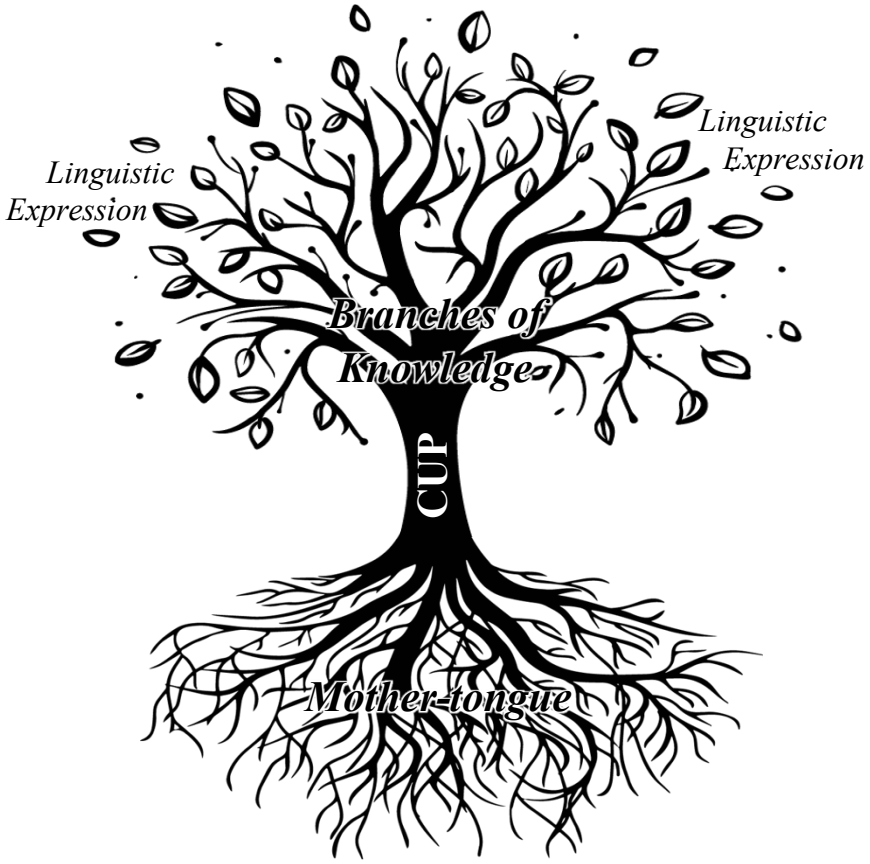


In the diagram above, the dichotomy of what we are accustomed to referring to as separate languages is broken down by all the positive connections our brains make across language when we are learning. This theory has origins in both Cummins (1976) and Skutnab-Kangas and Toukoma's (1976) 'threshold level hypothesis' which proposed that learners in a school environment needed a certain level of mastery of their mother tongue as a foundation for

learning a second language. Cummins (1984) came to define this threshold as a level of "cognitive academic language proficiency" (CALP) and showed that once a learner had attained CALP in their mother tongue, they were able to apply this and became more fluent in their second language (Cummins 2005). If a learner had not achieved CALP in their home language then their academic learning suffered in both languages (Ball 2010:110).

In the figure below, the roots represent our home language(s), the trunk being our Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). CALP is unlabelled but understood as the structural maturity of the tree to grow new branches of conceptual knowledge. Leaves are the spoken words we use to describe this knowledge. The mathematical branch can grow leaves of many colours of languages, other domains of knowledge may be more specifically described in a particular language.

Figure 6 *The Roots of Language Learning*

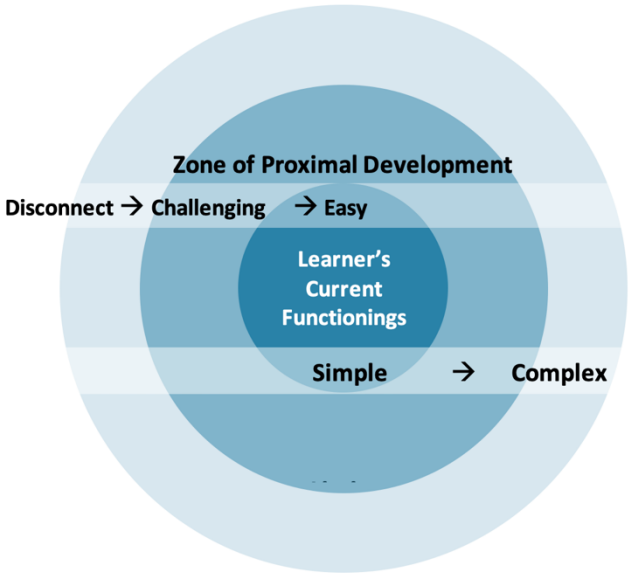


3.4 Conceptual Understanding

Learners' proficiency the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is key to developing conceptual understanding of topics (Brock-Utne 2016:123). Learners learn best when they are building on language they are fluent in (Ibid). Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal

development' (ZPD) proposes that learners have an optimal space between where content is too easy and repetitive on the one side and too complex and difficult to engage on the other (as cited by Ohta 2005). The concept outlines a zone where children learn most effectively in a space that draws on what a learner knows while introducing them to new concepts in a deliberate and sequenced fashion (Ohta 2005:513).

Figure 7 *Zone of Proximal Development*



If the language a teacher uses in the classroom is too far beyond a learner's ability to engage then they are not in a position to learn new content. The ZPD supports engaging learners in language they are comfortable in before moving into language that is more difficult. This is the idea that learning new concepts should follow a sequence, moving from the basics to the more complex (Lotz-Sisitka 2009:128). In the figure above this suggests watering the roots of children's minds to see how this allows them to grow and reach out into new spaces.

3.5 Communicative Needs

For children to become bi- or multi-lingual from a young age they need to have communicative needs in their social environment, for example if one side of the family speaks to the child in one language and the other side speaks another. The study of language socialization sees language learning as "an outcome of synergistic communicative entanglements of novices with sources of knowledge, human, or otherwise" (Duff & May 2017:31). A lot of the contemporary work in this field builds on Ochs and Schieffelin's (1984) theory that learning language is the process of becoming a competent member of a social group (Duff & May 2017:33). This

implies that schools need to be very realistic about the rate at which children will be able to learn a language that does not play a significant role in their social life – at home and in the community (Ball 2010:125). Engaging children in learning is therefore not just an intellectual endeavour, but an emotional one as well.

3.6 Emotional Effects

When a child is able to engage their home language in the classroom there is social and emotional stability which is important in itself, and also benefits learning (Kioko, Mutiga, Muthwii, Schroeder, Inyega, & Trudell, 2008 as cited in Ball 2010:119; Ngũgĩ 1986). In the 1950s during British colonial rule in Kenya, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a young boy in rural Primary school. Ngũgĩ (1986) would later become one of the harshest critics of Kenya's post-colonial reliance on English in schools and government. He talks of the richness of growing up speaking his home language of Gĩkũyũ in Kenya:

> *"Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words. So we learnt the music of our language on top of the content. The language through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own" (Ngũgĩ, 1986).*

Ngũgĩ (1986) elaborates how language, as expressed through 'orature' (oral literature) and literature, also articulates the ethical, moral, and spiritual concepts of a people's evolving world-view which over time become their distinct culture and history. Mandela (1994) describes such orature at his Xhosa Chief's council, delivered by the "amaphakathi, a group of councillors of high rank who functioned as the regent's parliament and judiciary… I observed how some speakers used emotion and dramatic language, and tried to move the audience with such techniques" (Mandela, 1994: Ch.3). Growing up this contributes to a sense of what is good and forms one's identity and 'place in the universe' (Sherris & Peyton, 2019:2; Tangaere, 1997: 46; Ngũgĩ, 1986). Our language has deep connections to our genealogy and their relationship to the land, communicated through "rich folklore; homeopathic uses for plants; knowledge of plant life, fish, and animals; cultural history and traditions; and linguistic knowledge, often of the fragile and unique aspects of conceptual metaphor and idiom" (Sherris & Peyton, 2019:2).

Back et al. (2020:16) work with Park's (2014) notion of 'emotional scaffolding' for teachers to be responsive to the needs of children in class. They build on the large body of literature around the impacts of emotions on learning (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner 1994; MacIntyre & Gregersen 2012; Tsui 1996:3) to note that emerging multilingual learners are held back by a large amount of anxiety engaging in a second language (Back et al.2020:16). Back et al. (2020:16) found strong evidence for alleviating learner anxiety in the classroom and increased interaction in discussions by allowing learners to engage new language and material using their home language through Translanguaging techniques. Home language interactions supported learner socialisation in the classroom; encouraged them to take ownership of their learning; allowed teachers to better understand and respond to the emotions of their learners; and helped set a cognitive stability that was positive for learning outcomes (Back et al.2020:5-16).

There are two sides to the emotional coin for learners. Pekrun et al. (2011) "demonstrated that positive emotions such as enjoyment, hope, and pride predicted high achievement, whereas negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and shame predicted low achievement" (as cited by Back et al.2020:4). Benson (2016) showed the implications of marginalizing a learner's home language on their identity conjuring emotions of shame and humiliation (as cited by Liyanage & Walker 2019:25). Rubio (2007) highlighted that children are very perceptive to how adults value language and when their language and culture is not valued, learners' self-confidence suffers (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998; Covington, 1989 as cited by Ball 2010:119). The flip side of this are what Ball (2010) finds are many well established studies that home language instruction can improve a child's self-esteem (Appel, 1988; Cummins, 1989, 1990; Hernàndez-Chavez, 1984 as cited by Ball 2010:119).

3.7 Language Attitudes

The pressures that push schools to adopt premature 'early exit' models of submersion English teaching are a result of perceptions that English proficiency is "synonymous with modernity, international competitiveness, and thus with social mobility and access to prosperity identified with globalization" (Liyanage & Walker 2019:16). The perceived higher status makes English "a marker of social status and education, and of division between wealthy and poor, urban and rural" (Liyanage & Walker 2019:18). The ideology of English superiority grants a mode of gate-keeping power to an urban English speaking elite (Tollefson 2008:10). Tao & Liyanage

(2020:24) refer to this as the "global hyper-centrality of English" and it shines a blinding light in the eyes of policy makers to create what Tollefson (2008:10) call an "incoherent and unsystematic debate" that only serves to preserve the place of those in power.

Promoting the status of African languages is essential because parents "are obliged to choose the language of higher status" exactly because it is the language of power, access and economic opportunity (Heugh, 2007: 203; Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013: 4). It is common to hear in South Africa that parents want their children to learn English (Appel & Guzula, 2019). Heugh (2007) demonstrates that parents are often given a false choice and when "they are given a bilingual option… the majority of parents (88%) prefer [mother-tongue education] MTE plus English" as a subject, in a more comprehensively designed survey (Heugh 2007: 204).

A shift in attitudes of linguistic competence could also improve the local recruitment, training and retention of teachers who at present "are not teaching in their own tongue" (Blaine, 2005 as cited in Alexander, 2008: 62). Heugh (2007: 212) estimates that the recruitment and training gap in South Africa of 260,000 teachers could be halved with more home language instruction. To address teacher attitudes to language, Fleming (2020) proposes a model of teacher training that values the social and language knowledge of educators in "a flexible, decentralized model of delivery that [gives] participants the power to modify or adapt content and tasks to align with their needs and realities" (as cited by Tao & Liyanage 2020:24). The model of language teaching that is on the most progressive end of embracing these concepts from multilingual education research is the concept of Translanguaging.

3.8 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is defined alternatively as "hybrid communicative practices…that are inclusive of multilingual learners" (Guzula 2019:63) and LoLT strategies that are "used purposefully to encourage students to work through a normal process of language-learning mixing, switching, interpreting and translating towards being able to use two or more languages" (Heugh et al.2019:167). The concept builds on the latest research into language of instruction that finds the judicious use of home language with target language is not only successful in second language learning, it also creates a more emotionally grounded learning environment for students (Heugh et al.2019:167; García & Wei 2014; Back et al.2020:5; Tao & Liyanage 2020:20).

Guzula et al.(2016) advance the concept of Translanguaging through participatory action research in the Western Cape, South Africa. They find that by embracing learners' home language skills as a socio-cultural resource that draws on their prior knowledge, learners can be drawn into discussions for deeper understanding that extend into the learning of new concepts and vocabulary in an additional language (219). This positions learners as resourceful and encourages participation in an inclusive dialogue in a classroom with learners at different points on the bi-lingual continuum (219). They call this process 'translanguaging' as it breaks down the perceived boundaries between "languages" and forces us to think of "languaging" as an active process of negotiating meaning (215). Even for English home language learners, languaging involves multi-modal meaning making through different genres, styles, registers and jargon (215). They cite examples in the science classroom where learners engage in 'exploratory talk' that is hesitant and incomplete to grapple with emerging understandings before new concepts and vocabulary can be presented in writing (215). Translanguaging recognises the value of exploratory talk where learners translate between their home language and English, demonstrating the cognitive process of bi-lingualism for the class. Makalela finds this communicative process that sees harmony across languages is also consistent with African philosophy, proposing work with ubuntu Translanguaging where "one rediscovers a plural vision of interdependence, fluid, and overlapping and discursive system that matches ways of communicating where the use of one language is incomplete without the other" (Makalela 2016:9). This ethic is taken to heart with the inclusion of Tshivenḓa terminology through this research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on multilingual education and found a strong role for learners' mother tongue in the classroom. Translanguaging is gaining traction as a good fit in South Africa because of what increasing numbers of studies are demonstrating that with the current Early-Exit English model, children are not building a strong enough base in their home language to reach their full learning capabilities (Naketsana, 2019:127; Abdulatief, 2018; Guzula et al, 2016:214; Nomlomo & Vuzo 2014:78). The denial of this capability is the production of inequality through language (Mohanty, 2008: 121). It works in parallel to and helps reinforce economic inequalities. In order to overcome the dominance of monolingual practice, it is necessary to create deliberate spaces for local languages not only in education but

also in business, policy-making, media, curriculum development, literature and science as ways of raising their status (Rasool, 2007: 153). Language determines how a country imagines its own 'development' and has a dynamic role between culture, education, the economy and politics "and the discursive power relations in which they are embedded" (Rassool, 2007:151).

Chapter 4. Language in South Africa

In order to try and understand the current context for South Africa's language policies, this chapter takes an overview of the British and apartheid governments' attempts to confine African languages and impose monolingual language policies at their expense. In the 1970's within the multilingual context of the Black Consciousness Movement, English became a language of resistance and wider communication for political change. It concludes with the democratic government's move in 1994 to embrace a multilingual South Africa.

4.1 From the Monolingual to Multilingual State

Language policy has been used by successive governments to assert their power in South Africa since the arrival of the Dutch East India company to the cape in 1652 (Heugh, 2007: 199). During British administration English was a tool of education for civilising "primitive African people" (Rassool, 2007: 40). Then apartheid introduced efforts to enforce ethno-linguistic boundaries through monolingual homelands. South Africa's experience lead it to challenge these assumptions and take a multi-lingual approach to language planning in the 'Rainbow Nation' (Heugh, 2007). In practice many South Africans speak multiple languages through different contexts as a strategy for wider communication (Heugh, 2007:212). Nelson Mandela shared this sentiment in his reflection on his time organising a broad coalition of South Africans to overcome the apartheid government, "I again realized that we were not different people with separate languages; we were one people, with different tongues" (Mandela, 1994: Ch.10).

4.2 Bantu Education to Soweto Uprising

With public education becoming a core part of a country's economic development, language planning has been heavily influenced by modernisation theory (Rostow 1960) and the "idealized vision of the linguistically and ethnically homogenous nation-state" (Tollefson 2008:5-8). As a formal concept the LoLT is generally planned by the state for learning materials to be standardised and distributed for public schooling. The Encyclopaedia of Language & Education (2017) defines language planning as "deliberate efforts to affect the structure, function, and acquisition of languages" (Tollefson 2017:4).

The South African government used the concept of 'homelands' to separate out 'the races' in its all encompassing strategy of apartheid (Mandela, 1994: ch.22). The 'homelands' were

imagined as mono-lingual havens and Bantu education prioritised monolingual mother-tongue education as a tool of segregation (Mandela, 2003:39). African languages were limited to under-resourced primary instruction and only teaching English and Afrikaans to the extent that workers would need them to follow instructions (Ibid; Heugh, 2007: 199). Those cultures deemed authentic enough in the Orientalist frames developed by the British (Rassool, 2007: 21) and now codified by the apartheid government were given homeland status: Zulu, Xhosa, (Southern) Ndebele, Swati, Sotho, Northern Sotho (Pedi), Tswana, Tsonga and Venda (Heugh, 2007: 189).

The languages were then incorporated into apartheid's Bantu education system using orthographies documented largely by European missionaries (Rassool, 2007: 41) in a process that Stuart Hall would describe as a Western habit of categorizing, condensing complex societies into models for comparison and ranking (as cited by Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999: 43). The differing orthographical techniques employed by different missionaries mean that languages that have many similarities such as Sepedi and Tshivenḓa are written in obliquely different ways (Heugh, 2007: 202). This served to emphasise divisions and leave out languages like Setokwa that lie on the spectrum between Sepedi and Tshivenḓa or other languages such as Northern Ndebele whose speakers hold a distinct identity (Heugh, 2007: 190).

4.2.1 Language as a Right

South Africans of the now 'non-white' classification quickly mobilised their opposition, in 1955 releasing the Freedom Charter that included the demand that "All people shall have equal rights to use their own language and to develop their own folk culture and customs" (Mandela, 1994: ch.20). It would take 40 years before this right would be recognised and it is significant that linguistic rights were included alongside the economic and democratic demands of South Africans fighting for freedom. When it comes to implementing language policies, the power to define the process is fundamental (UNDRIP, 2007; Quanchi, 2004:3).

Language forms a fundamental part of our sense as a human being and is the basis of our linguistic human rights (LHRs) (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1472). The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) includes the right to education without discrimination and Article 2 specifies language as a protected category. In 1960 this was clarified in the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, where

Article 5 specifically recognizes "the right of the members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including ... the use or the teaching of their own language" (Ball 2010:103). These rights were reaffirmed in 2007 in the passing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in which article 14 states "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (UNDRIP 2007:15).

4.2.2 English in the Black Consciousness Movement

The Soweto uprising of 1976 was one of the most poignant moments of the anti-apartheid struggle and came about from the National Party's language policy in schools (Mandela, 1994:466). Students motivated by the Black Consciousness Movement were protesting the move to make Afrikaans the language of instruction in secondary school when police shot dead 12 year old Hector Pieterson in pictures that would be published in newspapers around the world (Heugh, 2007: 199; Mandela, 1994:466). Many anti-apartheid activists and political exiles spoke out in English to try and bring international pressure on the apartheid government (Heugh, 2007: 203).

One of those arrested in the protests that day in Soweto was a tertiary student from Venda, Cyril Ramaphosa, who after being released from prison set about to use his command of English to complete a law degree in Johannesburg (BBC, 2019). "In becoming a weapon against apartheid hegemony, English language use empowered people in their everyday lives, by enabling them to defy the discriminatory and exploitative policies that dehumanized them" (Rassool, 2007: 143). It was this resistance and "overriding resentment towards Afrikaans as a language of control" that led to the swing in favour of English (Heugh, 2007: 199). The Afrikaans language had become so imbued with the National Party's racist white nationalist agenda that for students to be able to learn English, a language of higher status with global reach to other liberation movements such as in Ghana and the United States was itself an act of liberation (Mandela, 1994: ch.33). Another student, Oupa Moloto was 18 years old at the time and recalls:

> *"I started reading books of the Black Panthers, I started reading the books of Angela Davis. That was the Black Power movement in America. And those books, because now, they are very interesting to me. It's about blackness, this pigmentation that has been*

> *giving one a problem and then you start reading about books that are empowering. Books that are saying 'black is beautiful'" (Interview with Oupa Moloto as cited in Mukonde 2020:21).*

In this Steve Biko, one of the leaders of the Black Consciousness (BC) movement, "rightly emphasized the importance of raising self-esteem to the whole BC enterprise" (Mukonde 2020:31). Students in Soweto formed a cultural group called "Khindlimuka", which means "Arise" in seTswana, to practice poetry, drama, reading and sharing books with BC ideas (Mukonde 2020:67). More texts that Mukonde (2020:67) found students reading were by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.

With this momentum, during the drafting of South Africa's first democratic constitution English was adopted as a language of wider communication (LWC) using 'language as a resource' rationales from Ruiz's (1984) influential work on language planning (as cited in Heugh, 2007: 199). Given 11 official languages, Ruiz challenged an engrained 'language as a problem' approach many governments had towards multilingualism by providing a way to elaborate the many resources people's languages provide society (Ruiz 2010:166). Among the innumerable ways in which languages function as a resource are their "intellectual, cultural, economic, social, citizenship and rights" dimensions (Ruiz 2010:162). Neville Alexander was one of the scholars who had been active in promoting African language policies among the shadow administration of activists against the apartheid government (Alexander, 1989: 4). Writing in 2008 he notes that English remains "the most important key to social, economic and political success" in contemporary South Africa (Alexander, 2008: 54). However, Alexander (2008) is critical of increasingly monolingual approaches to the role of English when African languages remain at the centre of the lives of many South Africans today.

Chapter 5. Methodology and Research Design

This chapter describes the methods chosen to conduct this research. This project took a qualitative approach to investigating South Africa's home language curriculum (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 97). The primary research was with teachers in Vhembe to understand what the home language policy meant to their work with learners in the classroom. The document analysis focused on national level policy to understand the valued capabilities in education as defined in the deliberative space of South Africa's democratic institutions. The literature review rounded these out with independent research on how language works as a conversion factor to children's education. The research therefore aimed to triangulate findings on the role of Tshivenḓa in Vhembe schools with national policy and international research on home language education (Sumner & Tribe 2008:108). The goal remains to broaden the discussion around language of instruction by understanding the different ways Tshivenḓa is meaningful to children's lives in classrooms across Vhembe.

5.1 Qualitative Research

The qualitative methods of this research sought to build an understanding of language capabilities in Vhembe in an inductive manner through interviews and policy analysis (Stewart-Withers et al. 2014: 59). Interviews were conducted with educators to interpret the role of the topic in the context of Vhembe, South Africa (Sumner & Tribe 2008:7). The aim was for a depth of understanding of the issue in Vhembe as opposed to the generalizability of a wider approach (Sumner & Tribe 2008:9). The advantage was a richer understanding of the issue with "more insights into causal processes" and a "feedback loop - new/more interviews for interrogating data" (Sumner & Tribe 2008:15). The rigour of this research was therefore placed on the author's ability to: accurately convey participants' perspectives; embrace subjectivity; be reflexive, trustworthy and fair in interactions through the process; and triangulate perspectives towards a more holistic understanding (Sumner & Tribe 2008:20; Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 99).

Moses & Knutsen (2007) show how the world is complex, embedded in many layers of reality and they argue that the closest we are going to get to the truth is by being transparent about our application of a variety of methods to a problem (2007:12-15). The questions around children's capabilities are normative (what should) while questions of implementation are institutional

(structural) and discursive (how language relates to power). All of these are embedded in the context and history of participants (Moses & Knutsen 2007:17). This leads this project to a choice of qualitative methods that can account for these complex social realities (Sumner & Tribe 2008:3).

5.1.1 Scope & Limitations

The central actors in this qualitative research were teachers in the Vhembe district. Teachers' perceptions are significant because not only are they the ones implementing the curriculum and language policy in South Africa, they also have direct experience with engaging children in learning – what activates their learners' minds and what bores them. Teachers also sit on their School's Governing Body (SGB) and as such if this research is productive and relevant to their school, they are able to share these findings with parents and community members in the SGB.

This research is not attempting to portray a representative sample of language attitudes in Vhembe, South Africa and as such participants are not being recruited with an aim of systematic disaggregation (Sumner & Tribe 2008:15).

Children themselves are very relevant stakeholders to this research (Scheyvens et al. 2014: 258) and their participation would be valued. Trying to navigate Covid-19 restrictions meant meaningful participation of children could not be achieved. Working with children requires a more in-depth process of consent with communities, parents and caregivers as well as research design which requires an extended level of in-person fieldwork (Desai & Potter 2006:7). In the following sections I outline the process by which data will be collected to address these limitations.

5.1.2 Positionality & Bias

Working in the development field inevitably means that I am a part of the process that I want to influence (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 100; Sumner & Tribe 2008:27). South Africa has a very difficult history that many participants have lived through and that is why this research project endeavours to take an uplifting approach to raising local voices around their unique contributions to the country's education system (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 112). As a fellow teacher I am familiar having these conversations and this project is an opportunity to really go in depth (Univen 2017b:5).

The choice of Vhembe for this project was a result of my three years teaching there, and my experience of the beauty of the Tshivenḓa language and culture that helped make our school a positive environment for learners (Sumner & Tribe 2008:117). I see this project as necessary to deconstruct the perceived superiority of my role as an English teacher and centring the voices of local teachers (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). I acknowledge that my perspective is limited and this research is only relevant to the extent that I am able to portray the perspectives for people who are everyday embedded in the complexity of South Africa's multi-lingual society. My assumption is that the expansion of linguistic functionings for Tshivenḓa in formal education and political domains is necessary to amplify a fuller range of voices in civic and social debate (Scheyvens et al., 2014: 208).

I am of mixed English/Spanish heritage so there is some nostalgic awe for cultural communities that are practicing and 'whole'. I see a great role in these communities in maintaining our self-esteem as cultural beings because city folk like myself will often reach back for that language and feeling of home. My experience with other languages, and seeing the blooming of te reo Māori here in Aotearoa, has given me perspectives on the possibilities for Tshivenḓa in education that many people in Vhembe may feel are fixed. Beyond Vhembe district, Venda people are a small but integral minority in South Africa's rainbow nation. The strength of being mixed-race, in my case, is the experience of being an edge-walker and the need to build bridges between worlds (Stewart-Withers, 2016: 28). I also see the value of cross-cultural work and its ability to counter ethnocentric models of development (Scheyvens & McLennan, 2014:10-11).

My own culture and values are still a lens through which I will process my research. On first approach I am a white male with an American accent, and this carries a legacy of imperialism and exploitation of power (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As such it will be important to be reflexive about my privilege, the reciprocal assumptions that may invite and how my actions are affecting my relationships with participants (Stewart-Withers et.al, 2014).

5.1.3 Representing Culture

I also need to be aware of how I present 'Venda culture'. It is important that through this process I am not attempting to classify, rank and preserve a traditional culture, but rather give voice to people from a culture that is rich, dynamic and contested through its own world-view,

and that I am doing this respectfully as an outsider (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Vhembe is an Indigenous context and to be an ally with participants this process must be culturally responsive and locate power within the community itself (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:7). Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that the principle of self-determination includes the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (United Nations, 2007). This is to say that participants "must be agents of their own development and set the priorities that they value" (Yap & Yu 2016:317) and hence the use of the capabilities approach. Watene (2016) finds that the capabilities approach is useful for cross-cultural dialogue but it does not adequately capture the value of nature in Māori philosophy so it was important to be critical of how I processed important Venda cultural concepts in this research.

5.2 The Capabilities Approach

Both Walker (2009) and Yap and Yu's (2016) qualitative work on conceptualising capabilities with their participants helped to inform the stages this research took. This research used these models to propose four steps for data collection at both the local level through semi-structured interviews with participants in Vhembe and at the national level in a document analysis of South Africa's education policies. The steps broadly aim to:

a) define the capabilities of value to learners in Primary school;
b) identify the successes and challenges in achieving these capabilities;
c) with participants analyse how home language education effects those capabilities; and
d) validating findings with participants after the first write up of findings.

Framing the research in this way creates an iterative process for conceptualising and validating reasons people in Vhembe have for valuing home language education (Yap & Yu 2016:323; Scheyvens et al. 2014: 273). The result was three research questions, as outlined in the table below, plus follow up interviews.

Table 3 *Research Questions*

Aim: To investigate educators' perceptions on how Tshivenḓa home language teaching has influenced the capabilities of Primary School learners in Vhembe, South Africa.		
Research Questions:		
1. What functionings do South African educators consider to be valuable for primary school learners?	**2.** What successes and challenges do Primary school learners face when trying to achieve these functionings?	**3.** In what ways does home language instruction enable learners to attain these functionings?

Melanie Walker (2009) led her team through a four stage process in their research on professional capabilities for poverty reduction in South African universities: "(i) choosing comprehensive capabilities that make for a fully human life; (ii) selecting a subset of professional capabilities; (iii) identifying university transformation dimensions; and, (iv) bringing these three together as a multi-dimensional scorecard" (5). Stages (i) and (ii) have influenced the first research question of this project. They are combined due to the time limits of this research in order to more efficiently move from the selection of capabilities towards a life of value in Vhembe into the focus on dimensions relevant to Primary school education. Stage (iii) helps form the third research question with a space to analyse how university/home language effects these other capabilities and begin theorising some causal links together. While stage (iv) will be addressed in the discussion.

Yap and Yu (2016) developed three stages for constructing capabilities of well-being in the context of Indigenous Yawuru participants in Western Australia: "[1] face-to-face semi-structured interviews in order to conceptualise Yawuru's ideas of a good life. [2] Focus group activities on the selection of relevant indicators for the concepts generated in stage 1 at the individual level, followed by aggregation at the group level. [3] Validation and review of the indicators chosen" (Yap & Yu 2016:324). Stage [1] is exactly the approach we will take, while adding the national dimension of capabilities analysis in recognition of South Africa's collective struggle to achieve the 1996 democratic constitution (Crocker 2008:19). Stage [2] group aggregation is currently limited by Covid-19 travel restrictions that limit the ability of this project to conduct focus groups at the same depth that in-person interaction could generate. This is acceptable because the aim of this project is not to create a valid metric of language attitudes across Vhembe. Individual responses have the advantage of raising issues that occur in Vhembe but they are not necessarily representative of wider views. Finally the way stage

[3] frames the validation process is an integral part of the analysis and research findings sections of this research (Scheyvens et al. 2014: 273).

5.3 Policy Analysis

This document analysis focuses on government policy, Acts of national parliament and the government gazette. The scope of this analysis is time-bound from the 1994 democratic elections to the present (Creswell 1994:110). South Africa's democratic process offers insight into the capabilities its citizens have reason to value (Crocker 2008). More significantly, it is important that this project connects people in Vhembe, whether they identify as Indigenous or not, to national legislation, treaties and promises of the state (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:14). In this spirit, the national level is an important place to begin recognising sovereignty and the democratic process for realising capabilities in South Africa (Crocker 2008).

Objective 1.1: To analyse government documents for the desired outcomes of South Africa's democratic system for Primary education.

- What are the South African Department of Basic Education's current policies?
- What laws and parts of the constitution are they intended to fulfil?

Objective 2.1: To analyse government documents for the means to achieving the stated outcomes.

- What are the principles that underpin how the DBE expects these outcomes to be achieved?
- Who has the rights to make decisions around these policies?
- What textbooks are available to implement these policies?

Objective 3.1: To analyse the Department of Basic Education's rationale on how the language instruction effects children's learning.

- What is the research behind the DBE policy?

The overall goal of the policy analysis was to define the broader aims of the Primary education in South Africa in order to be able to link back how the language of instruction effects these priorities. This began by reading the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) that was drafted over a two year consultation period after the first democratic elections in 1994. The current curriculum documents were available on the DBE's website, formally known as the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, Gr R–12 (2011). I then conducted

a number of searches on both a general google search engine and google scholar using the terms 'language' or 'home language' and 'education' and 'policy' and 'South Africa'. Sifting through references for government documents, I was able to identify the Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997) and its mandates from the National Education Policy Act (Act No. 27 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) as the legal basis for any discussion on language in education. The most recent update to these policies that I could locate using online tools was the 'Call for Comments on the Language Policy of the Department of Basic Education' by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (2015). Searching for more recent documents I found the latest evaluation report on the implementation of CAPS and it made no mention of the Language of Learning & Teaching (LoLT) as an issue (DPME 2017:30). It was also important to get more local policy and while no documents were retrieved under searches for 'Vhembe' or 'Venda', there were documents under the Limpopo Department of Education and their 'Action Plan 2019' was informative to the analysis.

The analysis sought to highlight sections that were relevant to the research objectives, therefore a) valued capabilities, b) conversion factors, and c) how a language like Tshivenḓa fit into these wider aims. What became particularly relevant was identifying who had the legal rights to decide the LoLT and then given the strong backing in the legal frameworks for the development of African languages, what the textbook situation was. Over 50 textbooks were identified by 11 different publishers supplying public schools. They were found using an iterative process, first through the catalogue of DBE approved textbooks (DoE, 2015), then searching these publishers' websites for all of their current publications, then finally searching to buy these textbooks online which brought up a number of retailers that confirmed the final list of textbooks available in Tshivenḓa. In the process of confirming this list with teachers during follow up interviews, Vho Bebela revealed one more – the Multilingual Natural Sciences and Technology Term List (G4-6) published by the Department of Arts & Culture in 2013.

5.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

In this section I address the methods I used to conduct semi-structured interviews. Beyond obtaining a low-risk ethics clearance, ethical considerations were at the forefront of each step of this process. These are described in my relationship with Mutshinyani Nesane who acted as a Research Assistant and cultural advisor through this process; in how we sought informed consent; recruited participants; conducted interviews; used language in our interviews;

transcribed, translated and coded interviews; and finally how we followed up with participants to confirm findings. The second set of research objectives guided our conversations at each of these steps.

Objective 1.2: To interview educators of Primary schools in Vhembe on their role in promoting a life of value in their context.

Objective 2.2: To interview educators in Vhembe on the successes and challenges they face getting learners to achieve their stated capabilities.

Objective 3.3: To interview educators in Vhembe on the ways in which Tshivenḓa language curriculum has expanded the capabilities of their learners.

5.4.1 Ethics Application

This project obtained a low-risk notification from Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants (MUHEC 2017). For local considerations this project was also designed to comply with the University of Venda Research ethical standards policy (Univen 2017) and The Consolidated Department of Basic Education Research Protocols (DBE 2017) for South Africa.

5.4.2 Research Assistant

This research has been conducted with a large degree of input from Mutshinyani Nesane, M.Ed. Tshwane University of Technology. While I was able to obtain funding for Mutshinyani as a Research Assistant, her involvement went far beyond the collecting information as she was involved in interpreting, analysing and confirming findings from the interviews. I aspired to emulate the co-researcher partnership between Eunice Yu's as a local mediator in her work with Mandy Yap at the Australian National University (Yap & Yu, 2016:323). Mutshinyani's ability to mediate between my attempts at connections to the literature and her first-hand knowledge of Venda language and culture was crucial in analysing the data. The social dynamic between myself and Mutshinyani was significant if we were to be able to capture concepts teachers were sharing that are culturally and contextually specific (Sumner & Tribe 2008:23). Mutshinyani was able to balance her involvement in this project with her other commitments by specifying which days or weeks she was able or unable to give input.

Our relationship goes back to a 3 month training of 36 new American Peace Corps Volunteers where Mutshinyani was teaching Tshivenḓa while I was helping with the training on South Africa's English First Additional Language curriculum. We are about the same age and she is married so we have a very balanced professional relationship. Mutshinyani and I stayed in touch, we would occasionally catch up for lunch with other teachers in Thohoyandou and I helped her get approval for her M.Ed. research from the Vhembe circuit office because I was living closer to the office at the time.

5.4.3 Informed Consent

Before I began contacting participants for their written/oral consent, ethical clearance was granted from Massey University's human ethics committee under a low-risk notification (MUHEC 2017; Univen 13.6). I then went through a formal process of informed consent from Vhembe's Mutale circuit at the Department of Basic Education. In seeking the consent of teachers to participate it was important to be clear that I was stepping out of my role as a colleague and a friend into a new role as a researcher. There is a problematic history of western research in South Africa and having witnessed strong resistance to this there was a real question about whether I had any right to carry out this research. I shared information about the research project as a PDF over whatsapp being the most accurate and accessible manner for participants (Banks & Scheyvens 2014: 165). In accordance with the University of Venda's Research ethical standards policy (Univen 13.4.8) the information included: the researchers names and Universities; the guiding questions for the interview; an explanation that they are free to withdraw from the project at any time, even after the consent is given and the project has commenced; their anonymity; and my benefits having obtained a bursary (scholarship) and participation will help towards my Masters in International Development. I also took any questions they had over whatsapp and only once they appeared comfortable with the premise of this research did we begin to schedule interviews. Participants' rights to withdraw were repeated verbally at the beginning of interviews, and then asking for permission to begin recording.

5.4.4 Snowball Sampling

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, identified through a snowball selection technique (O'Leary 2017: 211). The selection of participants began with my relationships with colleagues and educators I had built during my 3 years teaching in the area.

We stay in contact via Whatsapp instant messaging service and with Covid-19 travel restrictions in place this was the bridge of communication enabled this research to take place. By beginning with a small number of educators in Vhembe, the snowball technique allowed them to drive the direction of the research in ways that are useful to them and their relation to the issue (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 107). If this project was seen as exploitative or irrelevant, teachers could easily avoid participation given that whatsapp conversations can come and go. The sampling ended up spiralling out to include twelve educators across the district which provided some helpful perspective on the situation for children in different schools.

Mclennan & Prinsen (2014: 130) point to the 'digital divide' that is likely to create a whatsapp-user bias in the sample. To address this Mutshinyani tried some different avenues to locate teachers (O'Leary 2017: 209). Teaching is a salaried role in Vhembe and because communication is a highly valued capability (as noted in the findings), it is rare to find a teacher without a cell phone. Nonetheless, Mutshinyani found a recently retired teacher through her relatives who was off the whatsapp grid and the interview became significant for the fact that she no longer worked for the DBE. We discovered another participant over the radio. During one call with Mutshinyani we were discussing ongoing efforts to strengthen the Tshivenḓa language and she remembered a show on the local Venda radio station "Phalaphala FM" that encourages pride in Venda traditions. Mutshinyani realised that the woman who leads the show had run her own school and I was very excited and said we must talk to her. Despite being a bit star-struck Mutshinyani was able to get the show host's email by calling up the radio station and we used our sent her our information and consent form in Tshivenḓa . Mutshinyani secured and conducted the interview with Vho Chelela.

5.4.5 Digital Interviews

Due to Covid-19 lock-downs, neither myself nor Mutshinyani were able to meet teachers in person for interviews. We therefore conducted interviews remotely by mobile phone, establishing contact with teachers through the instant messaging service Whatsapp, setting up an interview time and then calling their phone directly so there would be no costs to the participants. In my case I used Skype credit to dial South African numbers. Communication through Whatsapp is encrypted giving a high level of privacy to information exchanged on this platform (NYT 2017). Recordings of the interviews were kept on a password protected device with names and identifying details changed for anonymity.

The advantage to conducting interviews during lockdown was the fact that teachers were at home and seeking outside connections during the global pandemic. The extra time people had cannot be overstated because many teachers commute up to two hours each way from their homes to schools in rural Vhembe villages and being mostly women they have significant domestic workloads to attend to when they return. Mutshinyani and I found participants eager to know how Covid-19 was affecting us on the other side of the Province as well as in another corner of the world. The drawbacks to digital engagement were the lack of in-person catch-ups that can be very strong in relationship building and the loss of subtle visual cues and body language that can be important in communication (Mclennan & Prinsen 2014: 145). There was a risk that responses would be shorter without the direct commitment of a face-to-face meeting that includes other participants, food etc. but in the end all of the interviews reached a good depth of conversation. This was likely due to both the isolation of lockdown and relationships we had established in Vhembe which also came through in recommendations to other participants.

Vho Anetshela Vho Bebela Vho Chelela Vho Ḓifara Vho Engedza Vho Fhaṱelana Vho Gumula Vho Hwala Vho Isedza Vho Jena Vho Konḓisa Vho Lora

Participants have been given the pseudonyms VA, VB, VC etc. by age from the eldest, VA, to youngest, VL, and the names that begin with this letter have been made up in order to preserve their anonimity. Vho Anetshela is a retired teacher, to the youngest Vho Lora who recently finished University and was in her second year teaching. The V refers to Vho, the title for teachers and most adults in Tshivenḓa. While it is used like we use Mr. & Mrs. 'Vho' is a gender neutral title. Vho is also the concord (like a prefix) for referring to a group of people – implying that as respected teachers they answer on behalf of others in the community. VK and VL stated that they would feel old being referred to with 'Vho' and while the abreviation is retained, referring to them individually as Konḓisa and Lora.

Table 4 *Participant Interview Details*

Participant Interview Details						
Date	**Teacher**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Interviewer**	**Length**	**Quotes**
19/07/20	VA	50+	F	Mutshinyani	8:50	4
5/07/20	VB	50+	F	Marc	17:57	1
29/06/20	VC	50+	F	Mutshinyani	11:13	1
22/06/20	VD	50+	M	Marc	53:44	6
9/07/20	VE	50+	F	Marc	17:19	2
19/06/20	VF	50+	F	Marc	18:57	5
15/06/20	VG	36-49	F	Marc	25:30	1
22/06/20	VH	36-49	M	Marc	37:35	2
29/07/20	VI	36-49	M	Marc	47:32	7
20/07/20	VJ	36-49	F	Mutshinyani	20:13	4
21/06/20	VK	20-35	F	Marc	43:53	3
16/06/20	VL	20-35	F	Marc	41:42	2

Teachers who were interviewed work at schools across the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. They ranged from second and third year teachers (VL, VK), to Principals (VD, VE, VF) to a retired teacher (VA). Vho Bebela works at the University of Venda's Tshivenḓa Lexicography Unit writing dictionaries and Vho Chelela you will hear about shortly. Nine of the teachers were women and three of them men. From the total length of the interviews, women spoke 60% of the time and men 40%. I was slightly biased towards men with the final selection of quotes coming to 42% from men and 58% from women.

5.4.6 Language of Interviews

Language was central not only to the findings but also to the means of this research. This became the most difficult part of the process. Mutshinyani and I drafted interview questions in Tshivenḓa and gave interviewees the option of speaking in English or Tshivenḓa when we sought their consent. We always began these conversations in Tshivenḓa but without fail teachers would interview with Mutshinyani in Tshivenḓa and switch to English for me. There are power dynamics that I was unable to overcome and this does limit the quality of the 'data' particularly in how English shapes what people can say. However, there were notable individual differences among participants' use of English and this is expanded in the discussion on *Language Attitudes*.

Overall, this was a reflection of my proficiency in Tshivenḓa, with participants recognising that they would be better understood if they spoke English. It was clear that remaining in Aotearoa New Zealand and conducting late night interviews I was unable to get my Tshivenḓa to the level necessary for these complex interviews. My overestimating my ability in the language is also consistent with the literature on second language learners. While we may appear to have a high degree of fluency in our interactions with others, Cummins (2000) distinguishes Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) with the CALP that is necessary to actually learn *through* a language. These teachers therefore demonstrated a great feat of bilingual dynamism by shifting to communicate in my home language. In the end I did not have the level of advanced academic proficiency in Tshivenḓa that I needed to conduct this in their home language. Mutshinyani did have this high level of proficiency and her in-depth interviews demonstrate that Tshivenḓa has a place in Universities in Masters and higher level work.

While Vho Bebela chose to conduct the interview in English, it became clear that it was an obstacle. Out of respect for her desire to use and engage in English I completed the interview and made notes. I then scheduled a follow up interview with her and I only spoke in Tshivenḓa and while I could not follow her entire responses, she clearly had more freedom of expression. Mutshinyani helped me to translate the recording of this interview later.

For Konḓisa, Lora, Vho Fhaṱelana and Vho Hwala, they were all very comfortable in English. These interviews stood out for leaning towards the assumption that higher level academics should be in English, something that is explored further in Language Attitudes. From a more pragmatic point of view, their use of English can also be seen as taking back the power of translation. Knowing that my thesis will be in English and having high bi-lingual proficiency there was a sense that another reason to use English was to retain control over the translation and ensure that I did not misinterpret the Tshivenḓa.

For Vho Ḓifara, Vho Engedza, Vho Gumula, and Vho Isedza, they definitely used English for my benefit, but they also used a significant amount of Tshivenḓa in their interviews. In retrospect, these interviews were Translanguaging – teachers knew they could communicate easily in English while also bringing in Tshivenḓa words and sentences to hash out the cultural concepts that they were explaining to me. So while my encouragement of Tshivenḓa could not

overcome my lower proficiency, for these four teachers it did break the monopoly English would have over the interview, helping them feel free to bring in Tshivenḓa when English wasn't sufficient to explain what they wanted to say. In Vho Ḓifara's case, the interview lasted almost an hour with up to a third of it in Tshivenḓa and he clearly felt free to express himself using all of his language.

I worked with Mutshinyani to translate the Tshivenḓa responses in my interviews to ensure that I did not miss any of the wider meaning or words, phrases and symbolism inherent to a language (Murray & Overton 2014:47). Mutshinyani also translated her interviews with Vho Anetshela, Vho Chelela and Vho Jena. These translations ended up looking very similar to our Translanguaged interviews with Mutshinyani leaving in specific Tshivenḓa words that don't have a translation. We found that even in the English only interviews we there was some consistent terminology with teachers saying learners would 'feel free' (*u vhofolowa*) and 'enjoy' (*u takalela*).

5.4.7 Transcription, Coding & Analysis

All interviews were transcribed in full. Probably the greatest risk of this approach is 'agenda framing' by myself, the author "in terms of what facts are selected and which ones are excluded" (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 101; Sumner & Tribe 2008:15). With purposive sampling there is also a risk of an 'unwitting bias' that participants will confirm my assumptions in the study (O'Leary 2017: 210). The capabilities approach was key to addressing these limitations. The first two research questions step back from my research interests and serve to unpack the multiple and varied priorities of education in the local context. With the third research question participants placed the issue of home language into that established context, ensuring that the research topic is addressed without losing sight of participants' wider goals.

Steps to Analysing the role of Tshivenḓa

1. Created questions based on the Capabilities Approach
2. Contacted colleagues, sent research information sheet, set up interview times
3. Semi-structured interviews over Skype/Phones during lock-down
4. Snowball Sampling – colleagues recommended other teachers to speak on topic
5. Transcriptions & Coding – thematic analysis of interviews
    a. Used Nvivo simply to highlight and tag themes as I read transcripts
    b. Printed out quotes with themes and re-arranged with inter-connections

6. Tshivenḓa language analysis and re-coding of findings with Mutshinyani
7. Member Testing – follow up interviews to validate & review themes & findings

Table 5 *Interview Questions based on Research Objectives*

Aim: To investigate educators' perceptions on how Tshivenḓa home language teaching has influenced the capabilities of Primary School learners in Vhembe, South Africa.		
Research Questions:	***Semi-Structured Interview* Objectives:**	**Interview Questions:**
1. What capabilities do South African educators consider to be valuable for primary school learners?	*Objective 1.2:* To interview Primary school educators about the skills and values that are important for children in Vhembe.	❖What is important for learners for a good education in South Africa and Venda? ❖Do you agree with the current subjects for Primary? ❖What other skills are important for children to learn in Primary? ❖What values should learners learn?
2. What successes and challenges do Primary school learners face when trying to achieve these capabilities?	*Objective 2.2:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the successes and challenges they face getting learners to achieve these skills and values.	❖When do you find success in teaching these skills & values? ❖What do learners enjoy and get excited about doing? ❖What are the challenges that learners face when trying to learn these skills/values? ❖What makes it difficult for learners to learn? ❖What techniques do you use to help learners understand?
3. In what ways does home language instruction enable learners to attain these capabilities?	*Objective 3.3:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the ways in which Tshivenḓa language curriculum has expanded the capabilities of their learners.	❖How does Tshivenḓa help learners achieve these skills and/or values? ❖How do learners feel being able to speak Tshivenḓa? English?

		❖Do learners ask questions or participate more in English or Tshivenḓa? Why? ❖How is learners' Critical Thinking in Tshivenḓa vs. English?

5.4.8 Follow up Interviews

The major risk identified comes from mis-interpreting and mis-representing people's views through the research (Stewart Withers et al. 2014: 101; Univen 13.4.9). It was therefore crucial for participants to be involved in confirming statements, reflecting on their meaning giving feedback on the results (Scheyvens et al. 2014: 273). This meant that once transcripts were written up, they were shared and discussed with the teachers. This 'member testing' was part of a second round of calls at the analysis stage where I shared my interpretation of these results and asked for feedback (Univen 13.4.4). Teachers were happy to see their own statements as quotes and backed their inclusion in this work. The more difficult process was establishing agreed 'capabilities of value' in the Vhembe context. As teachers had reverted to CAPS subjects to name the things learners should learn in Primary school, the initial findings for valued capabilities emerged from thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Mutshinyani and I worked to harmonize the English and Tshivenḓa themes. Terms that were ambiguous such as 'they enjoy' in English were confirmed with teachers to ask if they meant *u diphina* which is a sense of inner pleasure, or *u takalela* which is a sense of happiness in relation to others. These themes were already grouped so teacher were asked if they agreed with the values other teachers had mentioned such as *u na ndele,* to be smart; *u tendelana,* to agree with others; and *vhuwavo,* to be kind however these three terms among others did not reach consensus as valued capabilities generally because their Tshivenḓa meanings did not suggest they could be cultivated through education. This is contrary to what their closest English translation may suggest which is important to highlight. The Tshivenḓa terms are included specifically because their Tshivenḓa meaning is what makes them relevant as capabilities in this research.

Chapter Summary

This research used qualitative methods to conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers in Vhembe, South Africa. The qualitative approaches, specifically of Yap and Yu (2016) and Walker (2009) in conceptualising capabilities were chosen to create dialogue as allies in a

cross-cultural space that strived to counter ethnocentric models of development (Scheyvens & McLennan, 2014:10-11). The policy analysis and literature review aimed to triangulate findings and link participants to national and international rights and research that align with their goals. This project received ethical clearance from Massey University and aligned with ethics of the University of Venda. As Covid-19 lockdowns came into place participants were contacted via Whatsapp using a snow-ball selection technique, obtaining informed consent and arranging phone interviews with twelve teachers. Both the interviews and policy analysis followed three steps of inquiry 1) establishing capabilities of value, 2) successes and challenges in achieving these, and 3) how Tshivenḓa affects the attainment of these capabilities for children in Vhembe. Interviews were transcribed, coded and themes were refined in follow up interviews with teachers.

Chapter 6. Findings on Language Policy

In order to understand if Tshivenḓa enhances any capabilities for learners, we must first establish what those capabilities of value are. Capabilities are those things we would like to do or be that combine to provide us with a life of value. The 1994 democratic elections in South Africa set up a wide ranging process to establish the laws and constitution that would allow each of its citizens, regardless of background, race, gender or ability the substantive freedom to live a life of dignity. Both languages and education were identified as playing a crucial role in fulfilling this. The following policy documents were identified as providing the core framework for the goals of language learning and Primary school education in South Africa:

1. The Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) and its 17 amendments
2. Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997) as underpinned by:
    a. The National Education Policy Act (Act No. 27 of 1996)
    b. The South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996)
3. The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, Gr R–12 (CAPS, 2011)
    a. The National Curriculum Framework (DBE, 2015)

The second part of this chapter then shifts to address objective 3.1 to analyse how the DBE defines the role of home language education and the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) to be implemented in fulfilling the larger aims and functionings of Primary education. Many of the most relevant policies are quoted in tables throughout this section for reference in both the discussion and for the use of South African colleagues who may use them to clarify their rights.

6.1 Valued Capabilities

In fulfilment of objective 1.1. this section will identify the priorities of South Africa's education system in order to theorise the capabilities of value in South African Primary schools. Each of the pieces of these documents and policies that are described and quoted in this section express the multiple capabilities of value for children in their education. The purpose of this section is not to question these capabilities here, but rather to bring them to the fore as a list so that progress towards them can be interrogated in the discussion with reference to teachers' experiences implementing them in Vhembe.

6.1.1 Skills & Values

The Constitution of South Africa is a document formed over 2 years of deliberation with broad consultation across the country's diverse population (Barnes & de Klerk, 2002). The rights laid out in the constitution aim to promote human dignity, equality and freedom as the core of its democracy.

Table 6 *Selections from the Bill of Rights*

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996	
Bill of Rights	
Section:	**7. Rights** (S.A. Const. 1996: §7)
§7 Dignity Equality Freedom	(1) This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. (2) The state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil [these rights].
Section:	**9. Equality** (S.A. Const. 1996: §9)
§9 Equality	(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
Section:	**29. Education** (S.A. Const. 1996: §29)
§29 Education	(1) Everyone has the right— (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

The general goals and aims of this basic education were established with 'The South African Schools Act' (SASA, 1996). Over the last 25 years the national curriculum proposed by SASA has gone through two reviews in order for the current 'National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12', more commonly known as the Curriculum And Policy Statement (CAPS). These documents are used to anchor a set of 'valued capabilities' for Primary School learners across South Africa as a whole. A general overview of the range of these capabilities are important ends to establish in the South African context before this research focuses in on the means, in the case of this project, in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).

CAPS: *"(a) gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools."* (CAPS 2011:9). South African Primary schools cater to Grades 1 to 7.

Table 7 *Subjects in CAPS*

Foundation Phase Grades 1-3	Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6	Senior Phase Grades 7-9
Home Language	Home Language	Home Language
First Additional Language	First Additional Language	First Additional Language
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Orientation
		Arts and Culture
Creative Arts, Personal & Social Wellbeing,	Natural Sciences & Technology	Natural Sciences
		Technology
	Social Sciences	Social Sciences
	History & Geography	Economic & Management Sciences

Home language is understood as the language learners speak at home or in the community. First Additional Language is a subject intended to establish a common language in South Africa which was agreed in 1996 as English (Heugh 2007). The current Minister for Basic Education explains that "The underlying principle is the maintenance of home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s) by all learners" (Motshekga, 2015:7). The language that the remaining subjects are taught in depends on a school selecting the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), a process that will be outlined below.

Beyond core subjects, CAPS outlines its purpose and a specific set of Principles that are relevant to understanding the capabilities of value in South African Primary schools. The column on the left is used to highlight the key concepts that CAPS defines in the column on the right so that these concepts, such as 'equity', can be referred to later in the discussion.

Table 8 *Purposes of CAPS*

Purpose:	*"CAPS (b) serves the purposes of:"* (CAPS 2011:9)
Equity Participation as Citizens	*equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country;*
Higher Education	*providing access to higher education*
Work	*facilitating the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace; and*
Competences	*providing employers with a sufficient profile of a learner's competences" (CAPS 2011:9).*

6.1.2 Home Language

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (DBE 2015) provides particularly clear rationale that "Children's rights form the basis for all communication: the right to be heard and the right to speak and the right to communicate in her home language" (DBE 2015:46). In addition, education must "actively honour the diversity of our young children, their capabilities, their languages and their heritage" (DBE 2015:9). As a result, the NCF develops six key 'Early Learning and Development Areas' that include:

Figure 8 *Early Learning & Development Areas*

> *"**2. Identity and belonging:** Children are becoming more aware of themselves as individuals, developing a positive self-image and learning how to manage their own behaviour. Children are demonstrating growing awareness of diversity and the need to respect and care for others."*
>
> *"**3. Communication:** Children are learning how to think critically, solve problems and form concepts. Children are learning to communicate effectively and use language confidently. Children are learning about mathematical concepts." (DBE 2015:14)*

Enshrining these rights in the Vhembe context, the South African Constitution (1996) section 6 establishes Tshivenḓa as an official language and provides for multilingualism and elevating the status of previously marginalised Indigenous languages. Section 6(2) requires specific action to be taken in order for these language rights to be realised.

Table 9 *Language Rights in the Constitution*

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996	
Chapter 1: Founding Provisions	
Section:	***6. Languages*** (S.A. Const. 1996: §6)
§6 Languages	(1) The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenḓa, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.
	(2) Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.
	(4) all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably.
	(5) A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must (a) promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of— (i) all official languages
Chapter Two the Bill of Rights	
Section:	***9. Equality*** (S.A. Const. 1996: §9)
§9 Equality	(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including … language …
Section:	***29. Education*** (S.A. Const. 1996: §29)
§29 Education	(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account—
	(2)(a) equity; (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.
Section:	***30. Language and culture*** (S.A. Const. 1996: §30)
§30 Language & Culture	Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.

These language rights are then repeated in SASA (1996) and NEPA (1996) before being detailed in the Department of Basic Education's (DBE)'s Language in Education Policy (1997).

Table 10 *Aims of the Language in Education Policy*

Summary	**Language in Education Policy** (DoE 1997)
Aims:	*The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are: (DoE 1997:2)*
1. Participation in Society	*1. to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;*
2. Additive Multilingualism	*2. to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;*
3. Develop all Official Languages	*3. to promote and develop all the official languages;*

Summary – Valued Capabilities

All children have a right to an equitable Primary school education in South Africa that will lead to participation as citizens in their democracy, with access to higher education and economic opportunities for work. Each child has the right to be taught in the official language of their choice as long as it promotes the overall goal of multilingualism. The subject areas of focus are Home Language (e.g. Tshivenḓa); First Additional Language (English); Mathematics; Life Skills; Creative Arts; Natural Sciences & Technology; and the Social Sciences of History and Geography. The curriculum is also underpinned by the principles of social transformation; critical learning; high knowledge; progression; inclusivity; Indigenous knowledge; and 'quality' as defined in comparison to other countries. While these are clearly valued capabilities in themselves, they also play a role as conversion factors to children's education.

6.2 Conversion Factors

While these goals outline some of the ends of South Africa's public education, the principles in this next table colour in more of the intrinsic means that are identified as having a crucial role for children to be able to achieve these aims.

Table 11 *Principles of CAPS*

Principles	*"(c) [CAPS] is based on the following principles:* (CAPS 2011:9).
Social Transformation	*1.* ***Social transformation****: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;*
Active & Critical	*2.* ***Active and critical learning****: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths;*
High Knowledge	*3.* ***High knowledge and high skills****: the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade are specified and set high, achievable standards in all subjects;*
Progression	*4.* ***Progression****: content and context of each grade shows progression from simple to complex;" (CAPS 2011:9)*
Inclusive	*5.* ***Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice****: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. [CAPS] is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors; (CAPS 2011:10)*
Indigenous	*6.* ***Valuing indigenous knowledge systems****: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution; and*
Quality	*7.* ***Credibility, quality and efficiency****: providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries."*

In their 2017 national evaluation report on the seven principles of CAPS (DPME 2017:30), active and critical learning was measured by learner participation or "the extent to which individual learners engaged in reading, writing, or speaking tasks during the lesson" (DPME 2017:30). The report concluded that there was a need for improvement in the principles of critical learning, high knowledge, progression from simple to complex and valuing Indigenous knowledge systems in order to see them more widely practiced in schools (Ibid). Schools are therefore found to be having significant challenges attaining the functionings of critical learning, high knowledge, progression and Indigenous knowledge that the curriculum identifies as key principles – both ends and means, capabilities in themselves and conversion factors to the overall capability of a basic education in South Africa.

Who decides the Language of Learning & Teaching?

Children's rights to an education in the official language of their choice, including Tshivenḓa, are clear. However, we cannot say that a child has the capability to enact this right as a functioning unless there are certain conversion factors to make this a reality. This section identifies the legal mechanisms as well as the practical resources needed in the form of Tshivenḓa language textbooks to make the conversion from a language right to an attainable capability.

In the most recent document to be published on their website, South Africa's still current Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, addresses the DBE's application of these laws and policies in Notice 325 of 2015 'Call for Comments on the Language Policy of the Department of Basic Education'. In this document, Motshekga (2015:9) explains that her interpretation of the Language in Education Policy (1997) is:

a) *"To promote multilingualism and respect for all languages used in the country;*
b) *To facilitate communication across barriers of skin colour, language and region; whilst at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own is encouraged;*
c) *To adopt a decentralised approach to language planning and policy implementation;*
d) *To promote previously marginalised official indigenous languages; and the learning and teaching of all the official languages of the Republic at all levels of schooling."*

In addressing Children's language rights in the Constitution's *§29* on Education, The National Education Policy Act 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) recognises "The right of every learner to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable" (clause 4 (v)).

Table 12 *Identifying the role of the School Governing Body (SGB)*

Summary	Language in Education Policy (1997) (DoE 1997)
Individual Rights	*6. The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism. (DoE 1997:1)*
The School	***The Rights And Duties Of The School*** *(DoE 1997:3)*
Multilingualism	*1. [I]n determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes*
The Province	***The Rights and Duties of the Provincial Education Departments***
Register of Requests	*1. The provincial education department must keep a register of requests by learners for teaching in a language medium which cannot be accommodated by schools.*
SGB determines LoLT	*2. In the case of a new school, the governing body of the school in consultation with the relevant provincial authority determines the language policy of the new school in accordance with the regulations promulgated in terms of section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996.*
40 Learners to request a Language	*3. It is reasonably practicable to provide education in a particular language of learning and teaching if at least 40 in Grades 1 to 6 or 35 in Grades 7 to 12 learners in a particular grade request it in a particular school.*
Resources	*4. The provincial department must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. It must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and or school districts which cannot be provided with and or offer additional languages of teaching in the home language(s) of learners.*

The Department of Basic Education's (DBE)'s Language in Education Policy (1997) invests this right in the individual (DoE 1997:1) and parents exercise these rights for minors on their behalf (DoE 1997:3). Parents are able to voice their language requests through their School Governing Body (SGB) that determines the Language of Learning & Teaching (LoLT) that is the best fit across the range of learners (Motshekga, 2015:12; DBE et al.2010:7). An SGB's voting members include a school's Principal, teachers, staff, community members and parents, and subject to SASA *§23(9)* parents must retain a majority with one more member on the body than the combined total of other members (SASA 1996:10).

Home Language Textbooks

The DBE's language policy also retains control over the language of curriculum documentation and textbooks, which is decided based on "The official languages of the Republic with due regard to the criteria…7.1.1 Usage 7.1.2 Practicality 7.1.3 Expense 7.1.4 Provincial circumstances 7.1.5 The needs and preferences of the public it serves" (Motshekga, 2015:16). In the Foundation Phase, the DBE commits to providing curriculum documents for all subjects in "all the eleven (11) official languages" (Motshekga, 2015:5). I was able to confirm the delivery of this commitment for Tshivenḓa Home Language textbooks with a review of the *National Catalogue of Learning & Teaching Support Materials (LSTM)* (DoE, 2015) that is detailed in the table below.

Table 13 *National Catalogue of Learning & Teaching Support Materials (DoE, 2015)*

CAPS Approved Tshivenḓa HL Books				
Publisher	**Series Title**	**Content Type**	**Grade Levels**	**Originally Written in:**
Pearson (Platinum)	Kha ri shele mulenzhe	Textbooks	1 to 12	Tshivenḓa
Via Afrika	Tshivenḓa Luambo lwa Hayani	Textbooks + Readers	1 to 12	Tshivenḓa
MacMillan	Thasululo ya Vhothe	Textbooks	1 to 3 + 10	Tshivenḓa
Department of Education	Rainbow Workbooks	Workbooks	1 to 6	English
Cambridge	Little Library	Reader sets	1 to 6	English
Vivlia Books	Sounds like fun!'	Reader sets	1 to 6	English
Oxford University Press	Ri khou aluwa Tshivenḓa	Reader sets	1 to 6	English
Pearson (Day By Day)	Duvha Nga Duvha	Textbooks	1 to 3	English
Hibbard Publishers	African Language Literature	Readers	7 to 9	Tshivenḓa
Vhutsila Publishers (Venda)	Mbeu ya Luambo	Textbooks	7 to 9	Tshivenḓa
Via Afrika	Tshivenḓa Folklore Anthology	Reader	12	Tshivenḓa

However, in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and onwards, the DBE only commits to "documents related to the teaching and learning of languages will be provided in all the official languages of the Republic of South Africa" (Motshekga, 2015:5). Analysis of textbooks available in Tshivenḓa during the Intermediate Phase concludes that this position taken by the DBE has limited the development of subject textbooks to English and Afrikaans only from grade 4 on.

Table 14 *CAPS Approved Textbooks available to Primary Schools in Vhembe*

<table>
<tr><th colspan="9">CAPS Approved Textbooks</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="3">Foundation Phase</th><th colspan="3">Intermediate Phase</th><th>Senior</th><th></th></tr>
<tr><th>Subject / Grade:</th><th>1</th><th>2</th><th>3</th><th>4</th><th>5</th><th>6</th><th>7</th><th>Publishers</th></tr>
<tr><td>Home Language</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="5">Tshivenḓa</td><td colspan="4">Tshivenḓa HL</td><td rowspan="6">Cambridge
Department of Education
MacMillan
Oxford University Press
Pearson (Day By Day)
Pearson (Platinum)
Via Afrika
Vivlia Books</td></tr>
<tr><td>Maths</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="5">English
or
Afrikaans</td></tr>
<tr><td>Life Skills</td></tr>
<tr><td>Social Science</td></tr>
<tr><td>Natural Science & Tech</td></tr>
<tr><td>First Additional Language</td><td colspan="3">English FAL</td></tr>
</table>

The only exception was a Multilingual Natural Sciences and Technology Term List released by the Department of Arts & Culture in 2013. The development of the subject dictionary was led by Ms Susan Roets and the Terminology Coordination Section (TCS) of the National Language Service (DAC, 2013: vi). The team used the English language Natural Science curriculum from Grades 4 to 6 to create a list of 2896 science terms/definitions and equivalent synonyms in Tshivenḓa and Xitsonga (viii). The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) assisted by allowing the National Language Body for each language, including Tshivenḓa, to authenticate the terminology lists (vi).

The Limpopo Department of Education's (2019) 'Action Plan 2019' indicates that this may change as there are signs and may be preparing to put resources into Tshivenḓa and other language textbooks for the remaining Grade 4-6 curriculum. This implementation document proposes that "[t]he use of African Languages as languages of teaching and learning will be extended to Grade 7. The Department will during 2019/20 also launch a Provincial LSTM call centre with a view of improving provision of LSTM to schools" (Limpopo DoE 2019:73). This proposal is not referenced elsewhere in the document, however, and remains buried under the 'Reconciling Performance Targets with the Budgets and MTEF' section "with a view of ensuring schools address issues impacting negatively on their learner performance" (Limpopo DoE 2019:73). This is to say that while the author is clearly aware of the impact this particular commitment could have, there is no further evidence at the moment of higher level commitment and follow through at The Limpopo Department of Education. At a national level for example, the latest evaluation report on CAPS made no mention of the Language of Learning & Teaching (LoLT) as an issue (DPME 2017:30).

6.2.1 How does home language enable learners to attain capabilities in education?

The Department of Basic Education's Language in Education Policy (1997) goes into more detail around the aims of supporting a multilingual approach with South Africa's 11 Official languages to all be accessible in schools (Motshekga, 2015:12).

Table 15 *Language in Education Policy (1997)*

Summary	**Language in Education Policy** (DoE 1997)
Aims:	*The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are: (DoE 1997:2)*
2. Conceptual Growth	*2. to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;*
4. Language Learning	*4. to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa;*
5. Overcome Language Barrier	*5. to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching;*
6. Redress	*6. to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages.*

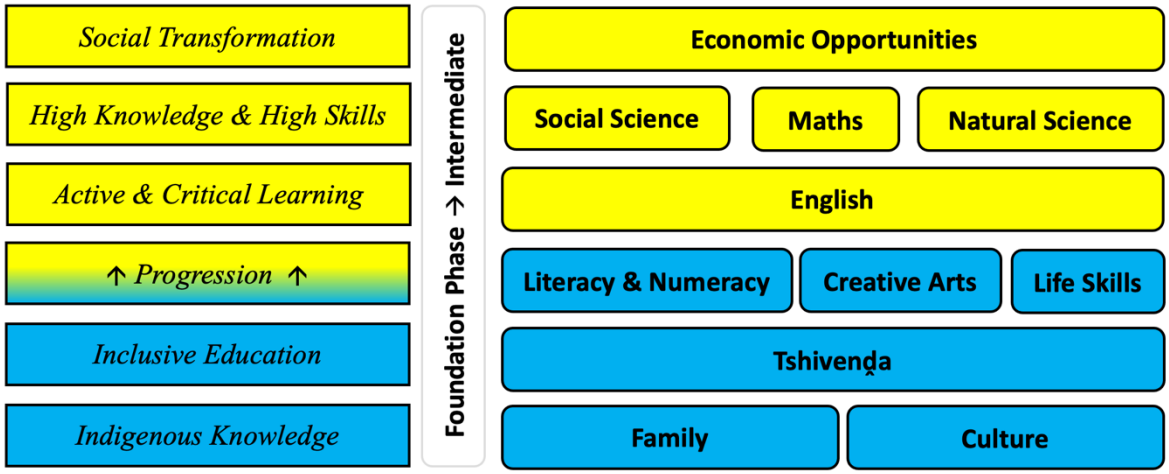
The Language in Education Policy (1997) recognises a range of "locally viable approaches towards multilingual education" and cites two particularly suitable options. The first is Home Language medium education with additional languages (e.g. English) as a subject. The second approach suggested is that of a "structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two way immersion) programmes" (DoE 1997:1). The policy does not take an ideological position, as long as the method supports "general conceptual growth amongst learners" towards additive multilingualism.

The DBE shares the findings of this project's literature review that the work of Cummins (2001) is foundational to our current understanding of multilingual education (DBE et al. 2010:7). This is evident across documents, with the NCF also making statements consistent with Cummins' (2001) work, "If they [learners] have a solid foundation in their mother tongue,

they will find it easier to learn another language as they will have already found out how language is structured and how to communicate with others" (DBE 2015:20).

This policy identifies the role of Tshivenḓa as building children's foundation for learning before they progress to achieve other valued functionings in the Intermediate phase as seen in the figure below. While Tshivenḓa is seen to have a role from Grades R-3, the transition to English in Grade 4 aims to prepare learners for a multilingual South Africa with the 'High Knowledge and High Skills' embedded in Social Science, Maths and Natural Science that require 'Active and Critical Learning' in order for learners to have economic opportunities when they complete their education and realise the goal of social transformation. This has resulted in the structure illustrated here. The assumptions behind this hierarchical structure are explored further in the discussion on critical learning, high knowledge and language attitudes.

Figure 9 *Structure of Home Language to English Transition*



Summary of Conversion Factors

Every child has the right to education in the official language of their choice (S.A. Const. 1996: §29) as exercised by their parents on their behalf (DoE 1997:3). Schools navigate this duty through their School Governing Body (SGB) that ultimately decides the Language of Learning & Teaching (LoLT) with the overall goal of multilingualism *(DoE 1997:3)*. The DBE recognises the core role of learners' home language as the foundation for multilingualism (DBE et al.2010:7; DBE 2015:20; Cummins 2001). While the DBE has only committed to providing Tshivenḓa language textbooks for subjects across the Foundation Phase (Motshekga, 2015:5),

there is a Grade 4-6 Natural Science Dictionary available (DAC, 2013) and the Limpopo Department of Education's 'Action Plan 2019' makes provision for "the use of African Languages as languages of teaching and learning will be extended to Grade 7" (Limpopo DoE 2019:73). If an SGB wishes to petition the Limpopo Department of Education to follow through on this provision, section 8.6.3 of the Language in Education Policy (1997) considers it reasonable to provide education in a particular LoLT (e.g. Tshivenḓa) if at least 40 learners request it.

Chapter 7. Findings from Teachers

Introduction

This section begins with teachers' discussion about those skills and values that are important for learners to acquire in their Primary schools. These included literacy, numeracy, science, history, culture, dances, and particular values such as *thonifho*, showing respect. The successes and challenges to teaching these centred around the diversity of learners in the classroom, the language learners understood, the influence of their parents and family life, the emotions children felt at school, their language attitudes, and providing practical activities for learners to connect to their lessons. The interview process came to conclude that Tshivenḓa was important as the language: that all learners understood well; that connected to their relationships with parents and grandparents; that engendered positive emotions; and finally as the language that allowed teachers to communicate practical concepts through the language of learners' cultural and environmental context.

7.1 Valued Capabilities – Skills & Values

The coding process revealed a number of themes for the valued capabilities in Vhembe Primary schools.

1. Tshivenḓa Home Language (All)
2. English (All)
3. To Know your Culture, yourself & Origins (8)
4. Natural Science (7)
5. Values: *thonifho,* respect; *u shuma rothe*, working together (6)
6. Maths (5)
7. Creative arts – dance & drums (5)
8. Read and Write (4)
9. Dance: Tshigombela, Tshikona, Malende, Tshifasi, Domba (4)
10. History – people, cultures and politics of South Africa (3)

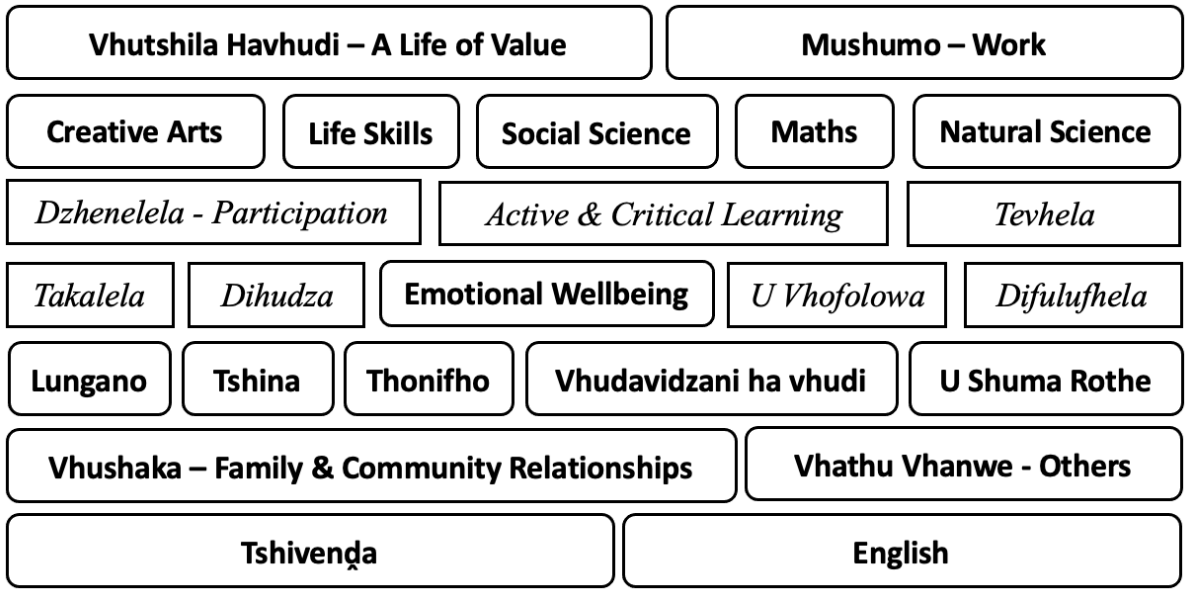
How Teachers Perceive Tshivenḓa's Role in Education

Intrinsic:

1. Culture & Origins (8)
2. Positive Emotions: Confident, Enjoy, Proud, Feel Free (6)
3. Venda Values: Thonifho, u shuma rothe, vhushaka (5)
4. Cultural Efficacy in Singing, Dance: Tshigombela, Tshikona, etc. (4)
5. Strengthened Relationships: particularly to family at home (3)
6. Ownership "Now we can own our culture because of this education system" (VD)

The skills that the teachers identify as valued functionings for learners in Primary school largely align with the current curriculum but they also go beyond it. These are that learners should master Tshivenḓa home language, literacy (reading & writing), numeracy (maths), natural science, social sciences (geography and history), creative arts (dances, singing, drumming), and English First Additional Language. Tshivenḓa is in itself important for learners to know themselves and their culture while being the main language of communication. Many teachers also link their learners' understanding of their own culture with their ability to respect and appreciate other South African cultures, a key aim of the Social Science curriculum. In discussing their role in the Primary school, teachers also revealed other valued functionings that they try and instil in their young learners. These are *vhudavhidzani ha vhudi* (good communication), *thonifho* (respect), *u shuma rothe* (to work together), as well as *u tshina* (to dance) and *u dzedza* (to tell a story) such as traditional *lungano* folktales. Individual teachers also cited a desire for more focus on technology to prepare learners for technical careers (Vho Jena) and vocational skills that will be practical in the workforce (Vho Hwala). Addressing a debate between English and Tshivenḓa as a language of instruction, most teachers were pragmatic *"If you are talking about the whole primary level, they should be taught in both" (Vho Anetshela).*

Figure 10 *Capabilities of Value as expressed in teacher interviews*



7.1.1 Tshivenḓa Home Language

For all of the teachers, Tshivenḓa is valued in and of itself as the source of culture and identity. The intrinsic nature of Tshivenḓa to both the teachers and their learners is also expressed in the consequences of its loss,

> *"If you take a language from a person, aaiih, you have taken everything [from] that person, because a language makes us who we are" (Vho Bebela).*

Teachers are certain that the language of Tshivenḓa itself contains concepts that are important for children to learn.

> *"Our learners must learn their language, their mother-tongue... you know your culture through your language...they can be able to learn where they come from, where is their home, through their language Tshivenḓa" (Vho Isedza).*

More than learning about an abstract past, this connection is relevant to learners everyday as Tshivenḓa is the language of learners' living relationships with their family at home and elders in the community.

> *"if the learners don't know their home language I think they will lose communication with their parents or their grandmother at home" (Vho Gumula).*

It is also the language of clearest communication. As one teacher said quite simply:

> *"It is their mother-tongue, they know that they can understand everything" (Vho Hwala).*

Tshivenḓa is therefore valued as a core part of a learners' life, how they understand themselves, their origins and their culture through their relationships with their parents, grandparents and teachers at school. This valued capability is reflected in the South African curriculum with Tshivenḓa available as a language subject from Grade R to Grade 12.

7.1.2 Social Science

The Social Science curriculum in Primary school grades 4 to 7 includes both History and Geography. One of the aims of this curriculum is to promote cross-cultural understanding that supports the diversity of South Africa as the 'Rainbow Nation'. *"The study of History also supports citizenship within a democracy by... 3. promoting human rights and peace by challenging prejudices involving race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia"* (CAPS-SS 2011:15). A key finding that emerged from the interviews was the connection teachers make between their learners' knowledge of their own culture, traditions, and history, and their ability to respect other cultures. In the early grades, learners begin looking at Venda traditions through the Life Skills curriculum.

> *"How our grandparents lived before us. What were the foods that they eat, the clothes they wear, you know they differ from the one these days" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

These aspects of Venda culture and identity connect learners, as teachers describe it, to their grandparents and relations (*vhushaka*). Teachers then link these concepts for their learners to understand other cultures through practical lessons. At her school, Vho Jena links learners traditional food with the specialties of other South African cultures

> *(Translated from Tshivenḓa) "let's take for example…cultural food so we ask learners to bring cultural food cooked at home. Looking at others like Hindus what they cook; Afrikaners cook boerewors; maXhosa cook xhushu; and us here we cook mashonzha [Mopani worms]" (Vho Jena).*

Vho Ḓifara emphasises the importance of learners competence interacting with people of other cultures in South Africa today.

> *"When you learn somebody's culture you can interchange knowledge better, because you know him, you respect him, so that's good" (Vho Ḓifara).*

Teachers are clear that without knowledge of their own culture and origins their learners would be lost, in a figurative and psychological sense.

> *"it is very important for them to know their language, their heritage, so they must grow up knowing that otherwise we will be lost in this world" (Vho Isedza).*

Vho Ḓifara goes further to relate culture to one's history, past and ability to practice *thonifho,* respect.

> *"Eh, muthu ria re a sa divhi mvelele ya we tshi amba dza uri hanga vha na thonifha vhathu [Yes if one does not know their culture it means they won't respect it or respect other people]. You could simply forget your behind [past] and you won't respect your history if you don't know what happened and how" (Vho Ḓifara).*

Vho Chelela has a particularly powerful quote that should remain in Tshivenḓa on the importance of knowing your culture and your past as a way of being able to think for oneself and chart where you are going.

> *"Musi vhamishinari vha swika fhano Afrika Tshipembe kana Afrika, vho vha vho fara tombo nga tshiṅwe tshanḓa nga tshiṅwe vho fara bivhili, tombo ḽovha ḽi ḽa u kwasha mvelele ngauri vho zwi ḓivha uri muthu ane ha ḓivhi mvelele u tou fana na mukegulu ane hana muhumbulo wa zwo iteaho, u tou fana na tshiḓahela tshine a tshi ḓivhi uri tshi bva gai ende tshi khou ya gai." (Vho Chelela)*

7.1.3 Life Skills – Values & Dance

Venda Morals & Values

Vho Ḓifara explains that as children begin Primary school, they as teachers take on the role from parents in teaching children good values (Vho Ḓifara). The moral upbringing of children in the community is also rooted in the language with the particular Venda values. The moral concepts that teachers raised were *thonifho* (respect); *u shuma rothe* (working together); *u kovhekana* (sharing); *vhudavhidzani ha vhudi* (good communication).

In Vho Jena's Grade 6 Life Skills class learners study the foods of Venda and other cultures grounded in the traditional Venda value of *thonifho*, respect.

> *(Translated from Tshivenḓa) "When we learn about that cultural food this is where you will see their values and if they are interested to come and show us what is cooked in*

> *their Venda culture. They ask their grandmother to cook tshigume, ṋemeṋeme and ṱhongolifha, while presenting we look at their facial expression to see the values and if they are happy. Facial expressions are important to learn as dignified values of culture we see the behaviour there and conclude that here we have a learner that will respect others because we taught them thonifho [respect]" (Vho Jena).*

These conventions and body language can be just as important as words in *vhudavhidzani ha vhudi,* communicating with others in the community.

> *"Communication is very important. We have to teach them how to communicate with others, with their friends, their community and so on" (Vho Isedza).*

This extends into the values children learn when practicing traditional Venda dances. *U shuma rothe* (working together) is demonstrated strongly through dance.

Tshina – Dance & Creative Arts

Learners particularly enjoyed practicing traditional songs and dances such as *Tshigombela, Tshikona, Malende, Tshifasi* and *Domba* through the creative arts curriculum. These dances and their accompanying songs carry the Venḓa culture and people's origins. The older children pass on the steps to younger children.

> *In "Tshigombela, they have the drum in the centre then they dance and after dancing they bow to show respect…When they enter they used to sing the song like 'Vho Silima, rine ro takala, Ahe Ahe, Vho Silima rine ro takala' – they were praising my name. Then they say they are happy then they were dancing on the centre, then they return, bow again to show respect then they go singing the song 'ri a tuwa vhone vha do sala' then they were going back" (Vho Engedza).*

Vho Engedza is the Principal of her small rural school, and explained that her learners danced a *Tshigombela* singing *'rine ro takala'* – 'we are happy' and demonstrating *thonifho* by changing the lyrics of the song to praise her name and *u losha* (bowing) in the dance. She also cites the dance of *Tshifasi*:

> *"where two groups are playing together, one for the guys, another group for the girls. When they start dancing, they will start by proposing. The man will go to propose to*

> *the girl to dance. The girl admitted by u losha. Then if she admits then they will begin to dance" (Vho Engedza).*

In this way learners are being socialized into understanding relationships, relating to one another and traditional concepts of consent. As these dances are learned and performed in harmony, teachers make their intrinsic value clear.

> *[Tshivenḓa] "So vha thomu ita tshigombela, malende, zwi khou vuya zwithu hayani zwa tekiwa I nandele ya thomu vuya zwino. U tshi khou bva gudisa, an halalu fhi tshikoloi a ndi vhutsi na rina ri love dances tsha o zwino. Zwino ri dansa u vuya tshikoloni tshi a do mu thonifhe ya zwavhudi zwa ri khou guda ri divha zwino ri dance dza kale" (Vho Ḓifara).*
>
> *[English Translation] "So they started with the likes of Tshigombela, Malende those things are coming back, these things of home are being revived and it is neat that they are starting to return now. When they come from learning (the dances), wow, it is obvious they love the dances. Now we dance and return to school and the learners are respecting each other nicely, we are learning, we know the dances of old now" (Vho Ḓifara).*

In this statement we begin to appreciate how inter-connected learners' culture is, here expressed through dance, to their emotions, *u shuma rothe* – working together, relationships with others and their engagement in learning. These connections are explored further as 'conversion factors'.

7.2 Conversion Factors: Successes & Challenges to Learning

> **U tevhela** *to follow, succeed; the term teachers used to describe active learning.*

Teachers in Vhembe encountered various successes and challenges in helping their learners achieve these valued functionings in their education. The interviews found that these include factors of learner diversity, family support, emotions in the classroom, aspirations for the future, learners' language proficiency, teaching pedagogy, as well as practical issues scarce resources with large class sizes and limited teaching aids. These themes emerged from the coding process of the interviews:

Conversion Factors affecting learners' actual ability to attain these Capabilities

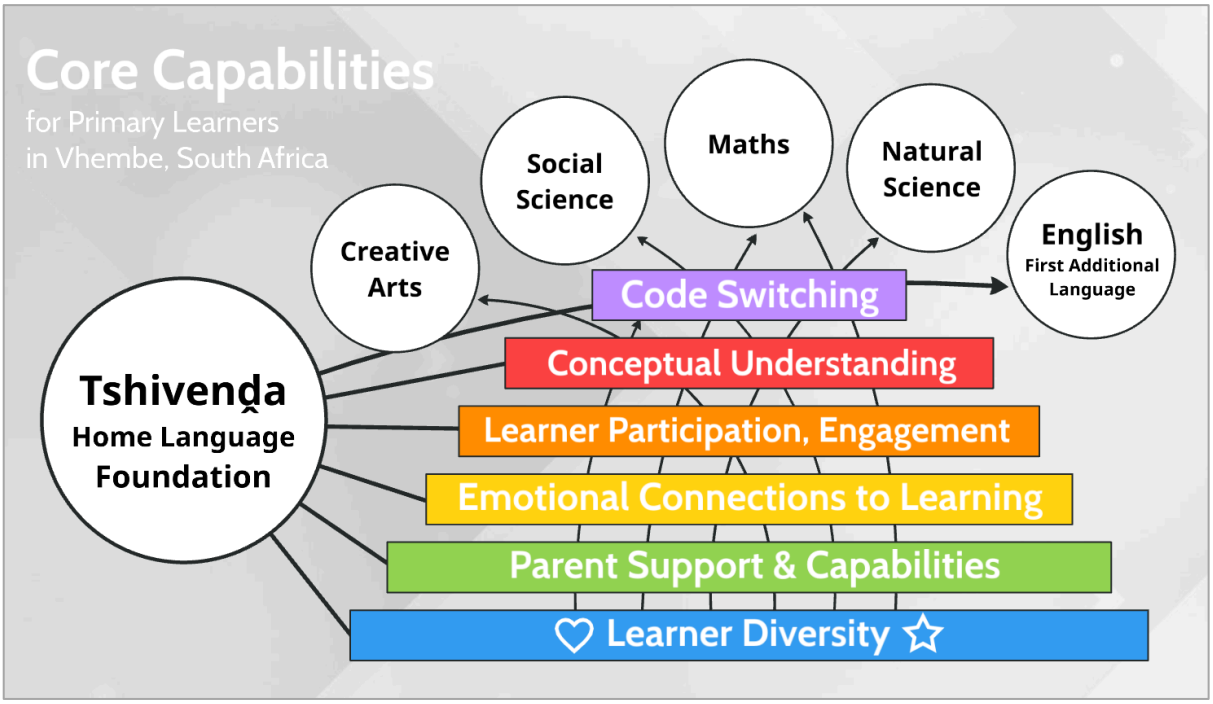
1. Parents & Family Life at Home
2. Emotions
3. Practical Activities
4. Learner Diversity
5. Language Attitudes
6. Language Proficiency / English Language Barrier
7. Resources & Teaching Aids
8. Becoming a part of a Social Group
9. Class Size numbers from 35-75 become a challenge

How Teachers Perceive Tshivenḓa's Role in Education

1. Children's Home Language Foundation is the basis on which they learn (All)
2. Code Switching is essential (9) Tshivenḓa only (2) English only (1)
3. Communication is clearest in home-language (8)
4. Learners' Culture as basis to understand & respect others (5)
5. Increased Participation: more learner engagement in class (5)
    a. Learners demonstrate critical thinking in home language (2)
6. Lungano – traditionally oral folktales in CAPS curriculum are a connection both to:
    a. Grandparents' Indigenous knowledge of environment & conservation
    b. Natural Science concepts of the environment and conservation

While learners differed in preferences and ability, including both special needs and learners who picked up English quickly, Tshivenḓa remained the language of inclusion that all learners were able to understand. By using their learners' home language in the classroom teachers were able to ensure they remained grounded in knowledge about their culture and themselves, connecting to their relationships with their parents and grandparents at home, bringing in positive emotions of *u vhofolowa* (to feel free), *u difulufhela* (to feel confident), *u takalela* (to enjoy), and *u dihudza* (to be proud) at school. Based on these findings I have created this diagram to illustrate how learners' capabilities in Tshivenḓa play positively into the conversion factors that emerged from interviews with participants. The following section goes into more detail on each of these factors, multi-coloured in the figure.

Figure 11 *Tshivenda's effects on conversion factors*



7.2.1 Learner Diversity – Phambano ya Vhagudiswa

In discussing the successes and challenges they face in the classroom, teachers created a strong theme around the diversity of their learners. Learners differed in their abilities, some learning faster and others more slowly, some with special needs, some learners received more support from home and all of their learners differed in their aspirations and what they were interested in learning about.

> *(Translated from Tshivenḓa) "learners are not the same, hence each and every learner must learn in their pace" (Vho Anetshela).*

There was also a strong sense that teachers needed to engage learners by connecting to what they know. Vho Ḓifara described this as bridging the gap between home and school so that learners *"vha khou tevhela"* (VD), explaining his use of the verb *tevhela* meaning how one is able to follow (the teacher) and find success (in learning). Vho Isedza explains his approach for learners to be able to *tevhela*.

> *"You go to their level and teach them the way they like it so they will get interested in what you are doing, then they will do the work" (Vho Isedza).*

A common strength among the learners was their command of Tshivenḓa language. Tshivenḓa therefore played an important role in the inclusiveness of the classroom.

> *"You can only find one learner [who is struggling with Tshivenḓa]. And it is not hard to help that one, really it is his or her own mother tongue so really its easy to support that learner" (Konḓisa).*

Through the diversity of their learners, teachers revealed that Tshivenḓa played a central role in how they were able to connect with their learners *uri vha khou tevhela,* in order for them to follow/succeed, in their education.

7.2.2 Tshivenḓa Foundation

For these teachers in Vhembe, Tshivenḓa was seen as the foundation of a child's education. In addition to being the language that learners understood, five teachers made their own independent assertions that learners must know their home language first in order to be able to learn other things (VG, VE, VA, VH, VB).

> *"Like here in Venda, they must know how to write Tshivenḓa, to speak Tshivenḓa, they must know most of the things in Tshivenḓa because it is easier for them to grasp that thing in their home language" (Vho Gumula).*

Alongside practical techniques like actions to demonstrate and visual aids, Tshivenḓa was a medium through which learners were able to learn new concepts. This was dynamic as learners became proficient in their new subjects, with each learner at their own pace, and Tshivenḓa retained a role in connecting to learners' prior knowledge across the subjects.

> *"When we start teaching them…something new, if they start from familiar territory then after that you can introduce new things. Like they say we learn things starting simple to the more complex. So starting from what you know it's ok, but if you start where you don't know you can become lost forever" (Vho Hwala).*

These comments came in the context that Tshivenḓa is more than simply a means of communication, and a core part of a learner's culturally centred education that would allow them to better engage new concepts.

> *"It is important for that learner to grow, that learner is able to know his or her own culture and be able to know his or her own language so that he can be able to understand the other disciplines at school from a young age" (Vho Bebela).*

One of those high priority disciplines for the children in Vhembe was proficiency in English, and Tshivenḓa was seen as the foundation that the learners' knowledge of additional languages would be built on.

> *(Translated from Tshivenḓa) "A child cannot start by learning a language that is not theirs. Not knowing theirs makes it hard to know or understand another language. He or she must first understand their language and there after learn the other language" (Vho Anetshela).*

The way that teachers talked about the role of Tshivenḓa in their learners' education was therefore not as something extra or tangential, but integral to their further learning. The strength of their mother tongue was also something developed at home.

7.2.3 Vhushaka – Parents & Relationships

The factor that teachers cited as having the greatest influence on learners' abilities in the classroom was their parents. This came through in the parents' or wider family's ability to assist with schoolwork, their influence on a learner's aspirations in what they believed they could actually achieve, as well as the material resources that parents could afford to support their children's learning. Tshivenḓa was a way for teachers to connect with learners' lives at home, as a language of communication and also as a language of a learner's relationships with their *vhushaka* – parents, grandparents and relations.

> *"Now the learners here at school, most of them live with parents who are illiterate. So it is better for them that we use their home language, even though we also use English" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

The high prevalence of illiteracy among parents in Vhembe was accompanied by issues of socio-economic disadvantage. Parents' capabilities were particularly influential because of how learners were able to imagine their own capabilities in the future.

> *"Someone who doesn't perform well. That person already, he or she can just tell herself that I will not go far...Even the parents play the important role. What do they talk with their learners at home. Because some of the learners were discouraged from home, you can say ah, in our family all of us we don't know anything so how can you achieve we don't know. We didn't. So that person go with a negative mind" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

Whether parents were able to assist or even encourage their learners' education depended on the language of learning and teaching. When it came to assisting learners in their Tshivenḓa language education, Vho Isedza and Vho Ḓifara were able to position parents and grandparents as knowledge bearers.

> *"Some of the grandparents don't read. They just tell children about these lungano [folklore], dzingano [old stories], it's an oral thing. It passes from one generation to the other. We even give the learners a homework to go home and ask their grandparents about one of these lungano and they will come back and narrate that to the class which means the grandparents know those folklores" (Vho Isedza).*

Vho Ḓifara re-frames the notion of learners parents and grandparents as 'illiterate' by saying reading was done in a different way, obliterating the colonial distinction between literature and orature.

> *"When we grew up reading was done in a different way…We started with the rhymes and the fairy tales and the olden stories…So we used to sing, learning dancing and rhyming while we were learning…We did not know that we were being introduced to counting in that singing...In that moment it was in our home language, we could master it very easily because we could play also singing at home because it was for Tshivenḓa. Even the mothers and the parents, they know how was this counting even though they did not attend formal schooling, so you were sitting at home they could also assist us" (Vho Ḓifara).*

Vho Ḓifara is very positive about how the opportunities for learners to dance traditional *tshigombela* and other dances for Creative Arts helps to involve parents in the life of the school.

> *"So we can go there and also take some parents to come to school now to teach them those cultural dances and songs. So Primary education yo shuma nga maanda uri vhana vha songo hangwa mvelele ya vho." [Primary education works really well so that children don't forget their culture] (Vho Ḓifara).*

Tshivenḓa therefore allows learners to connect their education at school with parents and grandparents at home through their culture. These relationships as part of a wider concept of *vhushaka* are important for learners to maintain and they help learners connect emotionally both at home and at school.

7.2.4 Emotional Connections to Learning

Tshivenḓa creates a positive learning environment for the emotions it conjures for learners when they are in school. This is in contrast to English when teachers describe learners feeling shy (VI) lost (VD), with fear (VJ), struggling and feeling bored (VH) with English teaching. In Tshivenḓa learners feel happy, free, proud, confident and they enjoy. To feel happy *'u takala'* and to enjoy *'u takalela'* are related terms, with *takalela* describing a happiness that is felt in relation with others. *U takalela* is then an appropriate descriptor for how learners enjoy communicating with each other in their language.

> *"They enjoy participating, working together, and in a simpler way in language that they can also understand, they enjoy" (Vho Ḓifara).*

Three of the teachers (VA, VK, VD) describe that when learners are able to use their home language Tshivenḓa in school *'vha vhofolowa'* – they feel free. Vho Anetshela described this feeling as a goal for her classroom.

> *(Translated from Tshivenḓa) "Success is when I as a teacher am accessible to learners and make them feel free when learning" (Vho Anetshela).*

Both Vho Hwala & Vho Isedza bring up how excited learners are to hear the *lungano* stories, particularly when they associate with the characters and want to hear the stories again. To discover a new *lungano* from their grandparents can be a source of pride for learners.

> *"When the learner comes to class with a lungano and then narrates that to the other learners, you will see that the learner is very proud of what he or she has done. Because sometimes they will even come with a lungano that we were not aware of. Maybe one or two people just know the lungano and then he or she comes with that lungano she or he will be so proud about what he or she has achieved" (Vho Isedza).*

Tshivenḓa ties together many of the emotional threads in a learners life, between their family, culture, creativity, literacy and motivation in class.

> *"If the learners are learning their language neh, and if they also learn their culture, they will be happy, even when they sing and they show their happiness while dancing and singing, they show that they are understanding what they are dancing for. They even, those older ones, they can even teach the younger ones. Even when we go to the class, if I did the learners to do a composition about one of your cultural dances, it is simple for them to write. Even if I say they must write a story, it is simple for them to write a story because they learn from practice. It is simple. For us, that dance, it goes further" (Vho Engedza).*

This example shows the rich connections between emotion, culture and *u shuma rothe*, working together across the age groups, and learning. By allowing learners to engage in Tshivenḓa, teachers are able to encourage them *u difulufhela* – to be confident, in themselves, where they come from and their abilities. Again *difulufhela* is conjugated like *takalela* in the relational tense suggesting that confidence is not something learners gain in isolation but in relation to how interactions are structured in the classroom.

> *"Our mother tongue Tshivenḓa is very important because it gives them that confidence to communicate with the teacher and to exchange ideas using our language" (Vho Isedza).*

7.2.5 U Dzhenelela – Participation & Critical Thinking

Learners participate more when they are able to speak in their home language.

> *"In the Tshivenḓa class? Ah, they do ask and at least in that time more learners will ask more questions. Because it's their own language. They will always be free in*

> *Tshivenḓa, neh…more learners will ask more questions...We always move fast" (Konḓisa).*

Understanding that some learners move faster than others, the language of learning and teaching also effects how different learners are able to engage content. Vho Fhaṱelana makes the point that Tshivenḓa is a more inclusive language in her classroom.

> *"They participate more than when we do that in English. Because when we do that in English, [only] the learners [who] will understand it well are the ones who will participate and ask questions. But the whole class will participate if we translate in Tshivenḓa because they understand it" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

Not only are more learners participating in class, but Vho Hwala & Vho Ḓifara find that learners also demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking when they engage in Tshivenḓa.

> *"In Tshivenḓa it's where you can hear exactly what they want to say and even their questions are well structured" (Vho Hwala). "It's that they think in Tshivenḓa. They participate intellectually mostly in Tshivenḓa" (VD).*

Vho Fhaṱelana describes active and critical learning among her learners as stemming from a 'positive mind', and rather than naming Tshivenḓa as the root of this, she names the aforementioned roles of parental support, encouragement of learners aspirations and positive emotions as the source of active learning among learners in her school (VF). What the other teachers have established is the central role Tshivenḓa has in creating this positive environment that learners can engage in.

7.2.6 Code Switching

This critical engagement that teachers have with children in Tshivenḓa would seem to be at risk with the switch to English LoLT in Grade 4. However, this research found that teachers were pragmatic and they continued to provide opportunities for learners to understand and engage subjects in the higher grades in their home language by code switching between English and Tshivenḓa. Code-switching was an exercise that teachers described as helping learners understand more about what they were learning through Tshivenḓa while also extending their language into English.

> *"Yeah Tshivenḓa helps a lot because when I teach I have to code switch to Tshivenḓa … and tell them some terms using our mother tongue so that they will grasp the topic very well. If I give them using the mother tongue it becomes easier for the learners to understand what is going on rather than using English only" (Vho Isedza).*

Vho Jena describes how code-switching helps learners develop their English language skills:

> *"I am a teacher who teaches both English and Tshivenḓa in Grade 4. So when they read I start by giving them a Tshivenḓa text to read and understand after that we go to English. Let's say I am teaching them about nouns I will code switch and explain to them what 'nouns' in Tshivenḓa is and remind them that we did them in Tshivenḓa "Nouns are names of things and places," those learners will understand, from there I will take them to English" (Vho Jena).*

Vho Fhaṱelana extends the need to build conceptual understanding in Tshivenḓa in the social science curriculum.

> *"Let's say in history they are learning about the San people, the learners have not heard about these people and…they no longer live the way they lived before. So for them to understand better you must explain to them first in their home language so that they can help their imagination, how, maybe in their mind they can think how those people looked like. Even their clothes, so in order to give them the picture, we must start by explaining to them using our home language. But when we teach we must teach them in English" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

Teachers' need to switch to English was driven by policy, *"Because they will be writing in English, the language of instruction is English"* (Vho Fhaṱelana). Pedagogically, Vho Ḓifara insists that despite the policy *"You must not throw away Tshivenḓa because you could throw away the whole content, trying to follow English"* (VD). Still, teachers demonstrated a great amount of togetherness to support the DBE's policy and learners' transition to English. Many quoted the DBE workshops where the current advice is that if teachers must code switch, they should remain 60/40 English/Tshivenḓa (VD, VH, VK).

> *"When we go for workshops, they will tell us that when we code switch we mustn't dwell much on the mother-tongue. We can even just say the word in English and try and say what it means in mother-tongue but not to switch completely" (Vho Hwala).*

Across this group of teachers, the practice of code-switching varied widely and this was connected to language attitudes.

7.2.7 Language Attitudes

U Dihudza Tshivenḓa

For Vho Isedza, he has an awareness of languages beyond English that sustain modern life and this contributed to his practice of using Tshivenḓa to link learners in to their technology and science lessons.

> *"Even in Tshivenḓa we can do what the Russians are doing, what the Chinese are doing, they are teaching their kids using the mother tongue and they are doctors, they are nurses, you see? Even the Cubans they even managed to train doctors which means they also do it" (Vho Isedza).*

This is in contrast to Vho Fhaṱelana who sees English as the reality her learners must grapple with.

> *"Mostly when they have to go far they have to use English. You know to the University. They are no longer about to talk about Tshivenḓa. Now English now became their language of instruction" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

As a result of this pressure towards English, and despite her detailed knowledge of the medicinal use of plants in Tshivenḓa, Konḓisa reverts to monolingual English teaching for her content subjects including Natural Science. Konḓisa explains that for learners to ask questions in Tshivenḓa,

> *"It's not allowed. No. We are teaching English learners. It must not only be in writing or reading. It's also in teaching. So they must learn how to speak English" (Konḓisa).*

Learners are then only exposed to STEM subjects in English while Tshivenḓa is only referred to in the context of the village and the past. This creates a false dichotomy between English/Tshivenḓa as modern/traditional upon which children build their language attitudes.

> *"Learners are more interested in English than Tshivenḓa. They like English culture… learners are interested on something like mathematics and technology but they are not interested on their culture" (Lora).*

Vho Engedza had an example of a learner who really struggled with Tshivenḓa despite it being his home language.

> *"Learners like [Beta], for them English is the best… You will find they don't even want to tell people they are Venda. Those who are better in English like [Beta], you will find that they also like the [Christian] religious things" (Vho Engedza).*

Vho Hwala and Vho Chelela were able to explain some of the history behind the impact religion has had on the self-perception of people in South Africa.

> *"Venda and Tsonga [people] after being taught about western culture some do not want anything to do with their culture, they take minwenda [a Venda dress] and xibelane [a Tsonga dress] as evil... remember missionaries told people that wearing traditional clothes is heathen, but nowadays people know that it is not true even mashedo [Venda girls' dress] are worn in churches. This means the mentality that they impose is no longer there. If they continue teaching culture and language it will make a difference" (Vho Chelela).*

> *"Sometimes there was a lot of misunderstandings, differences between cultures, that made people not to understand or to look down upon their culture. Because of what religion has brought" (Vho Hwala).*

Vho Ḓifara also observes that attitudes are changing.

> *"But now it is one thing, we are linked now, it has changed our attitudes now. We don't see anybody superior than the other…zwi a fana khana muPedi, muZulu, muVenda [we are the same no matter if we are Pedi, Zulu or Venda people]" (Vho Ḓifara).*

This drive for equality in South Africa is more difficult to define across languages, but Lora has her own way of asserting that Tshivenḓa should be of equal standing to English too.

> *"So Tshivenḓa and English are the same thing, when I check Tshivenḓa policy and English policy it is the same, if it is a Verb it's a Verb, if it's an Adverb it's an Adverb" (Lora).*

The debate in education is how to teach the more 'advanced' subjects such as science.

7.2.8 Science in Tshivenḓa

Linguistically, teachers confirm that they are able to translate and explain most things in Tshivenḓa but there are words and vocabulary in Natural Science, Geography, and Technology that have been coined in English but not yet in Tshivenḓa.

> *(translated from Tshivenḓa) "For maths it is fine but natural sciences and other subjects their terms, hey, it might be a challenge - the best option is to mix" (VD).*

As Vho Engedza put it, there are things that are known in Tshivenḓa but not in English. There are also things that English is able to explain that have not yet been articulated in Tshivenḓa (VE). As such, English was useful but Tshivenḓa was also an essential part of languaging for teachers. Four of the teachers cited direct examples of how Indigenous knowledge in Venda provides practical examples for learners to engage their Natural Science curriculum (VG, VK, VF, VI).

> *In Grade 3 "In natural science they come across things about how to process food, when we tell them how long ago our grandmothers cooked our cultural dish, even if we don't say we are teaching science now we are teaching them in different types of situations, it is the foundation to go to higher school" (Vho Gumula).*

> *Vho Jena also teaches "Natural Science in Grade 7, so when we do fermentation and distillation I take the learners and say to them ask at home from your grandparents who make traditional beers like muvanya and thothotho" (Vho Jena).*

As learners progress into topics of biology, bio-diversity and conservation, Tshivenḓa allows teachers to enrich their learners' understanding of these concepts (VK, VF, VI). Konḓisa is one

of the youngest teachers to be interviewed and she is easily able to relate the Venda concepts to the science curriculum.

> *"In Natural Science we learn about all things natural but in Tshivenḓa there are trees that are used for medicines. So as they are learning, yes we must keep our natural environment clean, but also with the vegetation we must know which trees to keep and which trees to clean because some trees are bad for us to have but some trees are good to have medicines and so on" (Konḓisa).*

Environmental knowledge in Venda, as carried by the language Tshivenḓa, is connected to people's genealogy and their relationship to the land. This emphasises how learners' connections to their grandparents, their ancestors, links to their knowledge of geography, natural science and conservation. Vho Isedza explains what this means for learners at his school who are *Vhatavha Tsindi*, a clan name that literally means 'people of the lake'.

> *"We have the lake of Fundudzi…it's a sacred area of Vhatavha Tsindi, they are the people who stay in Thengwe. That's their lake…We have to conserve that water by not throwing things in that lake which means we have to keep that lake clean at all times… They don't want to go there and do whatever. You can even see the Mutale river passes through Fundudzi. Yeah it is sacred, it is a very important place for the people of Thengwe" (Vho Isedza).*

The source of this knowledge are the *lungano, ngano* (folk tales) that are part of the orature, the oral repertoire, of different people in Venda. Some of these stories are included in the current Tshivenḓa language curriculum (as a subject) but as Vho Isedza describes, learners love discovering new *lungano* from their grandparents. They are not simply discrete stories but provide rich connections to learners' knowledge of themselves, their history and eco-systems at the core of natural science.

> *"Ngano teach us about that. They also teach us about the way of living and then they also teach us the importance of animals in our surroundings which means we have to live side by side with animals because this thing is a circle, you can't just kill all the animals. So Ngano zwe ri funza uri ri vha [the folk tales teach them so that they are] aware of our environment and also they teach young ones to respect the elders" (VI).*

The ability of these teachers to draw on these examples of Indigenous Venda knowledge and help learners make these complex inter-connections between their English language curriculum and their local environmental context is an amazing asset to these children and their intellectual futures.

Chapter Summary

Teachers were pragmatic about their use of language in the classroom because learners were expected to write their subjects in English from Grade 4. Teachers revealed that Tshivenḓa retained a role in all of these subjects through to Grade 7 because it was the language of inclusive access for their diverse range of learners *uri vha khou tevhela.* Tshivenḓa was described as being a foundation not just to learning other languages but also to building empathy and *thonifho* for other cultures in Social Science. Topics in Tshivenḓa such as food, dance and *lungano* connected learners back to their relationships with their parents and grandparents, bringing positive emotions and increased participation in the classroom. The *lungano* added Indigenous knowledge about learners' environmental context that connect to their Natural Science curriculum and by expressing these ideas in Tshivenḓa teachers observed higher levels of critical thinking. Tshivenḓa played a significant role in learners' capability of achieving their valued functionings in Primary school. Language attitudes that broke the Tshivenḓa/English, backwards/advanced, traditional/modern dichotomy were a key conversion factor in whether teachers were comfortable using Tshivenḓa to compliment English in the classroom.

Chapter 8. Discussion

Introduction

This research asked teachers how Tshivenḓa influenced the capabilities of their learners in Primary school classrooms in Vhembe. The interviews established that the functioning of Tshivenḓa was valuable in itself as a home language subject, but in connection with other valued capabilities in their education suggesting Tshivenḓa was also instrumental as a conversion factor for learners progress and achievement at school. Based on the triangulation of teachers' accounts, multilingual education literature and policy analysis, this discussion proposes that the freedom to use learners' home language for instruction in the classroom enhanced the Central Human Capability (CHC) to be educated for the learners of interview participants in Vhembe (Sen, 1999:129; Nussbaum 2011:39; Hart 2014:4; Young 2009:263). This has to be seen in the context that the capability to be educated involves many complex factors through which the language of instruction plays a small – but not insignificant – part. Within this complex system English is assumed to be a 'competing priority' and this discussion aims to address this by being very deliberate in identifying children's capabilities and how language effects their inter-connections in Vhembe's primary schools.

The choice to lead with the role of Tshivenḓa rather than what might seem to be a more neutral discussion on 'language of instruction' is in recognition of Tshivenḓa as a minority Indigenous language that can help build connections across the Global South. Bringing South Africa's legal framework and language policy into the research and discussion aims to centre the role of democracy and teachers' agency to influence these policies moving forward (Crocker 2008). Sharing these teachers' successes and challenges in providing quality Indigenous language education in their classrooms is important when up to 40% of the world's children are being denied this capability in their schooling (UNESCO 2016).

8.1 Valued Capabilities in Education

8.1.1 Multilingualism

The South African Constitution (1996) section 6 establishes Tshivenḓa as an official language and provides for multilingualism and elevating the status of previously marginalised Indigenous languages. The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in

education are "to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education" (DoE 1997:2). In the same way that monolingual education instils doubt and limits our capability to learn other languages, multilingual education instils confidence in children that they can language beyond their home language and if and when they choose become proficient in a second language like English (Mohanty 2008:104). Capabilities are then good at capturing our relation to languages in the sense that we know we do not have the capacity to learn all languages, but having the real opportunity i.e. the capability to learn another language can be hugely liberating. This feeling is the achievement of 'agency freedom' that the capability of multilingualism brings (Crocker 2008).

8.1.2 Social Transformation

The South African curriculum's core principal of 'social transformation' aims to redress past educational imbalances and provide equal educational opportunities across the country (CAPS 2011:9). This is a direct reference to the way Apartheid confined opportunities to the few and the urgency for South Africans to be able to expand opportunities particularly in rural areas such as Vhembe (Mandela, 2003:39). Parents' aspirations for their children can be captured in what Crocker (2008) describes as the "freedom or opportunities (capabilities) [for her child] to function in ways alternative to her current functioning" (151). This promise of alternative functionings that could offer children improved well-being outcomes as they grow up provides major motivation for this curriculum. In the fight against Apartheid discrimination, English became a language of political empowerment (Rassool, 2007: 143), a common language of wider communication (Heugh 2007: 199) and in Vhembe it has become the language that parents hope will bring their children wider opportunities. As described by one teacher, "when they have to go far they have to use English" (Vho Fhaṱelana). The assumption that proficiency in English leads to the kind of emancipation embodied in the idea of 'social transformation' is highly contested and addressed in the section on Language Attitudes.

8.1.3 High Knowledge & High Skills

The principle of high knowledge is reflected in Walker's (2019:228) distinction between 'labour market skills' and the role of acquiring 'powerful knowledge'. These include mathematics, science and technology. This is an important distinction in South Africa for the experience of Bantu education that deliberately withheld what the Apartheid government

considered 'High knowledge' to learners who were classified as black. This research finds that Tshivenḓa home language education plays an integral role in the acquisition of High Knowledge, not only for its foundational role in Primary education, but in de-colonizing the notion of 'High Knowledge' itself.

8.1.4 Subjects

During the interviews, teachers largely focused on achieving the capabilities outlined in the National Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS), namely the subjects of: Tshivenḓa (Home Language); English (First Additional Language); Maths; Creative Arts; Life Skills; Social Sciences; Natural Sciences & Technology. This focus was consistent with the learning progression laid out in CAPS for children to gain 'high knowledge and high skills' and attain competences recognised by employers and Universities – necessary for what teachers identified as the need 'to go further'. However this line of discussion was notably compliant with DBE policy. There are three lines of reasoning that help to unpack this focus: 1) Teachers agree with the broad aims of the curriculum and they are invested in implementing it; 2) The hierarchy at the DBE makes teachers reluctant to disagree with their boss; and 3) I did not have the necessary rapport to get a deeper reflection on this with teachers.

1) This interpretation can be seen as teachers' commitment to South Africa's democratic ideals as Crocker (2008:19) notes that national level policy is a way of understanding capabilities that have been negotiated through democratic process in a country. This sentiment is reflected in Vho Ḓifara's comment that "We can feel that we own South Africa now, all of us, irrespective of our culture ... because of this one same education system". There is an element of an Ubuntu ethic here that holds both South Africa's diversity of cultures in the one hand with a 'one same' consensus of social harmony and desire to move forward together on the national curriculum (Hoffmann & Metz 2017:158). Vho Hwala provided more dimension to the idea of the value of this consensus and giving it a chance. "Yeah the change has been good. But even though you cannot say it's perfect, it's going into the right direction. But it takes time for things like this to change and happen" (Vho Hwala). This reflected a sense that teachers did not want to dwell on arguments about the details of the curriculum. This did betray some of the democratic ideal that the duty of citizens is to be openly critical and holding government to account to support their flourishing. While this consensus did show a sense of ownership, the ambiguity over the lack of critique of CAPS leads to the next two points.

2) It is common sense not to seek conflict with your employer and the teachers were consistently diplomatic in not contradicting DBE policy. The exception that supports this point was Vho Anetshela's interview who, as the only retired teacher no longer working for the DBE, was very frank in her own critique of CAPS. To be clear in this section, her critique was not of the subjects and therefore the valued capabilities expressed in CAPS but rather how it is implemented, addressed as conversion factors. The weight of all the employed teachers' needs to avoid contradicting the DBE does suggest a top-down structure at the DBE where rural teachers are peripheral to the process of deciding what the curriculum should teach. As the Limpopo DBE official said in declining an interview, "they are the implementers".

3) There is also good reason not to share any disagreements with me. I do think it is plausible that teachers would rather keep any dissent within their ANC[1] and SADTU[2] structures rather than let an outsider, particularly a very pale white one like myself, jump on internal disagreements that might be used to divide these movements and once again disenfranchise black citizens. This is a very recent and real history for Vhembe and the wider country. It is also likely that the phone interview format did not provide the space necessary for a teacher to feel like they could adequately unpack the aims of education. Therefore, rather than indulge this question teachers were able to dodge it by holding up the current curriculum. This first question may have seemed like a distraction from the purpose of the interview and teachers opened up when discussing the role of Tshivenḓa.

Holding all of these considerations in mind, interviews did progress into conversations that revealed more valued capabilities in the Vhembe context. Analysis of participants' responses also revealed that even as teachers overtly centred their discussions on the goals of CAPS, they also used and valued culturally relevant content that complimented and went beyond the CAPS framework. Follow up interviews helped refine these themes as teachers began to name capabilities important for children in their Venda culture. These were *vhudavidzani havhudi*, good communication, *u shuma rothe*, working together, *thonifho*, respect, and *vhushaka*,

[1] African National Congress, the governing party in South African Parliament since 1994

[2] South African Democratic Teachers Union that represents these Primary school teachers

relations with family and ancestors. These capabilities connect to an Ubuntu worldview, other Indigenous cultures as well as a collective and relational view of humanity (Hoffmann & Metz 2017:158). These revealed not only how teachers weaved Venda culture into their learners' education but also the agency teachers exercised to include concepts beyond the set curriculum (Garcia & Wei 2014:52). The emotions that teachers described their learners feeling when they used Tshivenḓa at school can also be considered valued capabilities in themselves (Walker 2019: 225). Particularly children's ability to speak their language inspiring them *u vhofolowa*, to feel free, a finding that reinforces the intrinsic contribution of 'agency freedom' to a life of value in the capabilities approach (Crocker 2008:151). The capabilities for children *u dzhenelela*, to participate, *u takalela*, to enjoy, and *u difulufhela*, to feel confident, are also conjugated in Tshivenḓa's relational tense meaning (quite explicitly) that enacting these functionings is impossible in isolation and rather depends on one's relationship with others to be exercised. These findings relate well with Hoffman & Metz's proposal that an Ubuntu approach holds that "capabilities have intrinsic relational properties—they are opportunities to enter into relations of care with others, and they are an outcome of relations of care with others" (Hoffmann and Metz 2017:162).

Seeing valued capabilities emerge that are more specific to the Venda culture shows not only how the curriculum does not fully capture local conceptions of the role of education, they also demonstrate how teachers connected their own knowledge of children's culture to the achievement of the functionings that were expressed in the curriculum. These instrumental connections between Tshivenḓa and other valued capabilities inside and outside the curriculum are the subject of the following section on Conversion Factors. First, the next section discusses the role of Tshivenḓa as a valued capability on its own.

8.1.5 Tshivenḓa as a Subject

Given that Tshivenḓa speakers comprise only 2% of South Africa's population, the inclusion of Tshivenḓa as part of quality multilingual education speaks strongly of South Africa's commitment to equity among minorities in the public school system. The value of the capability to learn and speak Tshivenḓa in schools was unanimous among the teachers interviewed and was consistently backed up by the constitution of South Africa, Department of Education policies and international treaties. This section examines the three key conversion factors that have enabled children to learn Tshivenḓa as a subject: 1) legal rights with

corresponding policy to enact those rights; 2) teacher capacity; and 3) learning and teaching support materials i.e. textbooks.

Vhembe, South Africa is not the only place that values its Indigenous language. The intrinsic value of the capability to speak your language and freely express your culture in schools was reasserted in 2007 with the passing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), including Article 14 for "providing education in their own languages" (UNDRIP 2007:13). South Africa helped pioneer a path towards this goal by including in its Constitution every citizen's right to education in their own language (1996: §29(2)). The South African Schools Act (1996) turned this right into a capability by providing each School's Governing Body (SGB) with the process to make this language policy a reality (SASA, 1996; Motshekga, 2015:12). Each of the twelve teachers interviewed participated in their SGB's process to select Tshivenḓa as their learners' home language for the foundation phase. This exercise of democratic rights was an act of self-determination that colonialism has attempted to deny Indigenous people for centuries (Heugh, 2007).

By choosing to use Tshivenḓa in their schools, these teachers, their pupils and parents, are also raising the status of their Indigenous language in South Africa's institutions of education. Teachers' own advanced functionings in Tshivenḓa are a key conversion factor in achieving the capability expressed in section §6(2) of the Constitution, "Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (S.A. Const. 1996: §6). As Lora, one of the youngest teachers, said in her interview, she tells her learners they too can study Tshivenḓa language practice at University and be the ones to carry Tshivenḓa into the future.

> *"I am very looking forward to [myself and future teachers], teaching them how to be proud of our culture so that they can be proud too. So that they can be able to share their ideas with other cultures" (Lora).*

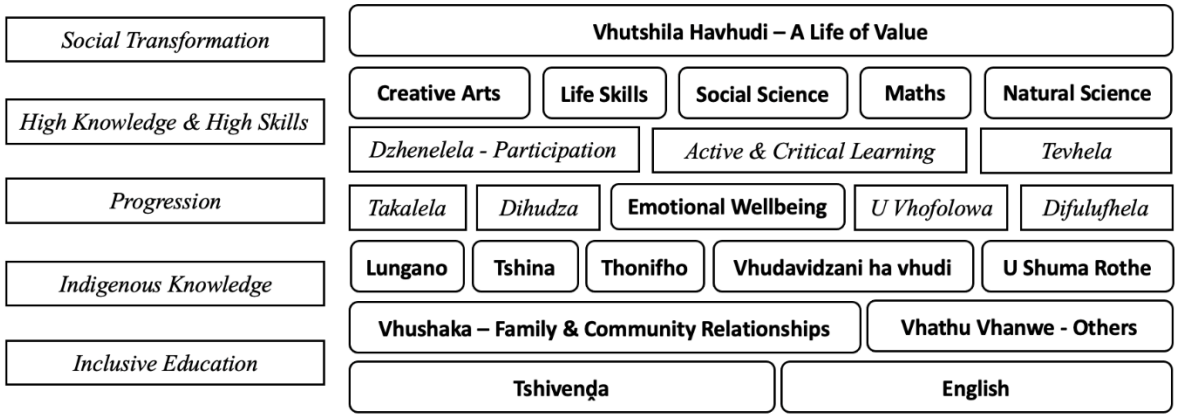
Note how the value of the capability to learn and teach Tshivenḓa is clarified to not be an individualistic functioning but one that will help children relate to others in a very *ubuntu* way (Hoffman & Metz 2017).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) allows schools to use their allocated public funding to purchase Tshivenḓa language books from a list of CAPS approved learning and teaching support materials (LTSM). This purchasing power of individual SGBs has seen the development of LTSM for Tshivenḓa as a home language subject. The policy analysis found that this demand has resulted in ten private publishers, in addition to the DBE, developing Tshivenḓa language learning textbooks that are now available for the length of a learner's Primary and Secondary education from Grade R to Grade 12. The DBE retains control over the quality of these books through its CAPS vetting process and SGBs use this list to source their materials. This investment in the development of Indigenous learning materials affirms the guiding principle of CAPS towards *valuing Indigenous knowledge systems* by "acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country" and incentivising their inclusion in textbooks (CAPS 2011:10). However, the DBE's CAPS based vetting process tends to privilege learning materials that are composed in English and then translated into Tshivenḓa, when more locally relevant content that actually incorporates Indigenous knowledge would be originally sourced in Tshivenḓa (Francis & Reyhner 2002).

Summary – Valued Capabilities

South Africa has made significant commitments to maintaining Tshivenḓa as an official language, and this has been sustained by the teachers and learners who keeps it relevant in education. What is contested is whether Tshivenḓa should be confined to being a language subject while English is used to teach history, geography, science and creative arts, or whether Tshivenḓa has a role in teaching these subjects too. Using the capabilities approach this question becomes one of connected capabilities – is Tshivenḓa an isolated capability or does its functioning connect learners with other valued capabilities in their education? This proposition is explored in the following section.

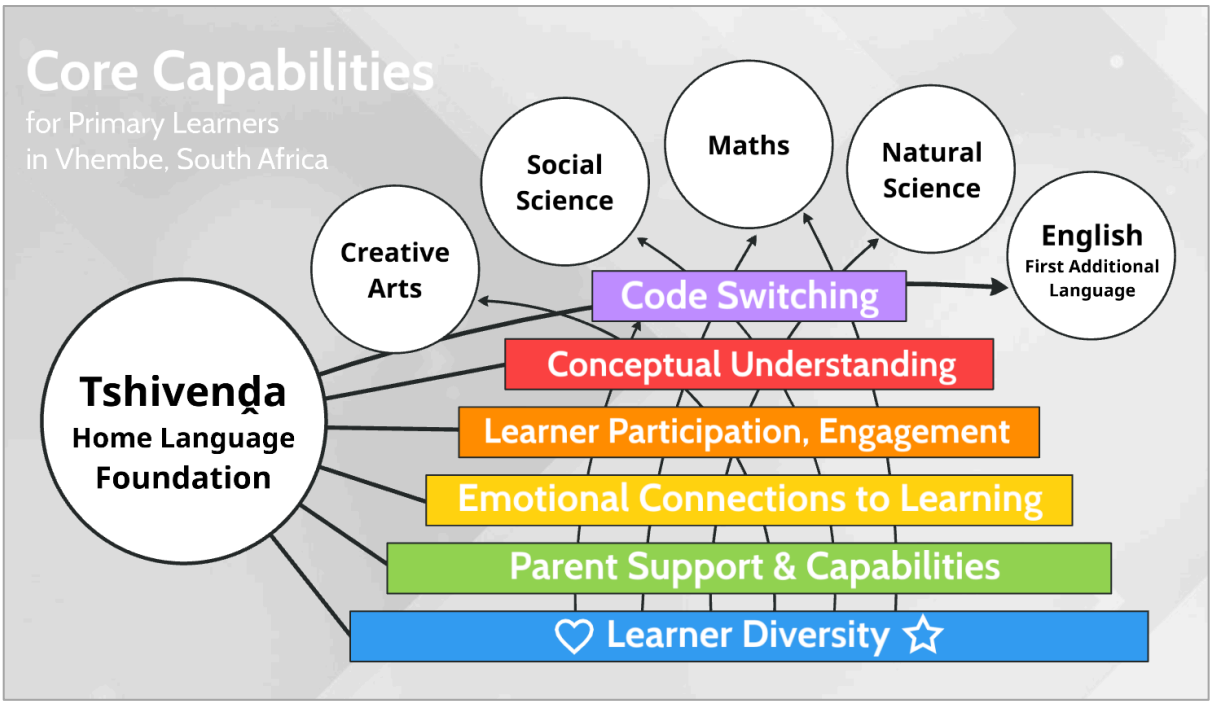
Figure 12 *Valued Capabilities in Primary Schools in Vhembe, South Africa*



8.2 Conversion Factors

Addressing this project's third objective, this section asks *how does Tshivenḓa language instruction help learners achieve these capabilities?* The premise of this analysis is what both Sen and Nussbaum "recognize that some functionings... may 'function' as a platform – may be instrumentally valuable – for having and choosing capabilities for other functions" (Crocker 2008:167). Before Tshivenḓa was factored in, teachers were asked to reflect on their successes and challenges to understand the main conversion factors to learning in the Vhembe context. Thematic analysis of teacher interviews identified the greatest influences on learners' ability to learn in their classrooms centred on the topics of: learner diversity; parents; emotions and aspirations; participation in activities; the language barrier; resources & teaching aids; and class size. While using Tshivenḓa was unable to solve these wider issues, it did have a positive impact for this group of teachers on the first five conversion factors, being a language learners understood well, connecting more closely with parents, learners' emotions, practical experiences and being a common language in this context that made it an inclusive language amidst learner diversity in other areas. These are illustrated in the diagram below with the aim being "to understand the mechanics of how language relates to the different valued capabilities" (Adamson 2020:105).

Figure 13 *Conversion Factors for Tshivenḓa Language Instruction*



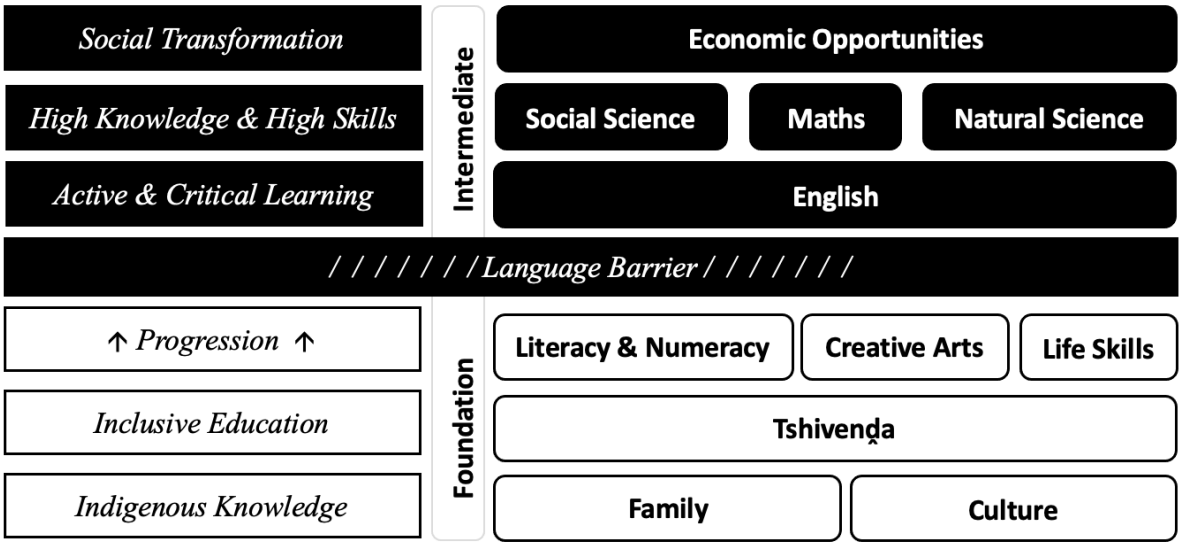
8.2.1 Language Policy

While Tshivenḓa has been strongly supported as a home language subject, findings revealed many tensions with using the language to teach other subjects at school. This section asks *do teachers have the capability of selecting the language of instruction that is most appropriate in their context?*

Following the constitution, the National Education Policy Act (1996) recognised the right of the child "to be instructed in the language of his or her choice" (clause 4 (v)). The Language in Education Policy (1997) clarified that "This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism" (DoE 1997:1). The pinning of children's language capabilities to multilingualism was key to social mobility, out of the confines of former homelands and across the diversity of South Africa's cities and provinces (IIAL, 2013:8). If Tshivenḓa still feels confined to Apartheid era homelands, the democratic mechanisms of choice are the crucial difference to an Apartheid approach where white bureaucrats created their own criteria for classifying people and dictating schools' language of instruction from the central government (Heugh 2013:218). In the case of our sample of teachers in Vhembe this was a choice for both Tshivenḓa and English. However, the current structure of CAPS with a Grade 4 transition to English language curriculum

presented learners in Vhembe classrooms with a language barrier, not only to learn English but to progress in their education and attain other valued capabilities, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 14 *Barrier to Progression from Home Language to English*



Analysis of the DBE's support for implementing African languages in schools shows that commitment to a 'decentralised language policy' only goes as far as to allow schools to select an official language within this structure, with all public schools in South Africa shifting to English in Grade 4. The findings of this research challenge the assumptions behind this structure and the narrative around learner progression as it is being implemented by teachers in Vhembe. However, this structure is in place for a reason and it is deeply rooted in South Africa's history. The Grade 4 English transition was won by student activism in the black consciousness movement that culminated in the Soweto Uprising of 1976 (Heugh 2007). Home language education was used as a tool of segregation for the apartheid government, confining learners to an under-resourced and under-developed *Bantu* education (Heugh 2013). English not only allowed access to more critical reading materials but was a language of wider communication and resistance to Afrikaans that had become the language of the apartheid regime (Mukonde 2020). The transition to democracy in 1994 changed the locus of governance in education with the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), however the DBE retains a dominant role ensuring equality across South Africa's school system and access to English is part of this (Motshekga 2015). However, by not granting teachers, through their SGBs, the substantive freedom to choose the language(s) of instruction most appropriate in their context beyond Grade 3, the DBE is not only denying schools the intrinsic value of

democratic freedoms, but the constructive role teachers demonstrate their dynamic use of languages can play in children's education (Sen 1999: 36).

This research affirms a uniquely South African commitment to freedom, equality, quality education, and real social transformation where people with scarce economic resources have the capabilities to build a life of value. What this research reveals is the role of Tshivenḓa, alongside English, in laying the foundation for these goals in Primary school. It does this by first examining the nature of the 'home language foundation' that learners are expected to establish in Grades R-3 and how teachers experience their learners engagement with English in Grade 4. Conversations with teachers revealed that a large amount of learner diversity made it difficult to progress in the steps laid out by CAPS, and that Tshivenḓa retained a small but powerful role in learners' progression to achieving all of the identified capabilities of value for Primary education in Vhembe, South Africa.

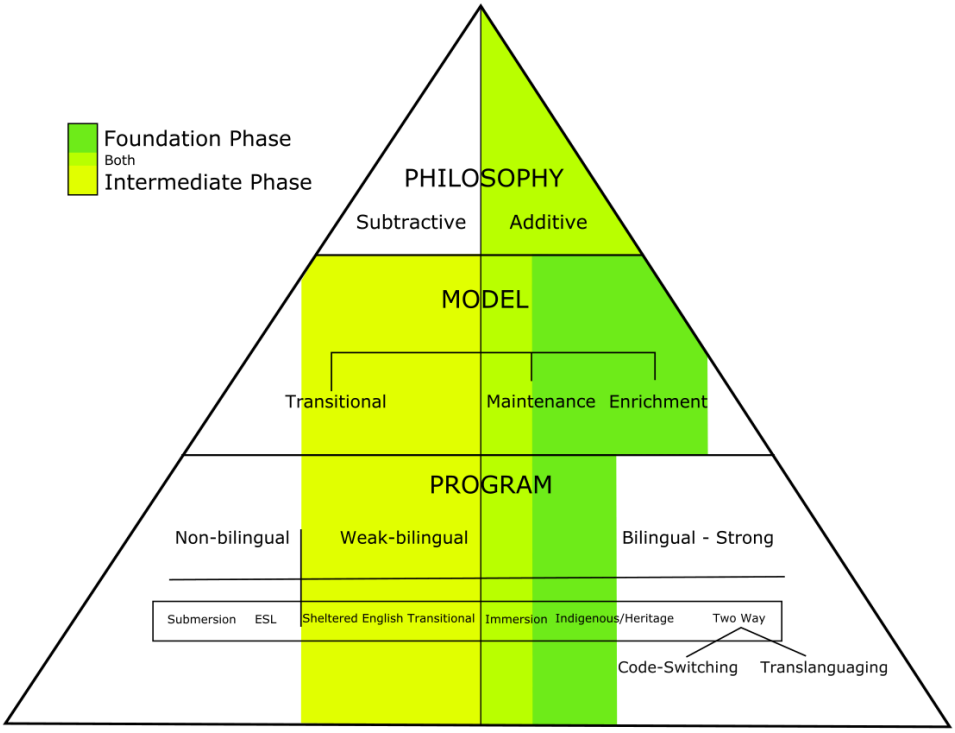
8.2.2 Tshivenḓa Foundation

Triangulation of findings from primary interviews with teachers, policy documents from the DBE and literature reviewed on language in education converge on the role of one's mother-tongue in establishing a child's cognitive foundation for learning, including other languages like English. This creates a strong case for considering Tshivenḓa home language as fundamental to the Central Human Capability (CHC) to be educated for the learners of interview participants in Vhembe (Nussbaum 2011:39; Hart 2014:4; Young 2009:263). Although teachers differed in their opinions on what should be done (see 8.2.9), they were clear that the Grades R-3 Foundation Phase did not provide enough of a language foundation for their learners in Vhembe to transition to English medium instruction in Grade 4. This is consistent with research in other rural schools in South Africa (Guzula 2019; Naketsana 2019; Probyn 2019; Abdulatief et al.2018; Makalela 2015; Nomlomo & Vuzo 2014; Heugh 2007). The role for Tshivenḓa in the classroom becomes clear when comparing these findings with the aims of the Department of Education's (1997) Language in Education Policy:

> *"to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education; to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa; (DoE 1997:2)*

In support of additive multilingualism, all 12 teachers were clear and consistent in separate interviews that their learners must learn their home language first, and another five teachers asserted that this strengthened learners' capability to learn other disciplines, including English. They are essentially saying that Tshivenḓa forms what Nussbaum calls a 'fertile capability' for their learners because certain achievement tends to promote other related capabilities (2011:59). This is consistent with the seminal work of Cummins (1979; 1984; 2001) on the interdependence of language proficiency that the policy analysis found the Department of Basic Education (DBE) also used to justify its Foundation Phase home language policy (DBE et al.2010:7). However, whereas CAPS assumes that the basic literacy and numeracy skills learners establish by Grade 3 are enough to begin learning through English in Grade 4, Cummins (2001) insists there is a higher threshold of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in one's home language that one needs to develop or else proficiency in a second language will also remain stunted. This is to say that an early exit transition to English that constrains a learner's ability to attain higher level CALP in their home language can also severely constrain that learner's capabilities in education, multilingualism and English (Ball 2010:110). It is therefore possible to map the DBE's Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase language policies onto May's (2016: 9) review of bilingual education programmes to see that despite the additive philosophy the DBE espouses, the Grade 4 transition strays into subtractive language territory with the maintenance of Tshivenḓa as a home language subject the only saving grace. This shift from green in the foundation phase to yellow subtractive territory is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 15 *CAPS' Approach to Bilingual Education*



Grade 4 is a critical period where learners are beginning to branch out from basic literacy and descriptive language into more abstract concepts of feelings, actions and consequences in the world around them. Not only does an indiscriminate shift to English cut learners off from using this strong foundation of language, it puts them back at the start of having to learn concrete descriptive language in English delaying their progression into negotiating more abstract concepts in their education. This is well understood and South Africa's Language in Education Policy (1997) did not endorse a subtractive – transitional approach to language learning. The document does recognise a range of "locally viable approaches towards multilingual education" and cites two particularly suitable options (1). The first is Home Language medium education with additional languages (e.g. English) as a subject. The second approach suggested is that of a "structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two way immersion) programmes" (DoE 1997:1). The dual medium approach is what teachers have found through their own trial and error with code-switching. There has been work on developing sound pedagogies around dual-medium / two way immersion instruction through Translanguaging in techniques (Tao & Liyanage 2020:20).

Despite the absence of any justification for an English immersion approach in CAPS or any of the language policies behind it, English submersion is what the DBE provides. Foreign language immersion was popularised by Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach that sought to simulate social incentives for learning a second language (Ruiz de Zarobe & Jiménez Catalán 2009: 1). However CLIL was developed mostly with English home language speakers learning French and Spanish (Navés 2009:23). The issue with flipping this approach in the Vhembe context is the disproportionate dominance of English that has two consequences. For English speakers their home language foundation is never at risk because of its continued relevance in multiple domains of life with the consequence that immersion in a foreign language can be truly additive towards multilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008:1470). In contrast, when children of non-dominant, minority languages are submersed in English there are more subtractive forces undermining learners' home language foundation and multilingual ability (Ibid). It is therefore inappropriate to equate English-only approaches with language immersion programmes and rather refer to this practice as English submersion teaching (Ball 2010:18; Cummins 2000).

It is also common sense that learners should develop a certain amount of proficiency (CALP) in English before being expected to learn *through* English (Cummins 2001; Ball 2010:110). One teacher suggested "if we code-switch to English in Grade 3 it would help" (Vho Gumula) which definitely would assist the English side of the equation, but also demonstrates how, in practice, the commitment to multilingualism only moves in one direction and is being used to justify the earlier introduction of English (Alexander 2008: 58). These are the power dynamics that continue to confine African languages to informal roles (Ibid). Heugh (2007:203) also laments the dominant place of English as undermining the 'democratic potential' of commitments to raise the status of languages including Tshivenḓa that was promised in the constitution. This leads to the next aim of the Language in Education Policy:

> *"to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners" (DoE 1997:2)*

Vho Gumula describes that Tshivenḓa assists in conceptual growth quite simply "because it is easier for them to grasp that thing in their home language". Moving towards the strong-bilingual approaches on May's (2016) diagram, she goes on to say "we code-switch [using Tshivenḓa and English] in Grade 4 maths" (Vho Gumula) which also shows a sensitivity to

learners thresholds of language proficiency in the classroom – but is not enough evidence to suggest she is actually continuing to develop her learners higher level CALP in Tshivenḓa in Grade 4. Vho Ḓifara used the example of Grade 6 maths where learners excelled when he gave them maths problems in Tshivenḓa in class, building their underlying proficiency in maths concepts while they were still working on their English. This aligns with Brock-Utne's (2016: 123) comprehensive work on the LoLT in Tanzania and South Africa, that learners learn best when they are building on language they are fluent in.

8.2.3 Learner Diversity – Inclusive Education

Discussing their successes and challenges in the classroom, teachers gave a great account of learner diversity in Vhembe schools. Children differed in their personalities, ambitions, abilities, language skills, and their lives at home. These combine to form a learner's internal capabilities which teachers build on (Adamson 2020:106). It is this diversity of internal capabilities that can help explain the "wildly different levels of achievement (and freedom to achieve)" between the relative success of learners in urban South Africa and those in the rural Vhembe district (Crocker 2008:166).

The language of instruction was not the most pressing concern for teachers trying to get all of their learners to succeed in their education. In addition to classroom size and resources, teachers had learners with special needs, learners who were behind because they did not attend pre-school/creche, and learners who were described as having ability but were disinterested in class. Teachers know they need to be able to be responsive to this diversity in the classroom, but the uniform progression of CAPS hampered ability to be dynamic and address their learners' needs.

> *[Translated from Tshivenḓa] "looking at the curriculum that is used now it does not teach learners to read in a pace of a learner. Let's say the learning because learners are not the same, hence each and every learner must learn at their pace. So with this one [CAPS] we are unable to individually follow the learner because we are guided by the lesson plans and time frames and it is not easy to reach these because some learners take time to master" (Vho Anetshela).*

In terms of the language of the curriculum, there is a disconnect when CAPS encourages teachers to embrace inclusive education and be "sensitive to issues of diversity" (2011:10) but only delivers content to learners in English.

> *"There are learners who are not interested in learning at all. There are learners who are not engaging they just disrupt the class... And then there are learners who are just stars, they know English and nothing can stop them, they know, they are geniuses" (Konḓisa)*

So among the diversity of learners in Vhembe, there are those who are succeeding in the English curriculum. The direct association here between English and intelligence is troubling – but built in to the structure of CAPS and will be discussed more in 8.2.9 Language Attitudes. Rather teachers explained that there were often other factors beyond innate ability that determined whether learners were engaging or struggling with the curriculum.

> *"I think there is a background. You will find that in a class, more than 60% of the learners didn't even go to preschool. Because they don't have money, their parents don't have money to enter them into the pre-school, the creche... and you have to start all over again with them" (Vho Isedza).*

As teachers expressed in the findings, with a large amount of diversity in the classroom, Tshivenḓa was the language of inclusion that allowed them to engage their broad range of learners in their Vhembe classrooms. Tshivenḓa was more inclusive because Tshivenḓa was the language of learners' home and in the community in Vhembe while the levels of English that children are exposed to varied a lot. From a capabilities perspective, when teachers Tshivenḓa a conversion factor for education content, it was much more stable across interpersonal variability in converting teaching into functionings among learners. It is also worth noting that Tshivenḓa is a diverse language in itself.

Dialect

Four teachers identified their learners speaking a related dialect and that the Tshivenḓa in some villages can diverge further. Linguists are clear that children who grow up speaking a 'non-standard' dialect are often marginalised by a standardised approach to languaging (Wolfram 2000:2). These Indigenous minorities are not afforded the same support for their choice of language in schools as those who identify with standard Tshivenḓa.

> *"In Thengwe we have our own dialect, when [the learners] speak it is different but when they write it is fine. There is one area where the dialect is more different and they can confuse more" (Vho Gumula).*

In this case Vho Gumula is essentially able to help her learners code-switch between their Thengwe dialect and the Tshivenḓa that has been standardised and although she says this is not an issue because the two are closely related, her learners are also assisted in moving between their local vocabulary and 'standard' Tshivenḓa because she is also from the area. This languaging across dialects in Tshivenḓa is strong linguistic exercise for learners who also want to be able to language into English.

Teacher Capacity

Learners' local dialects are the real source of advantage of a mother-tongue based multilingual education so Vho Gumula's competence not only in Tshivenḓa, but in the diversity of Tshivenḓa as a language and as it relates to her learners is significant in quality education. If teacher recruitment and training is based solely on English proficiency then new intakes of teachers from Vhembe will be skewed towards more urban and more privileged families, or foreign volunteers like myself, who will be less likely to be able to connect with learners' language repertoire. The more locally a teacher is based, the more likely their dialect will align with that of their learners.

Given the wide array of learner diversity in Vhembe and across South Africa, we can identify the importance of the agency of teachers to connect with learners' internal language capabilities for inclusive, quality education. This research should therefore not be interpreted to say that Tshivenḓa is the best LoLT in Vhembe, but rather the findings do support the value of teachers having the capability to teach in Tshivenḓa when they choose, to the fullest and richest extent of the curriculum (Probyn 2019:226). Teachers' positions in their SGB's therefore have an important democratic role in communicating with parents and the DBE the language of instruction most appropriate for their particular diversity of children in their school.

As far as teachers are developing differentiation strategies for teaching in their diverse classrooms (CAPS 2011:10) there is a case for further research into Translanguaging techniques that use Tshivenḓa home language as well as English as part of the linguistic scaffolding of lessons. This may sound complex but as the findings of this research show it is already second nature for these teachers in rural Limpopo province to use code-switching in the classroom, it is up to the institutions that support them to catch up.

By not being more flexible, CAPS is cutting off the ladder for those children who teachers have identified are from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The rigidity of CAPS, while designed to create one education system that promotes equality across South Africa, is not finding equitable outcomes across the diversity of learners in Vhembe. The capabilities approach is able to go beyond this 'limited interpretation of rights' (Robeyns, 2006: 70; Adamson 2020: 108) to capture this diversity and enable "enable different human beings to activate and enact those rights in ways they have reason to value" (Hart 2014:2). While teachers are also diverse in their capacity to respond to learner diversity and address learner needs, Tshivenḓa is found to have a small role and plays strongly on the capacity of local teachers.

8.2.4 Relationships & Parents' Capabilities

The finding that learners' functionings in the classroom are highly influenced by the functionings of their parents means there are a lot of connections to be found with Tshivenḓa language instruction. It also highlights historical legacies, the reproduction of functionings, and the desire for meaningful social transformation where children can pursue alternative functionings such as English. While parents may seem beyond the scope of a discussion of the language of instruction at school, Vho Chelela was influential in explaining that

> *"When we talk of education are three people involved. We have a parent, child and the educator, the three must work together" (Vho Chelela).*

Ngũgĩ (1986) also highlights the harmony that can be found in education when the three elements of learning in the community, at home, and at school align. These findings are in line with the theory of language socialisation where language learning occurs largely as "an outcome of synergistic communicative entanglements" (Duff & May 2017:31). This theory was particularly clear when Vho Engedza discussed the language motivations of two of her most successful learners. Vho Engedza explained that her top female learner, across all subjects, excelled in Tshivenḓa as well as their cultural dances and that it was easy for her to learn because "she want[ed] to be part of the dancers" (VE). One of Vho Engedza's male learners excelled in English and this was because of his religious ties with strong social incentives for English through Church. Whereas when children have few social incentives to learn a language like English, Duff & May (2017:31) suggest that teachers should work from learners' linguistic strengths, e.g. Tshivenḓa, with more gradual and intentional introduction of additional language (Heugh et al.2019:163; Ball 2010:125).

In large agreement among teachers in Vhembe was the finding that Tshivenḓa language learning connected to learners' capability around *vhushaka*, communication and relationships with their parents, grandparents and relations. This connection also extends to one of the core principles in the South African curriculum of valuing Indigenous knowledge systems (CAPS 2011:10). When learners' language, culture and as a result their Indigenous knowledge was embraced at school, parents were in more of a position to assist, particularly in teaching learners traditional Venda dances of *Tshigombela* and *Malende* as part of the Creative Arts curriculum. Vho Ḓifara noted the spill-over effects this had on learners capabilities for *u shuma rothe*, working together, *thonifho*, respect, as well as for learning. "Now we dance and return to school and the learners are respecting each other nicely, we are learning" (VD). These kinds of outcomes are exactly what the National Curriculum Framework intends with the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge:

> *"Strong emphasis is laid on offering the programme design and activities for children and their families according to indigenous, local and traditional knowledge, skills and behaviours which enhance children's development and learning, and which enhance the inclusion of families in [education]" (DBE 2015:20).*

Indigenous knowledge need not be confined to the arts, however, and in the final section we will look at how the *lungano* that parents and grandparents share as part of Venda's oral history contribute to outcomes in the Natural Science curriculum. While we have discussed promoting Tshivenḓa as a way of connecting children with their family and community, these language connections can also benefit their emotional capabilities.

8.2.5 Emotional Connections to Learning

Interviews with teachers found using Tshivenḓa in the classroom allowed learners to 'feel free', enjoy, be confident, proud and happy. This was in contrast to English where the operative emotions were bored, fear, lost and shy. These findings are significant in a discussion around Tshivenḓa as a conversion factor to a child's basic capability in education because of research that has established that positive emotions predict high achievement and negative emotions low achievement at school (Pekrun et al. 2011 as cited by Back et al.2020:4).

Nussbaum's work in theorising 'combined capabilities' highlights the need for not only developing children's internal capabilities through education, but also having opportunities to function in line with these capabilities (2011:36). This is relevant in understanding how children's capabilities for emotional health are not only strengthened when teachers have strong relationships with parents, but also what this research finds that using Tshivenḓa opens up opportunities for children to feel and express positive emotions. It may be tempting at this point to say that teachers should use Tshivenḓa for resolving personal conflicts at schools but that this says little about this Language of Learning & Teaching, and so the purpose of this discussion is to go further and highlight how Tshivenḓa can also be instrumental in its emotional capacity for achieving the content of the South African curriculum.

Analysis of teachers' responses around their successes to teaching the Social Science curriculum found a significant connection between learners' understanding of themselves, their culture and origins, and their ability to empathise with the diversity of others. Empathy in Tshivenḓa is expressed as *u pfela*, or 'to feel for someone'. Again this uses the relational tense '-ela' of the verb *u pfa* 'to feel'. This is directly in line with Walker's (2019) point that children's emotional capabilities are foundational in developing empathy for and understanding of others (225). This is important for learners in Vhembe to able to relate to a large diversity of South Africans, "promoting human rights and peace by challenging prejudices involving race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia" (CAPS-SS 2011:15). Teachers descriptions of teaching *thonifho,* respect, and the interplay between respect in and for one's own culture in learning to respect others is also consistent with Watene's (2016) philosophy on children's basic capabilities of identity and affiliation as the social bases of self-respect. To understand how the language of instruction effects children's emotions we look first at the literature on monolingual English instruction before going into home language.

The mere fact that teachers cited their learners associating positively with Tshivenḓa in schools is a victory for decolonizing education in South Africa. Ngũgĩ (1986) described the push for (monolingual, subtractive) English language education in Kenya as leaving African languages in a position "associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment" (Ngũgĩ, 1986). This observation is reinforced in a study by Benson (2016) that showed learners' emotions of shame and humiliation as a result of the marginalization of their home language (as cited in Liyanage & Walker 2019:18). Still, while the South African curriculum denounces these models of subtractive learning, recent studies

show that the Grade 4 transition to English is an 'early exit' model that is sliding more towards subtractive outcomes (Naketsana, 2019: 29; Heugh 2007, 2011) rather than the additive multilingualism the curriculum is aiming for (DoE 1997:2). This all fits with teachers' observations of their learners struggling with the language barrier, and while the psychological effects were not as harsh, perhaps blunted by the presence of Tshivenḓa in other parts of the curriculum, teachers still described these feelings of fear, being lost, shy and bored when English was the medium of instruction. Ngũgĩ (1986) captures these feelings when he describes English-only classrooms as pushing learning into an abstract, not an emotionally felt experience. The Grade 4 transition to monolingual English curriculum, by cutting out children's communicative language abilities in their home language, constructs children as deficient and creates a sink or swim environment for children's education from the age of 8 years old. With up to half of the world's learners facing mismatches of language in the classroom there is no shortage of studies that show how an abstract language of instruction can have compounding social effects on learner self-confidence and anxiety that can lead to chronic low achievement at school (e.g. Back et al.2020:4; Ball 2010:119).

This research found that Tshivenḓa home language education was providing teachers opportunities to engage learners from positions of strength that boosted confidence and self-esteem. Feelings of happiness, *u takala*, enjoyment, *u takalela*, and feeling free, *u vhofolowa*, extended to pride, *u dihudza*, and confidence, *u difulufhela*. Mukonde's (2020:31) recent interviews with former students who participated the Soweto Uprising of 1976 also cited how their pride and confidence in their identities and origins, boosted by the Black Consciousness movement, were central to their political activism and calls for human rights. While quality English language education was a large demand and lasting legacy of those we celebrate on Youth Day June 16th each year, student engagement in African languages also played a part. Mukonde (2020:67) cites the collective readings of poetry and drama in the Soweto cultural group *Khindlimuka* and how students would not limit themselves to reading those books Apartheid assigned them to, quoting Pearl Luthuli saying "I had friends in my school who were Xhosa, and I'm Zulu. So, I would read all my literature books, Zulu literature books, and end up reading the Xhosa books" (Mukonde 2020:52).

This is reminiscent of the interview with Lora, one of the youngest teachers who grew up in Vhembe of the 'born free' generation. Lora discussed her own pride in becoming a Tshivenḓa language teacher, "actually it's not that I love Venda traditions alone, here at home I also have other African traditions" (Lora). These examples suggest that the emotions of pride and

confidence brought on by Tshivenḓa language education need not lead learners to positions of *ethnic chauvinism (DoE 1997:1)*. Rather, closer to the findings of Back et al. (2020:16), Tshivenḓa gives learners more emotional scaffolding for active and critical learning.

8.2.6 Participation, Discussion & Critical Thinking

There was strong consensus among teachers that Tshivenḓa promoted participation in the classroom and suggestions that this can lead to more of what CAPS (2011) refers to as active and critical learning (p. 9). The observation from Vho Ḓifara that his learners "participate intellectually mostly in Tshivenḓa" is consistent with the research by Cummins (2000) that specifically for learners who also want to succeed in English, advanced proficiency in one's mother tongue "enhances the intellectual and academic resources of individual bilingual students" (38).

Vho Ḓifara used this 'intellectual participation' to describe when his learners were thinking critically, while Vho Hwala observed critical thinking when learners spoke in Tshivenḓa because questions were well structured. In the 2017 National Evaluation Report on the implementation of CAPS, active and critical learning was measured by learner participation or "the extent to which individual learners engaged in reading, writing, or speaking tasks during the lesson" (DPME 2017:30). Even on this narrow metric, it was one of the lowest scoring indicators among the South African classrooms sampled for this evaluation (DPME 2017:30). On this basis alone, more Tshivenḓa language discussion where learners are asking questions and participating intellectually in the lesson would be a great step towards the principle of active and critical learning.

One particularly influential development on Socrates' theory for active and critical learning is Paulo Freire's (1970) 'problem posing education'. Freire contrasts this with the 'banking concept' of education which is exactly what the DBE is trying to get teachers away from as 'rote and uncritical learning of given truths' (CAPS 2011:9). Freire's educational goal of *conscientização* – the active attainment of critical consciousness through dialogue with others – is a quintessentially democratic goal for an "open society in which government is based on the will of the people" (S.A. Const: *Preamble*). The capability for teachers and learners to use home language in the classroom can be understood as recognising their rights to express this

will and 'name the world' which is for Freire (1970) a prerequisite to active and critical dialogue for learning.

> *"dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression" (Freire 1970:88).*

Guzula et al. (2016) share this goal of realizing children's rights to speak by intertwining African languages and English in the classroom through Translanguaging techniques that position learners as resourceful and encourages participation in an inclusive dialogue (219).

Critical Translanguaging

Translanguaging demands more creative and critical inclusion of learners' voices (Garcia & Wei 2014:24) than is currently the case with rote learning still the norm in many South African classrooms. Nomlomo & Vuzo's (2014) observational data in classrooms suggested that code-switching did not lead to active and critical learning because teachers focused on 'teacher talk' rather than interaction with learners (78). So while the use of Tshivenḓa in itself is not an indicator of critical learning, there is a finer line to draw from these findings. Interviews were clear that teachers' use of Tshivenḓa increased the engagement of learners in active discussions. Translanguaging that is inclusive of learners' home language, can therefore be seen an essential component if teachers are going to be able to embrace learner-centred teaching, discussion and critical thinking activities going forward.

Critical pedagogies can be difficult to realise because most South African teachers have grown up in top-down education and decision making structures through Bantustan era and British colonial schooling (Abdulatief et al.2018:9). The internalized oppression from this history still runs deep, with assumptions that English is a superior language and that intelligence flows from thought in English. This perception is reinforced by the structure of CAPS.

To break out of this framing of cultural and intellectual deficiency it is important to understand Indigenous forms of teaching (Au & Kawakami 1991). In Vhembe one of the forms teachers shared of learning through the Venda culture is around the *ngoma*, drum, as Vho Engedza

described proficient dancers lead novice dancers around in an extended spiral of the dance. This provides a wonderful example of a community of learning (Vygotsky 1978 as cited by Au & Kawakami 1991) where learners have clear roles and cooperate towards a common goal, probably led by the teacher at the beginning who sees a gradual release of responsibility as learners move from observers to 'self-regulation' or command. Learners are active, *vha khou dzhenelela* – participating, *shuma rothe* – working together, and *thonife* – showing respect and because of this the teacher has been able to 'hand over the stick' and dialogue of the learning process to learners themselves.

8.2.7 Conceptual Understanding & Progression

Learning to dance through the ngoma becomes an analogy for the way in which Tshivenḓa helped learners progress from language that was familiar to them, to new language and concepts that they would build on to further their education. This is the role of Tshivenḓa home language in developing conceptual understanding of topics.

> *"Once you make the content to be simpler to them and make them to also participate, they enjoy. If you just come with your content and you teach alone, they don't enjoy it, they don't feel like they are part of the lesson. They enjoy participating, working together, and in the language that they can also understand" (Vho Ḓifara).*

CAPS defines the principle of progression as moving from "simple to complex" (2011: 9) and three teachers made similar references to describe the way they find success teaching in the classroom. Vho Hwala redefined this concept slightly, describing how he moves with his learners from familiar territory to concepts that are new. This echoes Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) that is a key theory in effective teaching (Ohta 2005).

ZPD holds learners existing knowledge at one end of a continuum, and proposes that dropping them into a lesson too far removed from these current academic functionings will go over their heads and fail to engage them in active learning. This part of the theory accurately captures what teachers describe happens with English language instruction – English content is often going over their heads and learners have less ability to engage cognitively in the lesson. The common reference to the 'language barrier' of English in these Vhembe classrooms reinforces the theory of ZPD – learners struggle when they are dropped into unfamiliar English-only lessons.

> *"In most cases, learners learn when they do practical things. They don't really love theory. They love practical things" (Konḓisa).*

Vygotsky's ZPD is instructive for the LoLT because it recognises the importance of engaging learners' prior knowledge as a way of progressing learners into understanding new concepts. In this way ZPD works by "(h) recognising the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of students" (DoE 1996:6). ZPD also recognises that the aim of education is to push learners beyond their current set of functionings, with the capability for social transformation (CAPS 2011:9).

When Vygotsky's ZPD is considered in the multilingual context of this research, learners' linguistic 'aptitudes, abilities and prior knowledge' was described as predominantly being in Tshivenḓa, while many of the new concepts in the current curriculum are in English. The finding that teachers use Tshivenḓa to engage and visualise concepts before moving into English shows a dynamic understanding of languaging through learners' ZPD, engaging learners' prior knowledge and then introducing more challenging concepts in English. In this way we can see that the use of Tshivenḓa need not trap learners in their current set of functionings, and is actually a key component in active learning. Embracing learners' linguistic dynamism like this also has the potential for teachers to move between local/embedded issues in learners lives to global/abstract ideas in their education.

> *"A translanguaging approach to bilingualism extends the repertoire of semiotic practices of individuals and transforms them into dynamic mobile resources that can adapt to global and local sociolinguistic situations" (Garcia & Wei 2014:18).*

This would move closer to fulfilling the South African curriculum's aim "that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives" (CAPS 2011:9). The local context in Vhembe is Indigenous, it is in Tshivenḓa, and despite the limits of the curriculum, many of these teachers embrace learners' functionings in Tshivenḓa in order to take them further. In this spirit, I wrote a short *lungano* with these findings that was proof-read by Mutshinyani:

Salungano!

Tshivenḓa ndi ngoma ya pfunzo, I khou lidziwa uri vhana vha tevhele tshikoloni. Salungano! Vhana avho vho thoma zwavhudi vha khou tevhedza vhukando ha vhalala, vhadededzi, muphuresidende nav ha khou bvela phanḓa kha u dzhenelela kha mbofholowo ya Afrika Tshipembe. Salungano!

It's a story!

Tshivenḓa is the drum of education.

When it plays, the children are following and succeeding at school.

It's a story about these children beginning nicely following the footsteps of their elders, teachers, leaders, and they are going forward to participate in the freedom of South Africa. Salungano!

8.2.8 From Code Switching to Translanguaging

This research found that while curriculum may switch to English in Grade 4, in practice, all but one of the 12 teachers interviewed in Vhembe are code-switching to explain concepts in Tshivenḓa. Teachers shared a variety of different approaches in addressing the common challenge of the English language barrier learners face from Grade 4. These ranged from challenging learners to seek meaning for themselves with an English-only approach, to introducing English earlier by code-switching in Grade 3 and the dominant approach of code-switching by translating English content verbally in Tshivenḓa with the goal of transition and performance in English.

Table 16 *English Transition with Code-switching*

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="3">Foundation Phase</th><th colspan="3">Intermediate Phase</th></tr>
<tr><td>Grade:</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Home Language</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="5">Tshivenḓa</td><td colspan="3">Tshivenḓa HL</td></tr>
<tr><td>Life Skills</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="5">English</td></tr>
<tr><td>Social Science</td></tr>
<tr><td>Maths</td></tr>
<tr><td>Natural Science & Tech</td></tr>
<tr><td>First Additional Language</td><td colspan="3">English FAL</td></tr>
</table>

Code switching for this group of teachers meant, "tell[ing learners] some terms using our mother tongue... rather than using English only" (Vho Isedza). This is consistent with other studies in South Africa such as Nomlomo & Vuzo (2014:78) who found teachers code switched

as a coping strategy for learners low English proficiency and the practice helped learners gain epistemological access to knowledge in the classroom (79).

However, interviews in Vhembe showed mixed feelings among teachers about code-switching, which was consistent with both Nomlomo & Vuzo's (2014) finding on the pressures towards monolingual English practice and Garcia & Wei's (2014) observation that "Code-switching behaviour is often stigmatised" (52). Garcia & Wei reframe code switching because "recent research has questioned this deficit orientation" (52) from a practice that violates a monolingual English ideal into a complex pedagogical technique.

> *"In fact, students and teachers in all bilingual education programs use complex language practices, and build on complex resources for meaning-making in order to learn and teach; that is, they use what we are calling here translanguaging" (Garcia & Wei 2014:52).*

Taking Translanguaging as a lens allows a more constructive analysis on the opportunities that teachers' practice of code switching presents, but if teachers are to make the most of the technique, Translanguaging departs in a number of key ways.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is language learning by "mixing, switching, interpreting and translating" that nourishes learners' bilingualism (Heugh et al.2019:167). Garcia & Wei (2014:16) create the analogy of subtractive monolingualism as a unicycle, additive bilingualism as a bicycle, and dynamic bilingualism (Translanguaging) as an all terrain vehicle (ATV) where people use their entire linguistic repertoire through the uneven interactive terrains of communication. In this way, "languaging both shapes and is shaped by context" (Becker 1988 in Garcia & Wei 2014:8).

In her teaching, Vho Jena provided the example of introducing the concept of 'nouns' in Tshivenḓa before taking them to this concept in English. This is a perfect example of Translanguaging, utilising Cummins (1979) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) to develop understanding of the concept in her learners' home language because she has a good sense that "there is a cognitive interdependence that allows for transfer of linguistic practices" (Garcia & Wei 2014:13). There were five teachers who also demonstrated a strong use of languaging through multi-modal semiotics by embracing actions and visual aids as part of

meaning making in the classroom. This is to say that despite the complexity of Translanguaging as a concept, it is a good fit for the complexity that teachers in Vhembe are working with every day. While this study was unable to observe how teachers implemented this in their classrooms, the interviews do allow us to understand some of the boundaries that teachers consider with their language practice.

8.2.9 Language Attitudes

The main social conversion factor in whether teachers were comfortable in their code-switching appeared to be the belief, enforced by DBE policy, that English is the language of progress, modernity and knowledge. As noted in the section on diversity, many learners in Vhembe schools are from disadvantaged backgrounds, their parents have not had the functionings to go further and Tshivenḓa was bundled in with this. The value of Tshivenḓa can be taken for granted as the language spoken at home. English is perceived as a gateway and everyone wants to do everything they can to ensure children attain 'high knowledge' and succeed in English. Despite herself contributing to many of the previous findings on the role of Tshivenḓa, including code-switching, Vho Fhaṱelana insists on the pre-eminence of English.

> *"Are there ways that Tshivenḓa helps learners with their education? No, I can't say that because mostly when they have to go far they have to use English. You know to the University. They are no longer about to talk about Tshivenḓa. Now English became their language of instruction" (Vho Fhaṱelana).*

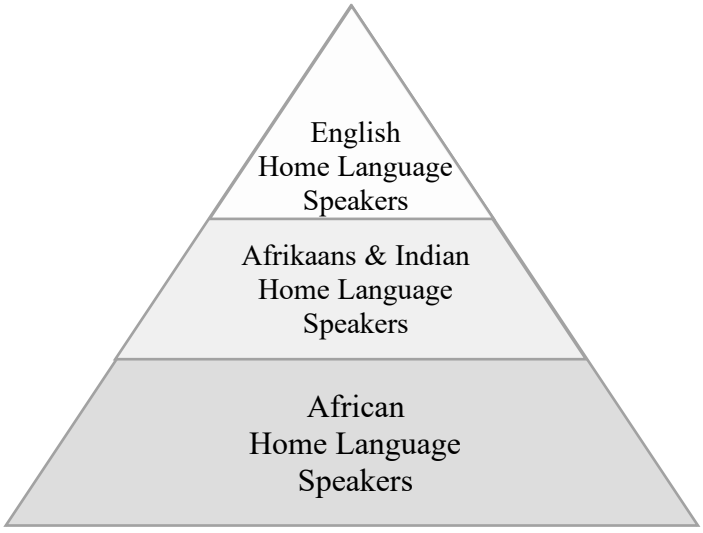
This view is consistent with the large body of literature that colonial notions superiority of English as a language of education allow it to dominate, preventing teachers and children from realising the full benefits of multilingual education (Cummins 2001; Heugh 2007; Tollefson 2008; Duff & May 2017; Tao & Liyanage 2020). The assumption embedded in CAPS' concept of 'high knowledge' is that the economic success of the wealthy is due to their possession of 'high skills' like English and that social transformation simply requires the dispossessed to attain this 'high knowledge' and put these 'high skills' into practice. Freire (1970) is particularly critical about this approach, when he writes "An education written and modelled by the upper class cannot liberate the poor" and rather work together to articulate their own place in the world. The concept of 'high knowledge' thereby avoids larger structural issues of power that perpetuate poverty, and plays into a system that the poor should only have expanded livelihood opportunities to the extent that they master concepts of 'high knowledge' that extend

to assimilation of upper class culture and language, hence English. Alexander (2008) explains that English dominance helps tighten economic and political power, "perpetuating class stratification and discrimination, one that deepened and complicated the very ethnic divides that the original [common language] policy was intended to avoid" (2008:56) and is assisting in 'elite closure' of the state. Heugh (2007) analyses survey data to show that the government's choice of disseminating most of its information in English means that up to 60% of African first-language speakers do not understand the language of its government (Heugh, 2007:194). While this may seem less of an issue going forward if all South Africans have access to English FAL at school, it gives privileged linguistic access to jobs and government to just 7.2% of the population:

> *"a very small elite which has Grade 12+ education plus English as their language of greatest fluency... What has happened linguistically is that whilst English is believed to be the horizontal language of access it has in effect become the vertical language of exclusion… English is fast becoming a gate-keeper rather than a language of access" (Heugh 2007: 200).*

The figure below illustrates a language hierarchy that allows English home language speakers to dominate formal sector opportunities (Alexander 2008; Heugh 2007).

Figure 16 *Hierarchy of Languages, adapted from Thomas (2019: 91)*



In capabilities terms, the privileging of English allows a sub-section of the population to retain consistency and control between cultural, family and economic capabilities while people of different backgrounds are forced into tragic choices between conflicting capabilities of culture,

family and economic livelihoods (Nussbaum 2011:52). This tragic choice is illustrated by the example of Roliwa.

> *"There are those learners like [Roliwa], they don't want to learn their cultural activities. For them English is the best. If you don't motivate them, showing that their home language is also strong or also good, those learners you will find they don't even want to tell people they are Venda" (Vho Engedza).*

These internalised feelings of personal inferiority and English superiority run deep. Frantz Fanon (1952) was seminal in his work on colonisation and psychology and the way these hierarchies have been reinforced in people's minds by a discourse that continues through to today (also see Escobar 1997). The extent to which this discourse has turned many of the teachers away from embracing their learners' Tshivenḓa language repertoire suggests that decolonisation is a necessary conversion factor towards achieving quality multilingual education.

Placing languages in competition with each other is consistent with British colonial divide and conquer tactics, enforcing assimilation, dominance and creating inequality (Makalela 2016:7). The idea that there is a trade-off between the valued capabilities of being fluent in your home language and becoming proficient in English is simply not supported by the evidence (Cummins 2000; Heugh 2007; Tao & Linayage 2020). The assumption that subtractive, submersion learning models are the most effective for acquiring English is a colonial era idea that has been consistently debunked by research on how we learn languages (Cummins 2001; Heugh 2007; Tollefson 2008; Duff & May 2017). Knowing that education in home language will boost not only overall education objectives but also proficiency in English, if one chooses, helps us recognise complimentary capabilities, and these ultimately have to be weighed by children and their representatives on SGBs themselves.

Tradition & Gender

There is another contradiction in language attitudes that conflate English with progress. The 'liberating' caricature of English can be seen as part of a deeply set colonial narrative that depends on an Orientalist charicature of barbaric 'other' cultures (Said, 1978). This line of narrative creates concerns that 'preserving' a language will perpetuate patriarchy embedded in African cultures. It is difficult to square this narrative with the example of Vho Engedza using

the traditional Venda dance of *Tshifasi* to put her girls in a position of power, guiding her adolescent learners in the negotiation of relationships. This positioning came from both Vho Engedza's in-depth knowledge of Venda culture that allowed her to draw on a repertoire of dances that spoke to this particular need amongst her learners as well as her agency to choose how to teach the creative arts curriculum. This agency is a reminder that all cultures "are always in the process of interpretation and reinterpretation, and never immune to change" (Phillips 2002:101).

Kruger (2007) notes that the *lungano* are also often labelled as passing on patriarchial norms. Kruger's analysis found that the *lungano* have been mostly passed on through women and the raising of these norms were more accurately characterized as sights of resistance (Kruger 2007:7). If critical thinking defined by Nussbaum (2006) is to actively question norms and traditions then it seems logical to include Venda norms and traditions for consideration rather than trying to ignore them with a blanket shift to English. English does have a role for offering learners access to other views on gender roles and feminism around the world. The degree to which learners are able to translate these ideas back into a critique of toxic masculinity at home also demands a strong proficiency in Tshivenḓa.

As Vho Engedza demonstrated in her teaching, there is great room for an Indigenous feminism to reclaim these parts of Venda culture that colonisation has stamped out. Vho Engedza cites the singer Makhadzi as having a big impact through popular Tshivenḓa language music in this respect. Indigenous forms of feminism are active within Venda culture; proficiency in English enhances peoples connections to common struggles with gender; and proficiency in Tshivenḓa lets people influence the dominant discourse in Vhembe around these issues.

8.2.10 Tshivenḓa in Natural Science

In Vho Isedza's use of the *lungano* to describe local environmental and conservation knowledge embedded in the oral history of *Vhatavha Tsindi*, the Thengwe clan, around lake Fundudzi we see a strong example of the way that Indigenous knowledge carried in the Tshivenḓa language can contribute to learners' holistic understanding of natural science in Vhembe classrooms. However, all of the other teachers resisted the idea that Tshivenḓa had much to contribute to science education. In order to deconstruct the hierarchy of English supremacy and the hold that a superficial image of the West has on science, it is necessary to

challenge cultural and gendered bias these fields of 'high knowledge' (Rahnema, 1997). As important as clarifying that English does not have a monopoly on scientific knowledge production is the recognition that Indigenous languages have always played a role in people's understandings of scientific processes and will continue to have a role in our collective ability to do science into the future. South Africa's curriculum statement for natural science does try and get at this point:

> *"Science as we know it today has roots in African, Arabic, Asian, European and American cultures. It has been shaped by the search to understand the natural world through observation, testing and proving of ideas, and has evolved to become part of the cultural heritage of all nations. In all cultures and in all times people have wanted to understand how the physical world works and have needed explanations that satisfy them." (DBE 2011:13)*

Vho Isedza demonstrated that the contributions of the *lungano* to our understanding of eco-systems and the environment in Vhembe, South Africa are a part of this rich heritage in science. This is why valuing Indigenous knowledge is a principle not in isolation but as a key conversion factor to the capability of a basic education in South Africa. Students growing up in Vhembe and aspiring to be scientists should, in a curriculum that values Indigenous knowledge, have access to this body of knowledge which was developed and is expressed most accurately in the lexicon not just in a standard but their local dialect of Tshivenḓa. The interviews for this research show that teachers in the district are comfortable moving between Tshivenḓa and English to give the children access to these different bodies of scientific knowledge. However, a pervasive monolingual English ideology continues to push against this practice, most strongly in the field of science. This is not to overlook contradictions and tensions between bodies of Indigenous and Western scientific knowledge, but this research notes there are teachers on the ground, like Vho Isedza, finding the ways they can compliment each other.

Guzula et al. (2018) identified, and the textbook analysis as part of this research confirmed, that the lack of African language textbooks is a main driver behind monolingual English teaching of the curriculum. This research found that not only is there the vocabulary necessary to teach natural science in Tshivenḓa, but that there is a Tshivenḓa-English natural science dictionary produced by the Department of Arts and Culture that teachers were not aware of (DAC 2013).

8.2.11 The Role of the SGBs

> *"with adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other" (Crocker 2008:158).*

The South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996) then delegates a School's Governing Body (SGB) take their learners' rights as well as practicability into account for selecting the Language of Learning & Teaching (LoLT) (Motshekga, 2015:12). The steps an SGB would need to take to establish Tshivenḓa as the LoLT for the whole of Primary school are outlined in the LiEP (1997). The SGB would need to submit 40 requests from children and their parents from Grades 1 to 7 for Tshivenḓa (or other) language instruction to the Limpopo (or other Provincial) Department of Basic Education (DoE 1997:3). The head of the provincial DBE must then decide what steps to take, considering the petitioning learners' rights (as outlined above), equity, redress racial discrimination, practicability and the advice of the SGB itself (DoE 1997:3). It must also "explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources" (DoE 1997:3).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have drawn on teacher interviews, policy analysis and the literature on capabilities and multilingual education to make the case that using Tshivenḓa as part of the languaging of a classroom enhances a number of conversion factors towards fulfilling the capabilities of children's education in Vhembe. The first personal conversion factor is a child's mother tongue, the language they communicate in at home and in the community which serves as a foundation for learning. The concept of personal conversion factors is based on the innate diversity of children and realising capabilities in the classroom therefore requires a view of inclusive education. Teachers cited the main source of learner diversity as their parents which brings in social conversion factors with social and relational motivations for learning. Emotions are also identified by teachers as a strong social conversion factor that lead to learner participation. Active and critical learning is a key conversion factor identified by the DBE. Teachers' practice of code-switching becomes a pedagogical conversion factor and the concept is explored further with South African research on Translanguaging. Finally, in a critical

analysis of teachers' interviews I identify language attitudes as a conversion factor for their openness to multilingual education.

Chapter 9. Conclusion and Reccomendations

9.1 Achievement of Research Aims & Objectives

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the role of Tshivenḓa in advancing learners' capabilities in Primary education from the perspective of teachers in the classroom. This study identified a number of valued capabilities in South Africa sourced from teachers in Vhembe, the constitution, education laws and the national curriculum and policy statement (CAPS). This was triangulated with the literature in multilingual education that is largely critical of CAPS' early-exit English curriculum. Going beyond these previous findings, this research was able to articulate the core human capabilities in education that are strengthened by Tshivenḓa language instruction in the context of this sample of teachers in Vhembe. This research also centres around democratic mechanisms for change – the rights embedded in the constitution, the laws that govern the DBE and the role of the School Governing Bodies that are empowered to

Table 17 *Achievement of Research Aims & Objectives*

Aim: To investigate educators' perceptions on how Tshivenḓa home language teaching has influenced the capabilities of Primary School learners in Vhembe, South Africa.	
Chapter 6. Policy Analysis	**Chapter 7. Semi-Structured Interviews**
Objective 1.1: To analyse government documents for the desired outcomes of South Africa's democratic system for Primary education.	*Objective 1.2:* To interview Primary school educators about the skills and values that are important for children in Vhembe.
Objective 2.1: To analyse government documents for the means to achieving the stated outcomes, particularly with language policies.	*Objective 2.2:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the successes and challenges they face getting learners to achieve these skills and values.
Objective 3.1: To analyse the Department of Basic Education's rationale on how the language instruction effects children's learning.	*Objective 3.3:* To interview educators in Vhembe on the ways in which Tshivenḓa language curriculum has expanded the capabilities of their learners.

9.2 Achievement of Research Questions

1. What capabilities do South African educators consider to be valuable for primary school learners?

As teachers discussed the role of language in their classrooms, a number of capabilities emerged that were unique to Vhembe while being connected to Indigenous and Ubuntu worldviews. These were that children should learn about and be able to practice: *mvelele na vhubvo*, culture and origins; *vhudavhidzani ha vhudi*, good communication; *thonifho*, respect; relationships with *vhushaka*, family and ancestors; *u shuma rothe*, working together; *u tshina*, to dance Venda dances such as *tshifhasi*; as well as *u dzedza*, to tell stories such as the *lungano* folktales. Each of these capabilities had strong relational aspects, breaking out of the perceived individualism of the capabilities approach. There was also a strong sense of the value of South Africa's capability for freedom, with the capability for children *u vhofolowa,* to feel free. Teachers described the emotional capabilities of children: *u difulufhela,* to feel confident; *u takalela,* to enjoy; *u takala,* to be happy; and *u dihudza,* to be proud. In these interviews, teachers were committed to fulfilling the capabilities outlined in CAPS, namely maths, natural science, life skills, Tshivenḓa home language, and English first additional language "because mostly when they have to go far they have to use English" (Vho Fhaṱelana). Still teachers were certain children in Vhembe must learn both languages. This aligned with the South African constitution's valued capability for multilingualism, and to develop previously marginalised African languages as part of inclusive education and valuing Indigenous knowledge. Commitments to both equality and equity strive for the capability of a quality education demonstrated through capabilities for progression, high knowledge and high skills; and ultimately social transformation towards meaningful participation in society, democracy and the economy.

2. What successes and challenges do Primary school learners face when trying to achieve these capabilities?

In Chapters 6 & 7 this analysis was conducted alongside Tshivenḓa to keep in mind the wider context of conversion factors to children's learning in Vhembe. Teachers identified large class sizes as a challenge for monitoring and engaging with a diverse range of learners. Given this diversity, one teacher noted how CAPS constrained educators further by prescribing the progression that needed to be followed each hour of the week that prevented them from being

responsive to the diversity of their learners' needs in the classroom. Teachers cited the functionings of parents as having a large influence on the range of learner functionings in the classroom and because of this many of their learners had emotional and language barriers to engaging in the classroom. Teachers stated that practical activities helped construct meaning, encourage participation and build positive emotions, still this varied by student. This provided examples of what CAPS refers to as 'active learning' and although teachers valued critical learning it was harder to demonstrate. 'Progression' was a process of bringing learners from familiar territory to new concepts which aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Teachers found home language instruction in the foundation phase important because 'children must learn their language first' which was consistent with the DBE justification based on Cummins' (1979; 2001) threshold level theory of language proficiency. Teachers were sensitive to the diversity of language functionings in their classrooms and found that code-switching into learners' home language improved communication and understanding in the classroom. Teachers' effective use of code-switching was constrained by DBE advice and attitudes to the superiority of English as a language of instruction. Schools' Governing Bodies (SGBs) were identified as the democratic mechanism for decisions on the language of instruction but they did not have a substantive choice with only English or Afrikaans textbooks in all subjects bar home language from Grade 4 upwards.

3. In what ways does home language instruction enable learners to attain these capabilities?

Tshivenḓa had no effect on class size and complicates the conversion factor of teacher resources including textbooks due to the limited investment so far in developing these beyond Grade 3. Nonetheless, this research has illuminated a number of ways that the capability of Tshivenḓa language instruction, even through Grades 4-7, has enhanced both the learning and well-being of children in the classrooms for this group of teachers in Vhembe. Given teachers' ability to freely respond to a full account of diversity amongst their learners there was a strong role for Tshivenḓa in quality, inclusive education. In the foundation phase Tshivenḓa ensured children learned literacy, numeracy and life skills while staying connected not only with their culture and origins but also their *vhushaka,* parents and grandparents, by learning *vhudavhidzani ha vhudi*, good communication and *thonifho*, respect. Parents were able to assist creative arts curriculum with *u tshina*, to dance Venda dances such as *tshifhasi* allowing learners' *u dihudza,* to be proud; *u difulufhela,* to feel confident; and *u takalela,* to enjoy.

Through the intermediate phase, Teachers expressed how using Tshivenḓa allowed them to engage the full linguistic repertoire of their learners opening up the agency for children *u vhofolowa,* to feel free; *u shuma rothe*, work together; *u dzhenelela*, to participate, and *u tevhela*, to follow and succeed in the classroom using their mother-tongue in maths, social science and natural science subjects. Sensitive to the diversity of their learners' English functionings, teachers' codeswitching practices activated familiar concepts for learners in Tshivenḓa and this helped them move together to more abstract concepts in English. This reflected an understanding of *progression* as working in learners' 'zone of proximal development' moving from the familiar to the new, with teachers underscoring the importance of: knowing your language to have the linguistic foundation to language further (Cummins 1979; 2001); knowing your culture to value and respect other cultures (Nussbaum 2011:49); and knowing yourself to have the emotional capabilities for empathy towards other people (Walker 2019:225). This dynamic reflected active learning to the extent that "they participate intellectually mostly in Tshivenḓa" (Vho Ḓifara). Critical learning depends more on specific pedagogies but these examples suggest that the capability to use Tshivenḓa was necessary, just not sufficient, for critical thinking in the classroom (Probyn 2019:226). Based on these findings many Vhembe learners' capability for attaining high knowledge and high skills was constrained by English-only approaches, while using traditional *lungano* folktales to introduce concepts of ecology and conservation in the natural science curriculum created stronger connections between the valued capabilities of Indigenous knowledge, progression, high skills and science. These findings suggest Tshivenḓa is less of a problem and more of an intellectual resource.

9.3 Findings and Recommendations based on results

Teachers in Vhembe have a number of the core capabilities to put Translanguaging into practice and while many are, they are swimming against a tide of monolingual performance incentives of the current early-exit English submersion curriculum. The Minister of Basic Education has committed to a de-centralised language policy and SGBs have the legal framework to take this up. These democratic mechanisms are key to the capabilities approach where the agency freedom to be able to use language most conducive to active and critical learning as part of the languaging of teaching is the goal.

A move towards Translanguaging pedagogies offers hope that learners can have balanced access to their valued capabilities of Tshivenḓa and English in the classroom. This research shows that this type of teaching would align far better with the skills and functionings of local teachers in Vhembe than an English-only curriculum that is unjustifiably suppressing active and inclusive learning in Tshivenḓa in schools. While these teachers had the skills, the burden of translating work cannot be underestimated and Tshivenḓa language learning and teaching support material (LTSM) gives them something to balance out the dominance of English LTSM. However, textbooks can be fraught with standard language ideology and LTSM needs to be developed in ways that support active, creative and critical learning that is inclusive of children's dialects. Adding to the call from Heugh (2007), local teachers who speak learners' dialects are therefore key to ensuring that learners get the home language foundation they need. Teachers' responses demonstrate a great fit with an ubuntu Translanguaging pedagogy for teaching in Vhembe classrooms with opportunities for development and further research.

Maṅweledzo ha lungano

Salungano salungano!
Kale kale ngei tshiritikini tsha Vhembe. Hovha huna vhaṅwe vhadedzi vhafumbili, vha tshi amba nga vhundeme ha lumabo lwashu lwa Tshivenḓa.

Here is a story for the children!
A long time ago up there in the Vhembe district there were twelve teachers who spoke on the importance of our language Tshivenḓa.

Salungano
Vho vha vha tshi ḓivha zwinzhi nga ha makwati a muvhuyu, liṅwe vha anetshela vhathu ngaha vhundeme ha makwati a muvhuyu. Vhari kale hangei o vha a tshi thusa nwana u aluwa zwavhudi, u tanya, na u guda luambo lwa swa.

It's a story about their knowledge of the bark of the Baobab tree, and how they revealed the importance of its substance. They said long ago people used it to help children grow strong, to be intelligent and to learn new languages.

Salungano!
Tshivenḓa ndi ngoma ya pfunzo, I khou lidziwa uri vhana vha tevhele tshikoloni.
It's a story!
Tshivenḓa is the drum of education.
When it plays, the children are following and succeeding at school.

Salungano!
Vhana avho vho thoma zwavhudi vha khou tevhedza vhukando ha vhalala, vhadededzi, muphuresidende nav ha khou bvela phanḓa kha u dzhenelela kha mbofholowo ya Afrika Tshipembe. Salungano!

It's a story about these children beginning nicely following the footsteps of their elders, teachers, leaders, and they are going forward to participate in the freedom of South Africa. Salungano!

Havha u fa ha lungano.
This is where the story ends.

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