How South Africa's Borrowed Higher Education Policies Alienate the Higher Certificate Students and Contribute to the Creation of NEETs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

PSET:	Post-school Education and Training
NEET:	Youths Not in Employment Education or Training
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
HC:	Higher Certificate
BA:	Bachelors
MAPALHE:	Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
STEM:	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Abstract

A review of four South African policies reveals that the post-apartheid government harbours neoliberal values that promote competition in higher education and promote the use of English. Through a critical document analysis, the research aimed to ascertain if the use of only English in South African higher education policies lead to a reproduction of neoliberal policies that actively exclude higher certificate students in universities. This study found that the neoliberal values further disenfranchise vulnerable student groups exemplified by the higher certificate cohort in university contexts as the policies barely address their linguistic rights through quantifiable strategies. Instead, English is promoted as necessary in both education and employment. The state's failure to reflect on linguistic access is most perilous for students who are already outcasted in universities and the neoliberal focus on bachelor's programmes within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics condemns vulnerable students to possible NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) status. Robert Phillipson's ideas on linguistic neoimperialism are used to situate this discussion. Ideas on disinvestment and disconnection are entertained as one of possible solutions to linguistic neoimperialism.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historically, the intersection between education, language and policy in South Africa has always been politically motivated and mediated. Simply put, South Africa has a history of using language to reinforce political ideologies in social contexts including the education space. Since the 1976 tragedy in the southern townships of Johannesburg, where over 500 people including one hundred and fifteen students were killed protesting against Afrikaans as a language of teaching, any debates about language at any level in the education system are carefully navigated through a political lens.

Schooling under the apartheid regime mirrored the racially segregated social systems and was under the immediate rule of provincial legislatures (Bunting, 1994). The education system, according to Ian Bunting, was 'the creation of the state' (2004: 6). Access to specific schools and institutions was mitigated first by race then later by proficiency in English the language of teaching, affordability, and availability of space in the formerly white schools.

With historically underdeveloped schools in the areas occupied by Black students, and no specific efforts to improve these schools this has meant that up to the present-day in post-apartheid South Africa the majority of Black students in South Africa attend poorly resourced schools. This in turn impacts the type of institutions to attend and the qualifications they may take up in higher education.

In 1997 Nelson Mandela's government made a language of learning proclamation in support of teaching in all of South Africa's eleven official languages to counter the dominance of English as a medium of instruction in education. However, the use of English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) has hardly shifted and continues to disenfranchise students at schools and higher education levels. English is further encouraged in key policy documents such as the National Development Plan (2012) ahead of other official languages. This is despite the government's calls for multilingualism in education, which were heralded as a significant factor in mediating access of quality education for all South African students.

Many challenges still plague the education system of the country, particularly the challenge with physical access to higher education in the public universities which is highlighted by Nico Cloete (2011) when he states that even if all the students in the current university system (by 2011) were black, the participation rate for black people would still be well below 30%. The limited capacity of the post-school sector has intensified the competition to gain entry, with institutions using various means of testing applicants. With public universities institutions vying for world class university status, with limited space for intake, universities put even less emphasis on bringing in at-risk students in lieu of students who are likely to perform better with a lesser amount of risk.

English is a key determinant in admissions for entry into bachelor programmes in the country. This has caused policy tensions as the government has been accused of promulgating language policies documents that are devoid of appropriate monitoring plans.

Birgit Brock-Utne (2003) zeroed in on this sustained priming of European languages in African education, asking 'what social classes profit from the continued use of European languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses out?'. She found that the benefactors were the ruling elites, political leaders and their international donors. The majority of the student population lose out on a lot more than they gain from the use of 'a common language'. Robert Phillipson (2008) contends that "acceptance of the status of English, and its assumed neutrality implies uncritical adherence to the dominant world disorder, unless policies to counteract neolinguistic imperialism and to resist linguistic capital dispossession are in force." (p. 38)

Rationale for the study

The current research departs from a similar axiological source. It furthers the social justice project by looking at four key higher education policies, namely the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (2012), the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014), the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020), and the Department of Higher Education and Training's Revised Strategic Plan – 2020 – 2025.

In lieu of a broad-spectrum analysis of all students, the study will focus on the specific group of students who only qualify to take up the one-year certificate programmes. These tend to be the at-risk students with a multitude of intersecting challenges. In relation to this group, it is especially necessary to study the implications of English in education policies, particularly how the policies shape the exclusion of HC students from better resourced institutions with better reputations and higher cultural capital.

Essentially, this study aims to offer a cause-and-effect analysis between the use of English in higher education policies in South Africa, and how this directly leads to further disenfranchisement of students outside the English-speaking community, particularly those who only qualify to take the one-year higher certificate programmes. The main research question to anchor the study is as follows: *Does the use of only English in South African higher education policies lead to a reproduction of neoliberal policies that actively exclude higher certificate students?*

There is evidence that state failure in constituting a sufficiently inclusive higher education system results in poor access and progression rates. This evidence is addressed in this study through a close reading of the NEETs (youth Not in Employment or Education and Training). This is a social group comprising of "care leavers who are not working, studying, or in training" (Dickens and Marx, 2018: 66). This is investigated through the second research question

which is as follows: *Do the South African higher education policies address strategies for linguistic access to support higher certificate students in universities and curtail NEETs*?
The answer to the problem of English in policy documents is not a linear endpoint of monolingualism, it is more than just proposing multilingualism in such a complex social milieu. The country's education system, through policies, created and maintains neoliberal architectonics that alienate poor students with limited command of the English language. The aim of this study then, is to uncover how higher education policies support the exclusion of these students by closely studying the four policies and juxtaposing them against the higher certificate cohort in the context of South African universities. The research question that targes this discussion is as follows: *Do South African education policies address equitable linguistic access to universities for higher certificate students?*

This research study intends to scrutinise the above-mentioned policy documents to ascertain the views they hold about the overall role of post-school education in South Africa and study closely at how these notions from the policies engender unique challenges for the students who qualify to take on one-year certificate programmes. Stephen Ball notes, rather poignantly, that "inequalities are also formed and reproduced within policies and processes of government, civil society and through 'institutional orderings'" (2010: 158-9). It is for this reason that the significant post-school education policies must be investigated so that their embedded ideologies may be critiqued and thoroughly ventilated. Moreover, the examination of policy bears the potential to 'reveal opportunities for social change and reform' (O'Connor and Rudolph 2023: 1).

Key concepts defined

As this discussion will be based on higher education, it is imperative to distinguish between higher education and tertiary. This particularly significant as the discussion is about the effects of the tertiary/higher education divide.
The distinction between the two is along the qualifications line, with the tertiary institutions aimed at providing the vocational qualifications whereas higher education is reserved for the knowledge production through specialised degree programmes. The South African Post-School Education and Training "consists of all education and training provision for those who have completed school, those who did not complete their schooling, and those who never attended school" (Branson, Culligan and Ingle 2020). When referring to the combination of the various offerings after basic education, the favoured terminology is 'post-school' sector.

Policy, is also a contentious subject and policy analysis requires a solid understanding of what is meant by policy. Stephen Ball's (1993) conceptualisation of policy as three-dimensional and

representative of textual reality, discourse and the implications of execution provides solid grounding. Kate O'Connor and Sophi Rudolph (2023) add that policy is indicative of social power dynamics as it is firstly, state commissioned and also communicates executive decisions and strategies. A policy may thus be a legal document or any other that carries a policy message. What is significant is that the document itself represents far more than the textual content it carries, and "typically posit(s) a restructuring, redistribution and disruption of power relations, so that different people can and cannot do different things" (Ball 1993: 13).

Next follows a contextual background to situate the language challenges in South African education.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Scholarship on the higher education policies has had minimal engagement with the sociolinguistic impact of borrowed policies in South African education although language planning in the educational sphere enjoys better coverage. The policies are 'borrowed' from various contexts that do not seem to fit the case of South Africa. Specifically, the policies communicate a change in administrative and educational planning for the country, but the statics demonstrate deeply entrenched inequalities even 29 years after the country's social emancipation.

There has also been limited interrogation of the language used to craft the educational policies, and how the use of English language, in particular, in policy documents furthers the neoliberal agenda in a deeply fragmented society.

This section will briefly outline the current post-secondary education and training system to highlight key concepts central to thus study. To understand the plight of the higher certificate cohort, it is imperative to debunk both the circumstances that lead to the certificate programme qualification as the only lifeline, and the exclusion of this group from universities as discussed in this study.

2.1 Historical overview of education in South Africa

In 1994 when the current dispensation ousted the apartheid regime, all aspects of South African society were slanted against all non-white races in favour of those of European descent. Education was instrumental in the segregation of society based on racial identity, and specific legislative efforts were passed to ensure education sector curated a pro-white anti-Black social structure. In addition to social restrictions, education policies were instituted to guarantee the implementation of social segregation. Key education policies are outlined in Appendix A.

Since the apartheid political dispensation schools and their governing bodies still retain control over the school's language policy (Murray 2002). Consequently, schools and institutional language policies inherited a preference for English and Afrikaans to the exclusion of African languages.

After 1994's general election many Black children started attending model C schools (public schools previously reserved for white students only), where the medium of instruction was English and wherein the selection criteria included stringent language competency testing. In this regard, English was not only the vehicle of knowledge production and consumption but was also the benchmark for access to better resourced education.

Tracing the history of South African universities has always been a task reserved for commemorative commissioning, although there is a developing historiography (Strydom 2016; Bunting 1994). In 1994 when Ian Bunting claimed that South Africa had a post-secondary system constituted on 'dubious philosophical arguments', he was referring to the racialised and segregated system propagated by the apartheid regime (p. 226). The sentiment still holds true of the current system, where political influence on education policies seems to cause and sustain inequalities.

2.2 The Current PSET Sector

Nico Cloete characterises South Africa's current higher education landscape as a system that is "medium knowledge producing and differentiated, with low participation and high attrition." (2014: 1357). Cloete's (2011) conceptions of the role of higher education as crucial for the furtherance of equity and knowledge, is an area yet to be adequately addressed by the current system.

The sector comprises of 26 public universities, and a variable number of private higher education institutions - the number was 124 in 2021 (DHET, 2022). The rest of the tertiary ecosystem carries 50 TVET colleges, 133 private colleges and 9 Community Education and Training (CET) colleges. The universities operate three classifications: first are the traditional research institutions which offer primarily bachelor's degrees (12), then there are (6) comprehensive universities with a substantial amount of diploma programmes and then the last strata is that of the universities of technology (8) which focus on vocational studies and offer bachelor's, diplomas and HCs. The traditional institutions carry more prestige, are older and better resourced. Majority of the comprehensive universities are results of mergers between technikons, and the universities of technology are categorised by having the newest institutions.

The Department of Higher Education reported that in the 2021/22 financial year, a total of R56.6 billion was reserved for the post-secondary school sector. Over 70% of the budget was allocated to public higher education institutions. The privately-owned institutions are not state-funded, and the student fund scheme is only limited to the public institutions.

Public universities also enjoy the lion's share of the student count, with 1 068 046 enrolled students against the 232 915 admitted at private institutions. The tertiary strata comprised of 817 901, down from the 2 million students admitted in 2018 (Branson, Culligan and Ingle

2020). The numbers do not account for the eligible applicants who do not gain admission due to lack of available space in public universities.

2.3 The Higher Certificate Student

A student successfully completes the final year of basic education with a national senior certificate wherein a higher education endorsement in indicated. The grade 12 results will come with the qualification they can be admitted into, and these are outlined below.

Bachelor's pass (symbol B): a candidate must pass all subjects, attaining a minimum of 30% for 3 subjects, 50% for four subjects and 40% in English or home language*

Diploma (symbol D): a candidate must pass all subjects with at least 40% in 4 of the 8 examinations. Home language or English must also be at 40%.

Higher certificate (symbol H): candidate may achieve 40% in 3 subjects, at least 30% in both home language and first additional language and may fail (achieve less than 30%) in two subjects that are not home language or first additional language.

*Although 40% pass mark in a student's home language is sufficient to pass, they require at least 40% of English for acceptance into university.

Table 1: Grade 12 results between 2018 – 2022 (fails excluded)

Year	Registered	BA passes	DIP passes	HC passes
2018	800,000	172,043	141,700	86,790
2019	787,717	186,058	144,762	78,984
2020	578,468	210,820	150,600	79,117
2021	897,163	256 031	177,572	103,859
2022	922,034	278,815	197,357	108,159

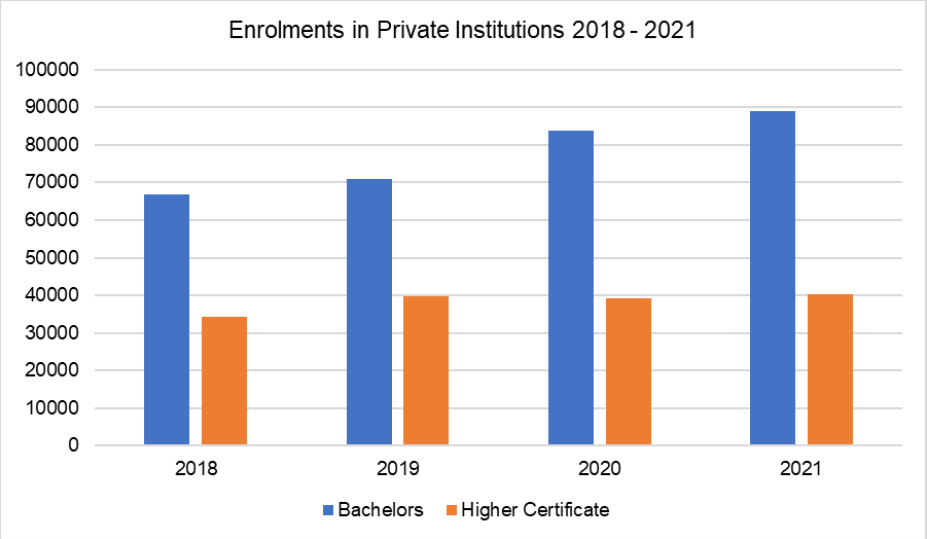
As indicated in the table above, at least a minimum of 75 000 students are expected to seek entry into post-school education with only a higher certificate pass mark each year. The total number of programmes they can take up in public universities is limited, and over half of these students wound up in private higher education institutions which are outside the purview of the National Financial Aid Scheme.

Public universities have a total of 71 programmes aimed at the HC cohort, wherein 40 of them are housed in the universities of technology, 23 are at the comprehensive universities and the research universities are custodian to only 8 HC programmes - see Appendix B.

University of South Africa, a primarily long-distance institution, has the most amount of these programmes offered across a range of faculties. The top two universities in the country, University of Cape Town and University of the Witwatersrand, both do not have any programmes for this group of students.

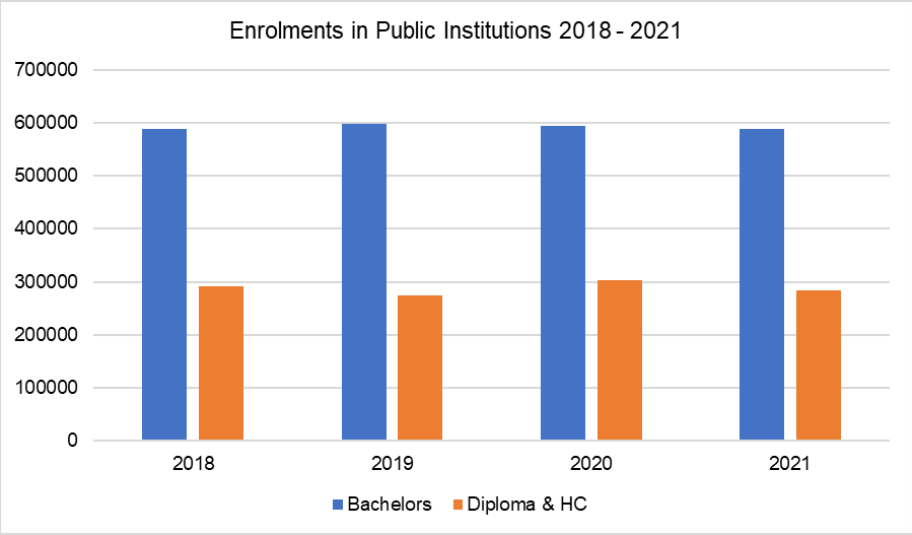
Figures 1 and 2 below demonstrate the enrolments of HC students in private and public institutions.

Figure 1



HC enrolments in private higher education are almost half of the BA enrolments.

Figure 2



The data on HC enrolments in public universities is conflated with the diploma numbers, however, the amount of HC programmes in all the 26 public universities indicates a significantly low HC intake.

What is key to note is that admission into higher certificate programme at any institution is based on the applicant achieving a minimum of 30% in the language of teaching and learning of the higher education institution to which they are applying (Umalusi, 2012). In addition, a higher certificate endorsement may be achieved even if the student leaves high school with two modules failed if they have the required minimum grade for languages. The same may be admitted to a higher certificate programme where the minimum required grade for progression is 50% for all modules, and teaching and learning occurs exclusively in English in most cases.

About half of the higher certificate candidates make their enrolments into the private institutions which are outside the purview of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Two key concepts underpin this study, these are English language in higher education policies and the linguistic susceptibility of the higher certificate students in universities which could give rise to NEETs.

This chapter will outline the key debates from the South African higher education context, focusing specifically on the policy landscape and English in multilingual contexts. The chapter is organised into three subsections. The first concerns itself with the tensions in higher education policies in South Africa, focusing on notable issues and the resultant discourse. Secondly, the chapter delves into the notions of linguistic imperialism in post-apartheid South Africa and introduces Robert Phillipson's theoretical framework which will be used to make an argument later in the report. The section concludes with a detailed contextual framing of Youths not in Employment, Education or Training.

3.1 Tensions in higher education policies

Policies aimed at social integration in the education space are non-binding and leave room for individual institutions to dictate their application if any. Undoubtedly, these policies are seen as either arduous and futile or simply an administrative undertaking with no real outputs required.

What still lingers in the South African higher education sector is the option of institutions to opt in or out of catering to a student body representative of the South African population. This is deducible from the application of policies. Deciphering the effects of education policy in post-apartheid South Africa, Nico Cloete (in Naidoo and Ranchod, 2018) marked a key policy challenge that transcended the late stages of apartheid to the period of transformation in higher education between 1994-1999 under then president Nelson Mandela. Central to his argument was that policy frameworks did not adequately account for equity and development in the post-secondary schooling sector. Cloete (in Naidoo and Ranchod, 2018) states that it was not until the National Development Plan 2030 of the National Planning Commission (2012) that massification was proposed, but with a methodologically-starved outline.

Summing Cloete and Moja's work (2005), Naidoo and Ranchod (2018) are in concert with Cloete's assessment, noting that Nelson Mandela's presidential term charted a higher education agenda whose policies sidestepped development whilst the primary concern was growing the numbers of students in higher education.

Paul Ashwin and Jennifer Case (2018) note that the student protests of recent years, highlighted most by the #rhodesmustfall and #feesmustfall campaigns, put a spotlight on the

higher education policy of the modern South Africa. In particular, the misalignment between higher education as an instrument of social reconfiguration and the tepid policies in facilitating equitable and sustainable accessibility to poor students.

Rajani Naidoo and Rushil Ranchod (2018) sum up this friction in the country's higher education policy landscape, noting that contemporary policies are as porous as those immediately after apartheid. First, the authors note, the contemporary education policies advocate for massification and differentiation where resources are unduly linked to success rates of institutions. In turn, this engenders cunning efforts from reputable institutions to remain exclusive and out of reach for students they consider requiring much and offering less to the institution. Naidoo and Ranchod explain the impact of this as follows:

> "*Such students are perceived to be time and resource intensive and are therefore expected to threaten institutional arrangements around activities, such as research, through which academic status and financial resources are accrued (Naidoo, 1998). In addition, such students are unlikely to enhance the institution's 'output' indicators"* (2018: 20).

Not only do the universities mould their missions to be amenable to income generating activities such as research, they have no impetus to drive transformation and equity because "institutions that absorb students from groups that are traditionally excluded from higher education are likely to be financially and reputationally penalised, since policy frameworks do not differentiate between categories of students with regard to social disadvantage and differences in prior educational attainment" (Naidoo and Ranchod 2018: 20).

Furthermore, the competition for resources in higher education exacerbates reputational inequality amongst the institutions and in the possible returns of individuals from their investments in higher education.

Most recently, Haruna Maama (2023) offers wide-sweeping commentary on the higher education policies in the country and their impact on transformation, underscoring the crucial role academic discourse has in examining the higher education policies. In particular, Maama investigates the impact of the South African higher education policies to ascertain both their positive and negative effects, noting their salient intention to ameliorate the outcomes form education as a means to support economic development. The transformation agenda outlined in the key policy documents such as *The Higher Education Act* of 1997, and the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (2014), has not led to the realisation of their purposes of a transformed, non-discriminatory and decolonised higher post-school system. Maama noted that South African institutions do not use their agency to address social challenges as laid out in the policies. Coupled with higher education institutions without an impetus to change the status quo, the policies fail to galvanise systemic change that transforms the sector. He

concluded that the policies are ineffectual and do not encourage compliance but rather offer unenforceable suggestions.

There is plenty of literature that highlights this misalignment between the policies of the democratic South African government and the execution on the ground. In 2004 already Keith Michael Borien had noted in a dissertation Jonathan Jansen's theoritisation of this poor political execution of policy. Jansen (in Borien, 2004) noted the political posturing that was aimed primarily at sanitising the social landscape ahead of any practical efforts at social redress. As such, policies were drafted, Jansen argued, to cement in the nation's consciousness the transition to democracy from a history of oppression.

Many years later, this observation may still hold true as policy has rarely translated into practice especially with regards to the promotion of all South African official languages in education. This sentiment is at the heart of the current study, where specific education policies are under scrutiny.

Discourse on the Language Policy

The *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* of 2002 indicates an awareness that language continues to impact the students with regards to access and performance in higher education. The document notes that "despite their status as official languages, indigenous languages have in the past and at present, structurally not been afforded the official space to function as academic and scientific languages." (2020: 11). The policy was aimed at directing the efforts for multilingualism in South African public universities but was criticised for being no more than a guide, whilst institutions reserved the full authority over the choices of official languages to use and the budgets each is afforded. Also significant is that the execution of the linguistic plurality, which activities each institution allocates to which language, the programmes that will offer multiple languages, the extent to (and conditions under) which the African languages are used in the teaching and learning and many more other pertinent decisions are all at the discretion of individual institutions. Although the higher education institutions are answerable to the Department of Higher Education, availability of resources to invest in languages is a double-edged sword that hinders those with intentions of multilingualism whilst also offering refuge for those content with sidelining African languages in higher education.

Andrew Drummond's (2016) close reading of the 2002 *National Language Policy Framework* captured the policy's ambivalence, noting that it relied on the vague language of the nation's constitution which allows institutions enough room to argue out of implementation of multilingualism. Specifically, Drummond problematises the use of the phrase 'reasonably practicable' in relation to the adoption of African languages in South Africa's higher education,

and notes how this language allows for the continuance of English as the language of teaching and learning. Drummond proposes the constitution of a national language body which would streamline specific strategies for the implementation of African languages in higher education limiting the individual institution's motivated hesitation. He foregrounds the impact of continued preference of English as detrimental to the large student body whose native language.

The Ministerial Advisory Panel on African Languages in Higher Education (2012) made a handful of concessions, noting a cognizance of several issues relating to African languages. Firstly, the report admits to the influence politics in the realisation of specific languages in society, specifically the valorisation of English and Afrikaans. Secondly, the document concedes that:

> "...the use of English as a common language of teaching and learning continues to create a differential educational experience and treatment of students who speak indigenous African languages being denied meaningful participation and success in higher education, and their sociocultural backgrounds and experiences playing an insignificant role in the learning process." (p. 10 – 11)

The report also echoed criticisms of the 2002 National Language Policy and its 'escape and limitation clauses' which engendered non-compliance (p. 10).

3.2 Linguistic imperialism in post-apartheid South Africa

Robert Phillipson (2008) coined the term *linguistic neoimperialism* to denote the contemporary linguistic challenges brought about by the universalisation of the English language and its inherent culture. He notes that linguistic neoimperialism deals with both the political and economic features of linguistic dominance; where the political involves the administrative policy drafting and the economic aspect relates to the implementation of state linguistic decisions at various levels. (p. 34). Furthermore, Phillipson expands, that "linguistic neoimperialism entails the maintenance of inequalities between speakers of English and other languages, within a framework of exploitative dominance...through penetration, fragmentation, marginalisation, and supremacist ideologies in discourse." (p.38).

Phillipson (2008) distinguishes this from linguistic capital accumulation where individuals or their families actively select English over their indigenous languages to better position themselves socially and economically from the influence of English. This symbolic power of English is legitimated by the active complicity of the state, further privileging those with English competency at the expense of those who have suffered from entrenched social denigration.

The post-apartheid regime recognised eleven official languages and allowed for education in a selected language of choice where this is practicable. Here, 'practicability' loosely translates to affordability because the choice of schools to apply to was, and still is, intrinsically linked to the language of teaching and the consequential financial obligation.

Nkhelebeni Phaswana's (2005) research on the languages used in parliament show a gaping need for language skills not only in the administrative context but also in other consequential environments such as the legislature, business, health and education.

Tollefson in Phaswana (2005) contends that language policies and languages of policy play an integral part in shaping social linguistic hierarchies and are indicative of the power attributed to the native speakers of the preferred language in policies. (p. 122). What Tollefson points to is an argument also highlighted by Phillipson (2008), that in multilingual contexts language choice bestows power and privilege to the speakers of the chosen language at the expense of others. In colonially-tainted contexts, the language of choice is often that of the former coloniser, and efforts of cultivating multilingualism must expressly target status planning.

Shadrack Mzangwa (2011) proposes the use of English as the official language of teaching and learning, and purports that this would resolve the challenges of language in schools and in tertiary education and perhaps improve the quality of education.

There a number of reasons why this thinking is flawed for the South African context. Firstly, Mzangwa oversimplifies the role of policy in social engineering. English and many other European languages used in the rest of the continent, have enjoyed high status due to use in administrative and official functions, which was achieved through strict administrative procedures to promote them in the colonies. Makoni and Pennycook (2019) underscore the use of literacy programmes to advance colonial and nationalist hegemonies. This is despite native speakers of these European languages being in a small minority, approximately 10% of the population in the case in South Africa.

Secondly, the advancement of a lingua franca as an economical strategy compared to multilingualism that is deemed costly is premised on the social value of English compared to indigenous languages. If indeed the point was pragmatic educational reasons, then IsiZulu understood by more than half of South Africa's population would be the obvious choice. The challenge with the use of IsiZulu is that it is understood within the Black community, and almost completely unspoken in contexts outside of the Black population. In the same compilation, Geingob (1995) argues that Fanakalo would have been a language of choice in Namibia if the intention of official language certification was for wider reach and accessibility. Championing English as the official language of Namibia after independence, Geingob believed in the neutrality of English within the social imagination as it was not Afrikaans which was closely associated with apartheid nor was it German that had limited international influence or the

indigenous languages which would likely propagate tribalism and greater social fissures. All these are the same arguments regurgitated by disciples of neoliberalism and the American world order. The proponents of English argue that the use of any other indigenous language for official business, particularly education would have enflamed tribalism. However, the selection of English did not do away with these nor did the elevation of the indigenous languages to official status grant all of them equal status.

Zach Matse (1995) draws a straight line between language, participation and success rates in education, noting that the use of English at all levels of education in South Africa has great potential to impact participation for the indigenous masses. He concludes that teaching and assessment in indigenous languages would support access to learning. Empowered through critical scholarship in their languages, Matse (1995) argues that the masses would be equipped to negotiate their social existence and navigate the terms of their democratic citizenship. The critical argument is that the language of education has a vital ideological function that permeates the school system and reinforces socio-political, economic and cultural values.

Lastly, there is evidence that in bilingual contexts where the populations have historically succumbed to colonial rule, the teaching and learning in English has proven to be a double-edged sword that further benefits the upper class at the expense of the lower class. Peter Sayer (2019) found that English teaching is stratified across class lines, with resources disproportionately concentrated in upper class domains, so that the learning in and of English realise varied degrees of benefits for the students. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) highlight the limited advantages that come with learning in English due to the quality of the education systems in poor communities. Furthermore, another set of challenges arises from multilingual societies whose education is mediated through English. Pütz (1995) outlines some of these challenges as follows:

- The technological stunting of languages and their speakers as knowledge and skills are not democratized.
- The continuation of imposing elitist social order on the masses, and propagation of English as an advantage in the political, industrial and commercial decision-making processes.
- Diglossic inferiority, in favour of English language and culture.
- Compromised national unity and heightened tribalism.

The advancement of English as the solution to education in South Africa is reliant on the fallacy of English as an international language, and hence its preference in education. Pennycook (2007) debunks this as a myth. He states that the myth of the universality of English is

collusionary as it supports globalisation and internationalisation agendas, *delusionary* due to the irrational aspirations of poverty alleviation ascribed to English and *exclusionary* as command of the language benefits those with higher proficiency and effectively disadvantages others.

Robert Phillipson (2008) is critical of the universality of the English language and discredits any notions of 'global English' or 'world English'. His main criticism is that language is not simply a communicative tool devoid of cultural signification. He argues that the English language was historically cultivated to carry and disseminate Anglo culture and imperialist interests.

Linguistic neoimperialism, a critical theoretical lens to review the effects of 'global English' in non-native contexts introduced by Phillipson offers research a critical eye with which to engage with English in policies and education. He declares it a weakness for research to fail to critically examine the political role of language.

Fervently, he notes that "language is a central dimension of ideological control, perpetuating the subordination of colonial times into the present" (p.10). The use of the English language, particularly in a former colony, warrants a critical review of the inherent values perpetuated. He further contends that neoliberalism in the current world order is embedded and solidified through the acceptance of the English language as the language of international trade. The globalisation of English was always aimed to be at the expense of local languages, Phillipson (2008) argues. Thus, a proliferation of English ahead of a multitude of local official languages can never be taken to be organic. Rather, the political dispensation embraces the narratives embedded in such corpus planning. "There are agentive forces behind the language shift, causal factors that lead to an increased use of English," Phillipson argues, anchoring the role played by the state in linguistically stratified societies such as South Africa. The Report on the Use of African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education (2012) also makes a similar point and exemplify it by referencing the development of Afrikaans. The report notes that:

> *"The relationship between language and society, and ideology and politics is illustrated through the development of Afrikaans which, even though its graphisation started in the 1920s, about a hundred years after the first indigenous African language was written down (first print in isiXhosa appeared in 1823), was developed to be the powerful scientific language it is now through organised and vigorous state intervention. The value placed on English and Afrikaans was accompanied by orchestrated undermining of the value of indigenous African languages in education and their mother tongue speakers*." (p. 9- 10).

Makoni and Pennycook (2017) caution against the acceptance of sociolinguistic frameworks of multilingualism or the notion of rejuvenation of indigenous languages for the sake of opposing dominant language ideologies. Rather, they provide an enlightened perspective on language and its efficacy in human social interaction. They argue that, firstly, languages are an extension of colonial understating of the world and not merely an organic tool of human existence. Thus, the understanding of languages as monolithic and enumerable entities indicative of the geography and cultures of their speakers is dismissed. In this regard, they claim that languages are but an invention; one with social innuendos.

Furthermore, they emphasize the nature of language as being a deliberate construction of colonial history, and they expound on this by bringing in the ideas of the pervasive power of colonial politics that incentivised the scholarship on linguistics to support the understanding of both Europe and its colonies. Central to ideas of harnessing what is now understood as languages was the horizontal scaffolding and exacted relations between languages and their speakers, which through various forms, served to legitimise colonizers' languages over indigenous languages. This constructivist epistemology was realised in practice through the institution of the panoptic notion of "the language of command and the command of language" (Makoni and Pennycook p.12).

They advance, instead, disinvention and reconstruction as one of alternative ways of investigating linguistic relations in various contexts including policymaking for education purposes. They argue that multilingualism and education in the mother tongue are often advocated for without detailed interrogation of their onto-epistemological resemblance to the positivist stance on languages. Additionally, in some instances, educators employ inventive techniques to get around the poor command of English by code-switching or using a common language. Some parents are also adamant about attainment of education in English ahead of indigenous languages and such feats are not sufficient to eliminate poor progression. These are some of the contentious topics raised by Makoni and Pennycook in cautioning against propagation of unchecked optimism about multilingualism. Their proposed intervention focuses on the social implications of language use. Disinvention as a framework encourages 'viable alternatives than solutions', thus, privileging no one side of the debate nor cementing continuous and multi-context experiences of languages within a decreed solution (2017: 30)

It is useful then to surmise that a call for a multilingual approach to higher education policies in South Africa or the more problematic route of translation would prove a facile endeavour. This would be no more than a valorisation of the status quo that languages are remnants of the human existence as noted by Makoni and Pennycook.

3.3 Youths not in Employment, Education or Training (the NEETs)

By 2003 the DHET had identified the NEETs as a crisis in the country. By the first quarter of 2022 at least 3.4 million youths between the age of 15 and 24 were classified as not in Employment, Education or Training (Mudiriza and Lannoy, 2022).

This group consists of those who are actively seeking employment, discouraged job seekers and those who have completed disengaged from the labour market. Many of these youths have intersecting social challenges that include high rates of poverty and caregiving responsibilities. Kraak (2012) adds that these youths are also characterised by poor social capital from inadequate schooling and skills development.

Economists have led calls for these youths to be reintegrated into society through educational development. The majority of them have not completed high school or possess only the high school certificate, whilst others are tertiary dropouts. Their plight worsens as their chances of employment decline the longer they stay as NEET (Dickens and Marx, 2018).

Mudiriza and Lennoy (2022) note that the group most susceptible to falling into NEET status are Black females from poor urban communities aged between 20 and 24 years, whereas white males make the least number of this group. The trend has remained consistent for the last ten years.

Researching NEETs is marred with inconsistencies as others, such as Dickens and Marx use various age range of 15 - 34 to describe the youth, whereas Mudiriza and Lennoy (2022) focus on the age between 15 - 24, and the South African government recognises the ages between 15 and 35 as indicative of the youth category. The data used for researching labour trends are also received from various sources and interpreted differently. What is constant is a need for deeper understanding of all factors that cause and impact the NEETs. As a concept adopted from the 1999 social exclusion report in the UK, scientific inquiry and policymaking are yet to catch up with sufficient evidence on understanding the NEETs (Kraak, 2012), although University of Cape Town's Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit makes a considerable contribution.

The notion of NEETs is also not without denotative challenges. Most significantly is that youths being defined by being either in education (preparing for employment) or in employment is a restatement of neoliberalism where individuals are valued by their economic contribution to society. An individual's development through education and training is measured against their potential value within macro agendas. Dickens and Marx (2018) expound on this, noting that "youth categorised as EET (engaged in Employment, Education or Training) are seen with a

measure of ‘success’ or developing to become a positive contributor to society” (p. 66). The social conceptualisation of an individual young person’s life as successful when educated and in employment aggravates the vulnerability of young people under this classification to physical and mental health problems, whilst also increasing the risk of social instability (Mudiriza and Lannoy, 2022). As noted by Kraak (2012), the application of the NEETs category, problematic as it may be, is useful in understanding the role education plays in the human capital social approach and is applied in this study to investigate how policies may have inadvertent effects on NEETs.

A detailed exposition of the methodology follows in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of the methods to collect and analyse the data. First to be explored is the conceptual framework, then a section on the collection of data will follow. Lastly, the processes of analysis will be discussed.

4.1 Overview of methodology

This study will take a qualitative approach. Quantitative research focuses on quantifiable phenomena whilst the qualitative method concerns itself with the meanings deducible from phenomena. The qualitative approach was necessitated by the nature of the research, which aims to establish the implied perspectives of access, language and stratification in South African higher education policies. The study is not concerned with quantifiable phenomena, but rather the meanings and relationships between concepts. This is particularly characteristic of qualitative research, where researchers target a thorough understanding of phenomena without necessarily aiming to make judgement about the validity of the underpinning thoughts and feelings (Jamaleddin and Lashkarian 2016).

The key idea of the research is to explore the association between the use of English language and the neglect of higher certificate students in universities. As part of this inquiry the study airs the English sensibilities that encumber post-secondary policies. The question that will guide the study is thus:

Does the use of only English in South African higher education policies lead to a reproduction of neoliberal policies that actively exclude higher certificate students?

Two sub-questions will support research, and they are outlined below.

- Do the South African higher education policies address strategies for linguistic access to support higher certificate students in universities and curtail NEETs?
- Do South African education policies address equitable linguistic access to universities for higher certificate students?

4.2 Critical Document Analysis as a qualitative method

The main purpose of content analysis is to ascertain meanings and relationships of words, phrases or concepts from a given text. This method of inquiry is useful for studying language and allows for a sociological analysis of data. Specifically, this method of research provides a detailed contextual analysis of a given research problem as researchers are able to use research documents to track a historical timeline of development. Other studies have used document analysis to test available research outputs in new contexts.

As the current study is based solely on policy documents, it is important to note that the method for this analysis is thus critical document analysis. Defining document analysis, Glenn Bowen (2009) states that this method involves the evaluation of recorded material which may be textual or electronic. Employing this method of inquiry yields better understanding of a current topic and produces new meanings of content (Bowen, 2009). Specifically, the method employed in this study aims to critically engage with the relationships of power and inequality in society as represented in written text.

The critical approach to education policy 'is typically conducted by academic researchers seeking to understand why a particular policy was developed, its analytical assumptions, and its potential effects.' (Rizvi and Lingard in O'Connor and Rudolph, 2023, p.3).

All inferences will be drawn from the listed documents and evaluated for their endorsement of English values within the South African higher education system. This method will best suit the goal of introducing salient debates about higher education and the corresponding policies, as it allows for the exploration of social justice discourse. Thus, the plight of the higher certificate students, often othered from the university context, can be ventilated.

Document analysis is also applicable to this study because it allows for the close reading of not only literal but also inferred meanings from policy documents. This will assist in identifying what and who the policy documents have omitted, including the continued exclusion of the higher certificate dimension. Further, this method helps in linking higher education policy frameworks to research on English in South African education contexts. Literature on policy discourse also indicates that content analysis as a method of inquiry has been a successful instrument for other researchers.

The social perceptions of degree programmes as superior to other programmes such diploma and higher certificate is re-enacted in policies through the focus on higher education as a place for degree purposes. It is then paramount that those whose existence in universities is not acknowledged even by policy be situated in education policy discourse. Document analysis allows for such an investigation of the neoliberal perceptions carried in these policies.

The nature of critical policy analysis, to which this study subscribes, also allows for a laissez-faire approach to theorisation of phenomena. The researcher may draw from various fields to understand and interpret the immediate phenomena under observation. Relying on the advantages of this methodological process, this research in this study has employed different theoretical stances for each finding to help situate each discussion point in its contextual grounding.

Qualitative research is often validated through rigorous activities that support both integrity and transparency. This process is known as triangulation, which Bowen (2009: 28) describes as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". To establish credible findings, document analysis is expected to engage in triangulation. This diminishes the potential for bias and supports the production of credible scientific knowledge.

However, Bowen (2009) notes, the method is acceptable on its own if paired with detailed exculpatory information that supports triangulation. When the researcher provides a detailed account of the data selection, collection and analysis the document analysis suffices as a rigorous methodology. Bracketing, as a tool to guard against the researcher's internal biases was applied in the course of this study. The concept of bracketing is rather contentious, eliciting controversy about what it actually is and how it must be applied. Tufford and Newman (2012) define this as a process where a researcher cultivates rigour in research by interrogating and acknowledging their preconceptions that may impact the outcomes. Their conception is much more useful than others, especially that of Robin Gearing (2004) whose proposition includes an unnecessarily broad scope. Other scholars offer descriptions of bracketing that are overly simplistic and can hardly be expanded in meaning to include the actual process of bracketing. 'Emotions', 'assumptions', 'preconceptions' are some of the descriptions offered in literature (Tufford and Newman, 2012).

There are numerous approaches to bracketing. The most common are journaling, keeping a memo or making use of an intermediary for interviews. As none of these apply to the current study, a different method is warranted. Following Tufford and Newman's generic scope, I identified pivotal areas that need to be addressed in relation to the current study, not only to situate my axiological standpoints but to also present these as a contextual backdrop that informed the research from conceptualisation to analysis.

4.3 Data collection

In qualitative studies, the process of data collection and processing is like the ouroboros with each phase leading onto the next and the cycle repeating. This means that a qualitative study

requires the researcher to source, sort, appraise and synthesise data continuously in a loop stopping once a point of saturation has been reached (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger 2020). The policy documents are complementary in nature, making individual analysis quite complex. Their missions, visions and principal objectives are often similar and improve on previous documents. The initial stage involved scanning of the aims and objectives of the policy documents. The secondary process was conducted manually to determine, most significantly, the linguistic nuances from the nodes. Some nodes, such as '*neoliberalism*' were umbrella concepts that carried too many varieties of information and needed to be unpacked in detail to reclassify the different kinds of information they signified. This process had two aims. Firstly, the aim was to establish the nodes carrying separate meaning. The second aim was to harmonise the nodes into broader themes.

This iterative order was followed for the current research, with the initial data collection process conducted manually. The three research questions were deconstructed in search of applicable theoretical concepts. This process yielded three major ideas of interest: *sociolinguistics*, *neoliberalism* and *social justice*.

Once the broad central concepts applicable to the study were identified, further examination was initiated on the selected policy documents by evaluation of the aims, objectives or purposes of the documents so as to determine commonalities in broad concepts identified from the research questions. This inductive approach ensured that the data collection process was best curated to address the research questions. Patrick Ngulube (2015) notes the significance of research questions in structuring the data analysis process, adding that each research question may be useful as a source for initial coding categories. Coding is a process that helps with sorting the data according to conceptual patterns. The researcher identifies similar themes in the data and classifies them according to preconceived labels, alternatively, pattens emerging from the data may be useful for delineating categories.

The use of predetermined codes, although sometimes criticised for narrowing the field of analysis, is useful when the area of interest is clear and can be best served by a direct approach. Scrutinising the research questions was crucial and provided key theoretical insights relevant to this research and thus, the a priori codes are more applicable to streamline the analysis. The research questions carry the theoretical constructs against which the policies are evaluated. This point is emphasised by Victoria Elliot when she claims that "a design which tests theory against empirical data requires pre-set codes." (2018: 2855).

The preliminary data gathering process unfolded as outlined below:

Step 1: Research questions: to highlight key concepts
Step 2: Aims/ objectives/ purpose: to identify broad themes (nodes)
Step 3: Documents: to generate codes

From this initial review, umbrella themes were developed and fed into the qualitative data management software NVivo for detailed coding. The software was enlisted to code each document thoroughly, a feat that would have been time consuming if conducted manually. Additionally, the software was useful in recording key concepts that formed the foundation of analysis and made it possible to keep record of apposite quotes. Elliot (2018) cautions against the excessive reliance on software that may diminish the researcher's role in interrogating the findings. Furthermore, these conveniences of software should not be taken to encourage the generation of large corpus of data that is not useful to one's study. What is evident from Elliot's assertions is that the researcher must take lead of the conceptual findings, whilst leaning on software only for the administrative conveniences as has been actioned in this study.

With this in mind, and an understanding that in qualitative research questions beget questions the secondary data collection process involved manual engagement with the data. The references gained from the initial coding process were used as a data source to construct thematic references known as nodes. To arrest the direction and scope of the research, the large corpus of data generated was recategorised into broader themes to allow for the tracking of patterns. As the key conceptual constructs on which the research is anchored had already been identified as *sociolinguistics*, *neoliberalism* and *social justice* the aim of reclassifying the reference data was to circle back to these grand abstractions.
This secondary level of analysis was conducted manually as outlined below:

Step 1: codes: to merge similar concepts into nodes
Step 2: nodes: to further streamline into larger themes
Step 3: themes: to formulate findings

4.4 Data Analysis

This study is in search of thematic clues to the previously stated research questions, and already has key conceptual standpoints deduced from the research questions. To this end, the analysis focuses on the relational aspects of the data vis à vis the philosophical aspects highlighted from the research questions. The aim was to tease out what is implied in the policy

documents and evaluate the impact of such notions in exacerbating the challenges of higher certificate attainment in universities.

Carol Cardno (2018) notes the conventional approach to policy analysis as inclusive of three phases: context, text and consequences. Together these three give a wholistic view of the policy documents and allow for a nuanced reading that is neither too narrow nor too wide in scope. This approach has been applied in the current study, albeit in an unorthodox fashion. The context is provided in Chapter 2 (Background), whilst the consequences are the subject of Chapter 6 (Discussion). This was to allow for the text to be the hero of the investigation and to enable an intensive focus on the language of the policy documents. A linear approach to the analysis was deemed less likely to produce a successful probe within the current context. Additionally, literature on South African higher education policies provides detailed accounts of both the historical and contemporary contexts. The focus on the text allows for an unbridled discovery of reality as encoded into the policy documents.

Notwithstanding, sourcing for meaning in implicit information requires a methodical approach. Ngulube (2015) outlines a list of questions central to qualitative data analysis that were first presented by Hair, Jr et al.

These have been paraphrased to fit the purposes of the current research and are outlined below:

- Are there themes and patterns emerging that relate to theoretical framework?
- Is there a relationship between the research questions and the patterns from the data?
- Are there examples that deviate from the established patterns?
- What kind of attention do the inconsistencies warrant?
- Do the data indicate a need for further exploration?

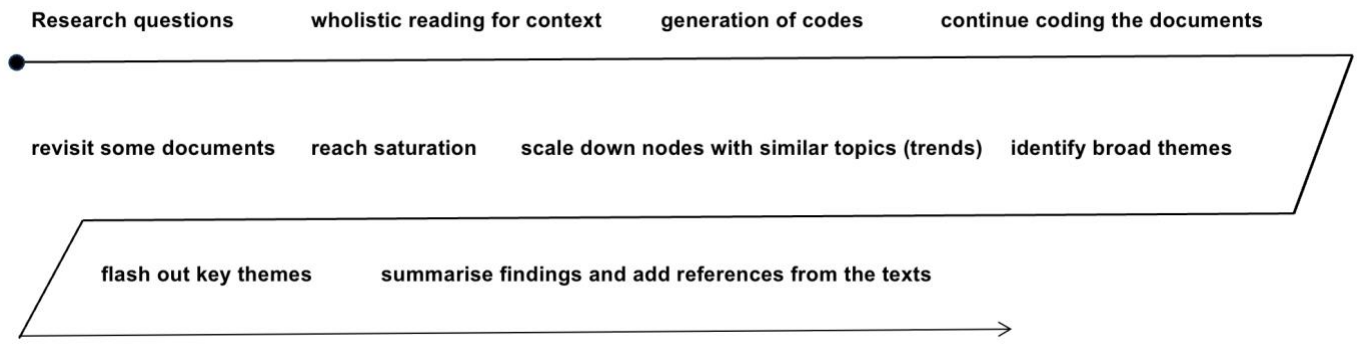
Furthermore, the data gathered from coding are used as a resource to mine for meaning or themes. Outlining the thematic analysis process of grounded theorists, Ngulube (2015) notes Harding's four-grade approach which for the present study is collapsed into three steps below:

- Outlining the key concepts and forming thematic clusters
- Accumulating references from the nodes
- Investigating the relationships between data classes to find applicable theory.

Although content analysis has a proclivity to favour the researcher's discretion when it comes to the data analysis strategy, it is advisable to have an overall plan even if it may later be altered or modified. It is characteristic of qualitative research to be conducted inductively, so that the data dictate the route even if this requires the researcher to amend the initial research

plan. The central idea to the conduct of document analysis is ascertaining what the data are saying about the research questions. The analysis process is thus a negotiation between the initial research questions and the emergent data patterns.

The plan for analysis employed in this study is depicted in the illustration below.



Any of the steps were repeated indiscriminately as the need arose but the basal principle was maintained as deriving knowledge by following the steps from research questions to an eventual finding.

4.5 Selected Documents for analysis

True to Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger's assertion that throughout the period of data processing the researcher may have to reorganise and modify their initial plan upon discovery of unexpected outcomes, the data analysis plan was slightly modified to keep in line with the scope of the study.

The initial plan was to work on at least seven policy documents that address the higher education landscape in South Africa. These documents were selected as they represented significant contribution to the higher education policy debates and provided a wider contextual field for the analysis access to higher education specifically. However, there were too many similarities in the documents and the total number of documents analysed was trimmed to four. Two of the seven documents were eliminated specifically because they were older and had much of their content addressed in more recent policies.

In the end the following four policy documents were selected:

1. *The National Development Plan* (2012) (NDP)

The NDP was commissioned by Jacob Zuma's government in 2010 through the National Planning Commission. The resultant draft was from numerous consultations and forums with various public stakeholders. The report has since been crucial in key policymaking decisions and frameworks within the broader context development in South Africa.

2. *The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (2014) (WP)

The 2014 White Paper was established to outline the government's vision for the post-school sector and to pronounce the specific strategies for rehabilitating higher education and training. Specifically, the policy was concerned with differentiation in the sector and each institutional category's role within the coordinated post-school system.

3. *The Revised Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025* (2020) (R-SP)

The White Paper – National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (draft)

The revised Strategic Plan is the logistical outline of the Mid-term Strategic Framework 2019 – 2024 – Strategic Plan (there were two preceding versions; the current draft is titled the revised Strategic Plan).

4. *The Language Policy Framework for Higher Education Institutions* (2020) (LPFHEI).

The 2020 version of the policy is a revision of the 2002 version, having taken into account critical feedback. The Ministerial Advisory Panel on the African Languages in Higher Education summed the key areas of improvement which the 2020 version sought to address.

Each of these documents bears a specific contribution to not only the broad context of higher education within a South African socio-political milieu, but also the overall significance placed on language as a means to access education.

The two earlier policies excluded from the study are The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) and The Medium-term Strategic Framework. Both these policy documents are effectively addressed in the four documents used for this analysis and so it was appropriate to exclude them without risk of missing data. In many ways their notions are covered within the all-encompassing *National Development Plan*. Furthermore, the older documents have had more public scrutiny and more academic attention in previous studies.

4.4 Positionality

Years ago I was asked by my long-time friend to speak at her 21st birthday party representing her friends. Remembering my father's dogmatic anti-English at home or with elders stance, I delivered a speech with as little code switching and mixing as I could. At the end the friend's grandfather delivered

a vote of thanks in which he emphasised his granddaughter's intellect, noting specifically how she's always been head and shoulders above her peers. The example he gave was how all the friends who had spoken had not used English like his granddaughter or their English did not come off as easily and with the close likeness to native speakers as the granddaughter's. I felt betrayed, sitting there wondering why someone who could not gain admission to the top universities in the country like I had done was being presented as smarter than me, how could she be when she was only admitted to the distance learning university reserved for old people and I was in the second-best university in the continent. Additionally, not speaking English was a conscious choice I had made as a sign of respect to the elderly and one executed with great difficulty. When I got home I arrested my father's attention with my rant about how I felt disrespected because my intellect was questioned in public when I can speak English just as well as my friend.

Such conceptions of English (and higher education) are not organic, nor harmless and deserve urgent attention. This study is borne from both personal and professional experiences of how South Africans of all classes and races are socialised to aspire to elitist perceptions of language in society.

The topic and the methodology are both indicative of the constructivist approach employed in this study. This angle already presupposes that there exist multiplicities in the crafting, execution and analysis of the policy documents under review. This notion is supported by many policy researchers who agree that policies carry "assumptions, aspirations, biases and political preferences" (Molla in O'Connor and Rudolph, 2023, p. 3). As such interpretative analysis of policy documents is founded on the principle of policies as highly contextual and ideologically burdened representations of specific societies.

My identity too, is one that requires a heightened awareness during the process of research. I concede that my point of departure is informed by my background and experience as a Black student who had to navigate South African higher education amongst others like me with similar challenges but different grades and how that resulted in our destinies being inimitably different.

In addition, I have experience in higher education administration where I have engaged with higher certificate students from admission to graduation and have a tangible understanding of how little policy has an impact in their quotidian existence in higher education. The challenges faced by this specific cohort of students are rarely addressed within what I perceive to be the right context but are always attributed to their perceived poor academic potential. In this context, enrolment to a higher certificate programme is almost like a handicap - it is understood to denote the individual inability to qualify for a bachelor's. Such sentiments have informed the analysis of the policy documents.

4.5 Limitations

Underlining the problem of NEETs to be partly due to education is an acknowledgment that education could and should do something differently, thus, acquiescing that education offers social mobility. This is framing education as capable and responsible for social redress. Additionally, aligning NEETs with education implies that the economic inactivity is a result of education's potential that has not been fulfilled. Again, this is a treacherous ontological slope for a critique of neoliberalism. However, the intent is to argue that if inequality cannot be addressed by policy, then at least it should not be enabled by policy either.

Moreover, Stuart Ball rightly notes that oftentimes policy analysis "concentrates too much on what those who inhabit policy think about and misses and fails to attend to what they do not think about." (2006: 14). Although this research aims to target what the policy documents under review 'do not think about', policy analysis as an instrument of inquiry cannot address all possible truths, particularly in a report of this scope.

Additionally, because the policies fail to think about the higher certificate students in universities there is limited research on this topic. Much of the information available concerns the statics of both the NEETs and higher certificate enrolments, but there is hardly any literature linking the two. The discourse on language policy in higher education also fails to account for the at-risk students already in the fringes of the university context. This limits the current analysis to rely extensively on qualitative research's tolerance of postulations. The data analysis process outlined how relationships were drawn between references that evidenced similar meanings, and this approach was useful in maintaining the integrity of the data as patterns were drawn from broad spectrum of evidence.

4.6 Ethical Concerns

Document analysis is a low-risk research approach as it is non-obtrusive and works primarily with secondary data sources. Additionally, the use of publicly available data such as policy documents further reduces any risk of harm as no personal information may be compromised. Notwithstanding, this does not indicate risk-free research. Judith Sixsmith (2001) cautions against the misrepresentation of meaning form the source such as deliberate extrication of words or phrases from their context to alter their intended meaning. In cases where the academic inquiry focuses specifically on meaning of text as is the case with the current

investigation, it is crucial to preserve the originator's meanings. Sixsmith (2001) advises that the most practicable way to address this is through wholistic reading of texts to ensure the context is not lost and meaning not misplaced.

Next follows the summary of the key findings from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The previous chapter focused on the methodological framework used to investigate the research questions. The approach to data collection and analysis was discussed in this preceding chapter. The focus for the current section is ventilating the discovery from the critical content analysis.

An in-depth reading of the four policies (*The National Development Plan* (2012) (NDP); *The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (2014) (WP); *The Revised Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025* (2020) (RSP); and *The Language Policy Framework for Higher Education Institutions* (2020) (LPFHEI) indicates that the South African government are aware of the major challenges to the country's economic standing, the social relations and the overall education systems. In this regard, the National Development Plan mapped out strategies galvanising social progress whilst mitigating consequences of South Africa's discriminatory past.

As far as the policies go, their intentions are to lay out the vision for the nation and streamline the roles to be played by both education and the private sector. It is clear from the policies that this tripartite alliance is led by the government in establishing the goal and delineating responsibilities, followed by education whose role is to train a capable population that must be fed into the labour market to develop and sustain a globally comparable economy.

Additionally, the policies indicate a great awareness of the state's role in engineering the social ills that plague the country, including poor educational outcomes. However, linguistic imperialism and neoliberalism are not canvassed sufficiently nor are they interrogated within the context of access to higher education. There seems to be a blindness to the correlation between language and participation in education. Furthermore, the policies are purblind to i) how the neoliberal ideology they perpetuate - through the use of the English language - reinforces cultural and class domination that favours individualistic education outcomes and marginalises the youth into NEET status, and ii) how linguistic access is a hinderance to education attainment that needs attention thorough actionable policy.

This chapter seeks to provide evidence from the texts to outline the findings. The sections will be arranged as follows:

- State vision for the nation
- Roles of state, business and the individual in education
- Language and participation in higher education

5.1 State vision for the nation

Policy documents offer great insights into a state's unique perspectives on civic matters. The conceptualisation of the national socio-political landscape and the hegemonic underpinnings of the state may be traced through a close inspection of the policy documents. In addition to giving context to the conditions of their creation, documents as text are indicative of the reality as conceived by their creators.

This section will summarise the three main ideas that signal the South African administration's vision for the nation. These are e*conomic development*, g*lobal engagement* and *social engineering*. The national vision is significant in understanding how education is positioned and the practical efforts invested in education, particularly when education is seen to carry nation-building responsibilities. Language as a proponent of social cohesion should be central in state's vision.

Each of the three concepts listed below will be briefly outlined to reveal the findings.

5.1.1 Economic Development

The government overtly propagates a market-minded vision for the country; with education noted as crucial to this grand scheme. The *National Development Plan* (NDP) puts it thus:

> "*The National Development Plan is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through uniting South Africans, unleashing the energies of its citizens, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capability of the state and leaders working together to solve complex problems*" (NDP, 2012: 1)

The vision for the country is reiterated throughout the four policy documents as thus:

- A prosperous economy supported by a highly educated population and international ties
- An integrated PSET ecosystem that is measurably stratified

The two tenets of this vision are economy and education, with the government as the strategic lead.

The policies reveal the kind of South Africa the government imagines the country to be; a developing nation in need of economic intervention to meet the citizen's needs. Thus, all strategies and plans are in service of the economic rejuvenation agenda. The NDP expressly states the need to "boost economic growth, increase employment and reduce poverty" (2012,

p. 30). All the policies are geared towards contributing to this goal of cultivating an economically thriving nation, and education is positioned as central to this. Post-school education is tasked with two key roles to play in facilitating economic growth. Firstly, the sector has the responsibility of training highly skilled students who can contribute towards the labour market. Secondly, the education sector must maintain close relationships with various industry players to ensure that students have work experience upon completion of studies, and to ensure the syllabi meet the needs of the labour market.

Furthermore, education is championed as the cornerstone of the economy. To this end, education policies are drafted to respond to economic needs as they arise. The minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nzimande, notes in his foreword to the Revised Strategic Plan that the revisions were necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic but also the mandate to intervene in the "worsening of the economic environment" (R-SP, 2020: 6). Consequently, the DHET initiated projects aimed at "economic reconstruction and recovery" (p. 7).

A prosperous economy is conceived as one at the end of a successful education process. One of the characteristics of the successful conveyance between education and the world of work is that the latter is staffed by a trained labour force of varying skills and specialisation. The White Paper (WP) summarises this noting the following:

> "*...One of the main purposes of the post-school system is to prepare workers for the labour market, or to enable individuals to earn sustainable livelihoods through self-employment or establishing a company or cooperative*." (WP, 2014: 8)

Within this PSET ecosystem tasked with cultivating employability universities are framed as the custodians of knowledge and research, and the rest of the tertiary sector are aimed at lower-level vocational skilling. In this regard, the notions of meritocracy and competition are endorsed. The university space is firmly established as the core of the knowledge system that is available to exceptional applicants. This is debunked by Paul Ashwin when he addresses the fallacy of exceptionalism, noting that universities are widely understood as suitable for academically strong students (2020: 38). To further underscore the economic viability of the university outcomes, the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) are proclaimed as the drivers of a knowledge economy upon which the country's prospects rest. There is specific attention to STEM subjects as crucial, and hence funding must be availed for these areas of knowledge for it is these fields that are flagged as capable of generating quality employment and boost the economy.

As policy analysis concerns itself with both the stated and the implicit, it can be concluded that the policy documents not only support but enable the exclusion of fields of study deemed not crucial for economic progress.

5.1.2 Global Engagement

The policy documents reveal that the government has global aspirations which the education system is mandated to support. The policies outline goals that seek to position the country as consequential in the global sphere, particularly within a commercial context. Universities are central to this and are expected to function at international levels in all aspects including, quality, funding, research, collaborations, and graduate outputs. Universities are valued by their ability to be 'internationally competitive,' budget allocations to the various sub-strata of the PSET system are compared against international benchmarks, and university outputs are compared against notions of international quality.
Below is an outline of how the South African higher education sector is measured against the global context, as indicated in the policy documents under review.

Firstly, the level and quality of education must be comparable globally, especially amongst the BRICS allies. This is highlighted in the NDP and covers both basic and higher education, where the former is expected to compete internationally with numeracy and literacy rates and the latter must compete in all aspects of education including the number of postgraduate students per annum. Secondly, the policy documents recognise South Africa as a member of the global community that is bound by the conventions of this international community. The Revised Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 (R-SP) notes that "the Department (of higher education and training) has to respond to international commitments, such as those of the United Nations (the Sustainable Developmental Goals), the Southern African Development Community and the African Union (such as its Agenda 2063)" (R-SP, p. 15).
Moreover, the administration of the post-school sector is expected to align with notions of international standards. Institutions are required to make efforts to seek collaborations with international players to boost both quality and innovation. As it has already been established that regionally South Africa fares better than the neighbours, and in some contexts outperforms the whole continent, it is logical to conclude that these collaborations envisaged are to be with institutions perceived to be better than those in the continent, and those with weighty social capital.

The business-like running of the higher education is advised. This includes both the quality of the offering and the institutional evaluations, wherein the NDP notes that performance-based grants must be used to incentivise quality at both school and PSET levels. Additionally, the NDP calls for performance-based funding models, citing graduate outputs as a criterion for subsidies as "in line with the international trend towards greater emphasis on output-based funding." (NDP, p.325.) Internationalisation is another concept of the business of education

that the policies endorse with the NDP outlining the need to “establish South Africa as a hub for higher education and training in the region, capable of attracting a significant share of the international student population” (NDP, p. 327)

Furthermore, the LPFHEI which acquiesces to their inability to affectively address the challenges of African languages within the education system motivates universities “to include in their language policies and plans, programmes that encourage the study of international languages, in particular, those languages that are important for the promotion of South Africa’s cultural, trade and diplomatic relations’” (LPFHEI, p. 14)

Lastly, the NDP laments the country’s lagging behind with employment rates noting that:

> “Today the labour force (those aged 15 to 64) makes up 64 percent of the population, with the proportion of children and the elderly comprising smaller shares. Internationally, demographic profiles such as these are often associated with rising incomes, faster productivity growth, higher savings and rising living standards.” (NDP, p. 28)

The policies, particularly the NDP, underscore global aspirations and the need for the country to operate at comparable standards. Oftentimes the phrase ‘global trends’ is invoked but it is not always clear which specific ‘global trends’ the policies refer to nor the global contexts where these trends have been tried and tested. This is exemplified in the NDP’s assertion:

> “South Africa needs a post-school system that provides a range of accessible options for younger and older people. The system should be capable of adapting to changes in technology, industry, population dynamics and global trends.” (NDP, p. 316)

Additionally, there is limited discussion of how the emulation of the ‘global trends’ is to be applied within a local context with a unique socio-political makeup. The RSP reiterates the role higher education must play in the vision for global visibility, and calls attention to “further expand access to the PSET system to bring South Africa’s skills base more in line with that of countries at comparable levels of economic development.” (p. 25).
What is clear is that ‘global’ is equated, in a sense, to excellence and is thus aspirational. This will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter.

5.1.3 Social Engineering

One of the central ideas that the government seeks to achieve is reweaving of the South African social environment. Coming from a history of colonialism and apartheid, South Africa had considerable social labour to work through. The first democratic elections in 1994 brought forth the country’s first Black president under the leadership of the African National Congress

party. It is this same conglomerate that has been in leadership to the present day, and their political dispensation that the country has been operating under. The NDP is clear on the ANC's nation building project aimed at "healing the wounds of the past and redressing the inequities caused by centuries of racial exclusion" (NDP, p. 24)

One of the key ideological tenets of the ANC was to communicate a new social order, one that emphasized the notion of multiplicity within common areas of existence. This 'unity in diversity' was championed by many notable leaders from the various racial groups and was signposted by two key developments. First, Nelson Mandela and then outgoing president of the country F. W. de Klerk were joint recipients of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize "for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa." (Nobel Prize, 1993). The second ideological framing of the country's post-apartheidism was the notion of the 'rainbow nation' whose front face was Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This idea was meant to signify a country tolerant to people of various backgrounds, particularly the different racial groups.

The National Development Plan is the key document that outlines the central ideas of how the government planned and continues to shape the South African social fabric. Policy documents in the various national legislative context are based on this key policy document which has become central to the country's political strategy. In the R-SP, the NDP's significance is outlined thus:

> "The NDP is a long-term vision for the country, which provides a broad strategic framework to guide key government choices and actions, and focuses on the critical capabilities needed to transform the economy and society. It regards education, training and innovation as central to South Africa's long-term development." (p. 9)

As the strategic centre to which all other policies are tethered to, the NDP carries weight regarding how the South African society is understood by government and the areas identified as priority. The education sector was identified as one of the crucial areas that required attention to turn it from a state-led arm of segregation to a state-led economic machine. This shift is notable not in the purpose of higher education, but in the functions of government that policy outsources to the education sector. The purposes of education will be discussed in full in the appropriate section in the chapter to follow.

The invention of the desired social structure is one of the functions of national leadership that have been laid over to the education sector. Essentially, the policies narrate a noble yearning for an economically prosperous nation capacitated by healthy and educated citizens of varying racial backgrounds. However, it is noteworthy that notions of social clustering promoted by the national development plan are indicative of a competitive environment, where resources are

rationed according to individual attributes and not equally available for all. The NDP outlines the society it sought to establish, noting the following:

> "This plan (NDP) envisions a South Africa where everyone feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work." (NDP, p. 24).

Two significant points are made in the excerpt above. Firstly, individuals are encouraged to have a sense of kinship, and must tap into their potential to contribute to the betterment of the nation. Secondly, opportunity is mediated by an individual's socio-economic background - although the original text attempts to be dubiously positive about this last point.

It is clear from the White Paper (2014) that higher education is central to the country's recalibration. The WP notes the DHET aims to prioritise expanding "the capacity of the post-school education and training system to meet the needs of the country." (White Paper, p. 4). Of these needs of the country the DHET has been entrusted with "contribut(ing) to building a developmental state with a vibrant democracy and a flourishing economy" through making available quality post-school education (p. 4). The NDP highlights that larger portions of the population with as high a level of education as they can get will have collective and individual benefits. This is reiterated in the R-SP where it is noted that "advanced levels of education contribute to higher productivity, and make recipients of such education more attractive to employ and raise their wage levels" (R-SP, p. 19).

The policies advocate for a systematic integration throughout all levels of the sector for better success of education in effecting the nation's socio-economic formation. Education is ascribed the power to improve both the individual and the community's quality of life, and thus, improved education outcomes are understood to be crucial for social mobility and improved quality of life.

5.2 Role of state, business and the individual in education

The policies outline key stakeholders in South Africa's educational system, highlighting government, the institutions and business as the key decision-makers in the PSET sector. The NDP foregrounds this noting that "the state and private sector both have a role to play in providing post-school education and training." (p. 321). What is of interest is that the business sector is not only invited to the education policy table but has been appointed as an equal partner that must play a role in the running of post-school education ecosystem. The institutions, and education at large, are only conduits enacting the state's plan of training

students suitable for the commercial enterprise. The current section will focus on the roles of the state, business and the individual to ascertain the manner in which the policies propose equitable access to higher education as one of the measures in dealing with NEETs.

The government, through various ministries and departments, has positioned its role as that of oversight, responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation. As the tactical lead of the nation, the state will initiate policies, avail funding, control the means of monitoring through regulatory bodies and outline any necessary interventions.

Minister Nzimande noted in the WP (2014) his expectation for state and business to equally engage in educational affairs and therefore summons business to participate in the business of education noting that “employers must be drawn closer to the education and training process; they are among its major beneficiaries and must contribute to its success.” (WP, p. viii). The government states that the aim is partnering with business so the latter may participate in central decision-making at PSET institutions including advising on the curricula for the various institutional types and fields so higher education may produce graduates with the skills required by industry. Additionally, the business world is tasked with training vocational students and employees in need of upskilling. A strong partnership with the business world is envisioned to support linear trajectories from education to employment.

The role of the individual is not as prominently pronounced as the state and busing sectors, but it is evident that excellence is preferable. The data and strategies that matter are from those from the STEM programmes, and individuals are thus encouraged to aim for entry into these fields for both study and eventual work. The NDP underscores the need for individuals to “improve their own lives (because) neither government nor the market can develop the necessary capabilities on their own.” (NDP, p. 27).

The NDP proclaims that “work and education enable citizens to improve their own lives”, and so the individual’s role is one that must strive to attain the best quality of education so they may gain sustainable employment in science and technology as these are the fields highlighted for their contribution to society. (NDP, p. 40) As the government has lax policies such as the LPFHEI, it is for the individual to place themselves in the position of attaining education in the language of their choosing by going to a public institution that has constituted one of their preferred languages. In addition to ensuring they get good grades to meet admission and languages requirements, the students must also be able to fund themselves in the event of them falling out of the parameters of the government’s financial aid scheme. Access, particularly linguistic and epistemic access, to higher education is conceptualised as the sole responsibility of the individual.

5.3 Language and participation in higher education

Language – in its intricately complex nature – is discussed as a challenge to education, a means to access post-school education and employment and a vehicle of official exclusion. The higher education policies in South Africa are in English, so how does this materialise in policy implementation specifically in relation to higher certificate students, what presuppositions can be deduced about the attitudes towards languages in multicultural South Africa and what efforts do the policies commit towards the treatment of the various languages in higher education? These prompts were used as a roadmap to answer the following research question: *Does the use of only English in South African higher education policies lead to a reproduction of neoliberal policies that actively exclude higher certificate students?*
The overarching idea from the policies is that English is a necessary part of South Africa's development, and that African languages in education are a possible future if funding is available. The policies take a clear stance that there are advantages to the preference of English, even in education.

Firstly, the government envisions a South Africa that can interact with its citizens and the world in English. In furtherance on the global vision, the state's overarching developmental goal is for the country to function and trade within a global community, and consequently the language preferred to support South Africa's ascendancy is English. This is evident in both the policies and the communication of the government. The policies interrogated in this study were all conceptualised and published in English and no other languages despite the country operating with eleven official languages. The preference for English paves way for the use of English to gain access to higher education.

Secondly, the present value of African languages is not made apparent in the policies, including the LPFHEI. In all the policies English is positioned as a necessary tool for education and economic success. The White Paper does make a considerable attempt to outline the significance of African languages in the post-apartheid South African context for nation building purposes and to situate the purpose of African languages in higher education. African languages are bestowed with the potential to redress past inequalities but nothing significant about their present value is stipulated. What is noted is that African languages have been deliberately underdeveloped and distorted in the past and that in future they may play a significant part in the realisation of linguistic rights of majority of South Africans.

A third key pattern noted from the policies is that the purpose of African languages in higher education, even to support expansion and access to all students, is accepted as an optional benefit. The LPFHEI expressed "the need for higher education to value all indigenous

languages as sources of knowledge, capable of informing learning of the different disciplines in higher education" (LPFHEI, p. 13). The challenge with such as assertion is that to "value" something is not an action, nor is it measurable, and is dependent on the valuer's discretion. Essentially, the value of African languages is to be determined by each institution as they see fit. This further underscores the value bestowed on language in higher education by the government.

The LPFHEI stipulates that:

> "the persistent underdevelopment and undervaluing of indigenous languages should not be allowed if public higher education institutions are to meet the diverse linguistic needs of their student population." (LPFHEI, 9)

However, what is also noteworthy is that the African languages are associated only with linguistic needs and not attached to anything bigger such as human rights, or the challenge of access in higher education.

The LPFHEI clarifies its position on the value of African languages being reserved for social cohesion noting that the policy's aim is to "contribute to transformation in higher education with specific reference to universities through enhancing the status and roles of previously marginalised South African languages to foster institutional inclusivity as well as social cohesion." (LPFHEI, p. 10). Although this is a worthy cause, as noted what it obscures is the role of language in epistemic access and overall success in higher education. The drawbacks from not being able to engage communicate in the institution's language of learning go far beyond an unfavourable institutional culture, and such disadvantages must be accounted for.

The LPFHEI and the NDP clearly establish linguistic human rights as significant in nurturing a cohesive institutional culture and the national social cohesion. The LPFHEI notes the need for "parity of esteem and use of all official languages as determined by constitutional and legislative imperatives" (p. 14). However, the strategies for the promotion of African languages are suggestions, and not linked to legislative outcomes as stipulated in the framework. When it comes to the use of African languages in higher education, the polices rely heavily on the language of possibilities; where they invoke an idea without practical strategies of execution. This is useful for posturing purposes, and feigning understanding or empathy; but words or phrases used leave enough room for varied interpretation. Institutions are encouraged to act in the best interests of African languages but are not mandated to do so which results in varied level of implementation as noted in the MAPALHE (2015). This is evident in the LPFHEI strategy to engage higher education in the use and development of African languages. The document states that "the Ministry (of Higher Education, Science and Technology) encourages all institutions to consider ways of promoting multilingualism" (LPFHEI, 2020: 14). Much like

the constitution itself, the policy ensures to leave enough room varied kinds and levels of interpretation and implementation, and without legal exposure for the institutions.

Although the LPFHEI advocates for “the right of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution”, (p. 11) this is not supported with a measurable strategy, but by suggestive language that holds no institution to account.

Lastly, the notion of African languages being made available subject to possibility and practicability underscores the cost as more important than meeting the specific population’s rights. Thus, African languages education to a population that barely understands English is not perceived as a priority, and students are rather expected to improve their understanding of the English language. This reveals a relationship between the English language and neoliberal underpinnings that favour social categories to which the HC students have no access. Fundamentally, the use of the ‘language of business’ and not the language of the common man already positions the policies as targeted at a specific social stratum. All policies, not just the four under review in this study, favour the language of the ruling class, thus alienating any potential students who are not from this class.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Whatever academic arguments put forward for the use of English, the true purpose seems grounded in political and economic conveniences rather than any pragmatic approaches to national unity. The conceptualisation of higher education policies only in English seems to be an extension of this. This chapter will draw from the findings to support the supposition that South African higher education policies use and encourage the use of English to advance neoliberal ideologies and the associated practices. This political and economic stance by the state, as reflected in the policies further exacerbates the plight of students with poor grades and relegates them to the vocational sector, whilst the universities are reserved for "excellence."

This discussion will build on the prominent points from the previous chapter to situate this discussion. The previous chapter has engaged with the discoveries from the four policy documents under study and noted an overarching neoliberal dispensation characterised by the promotion of individual excellence, aspiration to international norms, competition for opportunities and engagement through the English language.

Key postulations deduced from the policies are as follows:

- South Africa must position itself through close alignment with neoliberal ideas to grow the economy to everyone's benefit
- Education is for employment
- English is crucial for official communication

The above indicate policies that are not geared towards inclusive higher education norms aimed at promoting and improving access for the vulnerable group of higher certificate students. Instead, the policies propagate the concept of individual brilliance, and hence students not deemed academically excellent fall outside the concerns of the policies studied. This chapter will delve into how these aspects listed above impact the higher certificate students and the potential to worsen the plight of the country's NEETs.

Firstly, Robert Phillipson's (2008) *linguistic neoimperialism* will offer a theoretical grounding for analysis of the policies and their social and educational implications. This will guide the discussion on the politics behind the choice of language in policies and the blatant promotion of English ahead of other official languages. Secondly, ideas on access to university for 'non-traditional' will be discussed in relation to linguistic access. Lastly, this chapter will conclude

with asserting that the political and economic underpinnings of the policies under review promote an understanding of education for employment, and employment for individual and collective freedom. This in turn means that youths whose educational attainment is poor or incomplete will have limited freedoms.

6.1 Linguistic neoimperialism in policy and higher education

The central argument of this section is based on evidence from the findings of how the policies bestow more value to English and is contextualised using Phillipson's linguistic neoimperialism. This section of the study is aimed at addressing the main research question: *Does the use of only English in South African higher education policies lead to a reproduction of neoliberal policies that exclude the higher certificate students?*

Phillipson (2008) argues that linguistic neoimperialism is supported by action that seeks to invest in English by using the language in official administration. To this end, Phillipson argues that the proliferation of English cannot be organic as there is planning to support its use at the expense of indigenous languages. Such planning is evident in education as language is crucial for admission – in South African higher education a 40% pass rate in English is required for a bachelor's programme. Teaching and learning are further carried out in English thus making English a prerequisite to education attainment. This encourages efforts by individuals to seek English competency ahead of other local languages.

As evidenced in the preceding chapter, there is a concerted effort by the South African government to secure the position of English in South Africa's administrative systems despite the challenges. This exemplifies Phillipson's (2008) observation that "there are agents both among locals and in the Anglo-American world that are only too keen to see a consolidation of English, irrespective of the implications for other languages." (p. 29-30). Grin in Phillipson (2008) found that the American state profited approximately $19 billion annually from the use of English in global interactions as they need not invest in foreign language education (p. 28). This is contrary to the South African case where the state has included in policy the need not to develop the country's languages for trade but rather invest in the teaching and learning of foreign languages for trade and diplomacy.

This is a top-down dissemination of values that prime English language ahead of others in multilingual contexts for political and economic currency, and is cultivated in all social contexts including business, school, social life and entertainment. English is presented as a pre-requisite to engage in these activities and becomes a necessity for a specific quality of life.

Furthermore, the focus on STEM subjects, funding and incentives for universities overlooks and undermines the potential for growth in other areas of equal significance such as language and literature which would be instrumental to the development of all official languages. Instead, the policies advocate for an undefined 'promotion' of African languages but without targeted policy strategies such as incentivising enrolment and completion targets in languages, providing language-related postgraduate incentives, research grants for languages. Moreover, languages have no placement within the economy in the policies, and consequently, the policies overlook any strategies to align higher education work on languages with the business world.

Much can be sussed from the neoliberalisation of higher education, and this is traceable from the policies. English is valued as a language of commerce, and knowledge that is bestowed esteem is that which can be translated into English for economic benefits. Consequently, the inability to navigate higher education in English is equated to the inability to work within an English context that will benefit the country commercially. The close relationship between state and business and their combined influence on education ensures the curation of a social structure dependent on English to navigate the economically driven culture.

Additionally, the policies carry a strong focus on education and the workplace, with education being the gateway to employment. However, there is no established link between language and the workplace. This again, makes clear the policies' view of language as a topic outside the scope of both the education and workplace environments, and again attesting to the privileging of English in government and business administration. Makoni (2005) underscores the role of language as a social component that is of equal significance as economic development in the curation of social cohesion.

In contrast, African languages languish with the categorisation as under-developed. Not only is this neo-imperialist, but it provides a rationale for the preference of English. With the indigenous languages perceived as not able to carry political, economic, educational and technological rhetoric then government is absolved in not meeting the human rights of the country's indigenous population. When there are students who can access higher education in their mother tongue, this is to be understood as fortuitous and that it plays no part in their success in higher education. Note that Afrikaans also enjoys fervent defence when its position in higher education is threatened. In 2021 the Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled that University of South Africa were required to stop the planned phasing out of Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning, and that the institution's language policy be revised to indicate such. The case was brought by a local lobby group.

This shows that the constitutionality of the institutional language policies can be challenged. It underscores the significance of not only access in higher education through mother tongue, but the realisation of the group's human rights to be able to access higher education in an

official language of their choosing as stipulated in the constitution and in line with the students' human rights.

In a highly competitive labour market with high unemployment rates, students are less likely to take up programmes that will compound their challenges to employment upon completion of their studies. If higher education is curated to train students for work and to attain social mobility, then there needs to be work for all graduates and not only those in STEM.

The policies examined seemingly denote an effort towards supporting all official languages, particularly in higher education, but the role of African languages in the university space is addressed rather vaguely. There is no direct link of the development of African languages to the broad developmental goals of the country, nor to the purposes of the universities. The universities are encouraged to promote African languages, but there is no link to languages and access to universities. This inherently means poor promotion of African languages is not regarded as a hinderance to university admission. There is no practical means of creating sustainable employment in African languages contexts - be it in language and literature, education, translation, arts, language planning et cetera, there seems not to be a conceptualisation of the value of African languages in the country's economic development agenda. African languages are not centred as crucial to the country's development nor the economic sustenance, hence their role in education is not pronounced in the policies. This is in stark contrast to the assertions in the MAPALHE (2012) where three intrinsic values of language were discussed namely, the socio-cultural, the economic and the cognitive value. In arguing for the cognitive value, the report underscored the significance of language in the consumption and production of knowledge.

What is worth noting is that the problems with linguistic inequality in the country are attributed to the past dispensation, whilst the solutions are outsourced to higher education. The current government structure does not acknowledge any direct responsibility for changing this issue. The state only concedes to the responsibility to 'promoting African languages' but this feat is wholly regarded as an activity for the PSET sector led by universities.

Where English must be used, whether for convenience dictated by availability of educational resources or due to the context, the manner in which English is approached must be, first and foremost, to serve the purpose of communication. The choice for English must be the most plausible option, and one with the least potential for discrimination against the poor. Non-biased use of the English language would be one where all variations of the language are acceptable so long as the communicative system is achieved through the basic communication model of sender-message-receiver.

A disconnection between English language and culture is an option that has gained favour with numerous scholars, including Makoni (2005), Pennycook (2019) and Humpreys (2023). This momentous task would entail an intentional detangling of neocolonial and neoliberal

ideology and allow for localisation of the language. Makoni's (2005) disinvention addresses the need for language and culture to be decoupled to detach from the social context problematic colonial histories, or at least ensure that they are contained (p. 148). Makoni suggests disinvention as a form to progressively arrest the issues of contemporary language classification within the context of South Africa. Central to his ideas is that disivention will allow for languages to be unshackled from stringent categorisation of colonial societies. Humphreys (2023) shares similar ideas on how to move past neoimperialist uses of the English language in global contexts and argues that local contexts must take precedence over assimilation to the English language and Anglophone culture.

In a country where the individual's competency in the English language (and perceived proximity to Anglophone culture) is used to determine access to higher education and employment, it is plausible to call for a delinking of language and culture to support students from non-English speaking contexts. This also supports the notions of regional autonomy in English use, including the extent to which provincial legislatures operate through English. The economy of regions can define their language and cultural needs, instead of the same level of the same type of English in students who will occupy different areas in employment.

What is of concern with the South African policies as they are is the unwillingness to concede to English being problematic, but rather propelling it to dominate key administrative functions.

6.2 Access for 'non-traditional' students

This second segment of the chapter targets the following research question: *Do South African education policies address equitable linguistic access to universities for higher certificate students?*

Two main ideas pose challenges to access for higher certificates students in higher education. Firstly, the notion of innate brilliance that is a prerequisite for entry into universities. Secondly, the language of the institution predetermines the choice of institution for potential students.

The position is that "disadvantaged groups must be given access to the forms of thought that confer advantage in society, in particular traditional disciplinary areas" (McCowan 2016: 651). This is particularly important if the policies prioritise STEM programmes over others, even non-bachelor students must be able to gain the benefits of esteemed institutions in fields that will give them higher probability of employment, especially in a society with the world's highest unemployment rates. Paul Ashwin challenges the university as the space reserved the academically adept degree students, where other students are to navigate the system on their own and are solely responsible for their success or failure (2020: 38). This is the unfortunate position defended in the policies under review, but such an approach to higher education

serves only to further undermine students from poor backgrounds and curtails any opportunities available to them after completion of studies.

What is evident is that South Africa harbours policies that are reminiscent of their predecessors. This is exemplified in a national language policy predicated on the students' ability to function in the language of the institution, instead of an institution able to function in all official languages; particularly when language is one of the key barriers to success in higher education. All 26 public universities in the country use English as a medium of instruction – see Appendix B. This is despite 20 years since the inception of the first language policy that sought to encourage the development of African languages in higher education. What is evident is that the policies encourage a top-down approach to language and its use application in both education and society. The use of English in higher education policies legitimizes the use of the language in higher education too. It would be difficult to argue against the conveniences of one core language when implemented by institutions when the government – through the education departments - is proof of the efficacy of one language.

The status of English in higher education is further influenced by the state's goal of global economic participation, that they perceived must be mediated in English. For this reason, universities are supported – through 'escape cluses' - in priming English knowledge production because the government wants to have a working citizenry capable of participating in global economic structures that value English. This elitist view regurgitates the idea of higher education being specifically for those with economic privilege instead of a democratic sector open to all.

Alastair Pennycook's (2007) ideas of English in multilingual contexts as collusionary, delusionary and exclusionary are most evident in these policies. Not only is English preferred, promoted and funded ahead of others this is justified by insituations of English as beneficial to everyone, whilst those with poor command of the language (best evidenced by the 30% pass mark) are effectively excluded.

What the policies propagate is that English is not just inevitable but is also necessary. Hence, English, is accepted as the medium of instruction without much interrogation of social implications. Institutions are authorised to outline their language policies, ensuring that those who prefer English may continue to use the language as long as it is justified. This is not unlike what Bunting (1994) noted about the White schools when they were required to accept Black students. The school governing bodies were able to circumvent having to accept more students by putting in place specific measures to exploit gaps in the system. Fees and admission testing were some of the techniques used to deter Black students from joining their schools. Most importantly, language was used as a barrier to the students and those accepted were able to demonstrate competency in the school's language without expecting the schools

to cater to the students' linguistic rights. The LPF does little to dissuade language being a barrier to higher education entry and success for students with limited proficiency in English.

6.3 Education for employment, Employment for Freedom

Lastly, the third research question is debated in detail. This part of the discussion deals with the following research question: *Do the South African higher education policies address strategies for linguistic access to support the higher certificate students in universities and curtail NEETs?*

Youth of working age that are neither in school or training are highly likely from poor backgrounds where they did not benefit from social capital that would value and finance education. Additionally, they are likely to be caregivers from peri-urban communities with poorly resourced and managed schools. Literature and statistics on NEETs in South Africa highlights that the older the individuals are and the longer they stay as NEETs the less likely they are to escape this social trap.

If universities are capable of providing social mobility and addressing social challenges, part of their mandate should be engaging the vulnerable or 'at-risk' students who may not have any other option for social mobility.

McCowan rightly declares that "disadvantaged students should not be confined to lower-quality institutions" (2016: 645). In the competitive higher education and employment sectors, disadvantaged students are condemned to tertiary system with poor quality and reputation. Those in universities hardly have any support as both policies and universities prioritise the bachelors programmes and not the vulnerable students often in higher certificate programmes.

It is clear in the policies that freedom is not equated with basic human rights, but rather it is earned. Education, good command of English and the ability to export South Africa's political ambitions globally are evidently the key to free and prosperous life in South Africa. The sentiment is that the higher the level of education, the higher the rewards in all aspects of life. Thus, to improve the quality of one's life one's education must be developed in the best possible institutions.

If such sentiments hold, the access to higher education should be a human right, as the WP acknowledges "quality education is an important right, which plays a vital role in relation to a person's health, quality of life, self-esteem, and the ability of citizens to be actively engaged and empowered." (WP, p. 3).

Such freedoms must not be reserved for those who are able to easily navigate the higher education system. Additionally, if freedom comes from education and employment, this

inherently means freedom is mediated by non-state actors such as business or autonomously institutions and the government relinquishes strategic control that impacts rights of individuals. It would be reasonable to argue that in this way, access to freedom is negotiated through qualifications in lieu of basic human rights. For NEETs who may be without work because they lack education, and without education because they lack the language of schooling, their freedom becomes intrinsically threatened. The education-employment-freedom philosophy means that education becomes a barrier to freedom for those who are not able to participate in education and traps them in a cycle of poverty through permanent NEET status as they lose out on the intrinsic, instrumental and positional benefits of education (McCowan, 2016). Thus, the policies must not only acknowledge the NEETs but actively and strategically support their emancipation.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

All government documents and policies that address education are careful to include in the front matter that education leads to employment which in turn benefits the individual and society at large. This disclaimer seems to be used in defence of the significance of education for the nation. It is this fundamental principle that undergirds government's approach to education that is under review in this study. The government, not only believes but actively promotes the idea of success, healthy and happy citizenship being dependent on employment, which in turn can be accessed through education. Such convictions should be premised on equitable access to education for all citizens. However, this is not the case in South Africa and previous chapter has already canvassed the administration's position in the individual being the master of their own fate, despite the fact that they might have no resources. Moreover, the policies further the idea of social hierarchies through propagating that higher education is a space for a select few. Consequently, this thinking and the resultant policies, further entrench and embed in the social consciousness that unemployment is a result of poor or no education and thus an individual's failure.

The recommendation arising from this research is not a specific approach to the language of teaching and learning and administration, in both policymaking and higher education. Instead, this dissertation underscores the significance of disconnecting English, the language from Anglophone culture, so that all South Africans have equitable access to freedoms without discrimination. Competency in the use of English is oftentimes used to signify native-speaker sensibilities and cultures, and underperformance in Anglophone culture becomes the barrier to access higher education, or specific institutions particularly the world-class institutions.

The research underlying the dissertation deliberately disregarded the theories and models of navigating multicultural classrooms although there is a healthy amount of commentary on multiculturalism in place of English as the LoLT in South Africa. Instead, it focused on attitudes towards African languages in higher education and found that although there is awareness of the proliferation of English there is little more than policy drafts that the government does to ensure linguistic access in higher education.

Where English is used for practical economy, then disinvestment must be intentionally propagated to ensure the ideology and culture are not 'colonisation with consent' as noted by Phillipson (2008). The neocolonial philosophy that propagates the dominance of English as both pervasive and logical must be acknowledged for its true erosive impact in contexts outside of the Anglo-American sphere. The economic carrot comes with an even larger stick

for nations such as South Africa where the use of English has immediate and opposite effects on indigenous languages.

It is ideologically dangerous to promote English in a country where 'whiteness' is still equated with power and pre-eminence. To this day, long after the colonialism and apartheid were officially abolished their effects still remain in the everyday imagination and lived experiences of South Africans and white superiority is still engraved on the consciousness of Africans. Language is but one way these remnants of the past can be traced. The word 'umlungu' (which in the simplest and most contextually bankrupt translation refers to 'a Caucasian' is still common in Nguni vocabulary as a signifier of superiority and dominance. When used amongst Black people's everyday speech, particularly in IsiXhosa, the word is invoked to refer to 'boss' or 'superior person' because it was and still is understood that better quality of life and middle-class sensibilities are rights reserved for white people.

And so this study concludes with this ominous statement from Nkhelebeni Phaswana:

> *"So long as the national government uses English and Afrikaans as the only languages of record in Parliament, those who continue to fight for the use and recognition of African languages will continue to be regarded as uneducated and uncivilized, and their voices ignored and ultimately silenced. That will be the betrayal of our freedom and democracy, for freedom can only be fulfilled when the languages of the people are utilized in all segments of the society."* (2005, p. 130).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: South African Policy Outline

APPENDIX B: Outline of South African Public Universities