



## ARTICLE

# Reimagining African Languages in Teacher Education: A South African Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Language is one of the key factors in teaching and learning across the globe. Language of instructions, as established by various scholars influence learning experiences. Hence, language policies are drafted by various countries, for teaching and learning in higher education in different worldwide. This conceptual and policy review-type paper situates the marginalisation of African languages in South African teacher education within the dualistic frameworks of linguistic imperialism and coloniality. With critical linguistics and decolonial theory as its main intellectual vehicles, the study reflects on how historically committed ideological legacies of English hegemony continue to influence knowledge paradigms, pedagogical methods, and actual language policy implementations in post-apartheid educational institutions. Notwithstanding progressive multilingual policies, African languages continue to be marginal to the programme of teacher education, thus limiting epistemological access and enforcing Eurocentric curricula. By combining scholarly literature with policy documents, the paper advances a discourse for the re-centering of African languages in teacher education for cognitive justice, the affirmation of identity, and curriculum transformation. It points, among other things, to promising initiatives, such as Centres for African Language Teaching (CALTs) and the Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL), with a call for coordinated, well-resourced attacks on decolonising language education. In doing so, the study adds to the struggle for epistemic justice by putting forth strategies to bring African languages in teacher education in a meaningful and sustainable way.

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## 1. Introduction and Background

The prevalence of foreign languages in African educational systems continues to diminish the role and viability of indigenous languages within formal educational settings. Language imperialism, complete with colonial temptations, has systematically kept African languages from domains of power, including education, governance, and science<sup>[1–3]</sup>. Consequently, many learners in African contexts are forced to acquire knowledge through second or third languages, sometimes with profound effects on their comprehension, participation, and ability to perform further academically.

Constitutional recognition, however, has ensured that eleven languages are official languages; alongside increasing calls for transformation in higher education, English and Afrikaans enjoy institutional privilege in South Africa. Further marginalisation was exposed during the 2015–2016 student protests, which reawakened debates around decolonisation and thereby posed challenges to universities to rethink language policies, curriculum, and pedagogy<sup>[4]</sup>. These developments put to the fore the repositioning of African languages away from just being an aid to knowledge towards being a carrier of knowledge, identity, and academic discourse.

This conceptual paper explores the marginalisation of African languages in teacher education and tackles the structural, ideological, and curricular barriers militating against them. Using the body of literature and policy discourses as its reference, it interrogates the implications of linguistic marginalisation for educational equity and epistemic justice. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing scholarly and policy conversations about decolonisation and multilingualism within higher education.

Today, rather than committing to new empirical evidence, the paper places a much-needed spotlight on existing theoretical and policy frameworks toward the full-scale reimagination of language planning in teacher education. It strongly contends that actual change must come from the construction of language-in-education policies based on linguistic human rights, cultural appropriateness, and pedagogical inclusivity<sup>[5]</sup>. In framing itself as conceptual review work, the paper hopes to inform curriculum developers, policymak-

ers, and teacher educators committed to the dismantling of linguistic hierarchies toward equitable education in postcolonial Africa.

## 2. Theorising Linguistic Imperialism and Coloniality

Linguistic imperialism or linguicism is not a new concept, having been part of the language discourse for decades, as seen in the works of many African and international linguists<sup>[5,6]</sup>. It is synonymous with linguistic inequality. The discourse questions the hegemony of colonial languages in the former colonial states which threatens the use of local languages in education<sup>[7,8]</sup>. English hegemony is promoted in the economic and education sectors in countries that were colonised by the British, so that English has become an international lingua franca. Its international status is reinforced by being taught as a foreign language to immigrants or minority groups in Britain and America<sup>[9]</sup>. This practice has spread to Anglophone countries such as South Africa which offer English to Francophone immigrants to facilitate their integration in the host country<sup>[10]</sup>.

In relation to linguistic imperialism, intellectual and linguistic dependency, which denotes African scholars' dependence on Western epistemologies because of the use of colonial languages in education and economic affairs<sup>[11]</sup>. This dependency leads to African's assimilation into Western culture, which accords inferior status to the culture and languages of the African masses<sup>[12,13]</sup>. The assimilation promotes English monolingualism instead of promoting multilingualism, which embraces linguistic diversity. In South Africa, multilingualism is the cornerstone of the democratic Language-in-Education Policy<sup>[14]</sup> and the Language Policy in Higher Education<sup>[15]</sup>. However, in practice, these policies are not implemented.

In the South African context, linguistic imperialism can be traced to the colonial and apartheid periods. The colonial era includes the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652, the invasion of English colonisers in 1795 and the Dutch-English bilingual system from 1910 to 1925<sup>[16]</sup>. It is in this period that the Anglicisation of Africa began, through missionary

education which served the interests of the British colonisers by forcing African children to learn through English. Missionary education aimed at spreading English to Africans who subsequently served as teachers, priests and interpreters for those who were spreading the gospel. The missionaries also learned and developed the orthography of African languages to enable Africans to read the Bible in indigenous languages and spread the gospel<sup>[17–19]</sup>.

The British colonial language policy followed an assimilationist and transactional model as Africans became assimilated into Western culture. In many African countries such as Zambia and South Africa, children's home languages were used for a short period in schools to prepare them for the transition to English medium of instruction<sup>[20–22]</sup>. The current South African policy in education still follows this approach, as children are taught through the medium of African languages for the first three years of schooling. As a result of the very early switch to English, when children's cognitive structures are still being developed, many African children struggle to develop adequate concepts and fall behind at an early stage of their education. The result is that poor performance and high drop-out rates at both school and university levels are higher among black students who are home language speakers of African languages than among any other group<sup>[23]</sup>.

In South Africa, language inequality was exacerbated by the discriminatory language policies of the apartheid government from 1948<sup>[24]</sup>. The National Party (NP) strategy to divide and rule black people was implemented largely through the Group Areas Act, which perpetuated ethnic and linguistic segregation and confined black people to so-called homelands (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) according to their language groups. The turning point for the discriminatory language policy of the apartheid regime was the Soweto uprisings in 1976. After the uprisings, English gained high status as the language of liberation and empowerment, with Afrikaans regarded as the language of oppression<sup>[25]</sup>. Ironically, African languages were not chosen as languages of learning and teaching beyond lower primary education because they were associated with the inferior and low-quality Bantu Education<sup>[26]</sup>.

In post-apartheid South Africa, English hegemony still prevails, associated with a racialised ideology. It perpetuates coloniality and Anglonormativity, in which monolingualism in English is used to convey the curriculum and conduct

assessments<sup>[27,28]</sup>. While the South African Constitution and the democratic language policy recognise eleven official languages (namely, Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Ndebele, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga), English and Afrikaans – the only official languages during the colonial and apartheid eras – remain dominant in education. The nine African languages are still marginalised, despite the fact that they are spoken by more than 70% of South Africans. Academic success is measured by one's proficiency in English, as all assessments are conducted through this language<sup>[29]</sup>. This reinforces the inferior status of African languages in education and perpetuates a colonial or Eurocentric ideology which favours monolingualism in English instead of capitalising on multilingualism, which values proficiency in other languages<sup>[30,31]</sup>.

The use of colonial languages to promote Western epistemologies and the exclusion of indigenous knowledge in education is referred to as epistemic injustice<sup>[32,33]</sup>. It is an unjust practice which perpetuates linguistic inequality and prevents free communication<sup>[34]</sup>. This is referred to this phenomenon as 'linguicide' as it results in the loss of confidence in one's language and culture<sup>[35]</sup>. Therefore, the role of students' home languages is crucial in the decolonisation of education, as home languages are markers of cultural identity and significant tools for meaningful learning<sup>[36,37]</sup>. With regard to language teacher education, it is claimed that coloniality prevails<sup>[38]</sup>. Western epistemologies are still imposed, forming a basis for racialising and classifying those of non-European descent as inferior, and excluding other forms of knowledge.

In the South African context, only English and Afrikaans student teachers are trained to teach in their respective home languages. This creates a mismatch between the languages used in teacher education programmes and the languages used in practice by teachers in the classrooms<sup>[39]</sup>. It entrenches the power hierarchy that exists in English and African languages in education. This deficiency reinforces the low status of African languages in education which was initiated and entrenched by the colonial and apartheid regimes. Considering that the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is the key factor for students' access to meaningful learning, it may be argued that the exclusion of African languages in teacher education perpetuates not only English hegemony, but also epistemic injustice<sup>[40]</sup>. It means that in

practice, student teachers have to acquire disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge in English as they learn to teach<sup>[41]</sup>. Although the curriculum is written in English, teachers code switch to indigenous languages in order to teach it.

From a coloniality point of view, linguistic imperialism exacerbates unequal power relations of superiority and inferiority between the colonisers' languages and those of the colonised<sup>[10,16]</sup>. English possesses more power than other languages and is perceived to be good for everyone; hence it is accorded international *lingua franca* status<sup>[42]</sup>. It is a carrier of European or Western epistemologies that are entrenched in cultural, economic and political domains of the colonised<sup>[43]</sup>. Thus, linguistic imperialism, like coloniality, could be associated with epistemic violence which entails the imposition of the dominant European ideologies of the colonisers, and the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge along racial lines<sup>[44]</sup>. Hence this chapter seeks to re-centre African languages in teacher education in order to generate new knowledge on how they could add value to the decolonisation agenda. In order to gain an understanding of the colonial and apartheid legacy on the education system in South Africa, a brief overview of teacher education in South Africa is presented below.

### 3. Teacher Education and Language Dynamics

Teacher education is often cited as central to the transformation and sustainability of education systems, especially in postcolonial contexts like South Africa<sup>[45]</sup>. However, the historical development of teacher education in this country also largely reflects linguistic inequalities and colonial legacies that continue to inform curriculum and pedagogy. From the early days of missionary schools under British colonialism through to apartheid, African languages were systematically marginalised in that they were taught by largely under-qualified teachers and kept out from key domains of knowledge and economic participation<sup>[46]</sup>.

During apartheid, the segregated form of education installed by the Bantu Education system was one of inequity, as the teachers in Black schools had been issued subpar preparation. By the 1970s, it is noted that not more than 15% of teachers in Black schools were adequately qualified, whereas about 96% of teachers in white schools had received ade-

quate qualification. The language policy of the time also had a trilingualism component that made student teachers learn English, Afrikaans, and their home languages, but African languages were hardly regarded as holding any academic worth or economic leverage<sup>[47]</sup>.

After 1994, South Africa then restructured its teacher education system in line with the constitutional imperatives of equity and redress. Colleges which were racially segregated were closed down and some new qualifications such as the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) were introduced. Thereafter, the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) framework was developed to channel the training of teachers who can deal with diversity and advance social justice in schools.

Even so, African languages still remain marginal in teacher education, specifically after the structural reforms. English remains the hegemonic language as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), but African languages are normally just introduced as second or additional conversational languages. This is problematic in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3), where teachers are supposed to teach in the home language of the learners, who are themselves mostly trained in English.

Students are often conflicted when conversationalising disciplinary content into African languages in particular subjects such as mathematics and science due to a lack of pedagogical support, worsened by their merely passable proficiency in the languages<sup>[48]</sup>. These constraints affect their teaching and epistemological access and confidence as multilingual educators. Parallel to this, the acute shortage of proficient African language teachers at Foundation and Further Education and Training (FET) levels worsens the marginalisation of indigenous languages in schools.

Socio-cultural assumptions considered this notion of language worth beyond artificial boundaries. Many of the pupils and their parents regard an education in English as a conduit for economic fortune, hence the shrinking interest in African languages: be it studying or teaching them at university level. This state of language shift away from the indigenous languages is driven by their perceived socio-economic usefulness, which also strengthens linguistic imperialism and dislodges the formation of an indigenous identity.

Another key problem is the deficiency of culturally rele-

vant learning materials in African languages. The greater percentage of curriculum content is derived through translation from English, which always risks the loss of linguistic and cultural specificities. Also, various theories and pedagogies put to use in teacher education are often based on Western epistemologies, further marginalising African knowledge systems and restricting meaningful engagement with students' lived experiences.

Coloniality lingers not only in language but also in the production of curriculum knowledge and in programme design. Research reveals that teacher education in its current conception still privileges Eurocentric content to the extreme neglect and rarely considers indigenous epistemologies and African intellectual traditions. Therefore, in these ways, they become manifestations of epistemic exclusion which further impede and undermine the very potential for transformation in initial teacher education.

This conceptual review argues that a shift towards multilingual inclusive pedagogies that foreground African languages as legitimate carriers of disciplinary knowledge and cultural identity should be undertaken. The decoloniality discourse insists on achieving cognitive justice through the validation of knowledge systems that have suffered oppression throughout history, while simultaneously giving voice to communities that have been socially disregarded. Language here, thus, has become one of the key contested domains in the struggle for epistemic freedom and educational transformation.

At the other end of this imperative, teacher education in South Africa must develop strategies to valorise African language use beyond Foundation Phase and embed indigenous knowledge systems in the production of culturally responsive teachers. Teacher education, therefore, by embracing inclusive multilingual pedagogies and decolonial frameworks, will even begin to serve as a catalyst in the restoration of African identities and reclamation of indigenous language epistemic legitimacy in schools and universities.

#### **4. Towards Re-Centring African Languages in Teacher Education**

As indicated in the previous sections, the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution and the Language Education in Higher Education policy with regard to African

languages advocate for the development of African languages<sup>[28,34]</sup>. However, the ideal has remained at policy level, with no implementation plans to give effect to it. In the context of coloniality which continues to colour every aspect of life in South Africa, there is a need for redress of linguistic imperialism, since it perpetuates coloniality and leads to cultural oppression. Pragmatic interventions and measures should be taken to decolonise education, protect it from linguistic imperialism and offer an alternative to Eurocentric ideologies<sup>[49]</sup>.

The decolonisation strategies could involve revisiting the teacher education language curriculum, strengthening the teaching of African languages, intensifying research in African languages and providing appropriate resources for the development of these languages. Each is discussed below. The strategies discussed below are a means of re-centring African languages in teacher education.

### **5. Decolonising the Teacher Education Language Curriculum**

At the heart of decoloniality in education is curriculum renewal; that is, re-examining and amending the content offered to students, along with the teaching approaches and assessment strategies employed. Currently, there is concern about the Eurocentric approaches used to teach African languages and literacy in many South African classrooms.

It is asserted that decolonisers must use a variety of approaches (sociological, ideological and pragmatic) to fight against linguistic imperialism. In line with this view, the language curriculum of teacher education programmes should be revisited to ensure that appropriate terminology is developed and used consistently for the teaching not only of language and literacy, but for other disciplines such as mathematics, science and technology. This could be achieved through collaboration between linguistics and language departments or centres at universities. In South Africa, subject terminologies and dictionaries have already been developed by some institutions such as the Department of Arts and Culture and the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), and by research projects such as the Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA) project, which has developed science and geography learner-support materials for the Intermediate Phase<sup>[50]</sup>.

Many universities have commenced with terminology development. For example, the University of KwaZulu-Natal commenced with the use of isiZulu as a language of teaching and learning in certain teacher education programmes such as the PGCE over ten years ago<sup>[23]</sup>. Similarly, as part of the Western Cape Language Transformation Plan (LTP), the University of the Western Cape offered an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) through the medium of the three dominant languages in the Western Cape (English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa) in 2008. While this in-service training programme promised to transform language practices in the Western Cape by contributing to Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTBBE), it could not be sustained because of the change in political leadership and lack of funding.

Currently, the University of Fort Hare offers a bilingual Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) in English and isiXhosa. This is an innovative initiative that has to be supported through funding for its sustainability. It is worth noting that there are also initiatives in other universities that focus on the promotion of African languages in education. Lessons could be learned from these initiatives, especially with regard to materials development and the pedagogies employed. Currently, there is a lack of collaboration and coordination of such language transformation projects, with many universities working in silos.

Of importance in the decolonisation of the curriculum is the inclusion of African scholars in the design of the content offered to students, and the use of pedagogies that are not only student-centred but Afrocentric<sup>[51]</sup>. Afro-sensed approaches that value indigenous knowledge systems would disrupt the hegemonic Western epistemologies in education. Following Zavala's<sup>[22]</sup> decoloniality strategy, the language transformation initiatives mentioned above seek to recover indigenous epistemologies that have been colonised and generate new ways of knowing and being. In the context of the theme of this chapter, this entails the recovery of indigenous knowledge and a re-centring of African languages in teacher education.

## **6. Strengthen the Teaching of African Languages**

In colonial and apartheid South Africa, African languages were marginalised within the teacher education sys-

tem and taught mostly by underqualified persons. Following the post-apartheid standards whereby all teachers should at least have a Bachelor's degree, fewer students have taken African languages as a specialisation in teacher education since the early 2000s. The combination of factors includes poor bursary support for language specialisations when in comparison to the natural and economic sciences, and ill feelings toward African languages<sup>[52]</sup>. Such trends, then, portray the double bind of language devaluation and educational transformation.

It is highlighted that one requires both language competence and metalinguistic awareness, knowledge of the language's structure, and its impact on learning, for effective language education in teacher education. However, many South African student teachers are not first-language English speakers, thus limiting their capacity to effectively support multilingual learners. In this way, the reproduction of linguistic hierarchies perpetuates epistemic injustice, unequal access to disciplinary knowledge along linguistic boundaries.

African languages occupy a peripheral position in formal education, limited in operation to the Foundation Phase, where capacity becomes a constraint in teaching literacy in African languages. Other constraints include limited teacher training, a deficit of reagents, and continued Eurocentric approaches to pedagogy that undermine decision-making in early literacy in African languages<sup>[53]</sup>. This narrative is already apparent in national assessments that reveal that majority of learners in the Foundation Phase cannot read for the meaning. These literacy issues, emanating from inequalities entered by history, are undoubtedly stark reminders of how inherited pedagogical approaches do not intersect with the linguistic reality of most learners.

The marginalisation of African languages as additional languages in both basic and higher education extends to their functionality. They potentially link communities among themselves linguistically and culturally, but outside such web of communities, they are hardly taught or learnt. English functions ever so strongly as a language of hegemony; it is gladly treated as a first or additional language in the codes of other languages, yet for quite many of its populations, it is second. Such narrow linguistic framing hampers both teacher preparation and learner identity formation.

The MRTEQ policy framework acknowledges the significance of linguistic diversity and enlists five knowledge

domains for teacher education, which cover fundamental and situational knowledge. One of the six knowledge domains, namely the fundamental knowledge, basically entails learning a second language for conversational purposes. As the policy casts the exposure to African languages within this light, it seems that the argument for African languages has been undermined by a combination of low credit weighting and limited contact time for these courses, thus resulting in them being discredited by language students themselves. As a consequence, students end up graduating with very limited proficiency, which rage against the policy's intent to see African languages become an integral element in the wider teaching and learning ambit.

To address some of the systemic challenges, the DHET, supported by the European Union, is leading the establishment of Centres for African Language Teaching (CALTs) at selected universities. The objective of these centres is to build institutional capacity in African language teaching, particularly in assisting university lecturers and student teachers in teaching reading skills in African languages. Two pilot CALTs are currently in operation at the University of Johannesburg (for isiZulu and Sesotho) and the University of the Western Cape (for isiXhosa), with future plans for expansion to encompass other languages such as Setswana, Tshivenda, and isiNdebele.

CALTs constitute one of the tangible institutional innovations that link policy intent to implementation. These centres provide professional development, curriculum support, and material development in African languages, resources that have historically never been provided to teacher education. More importantly, they constitute a strategic attempt to elevate African languages intellectually toward recognition as mediums of instruction beyond just the Foundation Phase. If well established and scaled, CALTs will bring about a paradigm shift in the conduct of multilingual teacher education in South Africa and start to dismantle the dominant narrative that quality education is English-only.

However, the greater part of the sustainability of CALTs will be reliant on creating systemic support for their work. This should include aligning curriculum frameworks with research findings and credit allocation with best practice, as well as active promotion of language-positive attitudes from students and lecturers. Unless there is such structural backing, these centres are at risk of becoming symbolic gestures

rather than instigators of sustained reform. To uplift African languages in teacher education is surely not just a cultural interest; it is also a pedagogical and political imperative that ties in with cognitive justice and educational equity.

The poor integration of African languages in teacher education is, in essence, a function of long neglect, addressing the poorly defined policy relations, accompanied by structural inequalities<sup>[50,52]</sup>. However, countermeasures such as CALTs inspire hope, yet for the African language to be celebrated as key to transformation in education and not merely as token instruments in an English-dominant setting, a mode shift must take place. Such a decolonial reimagining of teacher education must place these languages squarely in the centre as languages of instruction, identity, and social change.

## **7. Advance Research in African Languages**

Currently, there is limited scholarship in the teaching and learning of African languages<sup>[13]</sup>. While there are emerging developments with regard to the use of African languages in writing Master's and Doctoral dissertations, and in publishing research work, this practice has not yet received full recognition in many academic institutions. Many research publication outlets accept manuscripts written in English only, even those that report on African language matters<sup>[54]</sup>. This practice privileges Eurocentric ideologies which tend to promote monolingualism, thus reinforcing linguistic imperialism.

Teaching and writing in African languages will contribute not only towards the intellectualisation of these languages<sup>[54]</sup> but will also create authentic literature to support the wider use of these languages in teaching and learning at universities. This is also a strategy of decolonising scientific knowledge to challenge linguistic imperialism. This view corresponds with It is argued that it is only through the use of African languages that a reading and writing culture will be strengthened.

## **8. Monitor and Support Language Transformation Initiatives**

Besides recent amendments to the Language Policy in Higher Education, which aim at promoting multilingual-

ism and developing African languages<sup>[55]</sup>, there are other projects that have been initiated to support the implementation of the policy in higher education. An example of such a project is the Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL) project, supported by Universities South Africa (USAf). CoPAL was established in 2016 to promote the status of African languages in South African universities. All 26 South African universities are represented in this project, which aims at promoting multilingualism by including African languages in teaching and learning. CoPAL is an intellectual and networking space for academics involved in the teaching of African languages and is a transformative initiative that is central to the language decolonisation project in education. However, more emphasis should be placed on effective implementation of the language policies in a manner that fosters inclusivity and students' epistemological access to knowledge.

Language decolonisation must start at the level of Basic Education so that learners gain exposure to African languages at an early age. The Department of Basic Education's (DBE's) Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) project, conceived in 2012, has not yielded tangible results with regard to the teaching and learning of African languages in the former White, Coloured and Indian schools, where these languages are not offered. The IIAL project is optional in these schools, and there are no teachers trained to teach African languages as additional languages. This project, if well implemented, could de-marginalise and restore the academic value of African languages in education.

Hence, it is recommended that English hegemony 'be challenged by having all children learn at least one African language up to school-leaving level and having competence in an African language as one of the requirements for university entrance'<sup>[56]</sup>. This view is progressive and relevant to advancing the decoloniality agenda, but it needs commitment from government leaders and other education stakeholders to ensure that it is effectively implemented in education. The speakers of African languages themselves must play an active role in the development and recognition of African languages in education as part of the decolonisation project<sup>[57]</sup>.

## 9. Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the deep interconnection between linguistic imperialism and coloniality, which are responsible for the continued marginalisation of African languages in teacher education. It has also exposed the manner in which the currently imposed status of African languages in initial teacher education undermines epistemological access, limits the cognitive development of student teachers, and, in turn, affects learning outcomes at the school level. These systemic gaps are not only theoretical and research matters; they continue to reproduce historical injustices and constrain the ability of education to act as an agent of transformation. Therefore, in line with such challenges, teacher educators ought to design language curricula that will account for and integrate indigenous knowledge systems. The genres will include oral narratives, folktales, proverbs, and poetry, which must never be regarded as being extra, but instead form the concrete basis for nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and cultural identity. African languages must be upheld beyond their usage as casual languages and work toward being seen as legitimate academic languages from the Foundation Phase to higher education. For researchers, stronger empirical studies are warranted to delve into what works in multilingual pedagogy, execute language policies towards inclusive practices, and investigate how Centres for African Languages Teaching (CALTs) can collaborate with teacher education. For teacher education institutions, curriculum reforms should be geared towards multilingualism, epistemic justice, and decolonial pedagogies, backed by policies supported by sustainable funding, institutional commitment, and systematic capacity-building programs for lecturers and students alike. Repositioning African languages at the core of teacher education could be one of the first moves in dismantling the colonial legacies and moving towards a more just, inclusive, and culturally rooted education system.

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V.S.N. and O.A.A; writing—review and editing, V.S.N. and O.A.A; visualization, V.S.N. and O.A.A; supervision, V.S.N. and O.A.A; project administration, V.S.N. and O.A.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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