

**The Practices of Graduates from the BA CEMS Bilingual
Programme that highlight the efficiency and effectiveness of the Curriculum**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy and effectiveness of the BA in Contemporary English and Multilingual Studies (CEMS) at the workplace. Regarding efficacy, this investigation focuses on how the programme capacitated the graduates with language skills to ensure that the outcomes are achieved. The multilingual content in two languages (English and Sepedi) aims to develop bilingual experts. The study is qualitative in nature and used 30 employed graduates from this bilingual programme who filled in questionnaires, and 10 of them were selected for interviews to get more clarity on the issues raised. The article is premised within the social constructivist theory. The study found that graduates (employees) meet different languages at their workplaces. One of such challenges was that they encountered languages that are unknown to them and were unable to fulfil their responsibilities. Secondly, most of them are not competent in the English language and hence struggle to satisfy their cliental. The study concludes that the programme needs a lot to provide efficiency and efficacy to the graduates.

Key words: Bilingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging, intellectualization of African languages, medium of instruction.

Introduction and background

The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy and effectiveness of the BA in Contemporary English and Multilingual Studies (CEMS) at the workplace. Regarding efficacy, this investigation focuses on how the programme may capacitate students with language skills to ensure that the programme meets the desired outcomes. The multilingual content in two languages aim to develop bilingual experts in both English and Sepedi. Many institutions of highly learning across the country experienced student protest indicating their discontent with language policies of their institutions. According to them, the policies are discriminative and fail to reflect the changing demographic

student population in a democratic South Africa. In view of the outcomes of the BA CEMS, the effectiveness and efficacy of the programme can be seen in the practices and experiences of the graduates at the workplaces where graduates demonstrate the applicability and suitability of the multilingual and Multicultural skills and abilities.

The content of this programme is distributed across 12 modules, taught over a six-semester period. CELS is constituted by modules from Applied English Language studies, while MUST modules developed a theoretical understanding of multilingualism and bilingual academic competence (Ramani & Joseph 2002: 234). In this regard, BA CEMS degree had as

their main aim to mould multilinguals who would stand a better chance of competition for employment at the diverse workplace. In addition, it set out to equip students with the skills and abilities to handle linguistic diversity aim at fostering both their personal and professional growth. Based on the forgoing argument, this research strives to develop a framework that will assist in improving the efficacy and effectiveness of the BA CEMS programme in preparing its graduate for the multilingual environment. Such a framework is believed would increase understanding of the programme's goals and objectives as well as may attempt to define relationships among inputs, activities, outputs, and the skills acquired by students. To achieve this goal, the programme is broken down into individual modules, which are further broken down into individual classes. The aim is to determine what kind of impact to be expected from graduates of the programme given the nature of the offering.

Madiba and Finlayson (2002:40) assert that intellectualization is a scheduled method of fast-tracking the progress and development of indigenous languages to boost their effective interface with modern developments, theories, and concepts. Languages may be considered modernized and intellectualized if they are used in educational instructions in any discipline from kindergarten to tertiary level (Sin-wai, 2004: 65). The intellectualization of African languages may lead to the democratization of access to scientific knowledge and technology to the benefit of the masses of the rural population who now wallow in ignorance, misery, disease and hunger because such life-saving knowledge and skills are confined to a foreign language accessible only to a privileged few (Mkandawire 2005: 173). Kaschula and

Maseko (2014) add that African languages should be intellectualised to function in government administration, science, technology, medicine, engineering, and other spheres of life.

Above all, the investigation would attempt to evaluate the modules and initiatives offered to the BA CEMS students throughout the degree. This can be made feasible by giving the participants a chance to identify the challenges and opportunities in their day to day interactions at the university and at the workplace, respectively. Furthermore, the investigation would zoom into the different languages that are used at the workplace, and the functions of these languages. A link would then be made between what the curriculum offers as well as the skills required in a multilingual environment.

Based on this, the students who are currently enrolled in the programme need to be exposed to the economic value of multilingualism. This therefore has a bearing on human growth as well as social transformation (Alexander 2013). It is important to note that the BA CEMS Degree is one of the few initiatives where an African language is used as a language of teaching and learning. Hence, Madiba (2013) argues that the university language policy offers an empowering space to introduce and strengthen the position of African Languages in higher education and not much progress has been made thus far. This is evident in the drop in numbers of students choosing African languages as their major subjects and the resultant threat of closure of some African language departments. Despite the fact that there are developing plans, the indigenous African Languages are not still given the attention required at higher education not only as subjects or media of instruction, but also as valued resource in learning, teaching and

research practices. Thus, the Ministerial Report on the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences (2011) recommended amongst others, an enquiry into the role of the indigenous African languages in enabling concept formation in African languages. The government is encouraging for the development of languages in policies and documents, but there are no initiatives and programmes implemented to foster these policies. Although the aims of the policy are good, implementing them remain a major fall back (Kaschula (2013: 4). She further argues that one of the main challenges in the development of African languages in higher education is at the policy implementation level. In addition, the language policy seems inspiring in its attempts to boost the use of African languages as media of instruction, as well as in the advancement of multilingualism in institutions. However, the problem is that it does not have an implementation plan. The Policy does not stipulate who is responsible to make sure it is implemented (Kaschula 2013: 4).

The BA CEMS has a maximum quota of 40 students per annum to be admitted into the programme. Since the launch of the programme in 2003, the first batch of students admitted into the programme were 8, and 6 graduated in 2006. Throughout the years, the numbers have increased slightly but the programme has never admitted the maximum number of 40 students. The number is often increased by the students who take Contemporary English modules (CELS) or Multilingual Studies (MUST) as part of another degree. The number drops drastically in the third year as the programme is then left with only those who are majoring in CEMS. The student enrolment figures from 2015-2019 demonstrates and shows that the numbers are slightly higher in first and second years

due to students who are taking the modules as electives. This status is a clear indication that even though the programme has been running for 15 years, it is still unable to attract the maximum number of 40 students and the enrolment figures are not growing. It also indicates that the students prefer to take the modules as electives but do not want to take the modules as a major and graduate as BA CEMS graduates. Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate the implementation of the programme and whether the content and outcomes reflect the purpose for which the degree was founded. It also explored whether the programme prepares students for the multilingual workplace environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the study focuses on the research participants' perceptions and experiences, we chose the **social constructivism theory** to frame it theoretically. The "constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience" (Merriam & Caffarella 1999: 260). Constructivism describes the way through which students decipher meaning from the material available and how these materials can be managed during teaching. Since Constructivism is an educational theory, teachers are required to take into consideration what students bring with them to give room to these students to put the students know how into practice. In view of this, the skills acquired from the programme need to assist graduates to deal with the challenges of multilingual/diverse workplace environmental challenges. Kanselaar (2002) projects two main strands of the constructivist perspective which include:

(a) constructivist perspective and,

(b) social-cultural perspective (Socio-constructivist perspective).

At this juncture, Roth (2000) seems to suggest that social entanglements/engagement and encounters provide opportunities for students to make sense out of events and situations. Roth (2000) also emphasises the importance of interactions with the environment and its people as the foundation or the basis/foundation of the knowledge base for every individual. In this regard, Derry (1999); McMahon (1997) stress the role of context (culture) in knowledge construction and meaning making based on the principles of the social constructivist theory.

Kim (2001) assumes that social constructivism is embedded in reality, knowledge and learning. To get a better understanding of this assumption, it is needful to throw more lights on these concepts below:

Reality:

Reality is known to be a co-construction of meaning during some interactions between persons, not something that exists before such a human activity. In view of this, the BA CEMS programme was constructed out of the need to prepare the graduates for the workplace, it did not just exist in an abstract manner. Kukla (2000) concurs that meaning is constructed by a community for that community, not for an individual. In line with social constructivism, reality does not exist before a social invention but emerges as a kind of discovery by the individuals that are involved in a situation.

Knowledge:

Kim (2001) defines knowledge as an outcome of human interactions informed by culture in a social milieu (Ernest 1999; Gredler 1997). Based on this, students decipher meaning when they engage with

peers in the classroom and in group discussions.

Learning:

Based on the constructivist perspective, learning is perceived as a social process. Learning does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passively developed by external forces (McMahon 1997). Based on this, the interactant's need to engage and participate in knowledge construction which is a result of societal creation not individual. To this effect, Social constructivism perceives learning as an engagement in cooperative and collaborative exercises between individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translanguaging

Meaning making may involve the use of two languages (L1 and L2) in concepts formation. Baker (2011) uses the term "translanguaging" as a strategy which can help to build up learners' cognitive development using two languages. Garcia (2014); Garcia and Kleyn (2016) explain that translanguaging in education can be defined as a process where students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include all the language practices of students in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new socio-political realities by interrogating linguistic inequality. Baker (2011) therefore, uses "translanguaging" as the strategy facilitates the development of cognition in the use of two languages simultaneously. In like manner, García and Wei (2013), view translanguaging as systematic and pedagogically means of connecting the language of learning and teaching and the languages of learners. Translanguaging is therefore the move by individuals in a

bilingual practice from one language to another from their language repertoire to communicate in a range of social contexts. The use of Sepedi and English by the BA CEMS students is a typical case of translanguaging.

The main outcome of translanguaging is not only to assist learners comprehend words, phrases, and sentences in two languages but using both languages to help them understand theories and expedite mental growth. Translanguaging focuses on both learners' and teachers' use of two languages (Tlowane and Foncha 2020: 74-92). As such, Tlowane and Foncha (2020: 74-92) argue that it is seen as an approach to bring about better learning. The thinking underlying translanguaging is that when all the languages present among the learners are used, then the quality and depth of learning should improve. This means that learners may gain a better understanding of concepts, participate fully and more effectively. This aspect can be recognized in Multilingual studies classes, where students often come up with new terminologies due to lack of a concept in Sepedi. Through mediation, the lecturers and the students often come up with terms that they may use in Sepedi together. During this process, the students depend on their knowledge and the previous knowledge in the English language. It is also noticed in the confidence demonstrated by these students when they participate in class using their mother tongue language.

Code switching

Deibert (2008: 3) asserts that "Code-switching is the ability of individuals to select a language according to the interlocutor, the situational context, the topic of the conversation and other factors

that influence communication". Participants often switch languages within a conversation or interaction based on the sociolinguistic rules and without infringing on specific grammatical constraints. Hence, code switching can happen intentionally or unintentionally (Cantone 2007). That notwithstanding, the reason for code-switching may be cognitive. Thus, Deibert (2008:3) argues that bilingual and multilingual speakers normally incline to code-switching: conversational code-switching or situational code-switching. Conversational code-switching refers to the interchange of languages or dialects within a conversation on one topic often within one speaker's turn (Mesthrie 1995: 195). Therefore, code switching can be intentional or unintentional. Nonetheless, the purpose of code-switching may be cognitive (to bring about better comprehension) or social (to show solidarity with other speakers of the same language (Mesthrie 1995: 195). It on these grounds that Deibert (2008:3) refers to code-switching as the term for different languages meeting one another in a conversation. Furthermore, he explains that bilingual and multilingual speakers normally tend to code-switch.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism is practically present in every country in the world, as in all different societal cast system (class) and in all age groups (Grosjean, 2010). Hoffmann (2014) defines bilingualism as a person's ability to speak as well as write in two languages. Adika and Asante (2015) extend the term bilingualism to an individual with possession or 'competence of two languages, even though the degree of fluency in each language may differ as a result of individual language acquisition circumstances and frequency of use'. To

this end, Bloomfield (1935: 56) points out that bilingualism as the native-like control of two languages. Grosjean and Li (2012) extend the assertion further and refer to bilingualism 'as the use of two languages' or 'dialects in everyday life'. The above definitions cover the use of two languages. However, others like Herk (2012); Filipovic and Putz (2014); Adika and Asante (2015) include the degree of fluency and competence.

The BA CEMS programme is bilingual in a sense that it uses both English and Sepedi as media of instruction. Both languages are used to facilitate lessons and for assessment purposes. It is therefore important to highlight the objectives of bilingual programmes and what these bilingual programmes set out to achieve. Hence, experience from bilingual education programmes has proven in practice that acquiring strong skills in an African language and in the official language can be very beneficial, as in the case of Burkina Faso's bilingual programme (Ilboudo 2003: 1086). Its learners have developed strong multilingual competences for different kinds of set-ups. The programme deliberately supports the professional development of learners. It is responsive to socio-economic activities of the region. In addition, it has built-in professional training and provides bridges to technical, vocational, and higher education careers (Alidou *et al.* 2008: 134).

Hyme (1972) defines proficiency can be seen as a language user's control of the formal and functional properties of language such that they are able to express and understand meaning accurately, fluently, and appropriately according to context. In this light, Canale and Swain (1980) say that tuition in proficiency takes as its starting point the notion of communicative competence, first coined

and explicated by Hymes (1972). It is therefore 'important to note' that it is not enough for learners to be perceived as proficient in both Sepedi and English but they also need to have a clear understanding of when and how to use these languages in different contexts. Hyme (1972) also insist that proficiency refers to a general competence in language and as such comprises a set of generic skills and abilities. In light of this, proficiency is understood in a framework that is reflected in grammar and syntax, general listening skills, vocabulary development, general reading and writing skills, the development of communication strategies and the pragmatics of communication and associated concerns with politeness and implicature and inference Canale and Swain 1980). In this regard, Hymes (1972) further suggests that students require opportunities to develop fluency and the confidence to deploy their formal and functional knowledge of the language in authentic contexts both within and outside the academic environment.

Multilingualism

multilingualism is the ability of a speaker to express him or herself in several languages with equal and or 'native-like proficiency'. From the above definition, being a multilingual speaker, one must be competent in the many languages at their disposal. However, Kemp (2009) and Grosjean (2010) define multilingualism as the use of more than two languages. According to Fortanet-Gomez (2013), multilingualism refers to an individual situation in which two or more languages are known and used by a speaker. People who come from multilingual nations tend to be bilingual (Adika & Asante 2015).

Varon (2016) state that ‘multilingualism is generally understood as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that may refer either’ to a speaker’s ‘capabilities and competence along a linguistic cline’ in using multiple languages (individual ‘multilingualism’) or to the alternate ‘the use of two or more languages within a community (societal multilingualism)’. Fortanel-Gomez (2013); Ong (2015) maintain that individual multilingualism refers to ‘the number and types of’ languages and ‘varieties an individual speaks’ because that constitutes ‘their linguistic repertoire’. Alternatively, societal multilingualism focuses on the different language types and varieties that community members speak (Varon 2016).

The effectiveness of the curriculum for bilingual studies

Bilingual education provides language skills that aid in employment, increase the educational success of students, encourage peace among different ethnic groups, support equality in educational settings, help to solve social conflicts among ethnic groups, and benefits students who have different ethnical background in the community (Cummins 2000: 54). A bilingual education program with an education system has also an important role building a strong relationship between two different ethnic groups (Ozfi dan & Burlbaw 2017).

bilingual education program preserves cultural identity, ethnic identity, and the linguistic knowledge of minority group and help to socialize people for full participation in their communities (Ngai 2002: 243). Bialystok et al. (2014) take this further and argue that research indicates that bilingual students can usually understand the content of their lessons more effectively and successful in their schooling. “Students may be able to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings

more comfortably in their classes once they are educated in their mother tongue (Cummins, 1991; Morse, 1994).” Thus, the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction tends to build student’s self-esteem and confidence (Ricento 2013).

Richards (2013) argues that as a tradition, each curriculum should kick off from the objectives of the programme. He is totally against the fact that teachers are often not included in the design of the curriculum but for some strange reasons, they are expected to implement it. Finland seems to be one of the nations that involve their teachers in the development, interpretation and implementation of the local and national curriculum and policy (Siiner 2014). Such involvement appears to be an ideal since the teachers are the actual practitioners who are in the field and who can see that the outcomes are achieved.

Challenges faced by the graduates at the workplace

Sanchez (2017) thinks that poor communication reduces quality, weakens productivity, and essentially leads to anger and lack of trust among individuals within the organization. Workplaces require certain skills to employ graduates to different positions. The aim of the BA CEMS programme is to produce graduate who are efficient in both English and Sepedi. Writing, reading, research and communication skills are some of the skills expected by employers from these bilingual graduates. On these grounds, Adeyemo et al. (2010) think that for graduates to be employable, they need to possess work attitudes, computer skills, communication skills and work environment exposure.

In this light, Dilrukshi et al. (2005) say that the lack of effective communication skills that includes reading, writing, and speaking are some of the major factors that impede

graduates from getting employment. Perera and Perera (2009) concur that lack of communication skills by the graduates renders them unemployable. Based on this, it is necessary for employees to get an understanding of the types of communication skills that are factored into the BA CEMS programme. It should also be noted that these skills are necessary for the graduates to perform their duties in the workplaces. Effective oral communication skills, effective basic writing and reading skills, competence in English and Sepedi and development of good interpersonal communication skills.

METHODOLOGY

This article is harvested from Tlowane's Doctorate thesis where Foncha was her supervisor. With specific focus to this article, the data used was collected from the graduates at their workplaces through interviews and questionnaires. We started data collection with the graduates using questionnaires. The data is qualitative and investigates the challenges of these graduates and how they were prepared to handle such challenges. In purposive sampling, we choose subjects who are relevant to the research topic. The participants chosen to respond to the questionnaires were 30 employed graduates from the BA CEMS from which group the ten interviewees were taken. The questionnaires were relevant to help us identify the experiences of the employed graduates as well as the different fields that they are employed in. Through their responses, we used the questionnaires to select the 10 graduates whom I did in-depth interviews with. The graduates were first requested to complete questionnaires and then the interviews were used as a follow up to the questionnaires. The interview was relevant to this study because it gave us an understanding of the practices/experiences

and their perspectives. Where the interviewee had difficulty answering a question or provided only a brief response, we used cues or prompts to encourage them to consider the question further. Also, we had the freedom to probe the interviewees to elaborate on the responses as we deemed necessary or we followed any line of inquiry that might have been introduced by the interviewees. When we interviewed graduates, who are employed as educators, we had to phrase the questions in a way that it would be relevant to their line of work. Such freedom guided by the semi-structured interviews permitted us to choose participants who could provide me with their subjective views about the phenomenon under investigation. We used thematic analysis where we coded our data under themes that were generated from the literature and data collection.

RESULTS

The language used at the workplace

The data here was provoked by the interview schedule and questionnaires questions with the graduates. Below are the responses to the interview:

Q9: What are your general experiences (positive and negative) with language usage at work?

Graduate 3: *We use English but during consultations students use their mother tongue, sometimes you find, they don't understand something in English then they come and ask in their mother tongue and request you maybe to also explain if possible in their mother tongue. And this can be a very difficult situation because students come from different backgrounds, so some try using their language and they expect you to switch to their language*

which is difficult but at times you try for them to understand.

Graduate 4: Here at work we get people from different places coming in to register businesses. Some of them speak languages I don't understand. But it always feels good when the customer understands Sepedi because I can easily explain things and they understand well. But other customers for instance would want to ask in Afrikaans and I cannot speak Afrikaans. So, I ask them to speak English, and I can see on their face that they are not happy.

Q10: How do you handle colleagues/students who speak languages other than yours?

Graduate 1: Most of them are from Sepedi speaking backgrounds but what I have realised is that, their Sepedi is not the same, so I don't know whether to call it dialects but they can use the same word that does not mean the same thing. Sometimes I would experience some challenges with some learners who are from a certain section, they have a way of naming things, as compared to the ones that are from around the school. So, I end up demonstrating, or use actions to try and understand what they are referring to.

Graduate 4: If I don't understand the language spoken by the customer, I explain to them that I cannot speak their language and ask that they speak English. But unfortunately, not all of them are able to.

Linguistic challenges at the workplace

Q11: Are there any challenges you encounter in communication with colleagues and clients? Explain?

Graduate 3: Yes, there are challenges, as I said diversity, some of them are speaking

Tshivenda and other languages that we have here on campus and its difficult because in BA CEMS we only had our Sepedi and our English so which is why we are comfortable in both languages rather than others like Tshivenda and other languages. We are having a problem there, even if we try but it is a problem because we didn't do all those languages

Graduate 5: With my colleagues we already know who speaks which languages. And even though we are not mother tongue speakers of other languages but we do understand each other, and it is never a problem when you respond with your own language and not the one you are being spoken to. But with clients its different because we want them to leave our offices happy and satisfied by our service. So, if I don't understand the language a client is speaking, and the native speaker for that language is not in office, I then ask if they can use English.

The common challenge from the respondents is the inability to help their clients in their native languages. The languages mentioned are from Limpopo, but the graduates are still unable to speak or assist the clients in Afrikaans or Tshivenda.

Q13: What content in the BA CEMS programme prepared you for these challenges?

Graduate 4: For me BA CEMS helped me improve my English and because we were always doing presentations it helped me with confidence to talk with a lot of people. There was also a module we did on understanding other people's backgrounds, so I always try to understand other people's backgrounds especially when I see that the person is getting angry.

Graduate 6: Since sometimes I do proof reading and these are scholarly books and all that, somehow I rely on my experience

from the BA CEMS, because we were taught how to analyse, interpret content instead of taking things just as they are, I am able to grasp the context. So I will say to a certain extent BA CEMS has helped me understand how language functions especially in the workspace where now you need to deal with different people, multiple personalities and different types of writings and so on.

Q15: So how do you attempt to overcome these challenges?

Graduate 6: *For me BA CEMS had really prepared me adequately to deal with workplace challenges because I have been through different position, first as a research assistant and now an editorial assistant. I am able to cope with all my responsibilities because the programme has equipped me with language skills such as writing and good communication skills.*

Graduate 5: *I plan to register and further my studies so that I can learn things such as proof reading and editing. It will really help me a lot because here at work we get paid by the service or work we have done. So when we get such clients I cannot take on such work because I do not have the relevant skills.*

In instances where graduates with clients who use foreign language, they often delegate the work to other colleagues, or as stated by Graduate 5, they cannot do the work at all.

Skills required for the workplace

Q12: How did the BA CEMS prepare you for these experiences?

Graduate 3: *Yes, I would say yes it prepared me fully for that because now I am able to transfer the English language skills from my mother tongue and again transfer from mother tongue to English.*

Graduate 5: *BA CEMS has assisted me a lot in using both English and Sepedi efficiently and to also communicate well in both the languages. But it has not assisted much in dealing with other languages that I do not know. So, I sometimes feel like my experience is limited to just these two languages.*

The responses from the graduates indicate that they have acquired skills such as Transference, where they learnt one skill in Sepedi and can transfer the same skill into English.

Q13: What content in the BA CEMS programme prepared you for these challenges?

Graduate 1: *I have learnt so much about transference of skills, I remember the theoretical framework of it, I remember scaffolding. It's really working for me as a grade 3 teacher because I enjoy moving learners from what they know to what they did not know, so that is what I see my teaching skills towards language is being effective so it is because of BA CEMS that I enjoy teaching language*

Graduate 3: *Yes there are, the use of language in context, in terms of what I am doing right now in terms of ESP, it helped me to know that in different context, people use different languages, different vocabulary for different context and how people behave in different contexts, that is one which I think is related to what I am doing right now. Because in English for specific purpose, which is English for accounting I have to adapt in terms of vocabulary in terms of how they use the language and how they use that language*

The response from the graduate 5, implies that they also use the skills learnt from electives to complement the content they have learnt in the BA CEMS degree.

The effectiveness of the BA CEMS curriculum in preparing the graduates for the workplace

Q13: How did the BA CEMS programme prepare you for workplace challenges?

Graduate 3: *For it's the fact that I feel I can express myself well compared to when I first arrived here at varsity. It was hard for me to stand in from of people and talk. And this degree is about languages so you can't make it if you can't express yourself well.*

Graduate 1: *I'm always the one offering to chair meetings whenever we have meetings with my colleagues, I know how to accommodate people and also make sure that everyone understands each other. My colleagues prefer that I do it because they know that I do it well.*

The data suggests that the graduates feel that the BA CEMS programme has prepared them for the workplace. The ability to accommodate other colleagues' different backgrounds, public speaking skills and respecting other people's languages.

Dealing with diversity in the workplace

Q7: Do you communicate with people who speak a different language to yours at work?

Graduate 4: *The province where I'm based is multilingual, so yes on a daily basis I communicate with people from different languages*

Graduate 6: *As a front desk worker, I answer the phone and our clients speak many languages.*

The data indicates that the graduates communicates with people from different language backgrounds in the workplace. Graduate 6 is a front desk worker, she is contact with clients and answers the telephone, as a result she communicates

with people from different language backgrounds.

Dealing with multilingualism in the workplace

Q6: How do you communicate with people at your workplace?

Graduate 1: *With my colleagues about language I am learning the most importance of multilingualism because my school is diversified and we have different language speakers, and I am a dialect speaker, we have educators from Swaziland, from eastern cape, Xhosa speaking educators, when it comes to English it becomes our uniting language or lingua franca in our school between the Sepedi speakers and the other language speakers*

Graduate 2: *Since well this place is a multicultural environment, we both know that Sovenga simply is for Sotho, Tsonga and Venda but though somehow Zulu and other language speakers are around here but mostly when we speak we use medium of instruction which is English. But sometimes we switch since well we are multilingual speakers we switch to Sepedi, if you come across a Tsonga speaking that's when I find myself mixing Tsonga with English or with Sepedi*

The graduates are working in multilingual environments. They have colleagues who speak different and they use English as a unifying language.

Q6: Are there any challenges you encounter in communication with colleagues and clients? Explain?

Graduate 1: *We use English but it's not always the case that English resolves our challenges, as a dialect speaker there are some terms I know only in my language,*

and I don't have the right word in Sepedi, and I also don't know the right word in English, so I end up using gestures, actions or pictures so that I can try to communicate with the next person so that they can understand exactly what I am talking about.

Graduate 2: *I would say in my experience I don't have any challenge actually, since well I am multicultural and I have been here for some time, I'm used to other languages, some like Tsonga I can hear but then fail to respond in Tsonga but then I can respond in my mother tongue or in English so there is no any challenge with the language*

Q7: How do you handle colleagues/students who speak languages other than yours?

Graduate 1: *Most of them are from Sepedi speaking backgrounds but what I have realised is that, their Sepedi is not the same, so I don't know whether to call it dialects but they can use the same word that does not mean the same thing. Sometimes I would experience some challenges with some learners who are from a certain section, they have a way of naming things, as compared to the ones that are from around the school. So, I end up demonstrating, or use actions to try and understand what they are referring to.*

Graduate 4: *Most of the times I communicate well with the customers. When I can see that they don't understand what I am saying in English I ask if they can understand Sepedi. And if they say yes then I get happy cause it becomes easy to explain things for them. But others would be speaking Xitsonga or Tshivenda or Afrikaans and other languages then we are forced to go back to English. And you find these are old people who wanted to maybe register a non-profit organisation, but they*

do not meet the requirements and they still don't understand my explanation because they are in English

The graduates always ask their colleagues and clients to use English if they are speaking a language that the employees do not understand.

Job satisfaction

Q3: What would you say is your success in teaching this programme?

Lecturer 3: *To actually see my students, graduate, them coming back to me through messages, through phone calls saying mam I am placed at this particular institution, I'm doing this and that, or even saying mam I have registered for further studies*

Lecturer 3: *The students we have in the programme requires a different type of support. They are not the same as students in other well-established programmes, so we develop a different type of bond and relationship with them. I keep contact with my students even after they have completed their studies. Most of them use me as their reference and they often revert to me when they secure jobs. The happiness in their voice and experience them grow into young adults into different professions makes me feel like I have done something right.*

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

The BA CEMS degree aims to develop students into bilingual specialists who can compete effectively for employment in the South Africa's multilingual terrain. The programme also strives 'to equip students with the skills that' are necessary to carry out advocacy for multilingualism in their future professions (Ramani & Joseph 2002: 235).

Graduates (employees) meet different languages being used at work. As bilingual

graduates, they have been using Sepedi and English but when they get to the workplace, they are now faced with other languages where they are expected to provide services in. These are often languages that are unknown to them and as a result they are unable to fulfil their responsibilities (Tlowane & Foncha 2020). As an institution that is based in the rural areas, the students admitted at the university are previously disadvantaged because they are not competent to communicate in English. When students come for individual consultations with the lecturers, it is because they cannot follow the lessons in the classroom through the English Medium. Others come to consult individually because they do not have the confidence to ask questions in English in front of the whole class.

Since the goal of the BA CEMS programme is to provide students with equal time exposure to two languages and to use both languages as media of instruction, this is what the curriculum set out to achieve (Christian 1996; Torres-Guzma'n 2002). The principal aim here is to take a language (Sepedi) that was previously disadvantaged and give it a status of being a language of learning and teaching at a higher learning institution. By so doing, the language is also given equal status like English, as the programme offers twelve modules in a period of three years in which six are taught in Sepedi and the other six are taught in English. This gives both languages equal time and exposure. However, in the workplace, the recognized and most use language remains English.

Williams (2003) suggests that translanguaging often uses the stronger language to develop the weaker one and thereby contributing towards a potentially relatively balanced development of two languages. Through children's L1

experience, they are likely to have developed an understanding of concepts they might have encountered in their early reading of L2 (Cummins et al. 2001: 83). In this regard, the students have a strong background and knowledge of their mother tongue which is Sepedi. When students are admitted in the BA CEMS, they are expected to have basic communication skills in English and Sepedi. This is to help them to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency in both these languages.

According to Gluth (2008: 6) Code switching is the mixing of elements of two linguistic varieties within a single utterance or text. Based on this, Code switching in both the English lessons and Multilingual Studies lessons happen amongst the students themselves. Code switching is a skill that may be applied by graduates at the workplaces when dealing with multilingualism. This however means that the graduates may only be able to code switch between English and Sepedi. Code-switching allows a speaker to meet another speaker half-way, establish common ground and show flexibility and openness (Wardhaugh 2011). By code switching, the graduate can make the other person feel accommodated to show the willingness to want to assist that particular individual.

Many of the BA CEMS graduates are employed, although some of them are employed in fields that are not related to their professional skills. The concept of graduate employability is defined as the ability of the graduates to penetrate the labour market while obtaining jobs that are related to the skills they acquired from Educational Institutions. In this view, Rothwell and Arnold (2007) argue that employability refers to the ability to acquire a job and partake to duties corresponding to what was learned in formal education.

Conclusion

The study revealed that graduates are faced with multilingual workplace challenges based on the numerous national languages in South Africa. Based on this, one may say that the graduates do not appear to have the required skills to negotiate meaning with languages that are not known to them are used to communicate at the workplaces. They are met with languages that are foreign to them and as a result, they appear unable to perform their duties to the maximum due to language barrier. In light of this, English appears to be the dominant language used between the employers and their employees at the workplace. Thus, not much is done to promote the use of African languages at the workplaces. As such,

English which is the primary language of government, business and commerce still functions as a lingua franca. Furthermore, it is the preferred medium of instruction in most schools and tertiary institutions (the only other medium of instruction at advanced levels at present is Afrikaans). In terms of societal influence, it is evident that English has spread far beyond the domain British origin (Mesthrie 1993). To bridge the language barrier at the workplace, the use of English as the language of communication is needful. The findings also point that the students lack competency in English and therefore require extensive support to engage and participate in English classes

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