

The multilingual Practices of the BA CEMS (Bilingual programme) graduates at the work place: Theoretical-applied perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the theoretical knowledge and its application by the BA CEMS degree graduates at the work place. The degree is in keeping with the South African government's commitment to the maintenance and promotion of African languages and multilingualism as articulated in its Constitution of 1996. The BA CEMS degree aims to develop students into bilingual specialists who can compete effectively for employment in South Africa's multilingual terrain. In this regard, the rationale for the study is to investigate ways through which BA CEMS programmes support its graduates through the curriculum as well as prepare them for the workplace. We strongly believe that such a degree can help to foster good citizenry at the work place in terms of the ability to use both the hegemonic language (English) on the one hand and indigenous African Language on the other. Methodologically, we interviewed graduates from the programme at their work places to better understand their practices/experiences on multilingualism and how they are coping with diversity. The main findings indicate that their dealings with diversity were based on trial and error rather than on the theoretical knowledge from their BA CEMS programme. The article makes a case for interrogating the curriculum so that the efficacy and the efficiency of the programme may be improved to provide graduates with the most relevant skills to handle diversity at the work place.

Introduction/background

The BA CEMS was the first undergraduate degree in South African higher education offered in two languages, English and Sepedi. It was a pioneer programme and there has been no other degree combining English and any African language(s) as medium of instruction (Ramani & Joseph, 2002). The degree comprises two learning programmes, offered as majors, Contemporary English Language Studies (CELS) taught and assessed through the medium of English and Multilingual Studies (MUST), taught and assessed through the medium of Sepedi giving a balance to both languages as media of instruction. The content of this program is distributed across 12 modules, taught over a period of six semesters. CELS has modules in Applied English Language studies similar to those offered in other universities, while MUST modules develop a theoretical understanding of multilingualism and bilingual academic competence (Ramani & Joseph, 2002, p. 234).

The degree is synonymous with the South African government's commitment to maintain and promote African languages and multilingualism as articulated in its Constitution of 1996. The degree also seeks to implement a key recommendation of South Africa's National Language Policy for Higher Education, known as "the development in the medium to long-term South African languages as media of instruction in higher education alongside English and Afrikaans" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 15). This policy is mandatory to all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa in order for them to promote institutional multilingualism, by developing and implementing policies and practices that support the use of African languages in teaching, learning and administration.

The BA CEMS degree also 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, p. 235).

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

As the study focuses on the graduate's perceptions and experiences, we felt that social constructivism theory could help to frame the article theoretically. The different experiences of these graduates form an opinion (empirical evidence) about the program. Constructivism is commensurate with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which is based on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed, where the role-players need some kind of negotiation to come to terms with their theoretical knowledge and actual practices at the work place. Equally important are the skills acquired for the workplace. With the skills acquired from the programme, the graduates are considered to be able to cope with the multilingual challenges at the work place in line with the Language for Higher Education 2002 policy and the promotion of Multilingualism. Constructivism theory gels well as a framework to this article in the same way that the knowledge acquired from BA CEMS only provides a set of skills and abilities that may materialise at the discretion of the graduates. Diversity in terms of language and culture

at the work place therefore becomes a cause for concern. In view of this, there is no right or wrong way to handle such diversity but merely through negotiation and experience. The Bilingual nature of BA CEMS becomes a pathway for the graduates for Multilingualism as informed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Language planning, policy and implementation

In this section, we raise and discuss some issues and insights that address language planning, policy and implementation, as we believe that these are vital to our study.

Language planning consists of three types of activities; namely, status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning (Reagan, 2002, p. 420). In the South African context, examples of status planning include the selection of official languages and the use of various languages in official and semi-official settings. This is prominent in the medium of instruction in schools, in law courts and by the public broadcaster (Made, 2010). Status planning, according to Crystal (1997, p. 95), deals with the standing of one language in relation to others. In a similar vein, Cooper (1989, p. 99) says that status planning refers to the deliberate effort to influence the allocation of functions among a community's languages. In this regard, status planning becomes a particular language or a variety that may be chosen for specific purposes and **being** given an official status.

According to Shohamy (2000, p.45), language policy is the primary mechanism for organising, managing and manipulating language use in society. It is through language policy that decisions are made about language that should be legitimised, used, learned, and taught. Language policy acts as **a** manipulating tool in the continuous battle between different ideologies. This manipulation occurs at a number of levels and in a number of directions especially in relation to the legitimacy of using and learning certain languages. To this effect, it provides the right to speak and learn certain languages in a given context. Language policy also embraces laws and regulations or policy documents that specify how and where **each** language should be used. Language policy plays a vital role in the society. It also provides guidelines to the people as to how to speak, pronounce, read and write (orthography) their languages. In most cases, language policy is formulated to solve language problems or language related problems. As language practitioners, we are of the view that the policy makers should take the context seriously to make sure that the implementation of the policy would not become a curricular nightmare.

Language policy is the language planning by the governments" (Tollefson, 1991, p. 16). The distinction between governmental and non-governmental activities reflects an uncritical social theory perspective that ignores the close relationship between public and private sectors. That is, language policy becomes one of mechanisms for locating language within social structures so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources. Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use, which implies that there is a dynamic relationship between social relations and language policy (Tollefson, 1991). Based on the position we have voiced above; we are inclined to

suggest that language planning should dissociate itself from class (power) and must strive to give access to everyone.

Language-in-Education Policy (1997) aims to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and religion, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged. To this end, De Wet (2002, p. 119) postulates that in accordance with the Constitution and the Schools Act, the Department of Education's Language-in-Education Policy aims to promote multilingualism and official languages which in the context of South Africa includes all the nine official languages. With this in mind, we suggest that the Bill of Rights and the constitution should be taken serious when selecting the language of learning and teaching to grant opportunity to a majority. We also think that this would be able to place graduates from the programme in a good position to deal with diversity at the work place. Having discussed so far those issues that relate to language planning, policy and implementation, we reckon that we now need to focus on language policy in higher education, and that is what we wish to do in the section below.

Language Policy in Higher Education (LPHE)

LPHE (2002) was produced by the Department of Higher Education in South Africa to deal with languages in higher education institutions of learning. In light of this, Vila and Bretxa (2014, p. 135) assert that the governance of higher education in South Africa is executed in terms of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997. Section 27(2) requires that subject to the policy determined by the minister, the council, with the concurrence of the senate, must determine the language policy of a public higher education institution, and must publish and make it available upon request.

According to Madiba (2004), transformation in South African higher education is required in the sense that the legacy of apartheid reflected in the underdevelopment of African languages must be eliminated. The multilingual nature of South African campuses is acknowledged and validated by the LPHE, which requires all higher education institutions to advance the use of African languages. Thus, Van Der Walt (2004, p.141) writes: "in line with the constitution founding provisions of non-racialism, non-sexism, human dignity and equity, the constitution not only accords equal status to all our languages, but recognizes that given the marginalization of indigenous languages in the past, the state "must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages"". The LPHE seeks to redress the imbalance and injustice of the past whilst mapping the way forward for the promotion and development of indigenous languages. The promotion of multilingualism in higher education is also aimed at creating an environment in which all languages work together for the benefit of the student community. Makalela and McCabe (2013) are of the view that a multilingual university encompasses all situations where administration, teaching and/ (or) research are, to some extent, conducted in more than one language at the institution. Based on this, we are

inclined to say that transformation is simply used as a political slogan instead of aligning with the social reality.

This policy, however, comes with its own challenges. Kaschula (2013, p. 4) argues that one of the main challenges in the development of African languages in higher education is at policy level. An excellent language policy, which provides for the development of African languages and the promotion of multilingualism in the education sector exists. The policy, however, often lacks a plan of implementation as well as directives on who should lead or drive its implementation. Although the languages of instruction are Sepedi and English, we do not see any balance between them since English remains dominant. Thus, there is need for the language policy on the one hand, and the degree programme on the other hand to promote the use of not only English, but also competence in other indigenous languages.

The use of African languages in education

The issues and insights we have covered earlier make it necessary for us to focus on the use of African languages in education and we propose to do that in this section.

Maseko (2009) holds the view that there are a number of advantages for using African languages as primary languages in tertiary education. During tertiary education, the young learners may strive to fit the new concepts within their conceptual and intellectual framework and experiences in order to comprehend and internalize information. Where a foreign language is used, the students may lack the supportive tool for proper comprehension, deepening their grasps of ideas and articulation of issues.

The official languages of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, isiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. However, in practice, not all languages are accorded equal status in LPHE (2002:2). Section 29 (2) of LPHE stipulates that, “Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in the public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.” In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of this right, the state is obliged to consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account equity, practicability and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices. It is our belief that simply giving these languages the status of official languages in the policy without catering for their use in the public domain and education is not worthwhile. This leads us to focus on the intellectualization of African languages in the section that follows this one.

The intellectualisation of African languages

Madiba and Finlayson (2002, p. 40) assert that intellectualisation is a planned process of accelerating the growth and development of indigenous languages to enhance their effective interface with modern developments, theories and concepts. A language is said to be

modernized and intellectualised if the particular language being developed is used in educational instructions in any discipline from kindergarten to tertiary level (Sin-wai, 2004, p. 65). The intellectualisation 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, p. 173). Kaschula and Maseko (2014) add that African languages should be intellectualised in order to function in government administration, science, technology, medicine, engineering, and other spheres of life. Although the government does so much lip services to Multilingualism, we are aware that the necessary resources to foster all the nine official languages as languages of administration and education are not provided. A lot still needs to be done to develop the BA CEMS curriculum.

Multilingual/Bilingual Education

We believe that this section should serve as a sequel to all that we have covered so far and at this juncture it is important for us to focus on multilingual and bilingual education.

‘Multilingualism’ is thus best seen as an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of linguistic contexts and practices. Language status, speaker status, national histories, individual proficiencies and institutional contexts are some of the main variables that shape a great diversity of ‘multilingualisms.’ Where this diversity is erased in context-free universalistic theorizing, multilingualism usually comes to be seen as a combination of serial or parallel monolingualisms as observed by Piller, (2015, p. 28).

multilingualism frequently tells us that our world is no longer ‘diverse’ but ‘super-diverse’; that the multilingual practices of our time need entirely new terms ...’ to be adequately explained (Piller, 2015, p. 30).

Dual-medium education programmes in traditional minority contexts are primarily designed for the promotion of a minority language that face major challenges within the recent paradigm of linguistic diversity against the background of migration, mobility and policy-making. The goal of these programmes is to provide students with equal time exposure to two languages and to use both languages as media of instruction (Christian, 1996; Torres-Guzman 2002). Multilingual education refers to the use of more than two languages in education, an important development in our globalized world where two languages in education may not be enough. In addition, multilingual education is also used to refer to the teaching of more than two languages to make students at least trilingual (Cenoz, 2009). Furthermore, multilingual education is also the use of the many different languages of students in classrooms today to make subject matter comprehensible and also to enhance the development of a dominant language (Cenoz, 2009).

To this end, we believe that Bilingual education has to respond to the language practices of a people. Bilingual education then takes on a social justice purpose, reinforcing the idea that

language is used by people to communicate and participate in multiple contexts. A bilingual education that extends children's own language repertoire by approaching other linguistic features enables the children to be equal participants in many communities of practice and to truly become traditional bilinguals or multilinguals.

Taking into consideration the range of issues we have so far articulated in this article; we are inclined to believe that the Language Policy in Higher Education in South Africa is designed to develop indigenous African languages in higher education institutions as guidelines for language administration and language use. The challenge facing higher education is to ensure the simultaneous development of a multilingual environment in which all languages are developed as academics/scientific languages, while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of instruction do not serve as a barrier to access and success (LPHE 2002, p. 5).

Intercultural Communication Competence

A discussion of some key issues in intercultural communication competence is unavoidable in a paper given the centrality and immediacy of multilingual and bilingual education to it. Therefore, we wish to use this section to focus on intercultural communication competence.

Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) is the ability to interact with other people but the interaction takes place between people from different cultures and countries in a foreign language, the knowledge of the participants of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately and their awareness of the specific meaning, values and connotations of the language (Aguilar, 2010). ICC is regarded as a precondition for successful intercultural interaction and encounters which involve meeting and communicating with persons representing another cultural background. ICC comprises components such as motivation, attitudes and emotions, knowledge, and behavior and skills. Motivation refers to the desire to communicate appropriately and effectively, knowledge means the awareness needed in intercultural situations, and skills are the abilities necessary for intercultural communication. With this in mind, we are of the opinion that the BA CEMs programme needs to be rearticulated to include skills and abilities to deal with diversity rather than simply making Sepedi and English a dual medium of instruction.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned issues and insights, ICC includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). The primary purpose of intercultural communication is to increase understanding of culturally mediated communication phenomena. Within this goal, there are three distinct research avenues: culture specific, culture general and intercultural interaction. The "culture specific" focuses on identifying the communication behaviors of a specific culture. The "culture general" seeks to identify commonalities or universalities across cultures. A combination of both culture-specific and culture general integrates different cultures interacting hence called intercultural interaction (Zaharna, 2000).

The business sector is probably most affected by issues of intercultural communication. Today with the emergence of multi-national companies and global companies, it is unlikely to do business without communicating cross-culturally. Targowski and Metwalli (2003) viewed this millennium as an era in which global organizations will increasingly focus on the critical value of cross-cultural communication processes, issues of efficiency and competence and cost of doing business. In order to successfully communicate cross-culturally, knowledge and understanding of cultural factors such as values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior should be acquired. Effective cross-cultural communication in global economy provides pragmatic tools about how to define a communication strategy, train representatives and conduct business talks in order to achieve success. By nurturing these skills, it allows the students to cope with multicultural differences to effectively and appropriately interact with others in a globalized community. In short, ICC plays a crucial role in fostering both that they can encounter with cultural difference and conflict (Seiler & Beall, 2002) and gain the effective and appropriate intercultural communication.

Competency is all about “an ability to perform satisfactorily, a task being clearly defined and the criteria of success being set out” (Zimmermann, 2010). Rendering to Fantini and Tirmizi (2006), every individual has the ability to enhance their communicative competence according to their local language, which usually helps them to head towards communication within similar cultures without any confusion. Then, that individual needs to learn that language.

An individual can connect the awareness of other cultures in the linguistic competency in the form of skills to utilize linguistic appropriately to be competent in intercultural communication. In this regard, we think that it is the capacity to inculcate linguistic skills in different scenarios that should be factored into the BA CEMS programme to provide students with intercultural communication competence. Thus, Seiler and Beall (2002) explain that competency in communication is referred to the ability to take part in effective communication which is mostly demonstrated by awareness and the skills which allows individuals to share information fruitfully. Due to globalization, industries require from their workers that they have efficient speaking and writing power across different cultures to gain their agenda. McCain (1996) intensely confirms that communication competency is an essential apprehension for interaction or dialogue. In light of this, we hasten to suggest the types of skills and abilities required for intercultural communication competence below. Having discussed some key issues that underpin intercultural communication competence we feel that it is important to focus on those skills and abilities that we consider are synonymous with it. In light of this, we wish to focus on it in the following section

Skills and abilities

Intercultural communication competence can best be taught through a practical approach by sharing cultural knowledge and using methods of experiential learning and reflection. Intercultural communication needs to be experienced, not merely learnt through lectures or literature (Gore 2007). Experiential learning that involves also attitudes and emotions is based

on the idea of learning by doing, and through active participation. The students' real-life experiences are included as part of the learning process. The underlying assumption is that people learn best from their own experiences (Korhonen, 2004, p. 53).

Some of the skills important to intercultural communication competence are the ability to empathize, accumulate cultural information, listen, resolve conflict, and manage anxiety (Bennett, 2009). The ability to empathize and manage anxiety enhances prejudice reduction, and these two skills have been shown to enhance the overall impact of intercultural contact even more than acquiring cultural knowledge. A person with appropriate intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to engage in intercultural communication can develop self- and other-knowledge that will contribute to their ability to be mindful of their own communication and tolerate uncertain situations. To this end, we believe that if students are armed with these skills and abilities, they would be well prepared to handle diversity at the work place.

Methodology

Research question

1. What are the practices/experiences and challenges faced by BA CEMS graduates at the workplace?

This paper in large parts is predicated on Tlowane's PhD study where Foncha plays the role of a supervisor. To understand the practices/experiences and challenges of the graduates at the work places, we tracked down some graduates from the programme who are employed and who are dealing with diversity to formulate their perceptions on multilingual practices at the work place. We first of all sent multiple choice questionnaires (See Appendix 1) to all the graduates that we could track down. We distributed a total of 34 questionnaires but got only 28 responses returned to us and from their responses we then formulated a semi-structured interview schedule for five graduates selected randomly to get clarity on the issues that were not clear to us from the questionnaires. These five interviewees were representative of all the ideas raised by the 28 respondents. The semi-structured interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2. We selected the five graduates who we think were most exposed to diversity. These are graduates who had diverse clientele in terms of linguistic backgrounds and who had to find a way to deal with such diversity in order to execute their job descriptions. We designed a set of semi-structured questions beforehand to act as a guide and for consistency in their responses. These responses were tape recorded and later transcribed to form the data for this study that we present and discuss below.

Presentation and Discussion of Data

The data/findings are based on excerpts from the interviews with the graduates based on their experiences at the work place. Their responses were guided by the semi-structured interview schedule. to support each. We also made an attempt to analyse each response and then made commentaries to all three strands which generated a discussion. For the purpose of saliency, we made use of only three strands of data for each question.

Below are responses to question 5 from the interview schedule which has to do with the responsibilities of the graduates at the workplace. The aim of the question was to find out if they had encounters with a diverse clientele in terms of linguistic backgrounds.

Q5: What are your core responsibilities at work?

Graduate 1: *I teach my learners, I assess, I prepare formal assessment, then there is a specific routine that we have that is outlined by the department then its posted in our classroom walls then we follow it.*

Graduate 5: *On my current job it all depends on what the clients want from the company. The company offers a lot of language services and they often come and request different services. Like they can ask us to come and record a hearing or meeting proceedings then transcribe the information. Sometimes we are asked to come and interpret. I also translate documents. So normally I deal with such requests as long as they are needed in English and Sepedi.*

Graduate 3: *I lecture business English for accounting students. I have to introduce students to basic language skills, English grammar and writing. The four basic skills. I do assessments and mark as well.*

It is evident from the responses that all three respondents are bilingual in Sepedi and English only and the BA CEMS bilingual programme has not left skills and abilities to handle other languages and cultures.

The responses that follow are excerpts from the responses of the graduates, which are meant to find out their experiences with language use at the work place. In a way, this lays emphasis on the previous question.

Q7: What are your general experiences (positive and negative) with language usage at work?

Graduate 1: *Let me start by saying I'm teaching in a lower primary school situated in the rural area. They are Sepedi speaking people so it is like the mother tongue of the environment, so my colleagues we speak Sepedi in informal conversations but when it comes to meetings, for the purpose of the secretary to jot down minutes we use English. And then in classrooms, foundation phase is structured differently with intermediate phase. Foundation phase is mother tongue teaching until grade 3. So English is just treated as a subject from Grade R (preparatory class for primary school) to Grade 2. I teach Sepedi, I teach maths in Sepedi and I also teach life skills in Sepedi*

Graduate 5: *Usually some clients expect me to speak all the languages, they don't understand that I can only use Sepedi and English. Especially Tshivenda and Xitsonga because they are local languages. So when people walk into our offices they automatically expect to be assisted in their own mother tongue and sometimes you find that the relevant person for that language is not there.*

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.

Diversity does not seem to have taught the graduates that the programme was not only meant to prepare them for Bilingual space but to train them to handle multilingualism and multiculturalism. Graduate 1 only showed fluency in Sepedi and English, the two languages they studied the University of Limpopo as media of instruction. Graduate 5 is unable to understand Sotho, Venda and Tsonga (SOVENGA) which are the official languages of Limpopo province. Graduate 4 who is exposed to a more diverse environment would oblige the clients to speak English.

The question that follows is based on their knowledge on how the programme prepared them for the work place. Our intention to get their views on the pros and cons of the programme.

Q8: How did the BA CEMS prepare you for these experiences?

Graduate 2: *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.*

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 1: *Let me start with my teaching as a profession. In grade 3 we are expected to do what is called gradual transfer, that means for the four years of foundation phase three years is mother tongue teaching, and then in the fourth year that is grade 3, learners prepare to go to grade four then, you are then as a teacher supposed to gradually transfer from Sepedi or mother tongue teaching to English as a language of learning and teaching, which is something that I have learnt from BA CEMS. Basically the content was centred around transference of skills from mother tongue to the language of learning and teaching, in this case English.*

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.

From the responses above, the programme only assisted them to improve in the two languages of tuition taking away the idea of bilingualism. Ideally, they should use the skills acquired to interact easily with a diverse 'other'.

The responses in this section give us an idea on the challenges they actually encounter at the work place. We were interested to see if they were aware of intercultural communication competence and this is what they had to say.

Q9. 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 4: *We have a very small office here. Cause the branch here in Polokwane is not big. The main branch is in Pretoria, that is where you find many people. But here it is just me, and my manager and another lady who works with registering the business online. And then another Ms X, who only comes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday to clean the office. So the other two colleagues are white and they only speak English with me. But they also speak Afrikaans amongst themselves. So they don't talk to me in Afrikaans because they know I don't understand it.*

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 also 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 challenges that these respondents are encountering are the same challenges that monolinguals are going through which is evident that the programme did not leave any impact on them as might have been expected.

The answers from the graduates that follow are at the core of our investigation to expose what the graduates are going through with language diversity. It was meant to determine the efficacy and efficiency of the BA CEMS programme.

Q12: 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: *I listen carefully to what the person wants. Then I try to help them. I sometimes call the other colleagues especially if the person speaks Afrikaans and insist on speaking the language even though I made it clear that I do not understand it.*

Graduate 3: *I ensure that I prepare well for my lessons and I lock up and research information that I am not sure of. Students can feel it if you are unable to explain a concept well. So I always prepare sufficiently.*

Only Graduate 4 makes an attempt to interact with a language other than Sepedi and English. All the others only rely on English and Sepedi, which indicate that the BA CEMS programme did not meet its objective of building Multilinguals.

Responses to question 13 were intended to help us identify areas that need improvement in the programme. With such responses, we strive to deduce where the programme falls short in preparing graduates for the workplace.

Q13: Is there any aspect that you feel needs improvement in the programme? Please explain.

Graduate 2: *for me as a foundation teacher I think I have sufficient skills for where I am in my teaching profession, but as an educator with my colleagues, I think the programme, in fact not only for me but the programme itself can diversify, because when I did BA CEMS we only had Sepedi for multilingual studies. If only we can have other languages for multilingualism, then we would be more prepared to work with other languages, because multilingualism was only Sepedi and English. so we always get challenges especially when you tell someone that you did multilingualism it's like they expect me to speak all the languages. So then I'm starting to see a need that multilingualism as a module we could have learnt other different languages so that we can be effective when we talk to other people outside Sepedi and English.*

Graduate 3: *it's just to add those languages which are not in, if possible have different languages because when you say for example I did multilingual studies people expect you to have more than three languages, because if you are having only two which means that its bilingual, you can't call it multilingual studies because you have only two and you can tell in Limpopo we have different languages that are spoken around here. So why can't every language be included, for instance when they separate to the multilingual class then they do their African language but when they go to CELS then they can come together but be separated only when they go for Multilingual studies class. It's been a while that this multilingual studies programme existed but they are not adding other languages, why? That's the problem.*

Graduate 4: *The programme is not known by most employers, and even when you are short listed they often don't understand what is it that you are able to do. It needs to be marketed more to the outside world. The use of other languages can be taken as electives from first year so that the students can be able to learn other languages. For my current position it would have been easy for me to do my work if I knew a few other languages.*

Graduate 2 and 3 suggest that the programme should be improved upon because the BA CEMS only limits itself to the two languages of instruction. Even Graduate 4 feels that the programme needs some adjustment to provide skills and abilities that can render someone a multilingual.

The results above suggest that although the programme appears to be Bilingual in nature, English still takes a hegemonic position as a language of communication attesting to English

as monolingual multilingualism which is against Madiba and Finlayson's (2002) notion of African language intellectualisation. This is seen in the fact that all the respondents use English conveniently in all contexts but complain about the use of all other indigenous languages including even Sepedi which was a medium of instruction in the BA CEMS degree programme. This corresponds with Piller's (2015) findings that academic understanding of multilingualism is skewed towards mediation through English:

Whorfian effects par excellence are found not in some far-away exotic tribe but on the pages of academic journals, among scholars who [...] equate the English lexicon with 'the language of thought', adopting English terms – that lack translation equivalents in many languages – to describe 'thinking for thinking' and 'feeling for feeling.' (Pavlenko, 2014 p. 300).

The above quotation attests to the belief that English is an international Language and enjoys prestige over the other languages. In view of this, the BA CEMS programme has not left any multilingual impact on the graduates. There is evidence that the graduates have problems with understanding the different varieties of Sepedi but do not complain about the English Language. Thus, the efficacy of the degree as stipulated in its aim, falls far short of the efficiency. To sum this up we allude to Pavlenko (2014, p. x1):

In reality, there is no such thing as the bilingual mind: bilinguals vary greatly in linguistic repertoires, histories, and abilities, and the bilingual mind appears here as an umbrella term to refer to a variety of speakers, including multilinguals (Pavlenko, 2014, p xi).

Although BA CEMS is seen as a bilingual programme, it appears to concur in many respects with Pavlenko's assertion as we have shown in the above stated quotation. and something needs to be done for the efficacy of the programme. It is our fervent believe therefore that the efficacy and efficiency of the programme should be able to meet the demands of Globalisation.

Conclusion

Today's working life environment is global and characterised by multicultural and multidisciplinary teamwork in global networks. This sets demands on the employees who need new kinds of skills and competencies to be able to do their work effectively. Since the main task of the universities is to educate and prepare their students for the future work life, it would be crucial to be able to predict what skills and competencies the graduates would require. Due to the challenges brought about by globalisation, especially international skills and cultural knowledge have become essential in any work. The problems encountered at work are often interdisciplinary without one single correct solution that requires combining knowledge and skills from many different fields. Moreover, the work is frequently done in multidisciplinary teams.

It is evident from this study that English is a hegemonic language and therefore a knowledge of English places one in an advantageous position over others. Thus, English assumes the status

and role of monolingual multilingualism as seen in all the students from the programme using predominantly English in every diverse situation despite the fact that it is an additional language to them. One would have expected that in such a situation, the graduates would embrace Sepedi, which is their mother tongue and may only use English sparingly. Instead, the graduates complain about the different dialects of Sepedi but not those of English. Based on the above-mentioned views, we can conclude that the programme is not efficient in preparing graduates for the work place and so there is need to come up with a framework that may render the efficacy of the BA CEMS degree to prepare graduates for the diverse work place.

Limitations and suggestions for further studies

Based on the findings from the experiences of the graduates, we noticed that the programme fails to prepare students linguistically for the diverse workplace. In addition, the BA CEMS curriculum does not include skills and abilities required by students to attain intercultural communication competence. The above limitations open gaps for research particularly on how the BA CEMS degree may be managed to give the much-needed multilingual support to graduates at the work place.

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Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRES WITH BACEMS GRADUATES

1. Name of Employer_____
2. Do you have any other qualification in addition to the BA CEMS Degree?

- How long have you been employed?_____
3. What are your core responsibilities at work?_____
4. Which languages do you use at work?_____
5. Do these languages serve different purposes?_____
6. What are the challenges that you face at work?_____
7. How do you try to overcome these challenges?_____
8. Do you think that the BA CEMS programme has prepared you for such challenges?

9. What skills have you learnt to deal with diversity at the work place?_____
10. How do you handle customers who speak languages other than yours?_____
11. How has your knowledge of BA CEMS benefited you at your work place?_____
12. How can you advice the BA CEMS programme to support its students in preparation for the workplace?_____

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH BA CEMS GRADUATES

As a follow up to the questionnaire you have already completed, may you kindly partake in the interview as a process of providing further elaboration of the questionnaire. The questions included in this interview addresses aspects surrounding the preparations of the BA CEMS Students for the workplace. The interview is a follow up of the answers you have provided when answering the questionnaire. The interview sessions will be recorded with a voice

recorder to ensure that the correct version of the interview is transcribed. After completion of the interview the researcher will transcribe the audio recording.

1. What is the name of your employer?
2. Do you have any other qualification in addition to the BA CEMS Degree?
3. How long have you been employed?
4. What are your core responsibilities at work?
5. Which languages do you use at work?
6. Do these languages serve different purposes?
7. What are the challenges that you face at work?
8. How do you try to overcome these challenges?
9. Do you think that the BA CEMS programme has prepared you for such challenges?
10. What skills have you learnt to deal with diversity at the work place?
11. How has your knowledge of BA CEMS benefited you at your work place?
12. How can you advice the BA CEMS programme to support its students in preparation for the workplace?

Thank you for your participation