USAID
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LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

South Africa

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AHLs	African Home Languages
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
EFAL	English as a First Additional Language
EGR	Early Grade Reading
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) Language
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoCC	Language of Conversational Competence
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOI1	Language of Instruction Spoken at Home
LOI2	Subsequent Language of Instruction
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOLTENO	Molteno Language Institute
MRTEQP	Minimum Requirements of Teacher Education Qualifications Policy

NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NMI	Nelson Mandela Institute of Rural Education
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
OXFORD SA	Oxford University Press of South Africa
PD	Professional Development
R	Reception (first year of primary school)
REEP-A	Research for Effective Education Programming–Africa
RWI	Reading and Writing Instruction
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Voluntary Services Oversees

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early primary grades is a key education priority for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low and progress has been slow. As such, efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to improve learning outcomes in the early grades, as this can be a potential barrier to gains in literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.** Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the LOI spoken at home (LOI1) as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent language of instruction (LOI2).

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy, and thus are crucial to the design of programs that are effectively aligned with country literacy aims and approaches. During the design phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.

The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for 18 of the countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in South Africa.

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,* published by SIL International, there are 34 languages in South Africa. Of these, 30 are living and four are extinct. Of the living languages, 20 are indigenous and 10 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 12 are institutional, seven are developing, three are vigorous, one is in trouble, and three are dying (Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020.).

There are 11 official languages in South Africa: Zulu, Xhosa, Swati, Ndebele, Tsonga, Sesotho (referred to as "Sotho, Southern" by *Ethnologue*), Sepedi (referred to as "Sotho, Northern" by *Ethnologue*), Venda, Setswana, Afrikaans, and English. Zulu is the most widespread with 27.3 million speakers, of which 11.6 million are first language (L1) speakers and 15.7 million are second language (L2) speakers. Xhosa has the second highest population of speakers, at 19.15 million speakers. The other official indigenous languages, and corresponding numbers of speakers are: Sotho, Northern (13.72 million speakers); Venda (12.91 million speakers); Setswana (11.77 million speakers); Sotho, Southern (11.75 million speakers); Tsonga (5.68 million speakers); Swati (3.7 million speakers); and Ndebele (2.49 million speakers) (Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020.).

Afrikaans and English are two of the national languages and are the official languages in all nine provinces. There are 17.16 million Afrikaans speakers in South Africa, of which 6.86 million are L1 speakers and 10.3 million L2 speakers. There are 15.89 million speakers of English in South Africa, of which 4.89 million are L1 speakers and 11 million are L2 speakers. See Figure 2 for detailed information on languages and populations that speak them (Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020).
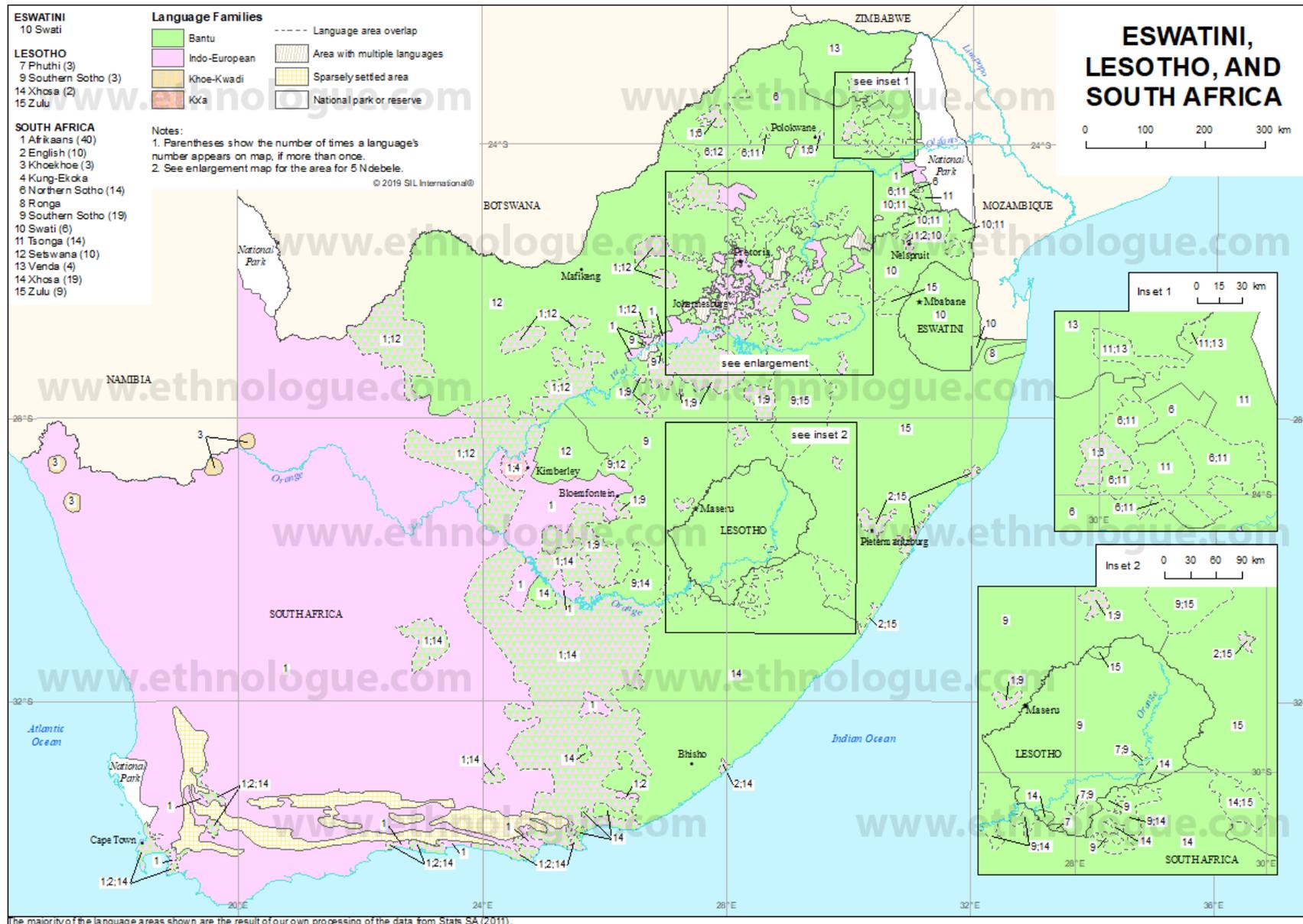
Two of the National Languages of South Africa

Afrikaans	17.16 million speakers
English	15.89 million speakers

Source: Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020.

Figure 1. Map of South Africa

Figure 2. Linguistic mapping of South Africa

ESWATINI
10 Swati

LESOTHO
7 Phuthi (3)
9 Southern Sotho (3)
14 Xhosa (2)
15 Zulu

SOUTH AFRICA
1 Afrikaans (40)
2 English (10)
3 Khoekhoe (3)
4 Kung-Ekoka
6 Northern Sotho (14)
8 Ronga
9 Southern Sotho (19)
10 Swati (6)
11 Tsonga (14)
12 Setswana (10)
13 Venda (4)
14 Xhosa (19)
15 Zulu (9)

Language Families
- Bantu
- Indo-European
- Khoe-Kwadi
- Kx'a
- Language area overlap
- Area with multiple languages
- Sparsely settled area
- National park or reserve

Notes:
1. Parentheses show the number of times a language's number appears on map, if more than once.
2. See enlargement map for the area for 5 Ndebele.

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ESWATINI, LESOTHO, AND SOUTH AFRICA

0   100   200   300 km

Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

Local language instruction is supported by South Africa's language policy. Generally, the L1 is used as the medium of instruction in Grades 1 to 3. English is introduced in Grades 1 and 2 as an additional subject, shifting to English as the LOI in Grade 4 (UNICEF, 2016).

South Africa's 1997 Language in Education Policy (LiEP) states:

> In terms of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognises that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language and the languages referred to in the South African Constitution (p.1).

It also states that "the language of learning and teaching in a public school must be an official language" (1997, p.3) and specifies the following:

> The learner must choose the language of teaching upon application for admission to a particular school. Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner (1997, p.3).

While the language policy allows for the use of the L1, it also allows parents and teachers to opt for English as the LOI, even if it is not the home language for the majority of the students (UNICEF, 2016). Research has shown that this is case in numerous schools (Bamgbose, 2004; Broom, 2004; Probyn, 2009; Wildsmith & Gordon, 2009). In 2015, the Government of South Africa took steps to counter the choice of English as the LOI through a policy amendment that requires the learning and use of an African language in the classroom, which is to be informed by the local context (UNICEF, 2016).

CLASS TIME

In Grades 1 to 3, the majority of class time is spent teaching literacy and numeracy skills. Language skills account for almost half of instruction time, including the L1 and an additional language.

Official instruction time per week lasts 23 hours for Kindergarten (called "Reception", or "R") to Grade 2, and 25 hours for Grade 3. Ten hours are allocated for languages in Grades R to 2, and 11 hours in Grade 3. Time allocation per week is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Weekly Class Time Allocation for Lower Primary

Subject	Grade R	Grades 1-2	Grade 3
Home Language (L1)	10 hours	7-8 hours	7-8 hours
First Additional Language (L2)	Not applicable	2-3 hours	3-4 hours
Mathematics	7 hours	7 hours	7 hours
Life Skills	6 hours	6 hours	7 hours
TOTAL	23 hours	23 hours	25 hours

Source: Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2013.

In Grades 1 and 2, a minimum of seven hours and maximum of eight hours are allocated for the L1, while a minimum of two hours and maximum of three hours are allocated for the first additional language. In Grade 3, a minimum of seven hours and a maximum of eight hours are allocated for the L1, while a minimum of three hours and maximum of four hours are allocated for the first additional language.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

The revised Minimum Requirements of Teacher Education Qualifications Policy (MRTEQP) of 2015 provides guidelines for initial teacher education that may follow two training options: 1) completing a four year Bachelor's of Education degree, or 2) completing an appropriate first degree, followed by a one year Advanced Diploma in Education, and registering with the South African Council for Educators.

To teach Grades R-3, teachers must complete the requirements for Foundational Phase Teaching. Courses cover five types of learning: disciplinary, pedagogical, practical, fundamental, and situational. See Table 2 for a description of each requirement.

Table 2. Initial Teacher Education Requirem

Type of Learning	Description	Courses (examples)
Disciplinary learning	Subject matter knowledge • The study of education and its foundations • Specific specialized subject matter	• Home Language • First Additional Language • Mathematics • Life Skills • School and Society
Pedagogical learning	General pedagogical knowledge • Knowledge of learners, learning, curriculum • Knowledge of instructional and assessment strategies Specialized pedagogical content knowledge • Concepts, methods, and rules of a specific discipline • Evaluation of progress in a specific discipline	• Curriculum Design • Teaching and Learning • Read, Write and Spell in First Language • Read, Write and Spell in Second Language
Practical learning	Learning from practice • The study of practice Learning in practice • Learning in classrooms • Learning in simulated classrooms	• Practical Internship • School-based Teaching Practice • Institutional Teaching Practice
Fundamental learning	• Learning to converse competently in a second official language • Ability to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) • Acquisition of academic literacies	• Afrikaans/Xhosa • Language Conversational English/isiZulu/ • Afrikaans/Setswana
Situational learning	• Knowledge of different learning situations, contexts, and environments • Knowledge of the prevailing policy, political, and organizational contexts	• Multicultural Education • Policy and Practice

Source: National Qualifications Framework Act, 2015.

TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

All teachers are required to be proficient in at least one official African language in order to graduate from their initial teacher education program. The 2015 MRTEQP states:

> All teachers who complete an initial professional qualification should be proficient in the use of at least one official South African language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and partially proficient (i.e. sufficient for purposes of conversation) in *at least one* other official African language, or in South African Sign Language, as language of conversational competence (LoCC). If the LoLT is English or Afrikaans, then the LoCC must be an African Language or South African Sign Language. All new certificates are to be endorsed to indicate the holder's level of competence in specific languages by using appropriate labels, for example: LoLT (English) and LoCC (isiZulu). (Government Gazette, 2015, p.13)

Teacher training colleges offer courses in English, Afrikaans, and the official African languages.

TEACHER IN-SERVICE

There are several programs offered for teachers to upgrade their qualifications and skills. The National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) was introduced in 2000 as a means of upgrading the skills of teachers lacking the required skills. Teachers can also develop specialized skills through an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE).

The new Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system was established in 2007 to "ensure that current initiatives devoted to the professional development of teachers contribute more effectively and directly to the quality of teaching" (Government Gazette, 2007, p.17).

According to the 2007 National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which is the statutory body for professional educators, was granted responsibility for the overall implementation, management, and quality assurance.

Teachers are supposed to earn a target number of professional development (PD) points every three years through PD activities endorsed by SACE. These PD activities can be from the following five categories:

- School-led programs
- Employer-led programs
- Qualification programs
- Other programs offered by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), teachers' unions, community-based and faith-based organizations, and other approved providers.

The Policy also states that "teachers, individually and collectively, will have a high degree of responsibility for their own professional development" (Government Gazette, 2007, p.18). While some PD activities are CPTD mandated, others are self-selected. Teachers are supposed to identify their own professional development needs, though the National Policy Framework provides some parameters for CPTD. These include:

- Programs developed as a result of the policy must emphasize the integration of a learning area or subject content knowledge together with pedagogical skills and an understanding of the changing social nature of schools and skills to manage diverse classrooms.
- Programs that will improve teachers' competence in the language of learning and teaching, and in the teaching of literacy and reading skills
- The link between language and learning, including the use of indigenous languages. Programs to promote language use in education will be supported and all teachers should have the opportunity of learning an indigenous African language.
- Educators must be trained to support learners with a range of learning styles and needs and to work alongside educational psychologists, counselors, therapists, and other support staff to strengthen effective curriculum delivery.
- CPTD will support conversion programs, with funding support, to enable teachers to move into scarce learning areas, subjects, or phases (Government Gazette, 2007, p.19).

USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

In alignment with the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education (2018), USAID's programming in South Africa aims to support the needs and priorities of the partner country in order to ensure that gains from the programming are sustained. Thus, USAID supports the Department of Basic Education in implementing several projects to strengthen early grade literacy in South Africa, which are:

Partnership for Accelerated Progress in Early Grade Learning is a five-year (2014-2019), $2.6 million project implemented by Save the Children South Africa and the Free State Department of Education. It aims to improve literacy outcomes in Grades 2 and 3 in the Free State by engaging district officials, principals, teachers, and community members in supporting reading activities.

The Reading Support Project is a four-year (2016-2020), $10.6 million project implemented in Limpopo and North West provinces by the Foundation for Professional Development; in partnership with local literacy organizations Molteno Language Institute (MOLTENO), the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), and Oxford University Press of South Africa (OXFORD SA), as well as an international partner, Voluntary Services Oversees (VSO). The ultimate aim of the project is to improve early primary grade learners' reading skills in African Home Languages (AHLs) as well as in English as a First Additional Language (EFAL). To achieve this, the project aims to increase the capacity of curriculum advisors and school management teams to support teachers. The project will also develop a comprehensive package of learning and teaching support materials to support high-quality language and literacy instruction. Additionally, the project provides quarterly training for teachers on the implementation of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and lesson plans, as well as the provision of coaches that offer classroom-based support to teachers to 165 schools.

Teacher Assessment Resources for Monitoring and Improving Instruction for Foundation Phase is a seven-year (2012-2019), $6.4 million project implemented by a local research organization, the Human Science Research Council. It provides teachers with an online assessment tool to help them more effectively address individual student learning needs in literacy. The tool is being integrated with the government's assessment training for teachers that is being rolled out in North West and Gauteng provinces.

The Early Grade Reading Study II is a three-year (2015-2019), $1.6 million project implemented by the University of the Witwatersrand. The project works in partnership with the Department of Basic Education to evaluate the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of interventions focused on improving the performance of Grade 1 and 2 learners in English as a First Additional Language. The study is being conducted in Mpumalanga Province.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

One of USAID's projects in South Africa focuses explicitly on engaging the community to increase and improve home language reading. ***Story Powered Schools*** is a three-year (2016-2019), $8 million project that is carried out by Nal'ibali, which is a national campaign for the enjoyment of reading. This project supports reading clubs at schools; provides home language reading materials to classrooms; trains teachers, parents and community members on how to support reading; and organizes school and community events celebrating reading.

OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, several other organizations are involved in implementing projects to address literacy and language issues, which are detailed below, across South Africa.

Room to Read's Reading and Writing Instruction Program (RWI)

Room to Read has been working in South Africa since 2006. Through their literacy program, they provide teacher training in literacy, create and support school libraries, and provide reading materials across the official languages. RWI is a two-year, school- based intervention that includes baseline and endline assessments of reading competencies. They have implemented their model in the provinces of Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng, while publishing materials in all eleven of South Africa's official languages. Room to Read aims to align their literacy program closely with the Government's educational policies and priorities. Thus far, they have reached 469 schools, 1,021 teachers, and 362,180 students in South Africa.

UNICEF's Magic Classroom Collective

Since 2008, UNICEF, through the *Schools for Africa partnership,*[1] supports the Nelson Mandela Institute of Rural Education (NMI) to carry out research and support for bilingual learning through an initiative called the *Magic Classroom Collective.* The initiative aims to support teachers in applying L1-based bilingual approaches to literacy and numeracy development, and to provide tested tools that strengthen the child's home language learning and English acquisition. The program is currently operating in 17 schools, in three Xhosa-speaking communities of the Eastern Cape province.

Molteno Institute

The Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy[2] carries out African-language reading materials development, in collaboration with a range of partners. The Institute is based at Rhodes University and is funded, by a grant from the Molteno Brothers Trust. Molteno produces materials in many South African languages through its program *Breakthrough to Literacy,* and also offers a *Bridge to English* program.

In 2012, the Molteno Institute developed a technology-based early literacy program called *Bridges to the Future,* in partnership with the International Literacy Institute at the University of Pennsylvania and Trydian Interactive, and funded by the *All Children Reading Grand Challenge.* The Bridges to the Future Initiative is an interactive approach to literacy learning available in four languages: Sepedi, Venda, Tsonga and English.

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1 For more information see their website: http://www.mandelainstitute.org.za

2 For more information see their website: www.molteno.co.za

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