

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF THE XITSONGA LANGUAGE BOARD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Language management, like any other form of management such as business management, is a process with four fundamental functions. These functions are planning, organising, leading and controlling.

Planning is the management function that involves formulating goals to be achieved and identifying ways of attaining such goals. Organising relates to the allocation of resources to achieve the goals. Leading refers to directing the human resources and motivating them in such a way that their actions are in accord with previously formulated goals and plans. Controlling involves checking constantly whether the goals are still achievable and taking corrective action if there is any deviation. (Smit & De J. Cronje: 1997).

For the goals of language planning to be achieved, someone must perform the four management functions. In the preceding chapters, it has been mentioned that prior to 1994, the role of managing the Xitsonga language was performed by agents such as chiefdoms, missionaries and bodies such as the Xitsonga Language Committee, Bureau of Xitsonga and culture and the Xitsonga Language Board.

Because the Xitsonga Language Board was central to the management of Xitsonga prior to 1994 (immediately before the advent of the new democratic order), an analysis of how it set out to achieve its objectives is necessary. Attention in this chapter is therefore on the Xitsonga Language Board.

3.2 History of the Xitsonga Language Board

The first Tsonga Language Board was formed in 1938 by the Transvaal Native Education Department. In 1954, Black education was placed under the Department of Bantu Education. A new system of Language Committees including the Tsonga Language Committee under the umbrella of the Bantu Language Board, came into operation. In 1955 the Tsonga Language Board came to be known as the Tsonga Language Committee.

The Tsonga Language Committee was dissolved in 1977. During the committee's last meeting (on 23-25 August 1977) a Mr. Swart, on behalf of the Central Department, outlined the proposed new dispensation i.e. *the transition from the working committee or language committee system to the autonomous Language Board system.*

With the passage of time, there were political changes in South Africa. In 1973, Gazankulu became a Self-Governing Territory under the homeland system introduced by the South African Government. The affairs of the Vatsonga were to be conducted by the Gazankulu Legislative Assembly. The first Tsonga Language Board under this new dispensation was inaugurated in 1978. This is the Language Board that functioned until 1995 when Language Boards were disbanded because of provision in the constitution to establish the Pan South African Language Board and its structures.

Three phases in the history of the Xitsonga Language Board can be distinguished:

- Phase I: 1938-1954
- Phase II: 1955-1977
- Phase III: 1978-1995

Each phase will be discussed separately.

A. Phase I: 1938-1954

The Xitsonga Language Board under the auspices of the Transvaal Education Department. The first Language Board was composed as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| - Rev. A.A. Jacques | - Swiss missionary |
| - Rev. R. Cuenod | - Swiss missionary |
| - Mr. N.D. Achterberg | - Inspector of schools |
| - Dr. N.J. van Warmelo | - Government ethnologist |
| - Mr. E.J. Mthebule | - Supervisor of schools |
| - Dr. W.M. Eiselen | - Chief inspector of schools |

Since the Board was to cater for the interests of the Vatsonga people, one would have expected the Board to be composed of more Vatsonga than the other groups. But the first Xitsonga Language Board had only one Mutsonga. Perhaps this was so as those who formed the Xitsonga Language Board had their own particular objectives and wanted the Xitsonga Language Board to pursue these objectives. It was only during the second meeting of the Board that another Mutsonga, Mr. D.C. Marivate, was appointed as a member.

When Mr. Marivate was no longer in the teaching profession, the Board proposed that the Department should allow the local branch of T.A.T.A. (Transvaal African Teachers Association) to be represented. The representation was not, however, proportional as the majority of the Xitsonga speaking people were not represented.

The selection and appointment criteria for the Board membership were not stipulated or laid down.

When the Board was in full operation, suggestions concerning its composition were made by the larger community. For example:

The local branch of T.A.T.A. requested that the number of the Vatsonga people be increased on the Board. This proposal was rejected on the ground that the

Board should remain a small body well acquainted with one side or another of the editing of books in the Xitsonga language the teachers would be informed of the work done only by their representative who in turn would be responsible for making their wishes known to the Board (Undated Minutes of the Language Board)

The reason advanced for refusing to have more Xitsonga speaking people is not sufficient.

The composition of the Board suggests that the Board was only an instrument used to advance the policy of the Government and that Blacks could not have a say even in matters that directly affected their language. The Government wanted to have a final say in all matters concerning black people.

This composition did not alter much in subsequent Languages Boards. The first chairman and secretary were representatives of the Department of Native Education. This did not seem to go well with missionaries and the church. This is evident from the fact that, in one of the subsequent meetings of the Language Board, i.e. in 1949, the missionaries (perhaps out of frustration) appeared to have hijacked the proceedings of the meeting, as reflected in a letter (L.T.C. 168 dated 1-2-1949) written by Mr. T.H. Endemann (inspector of schools and chairperson of the then Language Board) to the chief inspector of Native Education, as quoted from minutes of the meeting held on the 29 January 1949:

"During the meeting, it seemed the members were uncertain about the legal status or legitimacy of the meeting itself.

Mr. T.H. Endemann expressed concern that the meeting was not constituted, and he felt that such a meeting could not make decisions which are binding to the Education Department. In support of his stand, Mr. T.H. Endemann mentioned the following reasons:

members of the Swiss Mission took the chair without any form of election being made. No proper agenda was drafted.

The chairman took part to the discussions, took sides and was sometimes completely despotic in his approach.

All points on which discussions were allowed, were those matters which had bearing on the points of struggle among the missionary societies. The white representatives used this opportunity to try to resolve their own differences without considering the state departments which had great concern in the matter.

The representation in the meeting was completely one-sided. From the 12 members present at the meeting, 6 were whites who represented missionary societies only. These people had no other considerations while taking decisions, other than those concerning the church, the church press, and missionary work in Portuguese land.

Mr. T.H. Endemann recommended that the problems facing the Tsonga orthography should be"

He concluded by noting concern about the absence of certain members. He further suggested that the composition of the `Xitsonga' Language Board be as follows:

- 2 members representing the Native Education Department
- 2 members representing the Department of Native Affairs
- 1 member representing the Swiss Mission
- 1 member representing the Xitsonga-speaking teachers

According to Endemann, missionaries seem to have been an obstacle in the advancement of state policy while the state department seemed to have great concern in the development of the Xitsonga language. It was the Vatsonga people who should have a great concern in the matter

but were never accorded the opportunity to do so. The suggested composition was meant to cut down the number of missionaries on the Language Board. This suggestion does not seem to have been taken up. The Language Board which was inaugurated in 1951

consisted of the following members:

Mr. T.H. Endemann - chairman

Mr. A.E. Mpapele - secretary

Mr. E.A. Tlakula

Rev. R. Cuenod

Rev. J.A. Person

Rev. H.P. Junod

Mr. C.K. Mageza

Mr. N.J. van Warmelo

Mr. B. Navass

Mr. E.C. Mandlane

Officials of the Transvaal Native Education were ex-officio members.

The number of missionaries was raised to three and there was also an increase in the number of Vatsonga - four in this case as compared to the original one. The Department of Native Education still had on upper hand since both the chairman and secretary were representatives of this department.

The duties of the first Language Board were as follows:

- To decide on the orthography to be used in all departmental schools
- To decide on the prescribed books to be used in all different standards
- To draw up a programme in connection with the preparation and publication of school books which were urgently needed.

The Board took a controversial decision of implementing changes in the orthography of Xitsonga without consulting broadly within the Vatsonga community. Anticipating possible

protests about the changes in the Xitsonga orthography, the Board came to an agreement that decisions taken by the Board would be final and nobody would be allowed to challenge those decisions.

Ironically, this decision first drew a reaction from the Transvaal Department of Native Education. The secretary of this Department wrote a letter to the Language Board. The letter, dated 26 May 1939, together with the reply from the Board, follows hereunder.

In the letter written by the secretary of the Transvaal Education Department to the members of the Board 31216 F dated 26 May 1939, the following is found: "While the Department agrees that certain changes are desirable and that these should be effected before more books are published, it nevertheless feels that it cannot legislate in this matter and cannot empower a departmental Language Board to lay down law, more especially as the majority of the Tsongas are living outside this province. The Department is of opinion that, just as was done in the case of the Tswana orthography, a conference of men representing all the interested parties should be called to discuss and approve the orthography proposals made by the Language Board.

In reply to the above-mentioned letter, Dr. N.J. van Warmelo pointed out that the case was not so: but that the Tsonga spelling required simplification before the language Board could embark on the question of considering the production of literature.

He further stated that there were no interested parties other than the Swiss. He pointed out that the Board had already ceased to exist due to the absence of certain members.

This decision was also not well received by the missionaries, who for a long time were involved with the development of Xitsonga as a written language. They were not satisfied with the unilateral decision of the Board to change the Xitsonga orthography. A letter written by Rev. P.T. Leresche, a Swiss Missionary, to the Chief Inspector of Native Education expressed the

sentiment that the missionaries were not happy with the decision of the Board. The letter is as follows:

...Rev. P.T. Leresche's letter dated 25/4/1939 which was directed to the Chief Inspector of the Transvaal Native Education, Dr. W.M. Eiselen. The letter reads as follows: "At the preliminary meeting held at Pretoria in your office, you will remember that I was also a member of the preliminary meeting - the creation of the Tsonga Language Board was discussed and approved of. It was decided that it would start work as soon as possible, collect material for the publication of new Readers and supervise the general grading of the Readers. Mention was made that a new orthography was under study, and it was stated that the new orthography ought to be used in the new books, but, as far as I remember, it was never stated that the newly appointed Board would have to take over the duty of deciding which changes must take place and what they have to be. The fact that the Language Board did not get any special instructions for modifying the existent orthography, but did it to justify themselves in the minutes: "The Board feels that being appointed by the Department to produce Tsonga School Literature, it is entitled to decide what orthography should be used in the school books." So it was their own feeling, but not their instructions.

The Board decided first to tackle the question of changes in the Tsonga orthography, and secondly, in order probably to suppress any possible opposition, they stipulated that their decisions would be final. If there had been no books and no literature at all in Tsonga, I would understand that the Board would have had to take such decisions, but this is not the case. It is true that the list of suitable readers for school use is short, only 2 books; but next to the Bible, which existed in Tsonga translations respectively for the past 45 and 32 years (and the Bible itself from a pure literary point of view is a big and important work) it has been published in Tsonga by different missions; at least

20-25 books for the benefit of all Tsonga speakers. May I point out that the Tsonga Language Board dealt only with questions interesting the Transvaal Vatsonga who are barely 100,000, whereas in Rhodesia and other Eastern parts of Africa there are at any rate 400,000 or 500,000 Vatsonga.

"... (Is it right for a body which has to deal with the school literature of 1\5 or 1\6 of the whole tribe to impose a decision on the other 4\5 or 5\6 of the tribe? Is it right for a body appointed to develop school literature only to change the orthography of the language without any notice?

Is it right for a Board, comprising four Europeans (at that first meeting) and only one African, to take a decision affecting directly the mother-language of that African, without consulting some educated Bantus, such as could be done easily with Teacher's Associations and Ministers Associations?

I know the proposals for the said changes, e.g. from some of my colleagues of the Swiss Mission; we discussed them fully in our meetings (on the 11/11/38) and they were accepted by three for, two against and three abstentions, but at that meeting it was further decided to submit these changes (not as a final decision, already taken, but as proposals to an assembly of representatives of both the Transvaal and Portuguese East African Vatsonga as editor of the "Nyeleti ya Miso" which forms a strong link between the two sections of the tribe, I was asked to convene that conference. But four days later, hearing what the Language Board had decided on the 14/11/38 it became difficult for me to call that conference, the members of which in the Board's decision would probably have resented strongly the work done by the Board.

The author of this letter raised very important issues.

The Vatsonga were only represented by one person in the board. Therefore a decision

- of changing the orthography was taken without consulting the people at grassroots level, to whom the language belongs.
- The decision was also taken without consulting the people who had already embarked on the project of shaping the Xitsonga orthography - missionaries. The author is a missionary, and as such he could be saying their work should not be in vain.
- He also highlighted a very important fact of the representation of the Vatsonga-speaking group in Mozambique, which was then known as Portuguese East Africa.

The local branch of T.A.T.A. also wrote to the Board expressing the views of the branch about the proposed changes to the orthography. The branch agreed with some of the changes, but they proposed some changes in the proposals by the Board. The T.A.T.A.'s proposals were rejected and the changes adopted by the Board on the previous meeting were confirmed.

The December 1938 edition of *Nyeleti ya miso* (a Shangaan Newspaper published in 1930) published the changes in the orthography of Xitsonga. Some concerned readers of *Nyeleti ya miso* wrote letters to the secretary of the Transvaal Native Education Department challenging the changes, they had read about in *Nyeleti ya miso*. It is interesting to note that one reader who was against these changes is professor H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi, the first chief minister of Gazankulu. He together with other Vatsonga academicians, J.C. Myakayaka, R.E. Myeni and L.A. Myakayaka, wrote the following letter:

The publication of the orthographic changes by the 'Nyeleti ya miso' newspaper of the December issue 1940 caused an alarming concern amongst the Tsonga speaking people of the Transvaal. A letter dated 12 May 1941 from Shiluvane Mission Station directed to the Secretary of the Transvaal Education Department reads thus: "We the Undersigned on behalf of the Thonga speaking people of the Transvaal wish to draw the attention of the Transvaal Education Department to the publication in the December issue of the Organ of the Swiss Mission 'Nyeleti ya miso', that Department has approved the new Thonga Orthography and that it is to be put into effect in all the Thonga speaking schools.

We have a Thonga Literature Board which deals with matters concerning the Thonga Language spoken in the Transvaal. Any changes made by the Board are subject to the consultation and approval of the Thonga speaking people.

The Thonga people have not been consulted but were alarmed to read that the findings of the Board have been approved by the Transvaal Education Department.

With the departmental approval of the Board's decision, it should be clearly noted that the Thonga Language undergoes a great change.....

A careful study of the new Thonga Orthography shows that it does not aim at the promotion of the Thonga Language, but at facilitating the printing expenditure. Hence the selling of our language for silver and gold! Which we as patriots can never accept.

A closer study into the new Orthography further reveals that it has been compiled to alleviate the pronunciation difficulties of Thonga words to people other than Thonga.

It is the feeling of the Transvaal Education Department that the decision of the Board did not receive the consideration due to it. We therefore humbly request the Transvaal Education Department to take the matter back to the Thonga Literature Board to be reconsidered.

The letter was signed by J.G. Myakayaka, R.E. Miyeni, L.A. Myakayaka and H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi (Secretary).

A petition was also sent to the Secretary of the Transvaal Education Department, by the Secretary of the Vatsonga tribe representatives, Mr. Gideon Fyfe. Mr. Gideon Fyfe had written the petition, with signatures of all the representatives attached to it. The petition was dated 23rd August 1941. An article from *Nyeleti ya miso* newspaper was also attached.

In reply to all these complaints, the secretary of the Transvaal Native Education Department said:

An orthography is merely a mechanism employed to reduce a language to writing, and the symbols used do not affect the language nor does a change of orthography change the language.

This was a plain refusal by the Department to acknowledge that these people, the speakers of the language were correct. The very ideas they rejected, for example the suggestions of the T.A.T.A., happen to be used in the present Xitsonga orthography. They were rejected without consideration since they were raised by people whom the Department regarded as having no right to decide as to what was wrong or right about the language, even though this was their language. It was now a matter of politics versus linguistics, with politics overruling linguistics. The people in power had the final say.

This adamant attitude of the Board's decision concerning the orthography changes to be final is further displayed when:

The Swiss Mission in Portuguese East Africa and a good number of missionaries in the Transvaal used x instead of s, in view of the fact that the greater part of books are bought by the Portuguese East Africa readers.

The response by the Board was:

The Board should not concern itself with what is happening in P.E.A.; seeing that it is the policy of the Portuguese authorities not to encourage vernacular literature.

The very same people who were criticizing the Portuguese for "not having an interest in the development of the vernacular literature" were also displaying the same attitude by not accepting

that the very language they were developing (as they said) had to be developed beyond boundaries.

It is interesting to note that the changes implemented by the first Xitsonga Language Board have been retained in the present orthography of Xitsonga. It should be understood that people were generally not against any changes in the orthography of Xitsonga, but were against the unilateral decision of the Language Board to implement changes without consultation. People were against the "top-down" approach of the Board, taking decisions about the Xitsonga orthography without consulting the speakers of the language. About the history of Tsonga (The Development of Tsonga: tribute by the secretary of the Language Board in 1983 as a contribution to the Xitsonga Language centenary celebrations), we read the following:

It is this stage which we shall remember for the firm foundations that were laid on the teaching of Xitsonga. To mention one vital matter: it was during this period that Tsonga orthography was standardized. The various missionaries walking among different Vatsonga speaking communities had introduced different orthography with different printing facilities.

The issue of orthography was the main task undertaken by the Board as reflected in the reply by the Board, to the letter from the secretary of Native Education:

The Tsonga spelling required supplication before the Language Board could embark on the question of considering the production of literature.

When the Xitsonga Language Board came into being, only one literary work of art by a Mutsonga, namely *Sasavona*, by D.C. Marivate had been published. The rest were publications by the missionaries on various subjects like History, Geography, readers, etc. Available then for provisional use were books which were grouped according to standards as follows:

Substandard A - Sipele (reader)

Substandard B	-	<i>Buku ya vahlayi</i> 1st part (reader)
Standard I	-	<i>Buku ya vahlayi</i> 2nd part (reader)
Standard II	-	<i>Vahlayi</i> II (reader)
Standard III	-	<i>Milawu ya sitshavo</i> (Etiquette) and suitable portions of the new testament
Standard IV	-	<i>Hygiene</i> part I
Standard V	-	<i>Hygiene</i> part II
Standard VI	-	<i>Vutivi</i> (knowledge)
Standard VII	-	<i>Vutivi and Sasavona</i> (Novel)

The Board then decided to take over the work of gathering material for graded readers. During this phase, other works of art were published:

<i>Murhandziwana</i> (A novel)	-	S.J. Baloyi
<i>Mambuxu</i> (Novel)	-	E.P. Ndhambi
<i>David Livingstone</i> (Biography)	-	D.C. Marivate

When Swiss Missionaries in Portuguese East Africa and some in the Transvaal requested that x should be used instead of s, the reply by the Board did not encourage this kind of activity, hence they said:

The Board does not concern itself with what is happening in Portuguese East Africa, seeing that it is the policy of the Portuguese not to encourage vernacular literature.

The only misgiving about this endeavour is that of not encouraging wider readership of Xitsonga books.

PHASE II

1953 - 1977

The co-ordination of Xitsonga and other black languages was taken over by the newly created Department of Bantu Education (later Department of Education and Training) in 1953. During this period language boards for the different black languages were renamed Language Committees with a centralized Bantu Language Board. The Xitsonga Language Board then came to be known as the Tsonga Language Committee, with its chairman representing it in the centralized Bantu Language Board.

When the Tsonga Language Committee was formed, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 had already been passed in parliament. The committee then had the task of compiling a list of Xitsonga equivalents of terms required in the teaching of Arithmetic, Hygiene and Environmental Study. The other tasks were the same as those of the Tsonga Language Board, i.e.

- To decide on the orthography to be used in all Departmental schools.
- To decide on the prescribed books to be used in all different standards.
- To draw up a programme in connection with the preparation and publication of school books which were urgently needed.

COMPOSITION

The first Language Committee was composed as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| - Dr. T.H. Endemann | - School Inspector |
| - Dr. W.J. van Warmelo | - Government Ethnologist |
| - Mr. S.J. Baloyi | - Translator |
| - Mr. C.K. Mageza | - Principal, Pimville Secondary School |
| - Mr. H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi | - Principal, Shiluvani Secondary School |
| - Mr. A.E. Mpapele | - Supervisor of Bantu School, Louis Trichardt
Secretary |
| - Mr. H.W. Pahl | - Designation not given |

- Mr. E.B. van Wyk

- Lecturer in Bantu Languages: University of Pretoria

The church (missionaries), that was part of the composition of the former language board, was not represented in this new language committee. In 1963 Reverend P.T. Leresche was nominated as a representative of British and Foreign Bible Society.

One commendable issue about the composition of the Language committee is that later on the composition broadened to include other bodies that had an interest in Xitsonga, e.g. translators. In the later stages of this committee, representation was broadened to include the following sectors:

- The Department of Information
- The South African Bible Society
- The South African Broadcasting Corporation
- The Bureau for Xitsonga Culture

One other thing worth mentioning is the representatives of different dialects and areas in the Board; as noted hereunder

The Department having authorised the appointment of an additional member, it was decided to recommend a speaker of the 'Tsonga' dialect of the Lydenburg district.

Dr. van Zyl informed the Tsonga Language Committee that its term had expired and asked them to suggest prospective members and submit such names before the close of the sessions. The people to be suggested should be the representatives of the different Tsonga dialects.

Mr. D.I. Mathumba of Maripi High School, was appointed member to represent the 'Tsonga dialect in the South'.

A personal letter from the principal of Bankuna Secondary School complaining of the Bankuna dialect not represented in the Tsonga Language Committee was read by the chairman. In the opinion of the committee, it was said that Mr. H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi, who was a member, represented the Bankuna dialect.

This dialect representation was a burning issue in the Committee as is evident from the following:

The Tsonga Language Committee decided to approach Radio Bantu with a view to ask this body to see to it that on the appointment of announcers, Radio Bantu should see to it that they are selected from the three main dialects of Tsonga so as to ensure a sufficient application of every dialect in Tsonga.

The concern about dialects and their representation had both a positive and a negative effect. It could have been a hindrance in the development of the language. Language development accommodate changes, where the norm is the standard form of the particular language. So at times the different dialects might strive to outsmart and develop ahead of the other. At the same time, it could be a beneficial factor in that in the standardisation of the language, not only one, but all variations of the language are considered.

It was the Government's policy not to have many blacks serving on the committee. That is why when it was suggested in one of the Language Committee meetings to have an additional 'Bantu' member from Eastern Transvaal, the Department responded as follows:

The chairman pointed out that the Department had refused the appointment as an additional member, of Mr. I.J. Ndhlovu, of Bandy Vale School although the Tsonga Language Committee had recommended this appointment.

STRUCTURE

From 1954-1970 both the chairman and vice-chairman positions were held by white people. A Black person only held the position of secretary.

YEAR	CHAIRMAN	VICE	SECRETARY
1954	Mr. Franz	Dr. Endemann	A.E. Mpapele
1955	Dr. T.H. Endemann	Dr. N.J. van Warmelo	A.E. Mpapele
1956-1958	Mr. P.A. Hofmann	P.W. van Heerde	A.E. Mpapele
1959-1960	Dr. C.H.J. Schutte	Dr. N.J. van Warmelo	A.E. Mpapele
1960-1961	Dr. C.H.J. Schutte	J.D.N. Lotz	A.E. Mpapele
		F.B. Oliver	A.E. Mpapele
1962-1964	F.B. Oliver	L.A. Nel	E.P. Ndhambi
1965-1966	F.B. Oliver	J.H.A. Swart	E.P. Ndhambi
1966-1968	M.C.J. de Beer	J.H.A. Swart	E.P. Ndhambi
1969	M.C.J. de Beer	H. Kern	E.P. Ndhambi
1969	M.C.J. de Beer	J.H.A. Swart	E.P. Ndhambi

Even when transformation occurred, it was still with ulterior motives. From 1970, with the advent of the homelands, the structure of the committees underwent a change, whereby the speakers of the language assumed more responsibility while whites featured in an advisory capacity, hence the following structure from 1970.

YEAR	CHAIRMAN	VICE	SECRETARY
1970-1972	D.Z.J. Mthebule	D.I. Mavangwa	B.J. Masebenza
1973-1975	N.J. Shipalana	D.I. Mavangwa	B.J. Masebenza
1976-1977	N.J. Shipalana	W.D. Shirilele	B.J. Masebenza

It must be indicated that with this new dispensation, the head of the Language Service in the Department of Education in Gazankulu automatically became the secretary of the committee.

Although the idea of decentralising Language Committees was to empower the speakers of the language, there is doubt about it, as the new committee seemed to have been thrown into the

deep end. This is echoed by the chairman of this new committee in the minutes of the meeting held on the 28-30 April 1970:

The chairman, Mr. D.Z.J. Mthembu in reply said that it was not yet known what the Department of Bantu Education had in mind for the Language Committees, however he would pursue the matter further.

Again in a reply to the memorandum to the chairman, (dated 9 August 1971) written by secretary (dated 8th March 1971):

...It was because I had to find my feet in the new position and know how the Committee can go. You will appreciate the problem which I presume all the Languages Committees face. I was appointed chairman without a constitution or guide of some sort, yet I am expected to lead my Committee

DUTIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

When the Tsonga Language Committee was formed, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 had already been passed in the parliament. The Committee then had the task of compiling a list of Tsonga equivalents of terms required in the teaching of Arithmetic, Hygiene and Environmental Study. Another task of the Committee was:

to create essential African language terminology for school use. Technical terminology was created by the language committee after lists of key terms, mostly from syllabuses and prescribed textbooks, had been drawn up at head office.

This endeavour gave birth to a lot of translations, and the terminology and orthography series. Some of the works translated are reflected hereunder (from minutes of the meeting : 17-18 April 1956)

"Translations of Teacher's guides into Tsonga.

The Committee suggested the following people as translators:

Arithmetic: Mr. C.K. Mageza - Principal

Environmental Studies: Mr. S.C. Marivate - Principal

Scripture: Mr. M.D. Mhlongo - Principal

Hygiene: Mr. J.S. Shimati - Principal

Bantu Languages: Mr. A.E. Mpapele - School Inspector

Needlework: Mrs. J.D. Ndhlovu

Handicrafts: Mr. E.P. Ndhambi - Principal

Music: Mr. E.A. Tlakula - Principal

Gardening: Mr. H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi - Principal

Homecraft (Domestic Science): Miss A.A.K. Mpapele - Teacher

Nature Study; Mr. J.C. Mahuhushi - Principal

Swanepoel (1989) presents the following information and criticisms concerning these translations.

The Translation and Orthography series is the result of the work of the Language Committee established in 1953 by the Department of Bantu Education to create essential African language terminology for school use. The various Language Committees were under the Bantu Language Board and all these bodies were supported in their activities by a Bantu language division at head office. Technical terminology was created by the Language Committees after lists of key terms, taken mostly from syllabuses and prescribed textbooks, had been drawn up by head office.

The first principal proposition in the statement of the problem can be formulated as follows:

- (a) *Pupils in mother tongue education experience problems with*

- (i) *understanding and acquiring concepts associated with obscure (loan) terms, and*
- (ii) *(memorising) these obscure (loan) terms.*

Given the problems that black pupils experience in acquiring technical terminology it may furthermore be implicitly stated that:

For school purposes it would be better if the terms supplied in the Translation and Orthography series were self-explanatory neologisms/transparent terms and not obscure loan terms/obscure terms.

The main statement of the problem and suggestion relating to suitably school-level terminology gave rise to the following questions:

- (i) *What policy and procedures did the Language Committees follow in selecting and creating terms and translation equivalents in the various African languages and what are the policy and procedures of the current Language Board?*

There is a choice in any language as to the type of mechanism to be used to create new terms or translation equivalents for terms in other languages. Given this fact, further important questions are:

- (ii) *What is (are) the most acceptable mechanism(s) for selecting and creating terms for school use and how can the selection of (a) specific term creation mechanism(s) be substantiated?*

The second question will require us to consider in general terms the standards set for terminology work, terminologies and the development and publication of terminologies.

The only misgiving about it being executed by the government is that terms were not created and coined in a standard way, and this gave rise to a lot of confusion instead of it being a solution in Education. Involvement of government officials in the language committee could now be seen as that of painting a glossy picture when they really knew it was a futile exercise on the part of language development. They vigorously encouraged this exercise by painting a picture of success of following:

The meeting was privileged to be addressed by the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education, Dr. van Zyl. After thanking and congratulating the members that each and every school registered with Tsonga as a medium of instruction shall receive a copy of the printed terminology list but the remainder could be found at the rate of 30c each to those who needed them. He pointed out that because of mother tongue instruction in Bantu Languages, the matriculation as well as the Junior Certificate results had improved by 27% to 42%. It was also pointed out as from 1963 Matriculation Certificate would write Bantu Languages in the A-grade and Afrikaans and English B-grade. He also expressed the idea that question papers in a Bantu Language were extremely difficult, but he would in future control the standard, but not to lose it. (sic)

A word by the Deputy Secretary for Bantu Education. The Deputy Secretary for Bantu Education, Dr. H.J. van Zyl congratulated the members for having completed (sic) the Tsonga Terminology. He also pointed out that J.C. results in the Republic rose from 47% in 1962 to 78% in 1963. He attributed this to the fundamental basics which were required in the primary schools where instruction was mainly through the medium of mother tongue. He further urged the members of the Tsonga Language Committee to develop their language and to keep it up by writing books, as Tsonga literature amounted to one quarter of that of the other Bantu groups, e.g. Zulu.

The co-option of non-Tsonga speakers, Mr. Simelani and Mrs Maphanzela, into the committee to assist in the creation of music and homecraft terms was also ridiculous. If this exercise was a serious business, Vatsonga specialists in the respective fields should have been chosen. All in all, the committee succeeded in coining three terminology and orthography books. This exercise greatly affected the orthography.

New sounds had to be introduced into the language to accommodate borrowed words.

There was little development as far as Xitsonga literature is concerned. This fact is acknowledged as follows:

The members of the committee were to write books as at that stage there was a very limited number of books available.

In the latter stages of the Committee subject committees were established and they relieved the Language Committee of almost all school related matters e.g. syllabuses, examination papers and memoranda.

The Language Committee's effort to develop the language in general were thwarted by the refusal by the Department in this regard. For example,

The Committee decided to approach the Department in order to provide annual bursaries and prizes for the Matric and Junior Certificate students in the writing of essays, poems, short stories, etc. in Tsonga. This was aimed at uplifting the standard of Tsonga literature.

With regard to the question of bursaries and prizes for Matric and Junior Certificate students the answer was as follows "Die Departement kan nie aan die versoek voldoen om pryse en beurse beskikbaar te stel vir werk in Tsonga nie. (The above information is to be found in a letter dated 19/04/1963 Ref No. 22/1/6 from the Department of Bantu Education, Tzaneen; Mr. F.B. Olivier;

who at that time acted as Chairman of the Tsonga Language Committee.)

Time and again papers on some aspects of language were read in the language committee meetings, for example:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1971: Prof. H.W.E. Ntsan'wisi: | The problem of the Tsonga Idiom |
| 1971: T.R. Schnerder: | The relative clause.
The double adjective clause. |
| 1975: C.T.D. Marivate: | Tsonga folktales |
| 1977: Mrs. C.P.N. Nkondo: | The compound in Tsonga |

PHASE III

1978 - 1994

From August 1977, the Department of Education and Training of the R.S.A. and the Gazankulu Government, through its Department of Education, entered into some negotiations with a view to the establishment of an autonomous Tsonga Language Board. The proposed Board was to take over all the functions previously assigned to the Central Bantu Language Board and the Tsonga Language Committee of the Department of Education and Training of the R.S.A. ("Tsonga" Language Board Journal: P4). This suggestion is contained in the following document:

"The negotiations culminated with the final approval by the Gazankulu Cabinet and the establishment of the "Tsonga" Language Board in 1978 as we know it today. The Department of Education and Training suggested a structure according to which an autonomous Language Board could be constituted.

"The autonomous status of this newly established "Tsonga" Language Board was granted in principle only. In reality the Board was still under the control of the Department of Education and Training, since it had no function according to the structure suggested by the Department of Education and

Training. The Tsonga Language Board regulations are just as suggested by the Department of Education and Training.

COMPOSITION

- (2) The Board shall consist of not more than twenty-five members. These members shall be nominated by the bodies concerned for appointment by the Minister as follows:
- (a) a chairman nominated by the Gazankulu Department of Education;
 - (b) a vice-chairman nominated by the Department;
 - (c) a secretary who shall ex-officio be the Head of the Language Service Division of the department;
 - (d) two members to represent the Department;
 - (e) two members to represent the Department of Education and Training;
 - (f) two members to represent the Language Planning Division of the Department of Education and Training, one of whom shall be nominated for his special knowledge of Tsonga;
 - (g) not more than three members to represent universities that offer Tsonga as a course of study;
 - (h) one member to represent the Bureau for Tsonga Language and Culture;
 - (i) three members to represent the Tsonga Service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation
 - (j) one member to represent the Department of Information
 - (k) one member to represent the Information Division of the Department of the Chief Minister and Finance;
 - (l) one member to represent the Bible Society of South Africa;
 - (m) three or more optional members to represent neighbouring territories where Tsonga is spoken;
 - (n) if required by circumstances the chairman may with the prior approval of

the Minister, co-opt one or more members to the Board for a specified project or meeting or term of office.

The Tsonga Language Board from 1978 to 1981 was as follows:

1. Mr. D.Z.J. Mthebule - chairman (1978-1980)
2. Mr. N. Shiluvane - vice-chairman (1978-1980)
and chairman (1980-1981)
3. Mr. B.J. Masebenza - secretary
4. Mr. M.H. Mnisi - vice chairman (1980-1981)
5. Mr. R.S. Mukhawana - planning division: D.E.T.
6. Mr. T.H. Khosa - Information division/department of the chief minister
7. Mr. K.J. Nkuzana - S.A.B.C.
8. Mr. J.H.A. Swart - Planning division: D.E.T.
9. Rev. D.C. Marivate - Bible Society
10. Mr. G.S. Mayevu - University of the North
11. Mrs. C.P.N. Nkondo - University of the North
12. Mr. A.W. Mabirimise - Department of Education and Training
13. Mr. K.R. Myakayaka - Bureau of Language and Culture
14. Mr. P.J. Joubert - S.A.B.C.
15. Mr. G.N. Mculu - Department of Education
16. Mr. M.S. Mukhari - Department of Information
17. Mr. M.G. Magagane - S.A.B.C.
18. Mrs. L.S. Hanyani - Department of Education (Gazankulu)
19. Mr. C.T.D. Marivate - University of South Africa

There were no representatives of neighbouring territories as required by paragraph 2.2 (m) of the regulations of the Board. The territories concerned here are Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This would have provided a very good forum for reviving the relationship of the Vatsonga

people in the three political entities where Xitsonga is spoken, i.e. R.S.A., Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

This issue was addressed by the Board in one of their meetings, but there was no development, maybe due to the political climate at that time.

This composition was broadened to also include representatives of

- Colleges of Education
- Department of Justice
- Department of Agriculture
- And lastly the Advisory and In-service training.

STRUCTURE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD

- (1) The Board shall have an executive committee consisting of the Chairman, the Vice-chairman, the secretary and two other members of the Board who shall be designated by the Board.
- (2) The Executive Committee of the Board shall meet once every quarter. However, a special meeting may, with the prior approval of the secretary for Education, be held at any time.

The first Language Board was structured as follows:

- Mr. D.Z. Mthebule - chairman
- Mr. N. Shiluvane - vice chairman
- Mr. B.J. Masebenza - secretary
- Mr. C.T.D. Marivate and K.J. Nkuzana were nominated to the executive committee by the Board as stipulated in the regulations. It must be mentioned that this remained the procedure throughout; i.e. during the following periods:

1978-1981; 1982-1984; 1986-1988 and 1989-1992

When the 1992-1995 Language Board was constituted on the 4th of October 1992, the complete executive committee had already been chosen.

The phase III Language Board was divided into four subcommittees:

- Journal subcommittee
- Literature Development subcommittee
- Examination subcommittee
- Literature Review and Grading subcommittee

(their duties will be discussed later). The then Tsonga Language Board also had plans to appoint a terminologist who would work towards the improvement of the terminology of Xitsonga orthography. (More about these two aspects; composition and structure respectively, will be discussed under duties and functions, since this is greatly influenced by the two aspects.)

The Board met as follows:

- At most twice each calendar year. (Special meetings could be held with the approval of the Secretary (Director-General for Education).

The executive committee met once a quarter.

In the regulations it is not stipulated as to how long each meeting should last.

Decisions were made as follows:

Questions arising at Board meetings are decided by a majority vote of the members present at meetings: Provided that in the event of a tie of votes, the chairman shall have a casting vote as well as a deliberative vote. (Regulations)

This ruling applies to subcommittees as well.

After decisions have been taken by the Board, they are forwarded to the Minister of Education (via the secretary) for consideration. This step has to be taken because:

The final decision on all matters handled or considered by the Board shall rest with the Gazankulu Government. This ruling created serious problems for the Board, as will be seen later on.

3.3 Duties and functions of the Xitsonga Language Board

As stipulated in the Gazette:

The duties and functions of the Board are the following:

The powers and functions of the Board

- (1) The primary function of the Board is to stimulate and foster the growth and development of Tsonga as an effective medium of communication at all levels.
- (2) Other duties of the Board will be:
 - (a) to formulate the Tsonga language policy of the other agencies
 - (b) to develop and increase Tsonga terminology and lay down rules on orthography and spelling
 - (c) to encourage the writing of books so as to progressively increase the literature of the language
 - (d) to study and reconcile dialectical differences and promote the standard form of the language
 - (e) to look after the interest of the Tsonga examination and the evaluation of Tsonga examination results
 - (f) to conduct research into the language and its literature and to publish the findings
 - (g) to select the grade books for use in schools as prescribed works, class readers, text-books and reference works
 - (h) to control and raise the standard of translations and interpretation
 - (i) to propagate pride in the language and encourage its use in all

spheres of human activity

- (j) to act as an authoritative catalyst on all aspects of the language
- (k) to deal with any matter which relates to the language.

The Board functions through four subcommittees as follows:

- Journal subcommittee

This subcommittee is concerned with the publication of the journal of the Language Board. Issues covered in this journal are educational or any other issue that concerns the Vatsonga in all spheres of life. In the minutes of this subcommittee dated 2 April 1992, the policy of the magazine is stated as follows:

1. To be the mouthpiece of the Tsonga Language Board's activities.
2. To promote the awareness of the Tsonga language in the public.
3. To promote creative and scientific writing.
4. To build up the art of literary criticism.
5. To disseminate information about Education and Culture.
6. To educate the public about publishing houses.
7. To publish two issues per year, in May and December.

- Language Research and Literature Development subcommittee

The duties of this subcommittee are the following:

1. To investigate ways of encouraging the writing of Xitsonga books.
2. To scrutinize Xitsonga literature which can be translated into other languages or other languages translated into Xitsonga.
3. To cooperate/liase with the Bureau of Xitsonga and the writer's association.
4. To cooperate/liase with institutions dealing with Xitsonga literature, for example the South African Broadcasting Co-operation.
5. To deal with research related matters in the Xitsonga language.

6. Terminology list: To develop and update Xitsonga words and to lay down orthography rules.
7. To check and consolidate differences between other languages and to develop the language in a correct way.
8. To do research on language and literature books as well as publishing the findings thereof.

- Examination subcommittee

It is concerned with matters that relate to the different examinations in Xitsonga. The committee works with the idea that there should be one paper set for each standard in all the schools in Gazankulu. It is also concerned with scrutinising the Xitsonga syllabi, to give advice where possible.

- Literature Review and Grading subcommittee.

The main concern of this committee is the issue of prescribing books for the different standards.

3.4 Achievements of the Xitsonga Language Board

The Board succeeded in the following noteworthy endeavours:

- A Xitsonga Language Advisor was appointed after a lot of persuasion.
- A journal, *Nyeleti*, was published.
- It organised the Xitsonga language centenary celebrations with the following objectives:
 1. to commemorate a hundred years of "Tsonga" as a written language;
 2. to launch a language revival;
 3. to arouse the language community to the rich resources of the language;
 4. to rediscover the value, beauty and expressive power of the language;
 5. to revitalize and invigorate the language;

6. to bring about a cultural reawakening;
7. to lay firmer foundations for the future advance of the language;
8. to strengthen and deepen old bonds and to forge new ones with other languages and communities;
9. to identify language problems to be earmarked for future language research.

- Literary competitions

Through the Language Development subcommittee, the Board succeeded in organising literary competitions to promote creative writing.

- The latest endeavour is an effort in trying to revive the Mozambique and Zimbabwe relationship.

- Through the Examination subcommittee, the Board has secured sponsorship for prizes for the best student and the best school in Xitsonga in the standard ten examination.

3.5 Problems experienced by the Xitsonga Language Board

- A. The major problem that faced the Board was the fact that: *The final decision on all the matters handled or considered by the Board shall rest with the cabinet of the Gazankulu Government.*

This decision hindered the Board in executing its duties effectively. Hereunder are two important decisions by the Board which were rejected by the cabinet of the former Gazankulu Government.

The Board proposed the word "Xitsonga" as the name of the language, instead of "Tsonga". They forwarded the following memorandum to the cabinet of the then Gazankulu Government.

THE WORD "XITSONGA"

O. INTRODUCTION

- 0.1 The former "Tsonga" Language Board had proposed to the state administrators that we start using the word Xitsonga as the name of the Machangana/Vatsonga language, instead of "Tsonga".
- 0.2 This recommendation was accepted by the Honourable Minister of Education but was refused by the cabinet.
- 0.3 The present Board finds this issue to be of great importance and also wishes to hear its views.

1. DEFINITION

With due respect, the Board humbly requests the cabinet to review this issue by carefully considering the following views:

- 1.1 The word Xitsonga is not a word that has just been created today by the Xitsonga Board. It is a word that was created together with the speakers of the language, the Vatsonga, who themselves named their language "Xitsonga". In the same manner that the Afrikaners named their language "Afrikaans", and the English named theirs "English".
- 1.2 Wherever the Vatsonga are, all of them, even those who never went to school, do not call their language by any other name but "Xitsonga".
- 1.3 The word "Tsonga", truthfully, does not exist in the Xitsonga language. It has been created by those to whom the language does not belong. The Xitsonga Language Board is against the tendency of breaking down Xitsonga words in order to make it easy for other people. To encourage this certainly means to destroy the language instead of preserving it.

1.4 If we look carefully into the words and structure of the Xitsonga language, we find that most of them have prefixes. It does not end there!

That prefix is the heart of that particular word because it grammatically classifies the noun into its proper class. In this way, "Xi" puts the word "Xitsonga" into its rightful place, that is in the same class of nouns such as: "Ximanga", "Xirindza", "Xigugu", "Xitlati" and so on. Now that the word "Xitsonga" is without its prefix, it has been crippled.

1.5 One of the reasons for teaching Xitsonga is to develop pride in the language. If we, the speakers of the language, use the word "Tsonga", we deprive it of the dignity and value, we make it one-eyed or ludicrous. How can children be proud of such a thing.

2.0 APPEAL

The Xitsonga Language Board pleaded with the cabinet to accept and use the word "Xitsonga", which has already been accepted by the Board, and prohibit the use of the term "Tsonga" in all official and community matters.

This idea was further rejected despite this powerful motivation. No reasons were advanced for this refusal. This led to a bitter confrontation between the then chairperson of the Board at that time and the Chief Minister of Gazankulu. This was in 1984. There are no records of the Xitsonga Language Board between this time and 1986, when the new Board was constituted, and the Chief Minister strongly condemned the above proposal, and the Minister of Education reminded the Board of its duties.

This fiasco reduced the Board to a mere instrument of advancing the interests of the Gazankulu Government, rather than of the speakers on the ground, to whom the language belongs. The Xitsonga language appeared to be the property of the Gazankulu Government. Other nationalities accepted the changes without any hassles whatsoever. The names *Setswana*,

isiZulu, Tshivenda, Sesotho were freely used. What is interesting is that despite the refusal by the Gazankulu Government, this is how the language is called by the speakers of the language, even in official circles, it is "Xitsonga", and not "Tsonga".

One could ask whether the Government based its argument on political or linguistic grounds. The Board advanced a linguistic argument. Was the cabinet of the Gazankulu Government constituted by people with the linguistic knowledge to effectively respond to this proposal? Only one person in the cabinet was qualified to do so, the Chief Minister himself.

The very effect of this ruling (that the final decision rested with the cabinet), is further evidenced when the Xitsonga Language Board requested the Department of Education in the then Gazankulu Government to appoint a person to be responsible for Xitsonga as in other subjects. The cabinet of the Gazankulu Government refused.

The very Government that appeared to have an interest in the Xitsonga language was now showing a different colour. The Board had to plead with them for ten years before they would agree to the appointment of such a person. Where was the commitment that the Government was always saying it had to the Xitsonga language? Instead they created more problems for the Board, by imposing a ruling that all people who took Xitsonga as a major, both at universities and colleges of education, were not to be granted Government bursaries. The Board had to intervene, since people lost an interest in Xitsonga as a subject, and it retarded the development of the language to a certain extent.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

The Xitsonga Language Board had set goals for the subcommittees. The researcher investigated how the subcommittees functioned, to find out if they accomplished the set goals. The language service, which handled the affairs of the Board, was under the Department of Education, and therefore under direct control of the Government. The head of this section was the secretary of the Language Board. As in all instances, the one who pays the piper, calls the tune. We will

look into the workings of each subcommittee to highlight these problems.

The Journal Subcommittee

The journal was said to be the mouthpiece of the Xitsonga Language Board, and was to promote an awareness of the Xitsonga language among the public.

From the above we deduce that since the Xitsonga Language Board served the interests of the Vatsonga nation, it had to inform the Vatsonga people of its activities. The Vatsonga are the speakers of the language. The journal, therefore, had to be in the language of the very people it was supposed to be serving. But it did not seem to be the case. Most articles in the journal were in English, for wide readership it was alleged. It did not benefit the grassroots people. Because of this flaw, there was no way the journal could have achieved the second and all its other objectives. How could awareness of Xitsonga be created among the non-speakers of the language while the majority of the speakers are in darkness as far as that is concerned. Furthermore, could awareness of the Xitsonga language be promoted through another language?

The Language Research and Literature Development Subcommittee

This subcommittee could not achieve most of its objectives because the Board met only twice a year, and for only two days in each session. This subcommittee being the backbone of the Board, was restricted in its effective functioning due to lack of funds and human resources.

Because of those constraints, there were no language research programmes carried out by this subcommittee. The proposed projects, like the process of compiling Xitsonga/English dictionaries, compiling a terminology list, which was done by the language service in the Department of Education. All these endeavours required time, money and manpower to execute them effectively.

The Examination Subcommittee

The major problem the subcommittee was faced with was the fact that it was limited in its functioning. Though it was concerned with examination related matters, it had, so far, been ignored in matters like the core syllabus discussions.

The Literature Review and Grading subcommittee

This subcommittee's main concern was the issue of prescribing books for different standards. Even though the Xitsonga Language Board had such a subcommittee, it is interesting to note that this exercise was the responsibility of all the Board members. Why was the committee not left to do this alone?

Could it have been that the Board lost sight of this fact or did it not have confidence in the subcommittee?

The Xitsonga Language Board was empowered to prescribe books for all the standards, except standard ten. Because of this ruling, in 1989 and 1990, books by an unknown author, P.B. Baloyi, were prescribed for standard ten. The Xitsonga Language Board, on investigating the matter, discovered that the author was non-existent, and this raised a lot of questions concerning the functions of the Language Board.

3.6 CRITICISM OF LANGUAGE BOARDS

Although the Language Boards were created to manage the various languages spoken in South Africa, much criticism was levelled against them by various people. At the National Language Project conference held in Cape Town in September 1991, Language Boards were criticised as instruments that sought to perpetuate Apartheid goals and policies. In the "Language in Contact and Conflict in Africa" (LiCCA) conference held in Lesotho in 1993, Language Boards came under fire. In one of the workshops it was proposed that Language

Boards be overhauled so as to serve the needs of the people much more effectively. This statement suggests that the Language Boards were perceived as instruments that did not manage language properly or effectively.

Speaking at the “Language-for-all” conference, Winnie Mandela (1994:4) echoed the sentiments that the Language Boards did not serve the interests of the people effectively as follows:

“The term ‘Language Board’, though, conjures bad memories. We are reminded of the Language Boards in the Apartheid era. Language Boards which were not structured and created democratically. Language Boards which prescribed terms for use on radio and television without consulting the users themselves. Language Boards which catered for writers who ensured that their own books were prescribed textbooks in the DET schools.”

Sotashe (1992) indicates that although Language Boards would be expected to be accountable to the constituency which is directly affected by the Board’s decisions, i.e. the general public, especially the parents, teachers and students, communication with the public was through the subject advisers of the DET and the media. Sotashe (1992) points out that there were no properly arranged channels for reciprocal communication and that the public, in effect, did not have access to the Board.

3.7 DISSOLUTION OF THE XITSONGA LANGUAGE BOARD

The Xitsonga Language Board was disbanded in 1995. The **Founding Report of the Northern Province Language Council** (1997:2) sums up the dissolution as follows:

“In order to facilitate delivery on reform in the new and democratic language Policy, Act 200 of 1993 made provision for the establishment by Act of Parliament of the Pan South African Language Board...

“Provisions outlined above rung-out the old ethnically based Language Boards and rang-in new and democratic language structures. In response to this new

CHAPTER 4

dispensation, the Northern Province disbanded the old Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sepedi Language Boards and sought to replace them with a new democratic language structure...”

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the role played by the Xitsonga Language Board in language management. The terminology of the Xitsonga language, the phonological structure, language vocabulary, etc. have all been handled by the Language Board. It has emerged from this chapter that the Xitsonga Language Board experienced problems in handling language management. Some of the problems experienced were political interference by the Government and the apparent lack of credibility among the people whose language the Board managed.

Generally, Language Boards were created to manage languages such as Xitsonga. However, they were seemingly not fully accepted by the speakers. The speakers appeared to perceive the Language Boards as having been created to meet the objectives of the Apartheid government rather than to manage the languages according to the way the speakers wanted to see them managed.

The fact that Language Boards were unilaterally constituted also discredited the Language Boards as the constituencies directly affected by the decisions of the Boards felt that the Boards did not uphold the principles of democracy. It is perhaps for this reason that the Language Boards were disbanded in 1995.

In the next chapter, an investigation on the perception of the speakers of the Xitsonga Language Board will be described/discussed.