



Demand-driven curriculum design for translation and interpreting program: Evidence from Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This study examines whether student demand can support developing a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting (MATI) at the University of Botswana. Using a demand-driven approach, it explores students' perceptions, enrolment intentions, employability expectations, and program preferences. A descriptive survey was conducted with 80 students from multiple faculties using a structured questionnaire. Findings indicate strong demand for the proposed program: over 90% of respondents recognized the need for professional translation and interpreting training in Botswana, and 68.8% expressed willingness to enroll. Participants perceived translation and interpreting qualifications as valuable for employment, particularly in education, government, healthcare, business, tourism, and media. Participants preferred blended and face-to-face delivery modes, along with flexible scheduling, although they identified technological and internet-access challenges. Qualitative findings emphasized the importance of experiential learning, technological competence, sector-specific specialization, African language integration, internships, and professional certification pathways. The findings strongly support introducing a MATI program at the University of Botswana and contribute to broader discussions on demand-driven curriculum development in multilingual developing-country contexts.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji apakah permintaan mahasiswa dapat menjadi dasar yang layak untuk pengembangan program Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretin (MATI) di Universitas Botswana. Melalui pendekatan berbasis permintaan, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa, niat pendaftaran, harapan terhadap peluang kerja, serta preferensi mereka terhadap program tersebut. Survei deskriptif dilakukan terhadap 80 mahasiswa dari berbagai fakultas menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya permintaan yang kuat terhadap program yang diusulkan. Lebih dari 90% responden mengakui perlunya pelatihan profesional dalam bidang penerjemahan dan penafsiran di Botswana, sementara 68,8% menyatakan kesediaan untuk mendaftar dalam program tersebut. Para peserta memandang kualifikasi di bidang penerjemahan dan penafsiran sebagai aset yang berharga untuk memperoleh pekerjaan, khususnya di sektor pendidikan, pemerintahan, kesehatan, bisnis, pariwisata, dan media. Mode pembelajaran campuran (*blended learning*) dan tatap muka menjadi pilihan utama, disertai preferensi terhadap jadwal yang fleksibel. Namun demikian, tantangan terkait teknologi dan akses internet juga teridentifikasi. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, kompetensi teknologi, spesialisasi sesuai sektor, integrasi bahasa-bahasa Afrika, program magang, serta jalur sertifikasi profesional. Temuan ini memberikan dukungan yang kuat bagi pembukaan program MATI di Universitas Botswana dan berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas mengenai pengembangan kurikulum berbasis permintaan dalam konteks negara berkembang yang multibahasa.

Kata Kunci: kurikulum berbasis permintaan; multibahasa; pendidikan tinggi; penerjemahan dan penafsiran; permintaan mahasiswa

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INTRODUCTION

This study adopts a demand-driven approach to curriculum development, positioning prospective learners' needs, interests, and professional aspirations as a central basis for program design. From this perspective, educational programs are developed not only in response to policy priorities and institutional goals but also with consideration of stakeholder expectations, labor-market requirements, and learner demand. The study examines student demand for a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting (MATI) program at the University of Botswana, focusing on perceptions of the need for professional training, willingness to enroll, employability expectations, and preferences regarding program design and delivery.

Recent studies on translation and interpreting education have emphasized the need to align curricula with labor-market requirements, technological developments, and multilingual realities. Research in developing-country contexts shows that translator-training programs are often established in response to national language policies, growing demand for multilingual communication, and the expansion of language-service industries (Al-Batineh & Al Tenaijy, 2024; EL-Karnichi, 2024). Experiences from several African countries further show the need for resilient, adaptable translator-training models that can respond to changing technological, educational, and professional environments (Afolabi & Oyetoyan, 2021).

Studies from Africa, Asia, and other developing regions have highlighted persistent challenges, including insufficient professional training opportunities, limited integration of translation technologies, inadequate attention to local languages, and weak alignment between academic programs and employer expectations (EL-Karnichi, 2024; Mabiletja & Ngcobo, 2023; Ogbonnaya & Els, 2024). Contemporary scholarship further stresses the importance of stakeholder-based curriculum development and competence-oriented training, in which students, employers, and professional practitioners contribute to program design to enhance relevance, employability, sustainability, and responsiveness to changing professional demands (Baig et al., 2025; Dlamini, 2024; Prieto Ramos, 2024b).

Furthermore, recent research suggests that translator education must increasingly prepare students for technology-rich, AI-assisted professional environments by incorporating translation technologies, machine translation, post-editing, and digital competencies into program curricula (Cai et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025; Prieto Ramos, 2024a). Recent reviews also reflect the growing importance of translation and interpreting education. A state-of-the-art review of interpreter and translator education research identified competence development, pedagogy, technology integration, and professional preparation as dominant themes in contemporary scholarship (Li, 2024).

Similarly, competence-based studies emphasize that translator-training programs must continuously evolve to respond to changes in professional practice, technological innovation, and employer expectations (Prieto Ramos, 2024a; Prieto Ramos, 2024b). These developments have increased attention to employability, technological competence, experiential learning, industry engagement, and curriculum modernization in translator education. Botswana provides a particularly relevant context for this inquiry. Although English and Setswana remain the principal languages of government and education,

Botswana has significant linguistic diversity and a growing recognition of indigenous languages in educational planning and policy (Mokibelo et al., 2024). This multilingual context creates a need for language mediation across linguistic communities, particularly in domains such as education, healthcare, public administration, and the justice system, where equitable access to services often depends on effective communication mechanisms (Sello, 2020).

H. M. Batibo's *"Language Decline and Death in Africa: Causes, Consequences and Challenges"* further underscores the vulnerability of minority languages and the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural heritage in multilingual African societies. Translation and interpreting have an important role in addressing these challenges by facilitating communication across linguistic communities, supporting access to services, and promoting social inclusion. Recent scholarship on multilingual learning further emphasizes that language-inclusive practices can contribute to more equitable and accessible educational and social environments (Kerfoot, 2024). This need extends beyond spoken languages to include sign-language interpreting, which remains essential for ensuring equitable access to communication and public services for Deaf communities across Africa (Kaula & Sati, 2025).

The growing emphasis on multilingualism in African higher education has also increased support for integrating indigenous languages into teaching, learning, and institutional communication as part of broader efforts to improve inclusion, linguistic equity, and educational access (Ogbonnaya & Els, 2024). Despite the growing need for language mediation, Botswana currently lacks a dedicated postgraduate program in translation and interpreting that accommodates both international and indigenous languages. As a result, many translation and interpreting services are still provided by individuals without formal professional training, raising concerns about quality, consistency, and workforce capacity.

Similar concerns have been reported in other developing-country contexts, where gaps between professional demands and educational provision have prompted calls for curriculum reform and greater alignment between training programs and labor-market expectations (Al-Batineh & Al Tenaijy, 2024; EL-Karnichi, 2024). Although translator education has attracted growing scholarly attention, relatively little empirical research has examined student demand as a basis for curriculum development, particularly within multilingual African contexts. Existing studies have focused mainly on competence development, technology integration, curriculum modernization, professional standards, and employability rather than prospective students' perceptions, enrolment intentions, and program expectations (Cui et al., 2025; EL-Karnichi, 2024; Li, 2024).

Furthermore, no known study has systematically investigated demand for a postgraduate translation and interpreting program in Botswana. This gap matters because demand-driven curriculum theory emphasizes that program sustainability depends not only on policy priorities and societal needs but also on learner demand and expectations (Baig et al., 2025). Understanding prospective students' interests is therefore essential for determining the viability, relevance, and long-term sustainability of a new program. Against this backdrop, this study investigates student demand for a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program at the University of Botswana.

Specifically, it assesses demand for professional training in translation and interpreting, examines students' willingness to enroll, explores perceptions of employability and labor-market relevance, investigates the relationship between prior language-related communication challenges and program interest, identifies preferences regarding program delivery and scheduling, and elicits recommendations for program content and structure. By providing empirical evidence of learner demand, the study contributes to developing a postgraduate program that is educationally relevant, professionally responsive, technologically current, and aligned with Botswana's multilingual context. It also contributes to the emerging literature on demand-driven curriculum development by showing how learner perspectives can inform translator education in a multilingual African higher-education environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in a demand-driven curriculum perspective, which views curriculum development as a process informed by the needs, expectations, and aspirations of multiple stakeholders. Unlike traditional supply-driven approaches that prioritize disciplinary traditions and institutional priorities, demand-driven models emphasize responsiveness to learners, employers, professional communities, and society more broadly. Recent higher-education research suggests that stakeholder-informed curricula are more likely to remain relevant, sustainable, and aligned with labor-market requirements (Baig et al., 2025; Dlamini, 2024). In translator education, this perspective matters because program viability depends not only on institutional commitment but also on demonstrable learner demand, professional relevance, and responsiveness to changing linguistic and technological environments. The framework adopted in this study therefore integrates three complementary perspectives: student demand and needs assessment, student-centered curriculum design, and competence-based approaches in translator education.

Student Demand and Needs Assessment

The framework begins by recognizing that student demand provides an important source of evidence for curriculum planning. In contemporary higher education, students increasingly evaluate academic programs according to employability prospects, professional relevance, flexibility, and alignment with career aspirations (Baig et al., 2025; Dlamini, 2024). Student demand therefore represents more than a measure of program popularity; it reflects learners' perceptions of educational value, professional opportunity, and future career trajectories.

The present study draws on Roger Kaufman's needs-assessment perspective, which argues that educational initiatives should be examined in relation to needs occurring at societal, organizational, and individual levels. Within this approach, learner demand should be considered alongside broader institutional priorities and societal requirements to ensure educational programs remain relevant and sustainable. In translator education, this means program development should respond not only to labor-market demands and language-policy objectives but also to prospective students' aspirations and expectations.

Recent higher-education research further supports incorporating stakeholder perspectives into curriculum development. Programs developed through consultation with learners, employers, and professional communities tend to align more strongly with workforce requirements and respond more readily to changing professional environments (Baig et al., 2025). Demand-driven approaches are particularly relevant in developing-country contexts, where educational institutions often face increasing pressure to demonstrate program relevance, employability outcomes, and sustainable enrolment patterns.

Student-Centred Curriculum Design

Once educational demand has been identified and validated, it must be translated into meaningful learning experiences. This shift from identified needs to educational practice requires a pedagogical framework that keeps learning relevant and responsive to students' contexts. The foundations of this student-centered approach can be traced to the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and James Beane, all of whom emphasized connecting education to learners' experiences, interests, and social realities. Their ideas continue to influence contemporary approaches that position learners as active participants in the educational process rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This learner-centered orientation is reflected in current curriculum and pedagogical practices, which emphasize learner participation, flexibility, responsiveness to learner diversity, and active engagement in constructing knowledge (Dlamini, 2024).

Such approaches are particularly relevant in postgraduate education, where students frequently balance academic studies with professional responsibilities and personal commitments. In increasingly diverse higher education environments, responsiveness to learners' circumstances extends beyond academic and professional needs to encompass linguistic and cultural dimensions. Research on multilingual education suggests that curriculum design should take account of learners' linguistic and cultural realities. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that language-supportive pedagogies can create more inclusive and effective learning environments by recognizing multilingualism as an educational resource rather than a barrier to learning (Dartey, 2024). These findings are particularly relevant to translator education, where linguistic diversity constitutes both a learning resource and an object of study.

Recent translator-education research similarly supports learner-centered approaches. Blended-learning models and flexible-delivery arrangements have been shown to support translation competence development while increasing learner satisfaction and accessibility (Peng et al., 2023). Further evidence suggests that blended approaches can be particularly effective in translation technology education by combining flexibility, independent learning, and practical engagement with digital tools (Chan, 2025). Consequently, curriculum development should prioritize learner preferences for program structure, scheduling, delivery mode, and access to technology. Constructive alignment further reinforces this perspective by emphasizing coherence between learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment practices. Effective curriculum design therefore requires not only identifying learner needs

but also developing educational experiences that address those needs coherently and purposefully.

Competence-Based Approaches in Translator Education

While student-centered approaches inform how learning should be organized, competence-based approaches guide what learners should acquire through translator education. International frameworks and competence-based models conceptualize translation competence as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic, intercultural, strategic, technological, and professional competencies (PACTE Group, 2005; Prieto Ramos, 2024a). Recent scholarship further emphasizes integrating intercultural competence systematically throughout translator-training curricula because successful translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to mediate between cultures and communication systems (Mejri, 2024).

These frameworks emphasize that contemporary translators require considerably more than language proficiency alone; they must also demonstrate technological expertise, professional awareness, problem-solving ability, intercultural competence, and adaptability to changing professional environments. Recent research suggests that translator competence frameworks must adapt continuously in response to technological transformation within the profession. Contemporary translators increasingly work within environments shaped by computer-assisted translation, machine translation, localization technologies, terminology-management systems, and artificial intelligence applications (Prieto Ramos, 2024a). Consequently, technological competence is now viewed as a core component of translator professionalism rather than an optional supplementary skill.

Evidence further indicates that translation technology training contributes significantly to competence development and professional preparedness. Technology-enhanced training has been associated with improved translation performance, greater efficiency, and enhanced readiness for contemporary workplace environments (Li & Li, 2023). Similarly, studies of translation markets in developing-country contexts have reported growing demand for technological competencies, particularly in localization, machine translation, and computer-assisted translation workflows (Al-Batineh & Al Tenaijy, 2024). Artificial intelligence has further expanded competence requirements in translator education.

Recent scholarship argues that translator-training programs should include AI literacy, machine-translation post-editing, ethical awareness, and critical engagement with AI-assisted systems to prepare graduates for emerging professional realities (Cai et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025). Furthermore, human-AI collaboration is increasingly recognized as a key competence area for future translators, requiring educational institutions to reconsider traditional curriculum models and integrate new forms of technological training (Ren & Wang, 2025). Recent developments in competence research also underscore the need to align educational models with evolving professional practice. Competence-based curricula are increasingly expected to reflect developments in translation technologies, machine translation, quality assurance processes, and specialized professional domains to remain relevant and support employability (Prieto Ramos, 2024a; Prieto Ramos, 2024b).

Empirical Studies on Translator Education and Curriculum Development

Recent empirical studies identify several recurring priorities in translator education. Professional specialization, experiential learning, technological competence, industry engagement, employability, and curriculum responsiveness consistently emerge as important curriculum components. A state-of-the-art review of interpreter and translator education research identified competence development, pedagogy, technology integration, and professional preparation as dominant themes within contemporary scholarship (Li, 2024). Industry-oriented research further indicates that curricula aligned with workplace requirements contribute positively to trainee performance and professional readiness. Studies examining industry-driven translation training have reported improvements in translation competence and stronger alignment between educational outcomes and professional expectations (Al Thowaini & Qassem, 2024).

Similarly, research in developing-country contexts highlights the importance of modernizing curricula and better integrating labor-market requirements into translator-training programs (EL-Karnichi, 2024). Experiential learning has also emerged as a significant component of translator education. Internships, professional placements, workplace simulations, and project-based learning opportunities are widely viewed as mechanisms for bridging the gap between academic learning and professional practice. Recent evidence suggests that field-training experiences contribute positively to the development of linguistic, technological, interpersonal, service-provision, and domain-specific competencies while enhancing professional preparedness (Mahadin, 2026). Such findings reinforce calls for stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders.

Scholars have additionally emphasized the need to contextualize translator education within local linguistic and sociocultural realities. Research on multilingual education and language planning suggests that educational policies and curricula are more effective when adapted to specific sociolinguistic contexts rather than based on universal models (Mabiletja & Ngcobo, 2023). Similarly, multilingual higher-education research highlights the value of incorporating indigenous languages and local communication needs into program design to strengthen inclusion, participation, and access (Ogbonnaya & Els, 2024). These observations resonate with arguments that translator education should balance internationally recognized competence frameworks with locally relevant multilingual realities (Niles, 2025).

Research on university language policies similarly shows that multilingualism can either promote inclusion or reinforce linguistic hierarchies, depending on how language policies are conceptualized and implemented (Shirahata & Lahti, 2023). Consequently, translator-training programs in multilingual societies must consider not only professional competence development but also broader questions of linguistic diversity, social inclusion, and cultural preservation. Collectively, the literature suggests that effective translator-training programs should respond to stakeholder needs, be grounded in competence-based approaches, stay technologically current, remain professionally relevant, and be sensitive to multilingual realities. These considerations are particularly important in developing-country contexts, where educational programs must address both local needs and international professional expectations.

Conceptual Integration

The framework conceptualizes curriculum development as an interconnected process. Student demand provides the initial rationale for program development, while needs assessment validates this demand against broader societal, professional, and institutional priorities. Student-centered curriculum design then translates identified needs into meaningful learning experiences. At the same time, competence-based approaches specify the knowledge, skills, technological capabilities, and professional attributes required for contemporary translation and interpreting practice. Empirical studies on translator education further demonstrate the importance of aligning educational provision with technological developments, labor-market requirements, multilingual realities, and learner expectations. Together, these perspectives provide a coherent framework for evaluating the feasibility of the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program and for designing a curriculum that is responsive to learner demand, professionally relevant, technologically current, and aligned with Botswana's multilingual context. The framework therefore serves as the conceptual foundation for examining student demand and identifying implications for curriculum development at the University of Botswana.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design to assess student demand for a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program at the University of Botswana. The survey design was appropriate because it enabled the systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative data on students' perceptions, preferences, and expectations regarding a potential postgraduate program. Consistent with the demand-driven curriculum perspective underpinning this study, the survey sought to generate empirical evidence on perceived need for professional training, willingness to enroll, expected employability benefits, labor-market relevance, and preferred program characteristics.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data provided measurable indicators of program demand, while qualitative responses offered deeper insight into participants' expectations concerning curriculum content, delivery modes, professional specializations, and employability outcomes. Integrating both data types enabled a more comprehensive understanding of student demand and its implications for curriculum development.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the University of Botswana, the country's largest public university and a key provider of postgraduate education. Because the MATI program is expected to serve students from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, the study targeted undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in different faculties across the university. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling strategy because the study sought

preliminary evidence from a broad range of prospective applicants who were readily accessible during the data-collection period.

While probability sampling techniques may enhance representativeness, convenience sampling was considered appropriate for an exploratory needs-assessment study intended to evaluate student interest in a program. A total of 80 students participated voluntarily. Participants represented different levels of study, academic disciplines, and demographic backgrounds, thereby providing diverse perspectives regarding the potential value and relevance of postgraduate training in translation and interpreting.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was designed around themes identified in the literature on demand-driven curriculum development, student-centered education, employability-oriented curriculum design, and translator education. The questionnaire comprised three sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, gender, program of study, and level of study. The second section examined indicators of program demand. Respondents reported their perceptions of the need for professional translation and interpreting training, willingness to enroll in a MATI program, perceptions of labor-market demand, employability expectations, and experiences with language-related communication challenges.

The third section focused on curriculum-related considerations. Items addressed preferred modes of program delivery, scheduling preferences, anticipated participation challenges, and recommendations concerning program content, technological competencies, specialization pathways, internships, and professional development opportunities. Most attitudinal items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument also included multiple-choice questions, ranking exercises, and open-ended questions to allow respondents to elaborate on their views and curriculum recommendations.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire demonstrated content validity because its items were derived from concepts and themes identified in contemporary scholarship on curriculum development, translator education, multilingual communication, employability, and stakeholder-responsive program design. Integrating quantitative and qualitative questions further enhanced the instrument's capacity to capture different dimensions of student demand. However, the instrument was not subjected to formal psychometric testing prior to administration. The study did not conduct pilot testing, construct validation, expert review, or reliability analysis because of the exploratory nature of the study and time constraints associated with program development. Consequently, interpret the findings with appropriate caution, and future studies should incorporate more rigorous validation procedures to strengthen reliability and generalizability.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place over four weeks. Researchers recruited participants through classroom announcements, university communication channels, student networks, and direct invitations. The questionnaire was administered both electronically and in paper format to maximize participation and accessibility. We screened completed questionnaires for completeness before analysis. Responses containing substantial missing data were excluded; however, all 80 submitted questionnaires met the minimum requirements for inclusion in the final analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The University of Botswana's Research and Innovation Services granted ethical clearance before data collection began. The study adhered to established ethical principles relating to voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and responsible data management. Participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. No personally identifiable information was collected. All data were stored securely and reported only in aggregate form to protect participant privacy and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages summarised participants' responses on demand for professional training, willingness to enroll, employability expectations, labor-market relevance, delivery preferences, and perceived challenges to participation. We analyzed qualitative responses from open-ended questions using thematic analysis. The team reviewed responses repeatedly to identify recurring ideas, concepts, and recommendations. We grouped similar responses into broader themes reflecting participants' expectations regarding curriculum content, technological training, experiential learning, specialization opportunities, African-language integration, professional certification, and program delivery.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings enabled triangulation of evidence and provided both statistical and contextual insights into student demand. This combined approach strengthened the study's ability to generate practical recommendations for developing a demand-responsive MATI program. The next section presents the findings and discusses their implications for curriculum development, employability, multilingual communication, and translator education in Botswana.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demand for Professional Translation and Interpreting Training

Participants were asked whether Botswana requires professional training programs in translation and interpreting. The findings indicate overwhelmingly positive perceptions regarding the need for such training. More than 90% of respondents (73 out of 80) agreed

that Botswana requires formal professional preparation in translation and interpreting, while only a small minority expressed uncertainty or disagreement. These findings suggest that students see a significant gap in current educational provision and recognize the growing importance of professional language mediation in Botswana's multilingual context. The high level of agreement demonstrates widespread awareness of the role that translation and interpreting can play in facilitating communication across linguistic communities and supporting access to services in multilingual settings.

Willingness to Enroll in the Proposed MATI Program

Respondents were asked whether they would consider enrolling in the MATI program if the University of Botswana introduced it. The results indicate strong interest. Approximately 68.8% of respondents (55 out of 80) reported they would be willing to enroll, while the remainder expressed uncertainty or indicated they would not enroll. These findings provide evidence of substantial student interest in postgraduate studies in translation and interpreting. Although expressed intentions do not necessarily translate into actual enrolment, the results suggest the program would likely attract a significant number of prospective applicants.

Perceived Employability Value of Translation and Interpreting Qualifications

Participants were asked to evaluate the potential employability value of translation and interpreting qualifications. More than 87% of respondents (70 out of 80) viewed such qualifications positively and associated them with employment opportunities across a wide range of sectors. Respondents identified education, government, healthcare, business, tourism, media, and international organizations as potential employment destinations for graduates. These responses suggest that students see translation and interpreting not merely as academic fields, but as professionally relevant areas that can support career development and labor-market participation. The findings further indicate that respondents view multilingual competence as an increasingly valuable professional asset in contemporary society.

Language-Related Communication Challenges and Program Interest

The study also examined whether experiences of language-related communication difficulties influenced interest in establishing the program. More than 76% of respondents (61 out of 80) reported having encountered communication challenges arising from language barriers in educational, social, or professional contexts. Many participants said these experiences increased their awareness of the importance of translation and interpreting services. Many participants also reported that these experiences increased their awareness of the importance of translation and interpreting services. This finding suggests that lived experiences of multilingual communication may contribute to greater recognition of the value of professional translation and interpreting services.

Preferences for Program Delivery and Scheduling

Participants indicated their preferred mode of program delivery. Blended learning emerged as the most preferred option, followed by traditional face-to-face instruction, together accounting for more than 71% (57 out of 80). Fully online delivery received comparatively less support. Respondents also preferred flexible scheduling arrangements that would enable students to balance academic, professional, and personal commitments. Evening classes, weekend sessions, and hybrid teaching arrangements were frequently identified as desirable options. These findings show that accessibility and flexibility matter to prospective students and should be incorporated into program planning.

Perceived Challenges to Participation

Despite strong support for the proposed program, respondents identified several factors that might hinder participation. The most cited concerns included financial costs, internet access, technological resources, and time constraints related to professional or family responsibilities. Some participants also expressed concerns regarding the availability of specialized training resources and opportunities for professional practice. These findings suggest that program planners should consider mechanisms to reduce barriers to participation and support student success.

Student Recommendations for Curriculum Content and Structure

Qualitative responses provided valuable insights into students' expectations regarding curriculum design. Several prominent themes emerged.

Technological Competence

Participants consistently recommended including computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, machine translation systems, terminology-management software, and other digital translation technologies. Respondents viewed technological competence as an essential component of professional translator preparation. Recent evidence from Algeria similarly indicates that translation students increasingly require systematic training in translation technologies and that technology-related competencies should be central to translator-training curricula (Driai & Bekkouche, 2025).

Experiential Learning

Many participants emphasized the importance of practical and workplace-oriented training. Recent pedagogical research likewise highlights the importance of structured training workshops and practice-oriented learning environments in developing translation competence and improving learner confidence (Morgan, 2024). Internships, professional placements, translation projects, simulations, and authentic translation assignments were

frequently mentioned as desirable curriculum features. Students stressed the importance of opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts.

Specialisation Pathways

Respondents expressed interest in specialized fields of translation and interpreting, including legal, medical, business, educational, media, and community interpreting. These findings suggest that students value programs that provide opportunities for professional specialization and career diversification.

African Language Integration

Participants strongly supported including African languages alongside international languages in the proposed curriculum. Many respondents highlighted the importance of promoting local languages, supporting multilingual communication, and addressing the specific linguistic needs of Botswana's diverse communities. Participants' emphasis on multilingual communication and professional preparation also reflects the growing recognition of intercultural competence as a core component of translator and interpreter education (Mejri, 2024).

Professional Recognition and Certification

A recurring recommendation was to include pathways that facilitate professional accreditation or certification. Students viewed professional recognition as an important way to enhance employability, professional credibility, and career advancement.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings show strong student demand for a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program at the University of Botswana. Respondents view the program as both educationally relevant and professionally valuable. The results not only indicate strong interest in enrolment but also provide detailed information regarding curriculum expectations, employability considerations, technological requirements, and multilingual priorities.

Discussion

The findings strongly support a demand-driven approach to curriculum development. The high levels of perceived need for professional training in translation and interpreting, together with substantial willingness to enroll in the program, suggest that demonstrable student demand supports establishing a MATI program at the University of Botswana. These results reinforce the central premise of demand-driven curriculum theory: educational programs are more likely to be relevant, sustainable, and responsive when informed by empirically identified learner needs rather than institutional priorities alone (Baig et al., 2025). The findings align with previous research showing that student and stakeholder

demand drives curriculum innovation and program sustainability. Programs developed in response to learner, professional, and stakeholder needs are generally more likely to achieve relevance, responsiveness, and long-term sustainability (Al Thowaini & Qassem, 2024; Baig et al., 2025).

The results therefore support the argument that stakeholder participation should play a central role in curriculum planning and program design. A notable finding concerns participants' perceptions of employability and labor market relevance. Most respondents viewed translation and interpreting qualifications as valuable for enhancing career prospects and addressing workforce needs across a range of sectors. To better understand these perceptions, it helps to view the findings through the lens of human capital theory, traced to the work of Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker. These scholars conceptualized education as an investment through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies that enhance productivity, employability, and professional mobility. From this perspective, higher education is not only a means of acquiring academic knowledge but also a strategic pathway to improved employment opportunities and socioeconomic advancement.

The findings therefore suggest that students view translator education as both an academic endeavor and a vehicle for professional development, career progression, and greater participation in the labor market. This interpretation is supported by contemporary translator-education research that emphasizes employability, professional relevance, and alignment with labor-market requirements as important considerations in curriculum design (EL-Karnichi, 2024). Stronger connections between academic preparation and workplace expectations have also been associated with improved perceptions of professional value and career readiness among translation students (Al Thowaini & Qassem, 2024). The strong preference for flexible learning arrangements and blended delivery also merits attention. Participants expressed clear support for program structures that accommodate the realities of postgraduate learners, many of whom balance studies with professional and personal commitments.

Similar conclusions were reported in African contexts during and after the COVID-19 period, where flexible and technology-supported forms of translator and interpreter education became increasingly important (Afolabi & Oyetoyan, 2021). These findings align with student-centered approaches to curriculum design and support previous evidence demonstrating that blended-learning environments contribute positively to translation competence development and learner satisfaction (Peng et al., 2023). Recent research further indicates that blended-learning models can effectively support translation technology training by providing both flexibility and opportunities for practical engagement with digital tools (Chan, 2025). The qualitative findings provide further insight into how learner demand can be translated into curriculum design.

Participants consistently emphasized experiential learning, professional specialization, technological competence, and workplace-oriented training. These priorities align closely with contemporary developments in translator education. Industry-oriented and experiential approaches strengthen professional readiness, improve competence development, and facilitate smoother transitions from academic study to professional practice (Al Thowaini & Qassem, 2024; Mahadin, 2026). Participants also emphasized translation technologies. Participants widely viewed computer-assisted translation tools, machine translation,

terminology management systems, and other digital resources as essential components of modern translator preparation. These findings are consistent with competence-based models that increasingly position technological competence as a core dimension of professional translation competence.

Recent studies suggest that translation technology training contributes significantly to overall translation competence and professional preparedness (Li & Li, 2023). Similarly, contemporary translation practice has become increasingly shaped by machine translation, AI-assisted workflows, and other technological innovations that require translators to develop stronger technological capabilities (Prieto Ramos, 2024a; Prieto Ramos, 2025). The findings therefore support growing evidence that translation technologies should be systematically incorporated into curriculum design. The growing influence of artificial intelligence further reinforces this conclusion. Recent scholarship emphasizes that translator education must increasingly include AI literacy, machine-translation post-editing, human-AI collaboration, and critical engagement with AI-assisted systems (Cai et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025; Ren & Wang, 2025).

Participants' recommendations regarding technology integration therefore appear closely aligned with current international developments in translator education. Another important finding is participants' strong support for integrating African languages into the proposed program. While international competence frameworks provide valuable guidance for curriculum development, respondents emphasized the importance of keeping the curriculum responsive to Botswana's multilingual realities and communication needs. This finding supports recent scholarship on contextualized curriculum development, which argues that educational programs are more effective when they are adapted to local sociolinguistic environments and promote linguistic inclusion (Mabiletja & Ngcobo, 2023; Niles, 2025; Ogbonnaya & Els, 2024).

The findings also align with broader debates in African higher education that advocate integrating indigenous languages into teaching, learning, and professional training to strengthen inclusion, linguistic equity, and educational relevance (Dartey, 2024; Kaula & Sati, 2025). Within the Botswana context, these observations resonate with recent research highlighting the importance of promoting local languages and multilingual educational practices as part of efforts to enhance inclusion, cultural preservation, and equitable access to knowledge (Mokibelo et al., 2024). This approach may simultaneously strengthen translator preparation, promote multilingual communication, and support the preservation and development of local languages. The findings also contribute to broader debates concerning curriculum development in multilingual and developing-country contexts.

By identifying both the extent of student demand and the program characteristics that students consider important, the study demonstrates how learner perspectives can contribute meaningfully to curriculum innovation. The findings therefore extend existing translator-education scholarship beyond competence development and professional standards to include student demand as a critical source of evidence for program planning. More broadly, this study contributes to the emerging literature on demand-driven curriculum development by showing that learner demand can guide educational decision-making in translator education. More specifically, it contributes evidence from a multilingual African higher-education context, a perspective that remains underrepresented within contemporary

translator-education research. Through this contribution, the study broadens current discussions of translator education to include how prospective students' expectations, experiences, and aspirations shape curriculum design.

Limitations and Future Research

This study used a relatively small sample from a single institution and employed convenience sampling. In addition, the questionnaire was not formally psychometrically validated, which may limit the reliability and generalisability of the findings. Consequently, interpret the findings with appropriate caution, as they may not fully represent the views of all potential applicants in Botswana. Future studies should expand participation to include students from multiple institutions, employers, practicing translators and interpreters, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. Further research could examine labor-market demand for translation and interpreting services in Botswana, investigate employer expectations regarding graduate competencies, and evaluate the long-term sustainability of postgraduate translator-training programs in multilingual African contexts.

Additional research is also needed to explore the implications of artificial intelligence, machine translation, and human-AI collaboration for translator education in developing-country contexts. In conclusion, the study shows that student demand provides a strong and credible foundation for developing a postgraduate translation and interpreting program at the University of Botswana. By integrating contemporary professional requirements with Botswana's multilingual realities, such a program can contribute meaningfully to higher education, employability, multilingual communication, and national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The University of Botswana should proceed with the development of a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program, given the strong evidence of student demand and perceived labor-market relevance.
2. The curriculum should incorporate training in translation technologies, including computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, machine translation, localization technologies, post-editing, and emerging AI-assisted translation applications.
3. Experiential learning opportunities should be integrated throughout the program through internships, workplace placements, project-based learning, and authentic translation assignments. Such opportunities have been shown to contribute significantly to competence development and professional preparedness (Mahadin, 2026).
4. Specialization pathways should be offered in areas such as legal, medical, business, public-service, educational, media, and community interpreting to enable students to develop sector-specific expertise.
5. African languages should be incorporated into the curriculum wherever feasible to support multilingual communication, linguistic inclusion, and the preservation and development of Botswana's linguistic heritage.

6. Flexible delivery arrangements, including blended-learning models and scheduling options suitable for working professionals, should be considered to maximize accessibility and participation.
7. Strong partnerships should be established with industry stakeholders, government institutions, language-service providers, and professional associations to strengthen program relevance, facilitate internships, and enhance graduate employability.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated whether student demand provides a viable foundation for developing a MATI program at the University of Botswana. The findings indicate strong support for the proposed program, with most respondents recognizing the need for professional translation and interpreting training, expressing willingness to enroll, and perceiving such qualifications as valuable for enhancing employability across diverse sectors. These results suggest that translation and interpreting are increasingly viewed as professionally relevant fields that can address the communication needs of multilingual societies while creating meaningful career opportunities.

The study further identified key priorities for program development. Respondents favored flexible delivery arrangements, particularly blended and face-to-face modes of instruction. They emphasized the importance of translation technologies, experiential learning, internships, sector-specific specialization, African language integration, and professional certification pathways. Together, these findings indicate that prospective students value a curriculum that combines technological competence, workplace relevance, multilingual responsiveness, and practical professional preparation. By examining learner demand within a multilingual African higher-education context, the study contributes to the growing literature on demand-driven curriculum development in translator education.

The findings demonstrate that student demand can provide valuable evidence for program planning and curricular decision-making, particularly in contexts where formal translation and interpreting training opportunities remain limited. Overall, the results provide strong empirical support for establishing a Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program at the University of Botswana. A curriculum that integrates technological competence, experiential learning, professional specialization, and African language inclusion is likely to be both educationally relevant and responsive to Botswana's linguistic and socio-economic needs.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with the publication of this article. Furthermore, the authors confirm that all data and content presented in this manuscript are original and free from plagiarism. The authors also thank all individuals and institutions that contributed to completing this study.

Disclosure on the Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools, including Copilot and Grammarly, were used to assist with language editing and improve the manuscript's clarity and readability. The authors developed and carried out the core intellectual content, research design, interpretation of results, and data analysis. The underlying logic, argumentation, and scholarly conclusions remain entirely the authors' own.

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