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SA universities are consolidating planning towards integrating African Languages in their core functions and in administration

The 3rd Vice-Chancellors' Language Policy Colloquium that takes place from 5-6 December 2023 will sharply focus on implementation practices, monitoring and evaluation of the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, which came into effect in 2022.

The Policy Framework provides for the incorporation of South Africa's indigenous languages in teaching, learning, research and general communication at universities to advance meaningful transformation. It acknowledges South Africa's rich linguistic diversity, its unique historical context and recognises that progressive language practices in higher education foster access and success, and enable social cohesion and social justice.

However, the successful implementation of the Policy Framework requires more than the mere existence of institutional policies, says Professor Nobuhle Hlongwa, Chairperson of Universities South Africa's (USAF's) Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL), who is also the Dean & Head of the School of Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She says meaningful policy implementation requires a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation approach that addresses the intersection between policy and practice.

That is why vice-chancellors, their deputies and senior other university representatives, policymakers and language experts will assemble for two days at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Senate Chamber on Westville Campus to deliberate and consolidate their plan on mainstreaming multilingualism in university practices.

In keeping with the Colloquium theme **Policy and Practice: Best Practices on the Implementation of Language Policy in Higher Education – Monitoring and Evaluation**, speakers will share institutional perspectives and insights, thus suggesting measures proven effective in aligning practice with the prescripts of the Policy Framework. Delegates will hear of innovative resource mobilisation mechanisms; learn how universities can support sign language interpretation services, and hear how institutions can develop capacity for the successful implementation of their language policies.

Furthermore, the long-awaited findings of the **National Public Universities Language Resources Audit** that was completed earlier in 2023 will be shared at this colloquium, as well as the audit implications on the implementation of the Language Policy Framework.

Professor Hlongwa says monitoring and evaluating language practices will play a pivotal role in assessing progress, effectiveness, and impact in higher education. It will provide a framework for systematically collecting, analysing, and utilising data to inform decision-making, improve performance, and enhance accountability. That is why the Colloquium, among other objectives, intends to explore the development of a suitable monitoring and evaluation model for this purpose.

She says focus areas at this event will be:

1. Best practices and progress being made
2. Funding and resource-sharing models
3. Models for capacity development and
4. Planning for impact, monitoring and evaluation.

Since their first Colloquium in September 2021, universities' executive leaders have gained a deeper understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions. They have explored the resources needed to implement the Policy and now forge ahead to consolidate their plans to give expression to this Framework. The multilingualism agenda is being spearheaded by CoPAL and is endorsed by USAf's Teaching and Learning Strategy Group.

USAf is committed to supporting the multilingual approach to teaching, learning, research and engagement as part of transforming university cultures and shifting to student-centredness to enhance student success, social cohesion and social justice.

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