



UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA

Concept Note: A Colloquium on the New Language Policy for Higher Education

Vice-Chancellors Consultation Series

Transforming The Academy · Improving Student Access & Success · Decolonising the Curriculum

1. Background

South Africa is a linguistically and culturally diverse society, and our higher education sector reflects this diversity. The Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions gazetted in October 2020 has brought the multilingual debate sharply to the fore. Public universities have developed university language policies, some of which have been contested in the courts of law. Others have been criticised as pious articles of faith with no force or effect. The sector has a significant need for the key stakeholders to engage in the Language Policy Framework and its implementation.

Multilingualism and the requirement for the advancement and equality of indigenous African languages are set out in the *Constitution* (1996), the *Higher Education Act* (1997), the *Language Policy for Higher Education* (2020), the *Report on the Development of Indigenous African Languages for Use as Mediums of Instruction at University* (2003) and, the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (2008), the *Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences* (2011) and the *White Paper on Post-Secondary School Education and Training* (2013).

The USAf Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL) is committed to working with the sector to bring about transformation in this priority area with the support of the USAf Board, and to work towards normalising indigenous African languages as languages of teaching, learning and research across the Academy.

In view of the aforementioned, it was agreed that a USAf – CoPAL colloquium would be held in partnership with Stellenbosch University to create a platform for engagement on seminal matters related to the implementation of the New Language Policy for Higher Education. The colloquium will consider the impact of the legislative framework, policy frameworks, multilingualism, and the potential role of indigenous African languages in facilitating access

and success in higher education and in creating an enabling environment for social transformation.

2. Objectives

This colloquium is a first in a series that aims to:

- a) Provide a platform for a robust intellectual engagement in the current debates on university language policy.
- b) Further unpack the philosophical discourse and the implication of the newly gazetted Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions and the broader systemic issues affecting and foregrounding multilingualism, transformation, and decolonisation within the context of the CoPAL and the sector agenda.
- c) Explore strategies to harness and deploy the necessary resources to support HEIs in successfully implementing the Language Policy Framework.
- d) Bring together Vice-Chancellors and Deputy-Vice Chancellors from public institutions, Language Experts from the CoPAL, invited members of the judiciary and senior officials from DHET, DSI, DBE, DSAC, and PanSALB to address these national imperatives.

3. Programme

The programme and contributors will be determined in collaboration with key stakeholders and the Steering Committee.

The following suggested stakeholders have been identified to participate in the colloquium:

- Language experts from the Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL);
- University representatives;
- Targeted members of the judiciary to provide advice on constitutional matters and the legal implications of the language framework;
- Mr Mahlubi Mabizela, the Chief Director of DHET;
- Dr Daniel Adams, the Chief Director, Department of Science and Innovation;
- The National Language Service in the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture;
- PAN South African Language Board on Language Development (PANSALB); and
- The South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR).

4. Outcomes

- a) Participants will understand the statutory and related implications of the new Language Policy Framework for universities and will
- b) Collectively contribute to developing a strategy for the sector on implementing the new Language Policy Framework and the broader foregrounding systemic issues (multilingualism, transformation, and decolonisation).

5. Host Institutions

Stellenbosch University will host the first colloquium on 28 and 29 September 2021. This will take the format of a hybrid event in compliance with COVID regulations. The event will take place in a hybrid format, allowing key stakeholders to attend physically and other stakeholders to participate online.

Other institutions will be given the opportunity to host the subsequent colloquia at a mutually agreed date.

6. Audience

A targeted audience comprising high-level participants with decision-making powers within their institution will be invited. It is envisaged that between 80 – 90 participants will be invited.

7. Funding

Stellenbosch University has committed to funding the costs of the first colloquium. Participants wishing to participate physically will be expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

8. Steering Committee

A steering committee comprising various stakeholder groupings has been appointed to guide the planning and is indicated below.

Name	Institution
Prof Langa Khumalo (Chair)	North-West University & Chairperson: CoPAL
Prof Nokhanyo Mdzanga	Nelson Mandela University & Deputy Chairperson: CoPAL
Prof Deresh Ramjugernath	Stellenbosch University
Prof Hester Klopper	Stellenbosch University
Prof Mbulu Madiba	Stellenbosch University
Dr Wayne Muller	Stellenbosch University
Dr Antoinette van der Merwe	Stellenbosch University
Ms Jacolette Kloppers	Stellenbosch University
Dr Linda Meyer	USAf
Ms Ntswalo Ngobeni	USAf
Ms Janet van Rhyn	USAf
Ms M. Green	USAf
Ms S Nkayi	USAf

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