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Mapping the road to multilingualism in South Africa

The entrenchment of multilingualism in the South African Constitution articulated the need for a national policy and a legal framework on the basis of which government bodies could take the measures necessary for the implementation of the constitutional directives on multilingualism. This article analyses the process of writing a policy and this framework since 1995. Three phases are covered: the work of the Language Plan Task Group; the Language Plan of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, and the contributions of the Advisory Panel on Language Policy.

Op weg na meertaligheid in Suid-Afrika

Die verskansing van meertaligheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet het die behoefte vir 'n nasionale beleids- en wetgewende raamwerk, op basis waarvan owerheidsorgane vereiste maatreëls vir die implementering van die grondwetlike direktiewe oor meertaligheid kan neem, beklemtoon. Hierdie artikel analiseer die proses wat in 1995 'n aanvang geneem het vir die skryf van so 'n raamwerk. Drie fases word gedek: die werk van die Taalplan Taakgroep, die Taalplan van die Departement Kuns, Kultuur, Wetenskap en Tegnologie en die bydraes van die Adviespaneel oor Taalbeleid.

Moralo wa tsela e lebisang ditemengateng, Afrika Borwa

Ho kenngwa ha ditemengata Molaotheong wa Afrika Borwa ho bontshitse tlhokahalo ya leano la naha le metheo ya semolao, eo tlasa yona, mmuso o ka nkang mehato e hlokahalang ho ikamahanya le ditlhoko tsa molaotheo malebana le ditemengata. Ditaba tse mona di buwa ka tsela e tsamailweng ho tloha 1995, ho ngola leano le metheo ya semolao e jwalo. Ho hlaloswa mehato e meraro: Mosebetsi wa Sehlopha se kgethehileng sa Moralo wa Puo (Language Plan Task Group), Moralo wa Puo wa Lekala la Bonono, Setsho, Mahlale le Theknoliji, ha mmoho le kabelo ya Lekgotlana la Boeletsi hodima Leano la Puo.

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The constitutional entrenchment of multilingualism in South Africa articulated the need for a national language policy aimed at facilitating the implementation of the constitutional directives on language use and promotion. At the heart of the matter lies section 6 of the 1996 Constitution, which assigns official status to eleven languages and spells out the normative guidelines according to which multilingualism must be achieved. These guidelines direct that the state must take positive practical measures to elevate the status and advance the use of the historically marginalised indigenous languages;[1] that all eleven official languages shall enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably,[2] and that the national and provincial governments must regulate and monitor the use of official languages by legislative and other means.[3]

The complexities involved in the interpretation and application of section 6 have been dealt with in other publications[4] and will not be repeated here. This article's emphasis will be on the ongoing process that has unfolded since the advent of the new constitutional dispensation in South Africa, in respect of the writing of a national language policy and plan to facilitate the implementation of the constitutional provisions on language. Three landmark developments can be identified: the pioneering work of the Language Plan Task Group; the language policy and plan of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST), and the work of the Minister's Advisory Panel on Language Policy, which ultimately resulted in the drafting of a legislative framework for language use and promotion.

At the outset it must be clearly stated that, due to constraints of space and purpose, the exposition of the different stages of development below cannot do justice to the full scope of the various projects. Moreover, the selection of issues covered in this exposition is informed by a subjective identification of important considerations in the foundation of a multilingual dispensation in South Africa.

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1   Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, section 6(2).
2   Section 6(4).
3   Section 6(4).
4   Cf Strydom & Pretorius 1999; Pretorius 1999; Du Plessis & Pretorius 2000.

1. The work of the Language Action Task Group

On October 10, 1995, the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology announced the inauguration of a Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) with a mandate to advise the minister on the issue of a national language plan for South Africa. This occurred amid mounting concern that monolingualism was starting to take root in South Africa and that the government had failed to secure a significant position for language matters within the national Reconstruction and Development Plan.[5] To complete the picture it must also be pointed out that the Interim Constitution of 1993, which guaranteed the use and promotion of eleven official languages,[6] was already in force at the time, while the Pan-South African Language Board[7] was being established. Further afield and prior to these developments, the Heads of State and Government of the OAU had adopted the Language Plan of Action for Africa on July 30, 1986. This document mentioned in its programme of action the

> [...] imperative need for each OAU Member State to consider it necessary and primary that it formulates with the minimum of delay a language policy that places an indigenous African language or languages spoken and in active use by its peoples at the centre of its socio-economic development.

Against this background the design of a national language plan, with which LANGTAG[8] was tasked, had to focus on the following goals:

- providing access to all spheres of South African society by maintaining an appropriate level of spoken and written language in a range of contexts;

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5   LANGTAG 1996: iii, 2.
6   Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993, section 3.
7   Section 3(10) of the 1993 Constitution made provision for the establishment of this Board, which, as an independent statutory body, was expected to promote and monitor the observance of the constitutional principles on multilingualism. The Board came into being by virtue of the Pan-South African Language Board Act, Act 59 of 1995.
8   LANGTAG comprised a main committee and several sub-committees. The members of the main committee were: Dr N Alexander (chair), Dr A-M Beukes, Ms Q Buthelezi, Ms K Mboweni-Marais, Prof C T Msimang, Prof A C Nkabinde, Dr G Schuring and Prof V Webb.

- providing for the learning of languages other than the mother tongue;
- promoting and developing formerly marginalised languages, and
- establishing language services.[9]

These goals involve concrete issues, obviously informed by a specific reading of a historically created situation and by a specific understanding of what is needed to move away from it. However, in a deeply divided society, emerging from a history of conflict and suspicion and comprising a multitude of cultural, linguistic and religious groups, the accommodation of language diversity undoubtedly serves other broader goals. It is therefore encouraging that the LANGTAG report also reflected on this in referring to goals such as the promotion of national unity, the entrenchment of democracy and the promotion of respect for and tolerance towards linguistic and cultural diversity.[10]

1.1 The assumptions and focal areas of language planning

In fulfilling its mandate LANGTAG was guided by a number of fundamental assumptions,[11] some of which are peculiar to the sociolinguistic and political circumstances of South Africa. Of primary significance is the assumption that language policy ought to be inseparable from the political, economic, developmental and cultural strategies aimed at the establishment of good governance, the extension of democratic rule and the social and economic upliftment of marginalised communities. In response to this it may be argued that as long as language issues are seen as distinct from these goals, rather than as an integral part thereof, language rights and interests will be forced to compete against higher priority matters for scarce resources. The outcome of such a competition-based approach is self-evident. A second assumption is that knowledge of more than one language is an asset in the economic sense and in the broader social sense as a nation-building and pro-democratic practice. Thirdly, the state must take positive measures to facilitate, co-ordinate and initiate strategies

9   LANGTAG 1996: iv.
10   LANGTAG 1996: 5.
11   LANGTAG 1996: 6, 7.

geared to the promotion and protection of language rights and to the modernisation and development of marginalised languages. This is especially true in South Africa where, by means of past policies, inequality was created between languages and resources were unequally distributed. Fourthly, in multilingual societies, language must and can be planned, provided of course that the planning is accorded legitimacy by the speakers of the languages concerned.

Based on these and other assumptions that need not be elaborated here, the investigations and general recommendations of LANGTAG centred on three interrelated issues, namely status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Since the promotion of multilingualism in South Africa involves more than formally assigning official status to eleven languages, status planning was invoked as a mechanism for remedying the situation brought about by the systematic entrenchment of language hierarchies in accordance with past socio-economic and socio-political policies. Thus, elevating the status of formally marginalised languages was seen as calling for "political, economic, cultural and social interventions on the part of Government". In language planning terms these amount, *inter alia*, to a "systematically sustained series of language awareness campaigns using the media and providing incentives such as prestigious prizes, scholarships, bursaries and other material awards for enhancing the status of the languages concerned".[12] To the extent that these efforts are intended to address the negative stereotypes of the African languages, the greatest challenge undoubtedly would be that of changing the mindset of the speakers of those languages, since they favoured English as the medium of instruction for their school-going children, a factor often cited by linguists and educationists as the root cause of poor results and high failure rates. Thus, to avoid the same disaster that had befallen other African countries, status planning aimed, in the LANGTAG view, at the eventual use of all official languages in

> high status functions such as parliamentary debates, learning and teaching, from pre-school up to universities and technikons, in the print and electronic media and for domestic [...] business transactions.[13]

12 LANGTAG 1996: 8, 9.
13 LANGTAG 1996: 9.

The identification of a need for corpus planning, on the other hand, drew attention to the relative lack of literary materials in the indigenous languages and the scarcity of trained practitioners in those languages. To offset the costs of bringing about the necessary changes in these areas, LANGTAG proposed the use and extension of the technical infrastructure in existence for English and Afrikaans, including universities and technikons, in the development of literary materials and the provision of training.[14] It is clear that this area offers considerable scope for further research.

Acquisition planning aims at a situation characterised by multi-lingually proficient citizens.[15] This involves planning decisions for literacy, taking into account literacy acquisition, usage and development at all ages. Closely linked to this effort is the establishment of a proper evaluation system making use of reliable methods of assessment of language proficiency. However, a decisive factor in any attempt at successfully promoting language acquisition is the question of incentives. This involves a link between language acquisition and employment opportunities. By the same token, however, a system of rewards also has merit for the implementation of multilingual policies as such, especially in the case of non-state institutions. Why, for instance, shouldn't the state treat universities differently, rewarding those that have committed themselves to multilingual policies in theory and in practice? In the private sector, tax rebates would appear to be an appropriate form of reward for institutions that have demonstrated a similar commitment.

The preliminary work of LANGTAG, dealt with in broad outline above, not only laid the foundation for a series of short- and long-term measures recommended to government, but also determined the nature and direction of all subsequent efforts to establish a national policy and a regulatory framework for the implementation of the constitutional directives on language.

14 LANGTAG 1996 : 11.
15 LANGTAG 1996: 11, 12.

2. The language policy and plan

With the possible exception of the constitution-making process itself, few if any policy or legal framework developments can claim a consultative process comparable to that engaged in for the language policy and plan for South Africa. Not only were the LANGTAG committees representative of a wide spectrum of linguists and language specialists from various fields, but three years of extensive consultations, consultative conferences and debating opportunities provided ample opportunity for individuals and institutions to co-determine the content of several draft documents. In April 1998 the process culminated in the Language Plan for South Africa promulgated by DACST.

In Chapter 4 of the Language Plan, which is characterised by a garbled use of concepts such as "principles", "requirements" and "strategies" as well as out-of-context references to language as both a resource and a human right, the policy of functional multilingualism is given prominence. This policy (also referred to as a "strategy", "principle" and "mechanism"), which is seen as "pivotal" to the Language Plan, encompasses "functional differentiation" — meaning that the eleven languages need not all be used in all contexts and purposes, but that appropriate languages should be selected according to the specific context or purpose.[16] The Language Plan also made it clear that functional differentiation cannot remain static, but must be adapted as language use and needs change over time. However, as the Language Plan correctly pointed out, ongoing and effective implementation in terms of this approach will require accurate, up to date linguistic data, which must be obtained by means of regular language audits.[17]

In the context of outlining the strategies for the implementation of the DACST proposals, the Language Plan also shed more light on issues relating to functional differentiation, which would later assume prominence in the drafting of a legislative framework. In the first instance, government departments were advised to allocate administrative and professional tasks to various languages, distinguishing

16   DACST 1998:16.
17   DACST 1998: 18.

between internal and external communication and between oral and written communication. Secondly, the important issue of using languages in rotation for government publications was developed. For this purpose the Language Plan first suggested a categorisation of languages according to the principle of mutual intelligibility. This resulted in the separation of the Nguni languages (identified as Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Swati) from those of what was referred to as the Sotho group (identified as North Sotho, South Sotho, and Tswana). Other individual languages, listed as Venda, Tsonga, English and Afrikaans, were added.[18] In later documents the denotation of some of the languages changed, and combinations, rather than individual languages, were placed on the rotation list.

The proposals contained in the Language Plan were advanced when in February 1999 the DACST published a follow-up document containing its short- and medium-term implementation strategies for:

- providing effective and accessible government services in accordance with the policy of the functional differentiation of languages (status planning);

- developing the indigenous languages, including literary materials and language services (corpus planning), and

- establishing a programme for language learning (acquisition planning).[19]

Concerning the issue of functional differentiation, it was considered imperative to prevent the policy from being used to bring about a rigid hierarchical ordering of the official languages, which could result in "assigning certain dominant languages to 'higher' contexts such as the economic, educational and political contexts and relegating the other languages to more limited domains of use".[20] This admonition emphasises the importance of an implementation strategy that upholds the constitutional requirement that the official languages be treated equitably and enjoy parity of esteem.

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18   DACST 1998: 21, 22.
19   DACST 1999: 6, 7.
20   DACST 1999: 11.

Two other matters concerning the 1999 DACST proposals may briefly be mentioned here. First, the denotation of the indigenous languages in the 1998 Language Plan was corrected,[21] and secondly, a plan of action was included which spelled out various implementation activities as well as listing the government and other agencies responsible for them. In December 1999 these developments were incorporated into a Draft White Paper on Language, but this never gained the status of a proper White Paper in view of a new process set in motion by the appointment of the Minister's Advisory Panel.

3. The work of the Advisory Panel

In November 1999 an Advisory Panel on Language Policy[22] was appointed to advise the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology on the development of an enabling policy and a legislative framework for a multilingual dispensation aligned to the requirements of the Constitution. The main task of the Panel was to consolidate the results of the LANGTAG and DACST processes and to use them as a basis from which to draft a legislative framework. The consolidation phase culminated in the Draft Language Policy and Plan for South Africa of November 6, 2000. As far as the contents are concerned, there are no substantial differences between this document and the earlier DACST documents, the reason being that the 2000 version drawn up by the Advisory Panel was the result of a process aimed mainly at bringing greater clarity, focus and coherence to earlier documents, rather than at drafting an entirely new policy document. As such it was little more than a tidying-up process, but it was meaningful, nevertheless, in the sense that it provided a more defined outline of the language policy's requirements, its strategic goals and the main elements of the envisaged implementation plan.

21 DACST 1999: 11, 12. The names of the languages of the Nguni group were changed to isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, and siSwati, and those of the Sotho group to Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana. In addition, Venda was listed as Tshivenda and Tsonga as Xitsonga.
22 The following members were appointed to the panel: Dr N Alexander (chairperson), Ms Z Desai, Prof N Maake, Dr L Mathenjwa, Mr D Ntshangase, and Prof H Strydom.

3.1 The policy of using languages in rotation

As far as status planning is concerned, this issue remains crucial. In the Panel's proposals it has been unequivocally linked to the constitutional requirement of "parity of esteem and equitable use". Two exceptions are allowed for: when circumstances dictate that all eleven languages be used and when deviation from the constitutional requirement is found to be in the interests of stable and effective governance.[23] How these matters have been addressed in the draft legislation will be indicated below. As far as the categories of languages are concerned, the languages listed individually in the Language Plan have been coupled in the proposals of the Advisory Panel. Thus, Tshivenda and Xitsonga have been grouped together, as have Afrikaans and English. Since they are not mutually intelligible, the reason for the coupling of Tshivenda and Xitsonga for the purposes of rotation is essentially a practical one related to short-term resource constraints. The coupling of Afrikaans and English, on the other hand, is explained as follows:[24]

> The Advisory Panel is aware that currently there is an expectation that all government documentation should always be in English and occasionally also in other South African languages. If this expectation were to be endorsed by this policy document, it would be in conflict with both the spirit and the letter of the Constitution. It will [*sic*] also continue to disadvantage and disempower the majority of the people who are non-English speakers.

Parallel to the policy redrafting process, the Advisory Panel commenced work on a draft legislative framework which resulted in the South African Languages Bill.[25] If enacted into law the Bill will apply to all organs of state in the national, provincial and local spheres of government and to any institution exercising a public function in terms of any legislation.[26]

Although defined as an enabling framework for promoting South Africa's linguistic diversity, the Bill's greatest impact will undoubtedly be in the area of status planning. Crucial to this are the Bill's provisions on language policy, which hinge on the concept of rotation, defined as

23   Advisory Panel 2000: 10, 11.
24   Advisory Panel 2000: 11.
25   References are to the November 23, 2000, version of the Bill.
26   South African Languages Bill, 2000, clause 4(1).

> [...] the process by which documents intended for the general public which are published and disseminated by any national government department and *mutatis mutandis*, any provincial administration, will be available simultaneously in four of the languages as stipulated in Section 5(3), or as determined by provincial measures.[27]

The by now familiar language categories to which this will apply are: the Nguni group (isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and siSwati); the Sotho group (Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana); Tshivenda/Xitsonga, and Afrikaans/English.[28] According to clause 5(2) of the Bill,

> [...] languages shall be selected on a rotational basis from each of the four categories of official languages [...] except when the relevant organ of state or other institution can show that it is reasonably necessary to follow an alternative policy in the interest of effective governance or communication.

Fears have been expressed that providing for an alternative policy affords the state a loophole, which could undermine the whole purpose of the principle of rotation. This fear is not well-founded. Four safeguards are provided for in the Bill. First, the application of the Bill's provisions on language policy and all measures taken in pursuance thereof must ensure the "equitable treatment and parity of esteem" of the languages concerned.[29] Thus the preferential treatment of a specific language or languages deemed more suitable for "effective governance or communication" must be balanced out by a government practice that allows for the compensatory accommodation of the other languages in comparable contexts and for similar purposes. Secondly, government will have to show reasonable grounds when opting for an alternative policy. This precludes arbitrary decision-making. Thirdly, such an alternative policy can only be implemented in consultation with the Pan-South African Language Board.[30] Lastly, no alternative policy can circumvent the provisions of section 6(3)(a) of the Constitution, which obliges the national and provincial governments to use at least two official languages.[31]

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27   Clause 1(ix).
28   Clause 5(3).
29   Clause 5(1).
30   Clause 5(4)(a).
31   See also clause 5(4)(b).

3.2 The selection of government publications for the purposes of rotation

Another matter of fundamental importance is the selection of government publications and documents for the purposes of language rotation. It is assigned to the Minister to "classify, after consultation with other Ministries, the communications, reports, records, documentation and legislative instruments" to which the rotation principle will apply.[32] It is obvious that not all official languages need to be used for every conceivable form of governmental interaction with citizens. However, at the very least, the government is under an obligation to identify those documents that are a fair reflection of its core (as opposed to peripheral) functions in the legislative, executive and judicial spheres of activity. The selection of appropriate languages for these publications will have to comply with the requirement for "equitable treatment and parity of esteem" stipulated in the Constitution and the Bill. To do justice to this, three factors must be taken into consideration, namely numerical, status and frequency factors. The first implies that the selected languages must enjoy a more or less equal dissemination across the three spheres of government activity, as opposed to a division of languages to coincide with the divisions between the three spheres. The status factor requires that the languages be treated equitably as regards the nature of the publications. Thus, a policy or practice according to which certain languages would be used only for higher status publications and others only for lower status publications would not be permitted. Similarly, the frequency factor prohibits the selection of certain languages only for high frequency publications and others only for low frequency publications.

The responsibility for the implementation of the policy described above will fall largely on the shoulders of the Language Units of national and provincial departments.[33] At the provincial level such Units will also play an important role in supporting and strengthening local government's capacity to comply with the Bill.[34] Apart

32   Clause 5(6)(a).
33   Clause 6.
34   Clause 6(2).

from exerting a facilitating and monitoring function, Language Units are also assigned the power to take "effective and positive measures" for the implementation of the Bill's language policy.[35] Control over the measures and activities of Language Units is effected by means of their obligation to submit annual reports: to Parliament, in the case of a national departmental Language Unit; to the provincial legislature, in the case of a provincial Language Unit, and in both cases to the Pan-South African Language Board.[36]

3.3 Issues of enforcement

In the course of the drafting process, the issue of enforcement has often been the subject of debate inside and outside Parliament, particularly with regard to the powers of the Pan-South African Language Board. Since the Board's Act of 1995 failed to provide mechanisms whereby its directives could be enforced, a number of cases have arisen in which guilty parties have simply ignored the findings of the Board — to the dismay not only of the Board itself, but also of language activists, in Parliament and elsewhere. At the time of writing efforts are being made to remedy the situation. However, with a view to preventing a similar situation from developing in the case of the South African Languages Bill, those responsible for drafting it considered the inclusion of enforcement mechanisms an essential part of the Bill from the outset.

Hence, the Bill grants *locus standi* to "any person acting on his or her own behalf, or any person, body of persons or institution acting on behalf of its members, or members of a language group or any organ of state" to apply to court for an appropriate remedy.[37] An application may be based on any violation or impending violation of a language right, language policy or language practice, whether resulting from non-compliance or compliance with the obligations of the Bill, or non-compliance with a recommendation, finding or decision of the Pan-South African Language Board in relation to the Bill.[38]

35   Clause 7(a) and (b).
36   Clause 10.
37   Clause 11(1). The remedies are provided for in clause 11(3) and include a variety of orders by means of which a court can make restitution to an aggrieved party.
38   Clause 11(2).

4. Conclusion

The effective implementation of multilingualism in South Africa cannot depend solely on a policy and a legal framework. What needs to be effected is a change in the mindset of people, at various levels. At the political level a broader and more articulate demonstration of a political will in favour of multilingual government practices is urgently needed. Perhaps what also needs to change at this level is the outdated and misconceived nineteenth-century concept of the nation-state, which is anathema to the observation that unity in a multicultural and multilingual state is achieved not by the imposition, by stealth or otherwise, of a single, dominant official language, but rather by the accommodation of language diversity. The suspicion that the ghosts of the nineteenth century are still alive and well among our self-styled "progressive" decision-makers is not entirely unfounded. This notion is reinforced by the language policies hurriedly adopted by post-independent African governments in the name of a misplaced concept of national unity.

Another major challenge is to change the mindset of speakers of the indigenous languages. The extent to which they still favour educating their children in English bodes ill for the development of the status of these languages. The language-in-education policy of the Department of Education, on the other hand, provides some encouragement. The Department recently stated unequivocally:

> There are two main values we wish to promote in the area of language: firstly, the importance of studying through the language one knows best, or as it is popularly referred to, mother-tongue education; and secondly, the fostering of multilingualism. We do believe that an initial grounding in mother-tongue learning is a pedagogically sound approach to learning. We also believe that multi-cultural communication requires clear government support and direction.[39]

Achieving broad acceptance of this policy and success in the area of corpus planning are the two pillars without which no project for the advancement of the status of the indigenous languages can be sustained.

Another neglected area of research in South Africa is the link between economics and language, sometimes referred to as the econo-

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39 Working Group on Values in Education 2000: 2.

mics of language. A number of issues are relevant in the South African context, such as the effects of language on income; economic considerations in the selection, design and implementation of language policies; markets for language-specific goods and services; language and employment; economic factors in second-language acquisition, and so on.[40] Obviously these questions will assume a more dominant role as the implementation of multilingualism is gradually extended into the private sector. Strangely enough, organised business in South Africa has not yet fully grasped the prospects of such a development. Perhaps it is a case of "what they lack in knowledge on the subject, they make up in indifference".

40   See also Strauss 1996: 2 *et seq*.

Op weg na meertaligheid in Suid-Afrika

Die verskansing van meertaligheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet het die behoefte beklemtoon vir 'n nasionale beleids- en wetgewende raamwerk, op basis waarvan owerheidsorgane vereiste maatreëls vir die implementering van die grondwetlike direktiewe oor meertaligheid kan neem. Hierdie artikel handel oor die proses, wat in 1995 'n aanvang geneem het, vir die skryf van so 'n raamwerk. Drie fases word behandel: die werk van die Taalplan Taakgroep, die Taalplan van die Departement Kuns, Kultuur, Wetenskap en Tegnologie en die bydraes van die Adviespaneel oor Taalbeleid. Wat eersgenoemde betref, word daar van die volgende veronderstellings uitgegaan: taalbeleid behoort onafskeidbaar te staan van die politieke, ekonomiese en kulturele strategieë vir die tot stand bring van goeie regering, die verdieping van die demokrasie en die sosiale en ekonomiese opheffing van gemarginaliseerde gemeenskappe; meertaligheid is 'n ekonomiese bate; en die staat is konstitusioneel geroepe om positiewe maatreëls vir die koördinering en inisiëring van strategieë gerig op die bevordering en beskerming van taalregte en die ontwikkeling van gemarginaliseerde tale te tref. Die departementele taalplan weer fokus op die ontwikkeling van wat genoem word "funksionele differensiasie" wat inhou dat al elf amptelike tale nie noodwendig in alle kontekste en vir alle doeleindes gebruik hoef te word nie, maar dat 'n seleksie van tale volgens die toepaslikheid van 'n taal vir 'n bepaalde konteks en doeleinde gemaak word. Die hooftaak van die Ministeriële Adviespaneel was om die resultate van die voorafgaande twee prosesse te konsolideer sodat dit as basis kon dien vir die formulering van 'n nasionale beleids- en wetgewende raamwerk vir meertaligheid. 'n Belangrike verdere oogmerk hiervan was die bevordering van die status van agtergeblewe tale wat trag verwesenlik te word deur middel van die rotasie van tale binne vier omskewe taalgroeperinge.

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