



**27 September 2021**

## **Vice-Chancellors of public universities to confer on the New Language Policy for Higher Education from 28 to 29 September**

At an important point in the history of South Africa's Higher Education System, vice-chancellors of public universities will gather with experts and other stakeholders to contemplate ways to implement the New Language Policy for Higher Education that was gazetted in October 2020. This is with a view to advance transformation in higher education by invigorating the role of African languages in the core functions of South Africa's university system.

Taking place from 28 to 29 September under the auspices of Universities South Africa (USAf), the vice-chancellors' Colloquium on the New Language Policy for Higher Education is a joint project with USAf's Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL) and Stellenbosch University, the sponsor and host institution. It is the first in a series of events to be hosted by universities on the New Language Policy for Higher Education.

The purpose of this Colloquium is to:

- provide a platform for robust intellectual engagement and debates on the new language policy;
- explore the philosophical, constitutional and legislative base of the policy and the broader systemic issues informing the foregrounding of multilingualism, transformation, and decolonisation in the broader sector agenda and to
- Explore strategies to harness and deploy the necessary resources to support universities in successfully implementing the Language Policy Framework.

In addition to vice-chancellors, other participants in these significant deliberations will be language experts drawn from USAf's Community of Practice for the Teaching of African Languages (CoPAL), targeted members of the judiciary and senior officials from the Departments of Higher Education, Science and Innovation; Basic Education; and Sports, Arts and Culture. Senior representatives of the Pan South African Language Board have also been invited.

It is envisaged that by the end of this Colloquium, senior university executives will understand and appreciate the requirements and implications of the New Language Policy framework for universities. They will also be equipped to develop a strategy for the sector on implementing this policy – thereby crafting or strengthening their own institutional language policies and strategies and leading in their implementation.

According to Dr Sizwe Mabizela, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Rhodes University and the Chairperson of USAf's Teaching and Learning Strategy Group (TLSG), by mainstreaming African Languages in teaching and learning, universities will be advancing transformation beyond granting access and diversifying South Africa's higher education system. By delivering the curriculum in

students' mother tongue, universities will be supporting them more meaningfully and enhancing their success.

In Dr Mabizela's words, African languages were historically denigrated for political gain. "We must take the language policy from the periphery that it occupies within our institutions and place it at the centre of vice-chancellors' strategic outlook. This is central to acknowledging the diversity of our students on our institutions. For many, English is not a mother tongue. We need to start explaining concepts in mediums other than in English as the most predominant language. We also need to instill a sense of pride in our own languages and convey a message to our children, of the importance of English but lift all other languages to the same level as important media of communication for our thoughts and ideas. Our people must enjoy seeing their languages being respected. Language also builds a nation."

Close to 200 delegates are expected to attend this purely online event.

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