

**LANGUAGE POLICY & INFORMAL
LITERACY PRACTICES AT A HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

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Human Science Research Council

27 JULY 2005

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

3431

OBJECTIVES

- **Compare and analyze the relevant language policy documents from the Dept of Educ to the University of the Western Cape, in relation to the language education practices at the University of the Western Cape.**

SIGNIFICANCE

- **May well contributes to the development and use of ALs in higher education institutions.**
- **The unexpected results is that, this research has precipitated a renewed interest in the UWCLP by the senior staff.**

History of Policy Documents

- **1993. Interim Constitution (Principles)**
- **1996. The SA Constitution
LANGTAG Report**
- **2001. Council on Higher Education.
Language policy framework for HE.**

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- **2002 DoE. Language Policy for Higher education**
- **2003 UWC Language Policy**
- **2005 DoE. The development of Indigenous ALs as mediums of instruction in HEIs. [also known as the Ndebele Report].**

Analysis of Policy Documents

Similarities

All the Policies (CHE, DoE, UWC & DoE) do promote multilingualism. But the DoE 2005 is the only one that makes a provision for the development of ALs as LOLTs in Higher Education Institutions.

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However, the UWCLP & the DoE 2002 avoids this matter, where it is mentioned, it is often followed by the escape route “Where it is practicable to do so” which was identified by the DoE 2005 as a major stumbling block to Policy implementation.

Differences

- **The CHE recommended that effective learning will be facilitated through the translation of question papers into other SA languages.**
- **The DoE 2002 overlooked this recommendation, and even though the UWCLP makes provision for the translation of learning support materials but it includes the escape mechanism “where it is practicable to do so”.**

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- **With regard to the LOLT, the CHE does not identify which language this should be. But the DoE 2002 states that, it should work within the confines of the status quo: English and Afrikaans. The UWCLP leaves the decision to the faculties concerned.**

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- **The CHE also recommended that Language centres for the acquisition and study of SA main regional languages be identified to promote and use ALs.**
- **But this was overlooked by the DoE 2002. Even though UWC does have the centre, there is nothing mentioned about its potential role in the university's language policy.**

Mismatches of Students' needs **and the Policy Docs/Implementation**

- **English medium of instruction**
- **Translation of support materials**
- **The issue of MTE vs English**

This sheds light on why the UWCLP should be reviewed and be more closely aligned to the CHE 2001 and the Report on the dev of ALs into MoIs in HEIs 2005.

Students' Informal Literacy Practices from the Tutors' perspective

- What emerges is that the number of Students learning through English as a L2 and/or L3 at UWC was 37% in 2004 out of a total of 14 139.
- Tutors reported that Xhosa was used as a strategy to mediate ESL academic texts at UWC.
- Tutors and students uses Code-Switching as a strategy to facilitate teaching and learning.
- Students often uses Translation to negotiate meaning.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- **Students' Informal learning activities (study groups)**
- **The need for Qualified Multilingual Staff**
- **It would be important to prioritize Translation (and Courses).**
- **Regular Students and Staff Language Surveys for efficient and responsive language planning.**