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one WHY ARE LANGUAGE RIGHTS IMPORTANT?

Language rights are extremely important in a democratic education system where equal opportunities must be given to all citizens. South Africa has a long history of colonial and apartheid inequality, and this includes unequal language provision in education. It is therefore important to ensure that language rights are both promoted and protected in the new education system.

Mother tongue education, also known as home language or first language education is seen as the right of every child in the international discussions about human rights (see the list of international agreements in which language rights have been identified).

If some children have mother tongue education and others do not, the result of inequality is unavoidable. Learning that takes place in a familiar language is much easier. Learning that takes place in an unknown or unfamiliar language is much more difficult and brings many learning disadvantages for those who cannot use their own or a familiar language for education.

For many communities, language is very important for their identity, history and culture. If the mother tongue is not used in schools, a community's identity, history and culture may be lost or will become invisible. This loss or denial of the language often has negative effects on a student. For example, if students believe that the school does not value their language then this is understood by the students to mean that their own communities have low status and value. This negatively affects the confidence and self-esteem of the students. A strong sense of self-worth is essential for successful education, so if the student develops low self-esteem, then she is unlikely to succeed at school.

To summarise, if learners cannot use their mother tongue (home language or first language or best known language) in school, they are not likely to receive equal access to education. Schooling will take place under more difficult conditions than

those for whom mother tongue education is made available.

Quite simply: Language rights are violated if learners cannot receive education in their mother tongue.

Language rights are taken for granted if one belongs to a dominant or powerful language community. The rights of English-speakers in South Africa, for example, are guaranteed because of the very high international status and public use which this language enjoys. Language rights violations are usually experienced by people whose languages have low status or value in society. However, often people who use these languages do not complain when their language rights are being violated or they do not realise that there is a way of insisting that their rights be observed. Language rights for every language except English will only be guaranteed if people insist or demand that they be upheld.

South Africa is very similar to most other African countries which have many *indigenous** languages, i.e. they are *multilingual* but they also have at least one former powerful colonial (non-indigenous) language. In our case we have two powerful languages, Afrikaans and English, whose speakers came to dominate speakers of indigenous languages. So, even though the mother tongue speakers of English and Afrikaans are in the minority, their 'minority' languages have come to be used for high status functions in government, education or the economy. In other countries, it is usually the majority languages which come to be used for these high status functions.

The international community has for some time been concerned about the violations of the rights of dominated minority languages and there are several important international agreements which protect language rights for dominated minorities. The South African Constitution protects the language rights of all South Africans and there is no reason why violations should occur. However, language rights violations continue to take place in schools. The new South African Constitution and laws can be used to stop violations and protect language rights in education.

* Italicised words are explained in the word list at the end of the booklet.

Partly as a result of colonialism in Africa, South America and the Indian sub-continent, the speakers and writers of English, French, Spanish or Portuguese behave as if these are dominant majority languages. Majority populations have been forced to receive education through the ex-colonial language. Education across these three continents has been marked by poor success for the majority populations. *One reason*: the students are taught through a language which they and their teachers cannot fully understand or use.

Q2 How does good bilingual teaching and learning benefit learners?

The mother tongue is the normal and most efficient language through which children develop their literacy skills and ability to understand and cope with the demands of formal schooling. At the same time, most people live in multilingual societies and so it is no longer possible or advisable for learners to work with only the home language in school. It has become normal for students to learn and develop a second language for wider communication outside of school. In a country like South Africa it is important that all learners are able to use a powerful international language like English if this is not their home language. For this reason, English is most likely to be the first additional language (also known as the second language) for the majority of school learners.

There are no short cuts to developing a good, solid *proficiency* in any second language. It takes time, teachers who are good language models and requires appropriate teaching methods - all of which must be used well. The successful learning of a second language needs development of the first language to continue uninterrupted. This means that the mother tongue/first language must be used as a language of learning while the second language is being taught. In any case it normally takes 12 years to develop a strong proficiency in the home language (i.e. until learners are in about Grade 6), so the home language must be maintained for at least to the end of Grade 6. If it takes at least 12

years to develop a strong proficiency in the home language then it also means that it will take a long time for learners to reach a similar level of proficiency in the second language.

Good *additive bilingual* education can combine mother tongue and second language and use the two languages, as Languages of Learning and Teaching, at the same time. This involves beginning with the mother tongue and then adding the second language which can be used for about half of the teaching day from Grade 6 onwards.

Advantages of good bilingual education:

1. The development of the learner's thinking (cognitive) skills continues without an unnecessary and harmful interruption.
2. This method has a very high success rate for the development of the second language.
3. There is considerable evidence that learners who have experienced this kind of schooling have done better academically in both their first and second languages than learners in monolingual or second language only schools.
4. Learners in additive bilingual programmes tend to do better at mathematics and science than learners in second language only programmes.

Mother tongue education plus good teaching of the second language is a second option which has very good educational and language learning results. This is the kind of education which most Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners have always had in South Africa. The mother tongue is used as the medium throughout and the second language is taught by a specialist language teacher who is a good model for the second language. School leaving examinations are presented in bilingual (Afrikaans-English) format, so learners can read the questions in both languages to check that they have correctly interpreted the questions.

Bad or poor bilingual education removes the home language as a language of learning and teaching as quickly as possible. Although many people think that young children will learn to use a second language for education if they learn through it from the first grade at school, this is definitely not the case for most people. It results in:

1. High drop-out rates from school.
2. High levels of failure or need to repeat a grade.
3. Poor school leaving results.
4. Most students who change too quickly to the second language as medium do not succeed at mathematics and science.
5. Future prospects (further education, careers, jobs) are therefore limited.

The language medium choice plays a significant role in determining either the success or limitations of the future of all learners. One of the main reasons for high dropout, repeater and failure rates of learners in South African schools for the last four decades is that African language speaking learners have had to switch to English medium education when neither the teachers nor the learners have the language resources to manage the switch. Educational disadvantage has a lasting effect on a person's life.

'Better education without teaching in the home language...'

"*These educators are quite simply wrong and their advice to parents to use English in the home can lower the quality of communication between parents and children. This in turn can have very detrimental effects on children's development since there is strong evidence that quality and quantity of communication in the home provides children with the basis for performing well in school.*

In summary, bilingualism is associated with educational difficulties only when children come to school without a good foundation in their heritage [home] language, and when the heritage language is not promoted in school. When parents actively promote the heritage language in the home, children come to school with the necessary foundations for acquiring high levels of reading and writing skills in the school language. Research shows that these children consistently perform better than monolingual children in both linguistic and educational tasks. The better the children's home language is developed, the more successfully they acquire high levels of English educational skills."

Jim Cummins, 1985. *Bilingualism in the Home.*
Heritage Language Bulletin

EQUIPPING LEARNERS WITH LANGUAGE WHEELS

One wheel (one language) can get you places...

So can a big wheel and a little wheel...

However, when your wheels are nicely balanced and fully inflated you'll go further...

...provided, of course, the people who made the wheels knew what they were doing.

three EXAMPLES OF NEGLECT OR VIOLATION OF LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

The following are examples of possible language rights violations but there are many other possibilities which are not presented here. So if you think that a language right has been violated but you do not find an example here, ask one of the contacts listed below for advice.

Violation	Policy
Learners are prevented from using their home language or another language in the school premises.	*…the Department of Education … is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country…* Language in Education Policy: 4.1.1
Failure to teach any major language of the region as a language in school. Artificial separation of learners according to language groups beyond the foundation phase (parallel language medium is acceptable for part of the day only). Unequal *linguistic* expectations for different language groups e.g. African language speakers are expected to learn in English in English medium schools, but English speakers are not expected to learn in another major language of the region.	*….facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged.* Language in Education Policy: 4.1.3

Violation	Policy
School refuses to offer the home language as medium of instruction and as language of assessment. No additive bilingual model offered from Grade 4 onwards. Teachers not *competent* to teach additional language(s). There is no language maintenance programme at the school.	*…the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s).* Language in Education Policy: 4.1.5 *…to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education.* Language in Education Policy: 4.3.2
Language may not be used as a condition for admission. Example: a student is refused admission to school because her home language does not match that of the school.	*Where the school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner.* Norms and Standards regarding language policy: 5.2.3
A school language policy has not been established in accordance with the 1997 Language in Education Policy, and the school cannot demonstrate how it meets the policy criteria as outlined opposite.	*….in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department.* Norms and Standards regarding language policy: 5.3.1

Violation	Policy
The Departments of Education fail to give enough resources for mother tongue-based bilingual education. For example: School text books not available in official languages. Terminology needed for school education is not developed in African languages. A provincial department of education refuses to allow learners to sit for examinations in any of the official languages.	*The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including…language…* Constitution,1996: 9 (3)

4 WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR LANGUAGE RIGHTS ARE BEING NEGLECTED OR VIOLATED

Solutions:

- Check the constitutional clauses referred to in this document and then the relevant clauses of the Language in Education Policy and its accompanying Norms and Standards.
- Ask the school to demonstrate how it is complying with these clauses and the obligation to formulate a language policy in terms of the 1997 policy on Norms and Standards.
- If the school does not or cannot accommodate your needs, contact the MEC for education in your province.
- If there is no positive result, consult with the Pan South African Language Board's (PANSALB) Education and Mediation subcommittees (see contact details at the end of the booklet). If they are unable to assist you they should advise you of your next course of action.
- The Arbitration Foundation of SA would be the next step and the final step would be an appeal to the Constitutional Court of SA. In this case though, you should consult PANSALB, the Arbitration Foundation, and the Lawyers for Human Rights for their advice before you proceed.

Education Commissions and Declarations on Language in Education Rights in Africa

There have been dozens of important commissions of enquiry into the education of children across Africa for the last 100 years. Each of these concluded that it is the right of children on this continent to have education in both the mother tongue and an international language. Examples of the most important of these are:

- **Report on the Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, UNESCO, 1953**
- **The Language Plan of Action for Africa, OAU, 1986**
- **The Asmara Declaration, 2001**

Language Rights and International Declarations

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948**
  This was the first international 'instrument' to identify the right to education as a human right.
- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN 1966** and
- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, 1989,** both asserted the rights of minorities to use their languages.

The following important international agreements included a guarantee that the language of minorities would be used in education:

- **UNESCO's Convention Against Discrimination in Education, 1960**
- **The Copenhagen meeting which produced a document on the Human Dimension of the Conference for Security & Co-operation in Europe, 1990**
- **UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 1992**
- **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1995**

The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities,* 1996

…Educational research suggests that the medium of teaching at pre-school and kindergarten should ideally be of the child's language. Wherever possible, States should create the conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

Research also indicates that in primary school, the curriculum should ideally be taught in the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The official State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Towards the end of this period, a few practical or non-theoretical subjects should be taught through the medium of the State language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

In secondary school, a substantial part of the curriculum should be taught through the medium of the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis, preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Throughout this period the number of subjects taught in the State language, should gradually be increased. Research findings suggest that the more gradual the increase, the better for the child.

The maintenance of the primary and secondary levels of minority language education depends a great deal on the availability of teachers trained in all disciplines in the mother tongue. Therefore, ensuing from their obligation to provide adequate opportunities for minority language education, States should provide adequate facilities for the appropriate training of teachers and should facilitate access to such training. (Articles 11-14)

*** NB: In this context, '*minority* languages' means the same thing as the mother-tongue or first language.**

five WHAT DO THE CONSTITUTION AND OTHER LAWS SAY ABOUT LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND EDUCATION?

Key Clauses of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:

3(2) All citizens are –

(a) equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship; and

(b) equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

9(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including ….language….

29(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account –

(a) equity;

(b) practicability; and

(c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Key Clauses of the Language in Education Policy, 14 July 1997:

The Language in Education Policy and the Norms and Standards regarding language policy were announced together by the Minister of Education on 14 July 1997.

The Language in Education Policy was formulated in terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996.

The Norms and Standards regarding language policy in education were formulated in terms of Section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996.

Key Clauses of the Language Policy

4.1.1 …The Department of Education … is tasked … to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language…

4.1.5 …the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy….

4.1.6 The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism…

[The aims of the policy include the following:]

4.3.2 ….to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth…

4.3.5 ...to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching…

Key Clauses of the Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy

5.2.1 The parent exercises the minor learner's language rights on behalf of the minor learner….

5.2.2 The learner [parent if the learner is a minor] must choose the language of teaching upon application for admission to a particular school.

5.2.3 Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner.

5.2.4 Where no school in a school district offers the desired language as a medium of learning and teaching, the learner may request the provincial education department to

make provision for instruction in the chosen language, and section 5.3.2 must apply.

5.3 **The Rights and Duties of the School**

5.3.1 Subject to any law dealing with language in education and the Constitutional rights of learners, in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department. (This does not apply to learners who are seriously challenged with regard to language development, intellectual development ….)

5.3.2 When there are [fewer] than 40 requests in Grades 1 to 6, or [fewer] than 35 requests in Grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not already offered by a school in a particular school district, the head of the provincial department of education will determine how the needs of those learners will be met, taking into account …the duty of the state and right of the learners in terms of the Constitution, including … equity, …the need to redress…past racially discriminatory laws and practices,… practicability, and … the advice of the governing bodies and principals of the public schools concerned.

5.4 **The Rights and Duties of the Provincial Education Departments**

5.4.1 The provincial education department must keep a register of requests by learners for teaching in a language medium which cannot be accommodated by schools.

5.4.4 The provincial department must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. It must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and or school districts which cannot

be provided with and or offer additional languages of teaching in the home language(s) of learners.

5.5 **Further Steps**

5.5.1 Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the head of the provincial department of education, may appeal to the MEC within a period of 60 days.

5.5.2 Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the MEC, may approach the Pan South African Language Board to give advice on the constitutionality and/or legality of the decision taken, or may dispute the MEC's decision by referring the matter to the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa.

(extracts from: The Language in Education Policy, 14 July 1997, Minister of Education).

What the Language in Education Policy and the Norms and Standards mean:

1. Parents have the right to choose the language medium for their children.
2. The national Department of Education has set out a language in education policy which is in agreement with the language rights provisions of the Constitution.
3. This policy is to be followed by each Provincial Department of Education.
4. The language policy gives each school governing body the responsibility of establishing its own language policy by following the guidelines provided in the policy and norms and standards documents.
5. Each school must ensure that it creates a language policy which promotes multilingualism in a practical way and respect for all languages. It must observe the principle of promoting mother tongue education and the addition of the good teaching of a second language.

6 WAYS OF PROMOTING AND PROTECTING ALL LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS

The promotion of multilingualism, respect for all languages and the implementation of additive bi/multilingual models of education can be achieved by a number of education models. These include:

a. Mother tongue medium Reception to Grade 12, plus good teaching of an additional language.

b. Mother tongue medium, Reception/Grade 1 – 90% of day gradually shifting to 50% of day by Grade 5-6; additional language reception/Grade 1 – 10% of day, increasing to 50% of day by Grade 5-6. Use of 2 languages for teaching and learning continue to Grade 12.

c. Mother tongue medium Reception/Grade 1 – 90% of day, gradually shifting to 50% of day by Grade 9. Additional language for 10% of day from first grade and increasing to 50% of day by Grade 9.

d. If there are several minority languages in a class/school, then the 2 most widely used languages are used as in options b and c; plus special language maintenance programmes for the minority language speakers.

e. If there are sufficient numbers of minority speakers to make a stream (see norms and standards) then the school adds the appropriate language stream.

Detailed information on these approaches is available from the provincial departments of education, PANSALB and the Project for the Study of Alternatives in Education in South Africa (PRAESA) (see contact details at the end of the booklet).

The responsibilities of the provincial departments and schools include:

a. Ensuring that the language proficiencies of teachers match those of the learners.

b. Ensuring that teachers, across the curriculum, upgrade their language skills and or bilingual teaching methodologies so that learners are guaranteed access to the curriculum through a language which they understand.

c. Ensuring that examinations are translated and students have access to question papers in their mother tongue and English.

d. Ensuring that students have access to educational material in both mother tongue and English for models a-d above.

For practical purposes the most widely spoken official languages of each province should be the ones which are identified for the provision of mother tongue education. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, the most widely spoken languages are isiZulu and then English. In the Eastern Cape, they are isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sesotho (in some areas) and English. In many rural areas the decisions may be easier to make than in urban and metropolitan areas where communities tend to be more multilingual. Where there are several language communities living close together, the stipulations of the Norms and Standards document become very important.

For example, if in an area where there are mainly speakers of Sesotho sa Leboa, and a small minority of speakers of isiNdebele, a primary school might decide to offer Sesotho sa Leboa and English as the two languages of learning and teaching. The parents of children who speak isiNdebele could ask the school to provide an isiNdebele stream if there are at least 40 children in a single grade (reception to Grade 6) who could benefit from such a choice. If there are not enough children in this particular school but there are at least 40 such children in the area, the parents could jointly ask that one school accommodate these children, or they could ask the school governing bodies to negotiate an acceptable solution, or they could take their request to the provincial MEC.

If there are not sufficient numbers of learners to entitle them to a language stream of their choice, then their parents can insist on some form of adequate language maintenance programme being facilitated for their children at a particular school or in conjunction with an arrangement made amongst more than one school. The absolute minimum solution would be to include a programme whereby students are taught to read and write in their own language (afternoons or Saturdays).

The language rights of students may be violated if parents do not have sufficient information to make the appropriate choice for their children. Thus it is important that school governing bodies and teachers in liaison with the provincial departments of education take proactive and responsible steps to ensure that: they are promoting multilingualism, taking adequate measures to establish the most educationally effective additive bilingual model/s for their schools, and that they inform parents about language in education rights.

It is obviously not possible to make provision for each of the 11 official languages, in every province or school, but the *onus* is on each school and provincial department to ensure that language rights of everyone are not neglected or violated.

At no point should language be used to exclude any student from a school; and every school should ensure that its accommodation of multilingualism matches the needs of its community. This can be done by close consultation with the language policy, the norms and standards document, and the responsibilities which the Constitution place on South Africans to adhere to the spirit of democracy, human rights in general, and non-discrimination in relation to language, in particular.

In order that the departments of education can ensure that language in education rights are not violated, there is a legal and moral obligation and responsibility on the national and provincial departments of education to make education, throughout the school system, possible in each of the 11 official languages and South African Sign Language. This means that there is an

obligation to ensure that educational materials, curriculum, assessment instruments (including examinations) and teacher training is available in each of these languages. The focus on bilingual education brings an additional responsibility: the departments must ensure that adequate steps are taken to resource bilingual education and this begins with bilingual teacher education programmes.

Special mention must be made of the 12th official language for education, which is South African Sign Language. Parents should consult the local provincial departments of education for details regarding provision. Advice can be obtained from DEAFSA and PANSALB (see contact details below).

A Cautionary Note

The international evidence of the educational disadvantages which follow learners who lose their home language as medium should be taken seriously. Parents should be alert to choosing a language medium option which may violate their children's language rights since this will have serious negative educational effects on their children. Schools and provincial departments which do not take *proactive* steps to protect and advance language rights of students open themselves up to language rights *litigation*.

seven USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LANGUAGE RIGHTS

The *Arbitration Foundation of South Africa (AFSA)*

The AFSA can be approached if the steps outlined in the Norms and Standards document have not been followed and the complainant has had no success with a complaint to the MEC and or PANSALB.

AFSA Offices
Gauteng: Johannesburg (Head Office)

Physical Address
1st Floor
Maisels Chambers
4 Protea Place
Sandton

Postal Address
PO Box 653007
Benmore
2010

Tel: (2711) 320-0600

Fax: (2711) 320-0533

Email: info@arbitration.co.za

The *Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities*

This Commission is currently being established and this commission may be able to provide assistance once it is fully operational.

Address: unavailable at present.

Lawyers for Human Rights

Address:
Pretoria Kutlwanong Democracy Centre, 357 Visagie Street,
Pretoria 0002
Phone: 012 - 320 2943

Fax: 012 - 320 2949

Email: lhr@lhr.org.za

The *Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB)*

PANSALB is a *statutory* body which has been established to promote multilingualism and also to monitor and protect language rights. PANSALB has also been given the responsibility of overseeing the establishment of a Provincial Language Committee (PLC) in each province. Each provincial administration also has some responsibility for seeing that the PLC in its province is adequately supported and funded. At present not all the provinces have a PLC which is functioning. If members of the public are concerned about possible infringement of language rights, then they can contact either the PANSALB office or their PLC. PANSALB keeps a database of current PLC contacts and addresses.

Address

PANSALB
Private Bag X08
Arcadia
Pretoria
0007

Tel: 012 341-9638/341-9651

Fax: 012 341-5938

Email: communication@pansalb.org.za

Website: http://www.pansalb.org.za

Information about mother tongue and bilingual literacy and education programmes and materials:

DEAFSA

Tel: 021 683 4665

Fax: 021 671 2644

Email: deafsa@iafrica.co.za

Website: www.deafsa.co.za

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA)

Address
18 Arts Block
University of Cape Town
Private Bag Rondebosch 7700

Tel: 021 650 4013

Fax: 021 650 3027

Email: praesa@humanities.uct.ac.za

Website: www.uct.ac.za/depts/praesa

8 WORD LIST

additive bilingual education: the process of learning another language or languages on the basis of being able to read, write and speak well in your primary language or mother tongue. Additive bilingual models keep the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction or language of learning throughout school. A second language can be added by grade 5-6 as a complementary second medium, but for no more than 50% of the teaching day.

competent: to have enough skill or knowledge to do a particular task well.

indigenous: in this context, languages that developed in South Africa rather than those that came from elsewhere. In South Africa, ten of the eleven official languages are indigenous. The eleventh, English, is not.

linguistic background: a person's language background, which language/s they understand and speak.

litigation: the process of making or defending a claim in a court of law.

multilingual: speaking or using several different languages.

onus: responsibility to carry out a task.

proactive: controlling a situation by making things happen rather than waiting for things to happen and then reacting to them.

proficiency: ability to do something well, in this case speak and write in a particular language well, because of training and practice.

statutory: an organisation that is fixed and recognised by law or an action that is governed, regulated or supervised by a law.