

Poster presentation—Aligning San language and education programmes to the National Qualifications Framework

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Abstract

A report released by the South African Human Rights Commission in 2018 placed renewed attention on the perilous state of indigenous Khoe and San languages in South Africa, and the role and responsibility of the South African government in the maintenance and development of these languages (SAHRC 2018). Such responsibility includes the formulation of an education plan by the Department of Basic Education that would work towards remedying the historical neglect of San languages and cultures in formal education, as these historical patterns of neglect have remained largely intact into the present. This proposal aims to address the absence of an overarching education plan for San communities that gives cohesion to existing and future projects by stimulating discussion among the main stakeholders—the relevant communities and government education departments—and other interested parties (Siegrühn and Grant, forthcoming). An integrated education plan encompassing all phases of schooling from pre-school through Grade 12 based on a bilingual and bicultural approach to learning is proposed. There are two interrelated yet distinct components to the proposal: 1. Implementing a mother-tongue based bilingual education (MTBBE) programme at Xunkhwesa Combined School at Platfontein, Kimberley; 2. Developing San-based vocational training courses at NQF levels 2-4 (vocational grades 10-12 equivalents) in the Further Education and Training band to address the high drop-out rates among San learners and the shortage of vocational skills in San communities. Regarding the MTBBE programme, Platfontein is home to the only two San communities in South Africa where home-language transmission still takes place, but Afrikaans and English are the only languages on offer at the school. An MTBBE programme aligns with current and evolving language and curriculum policy trends, however, special policy accommodations need to be sought to enable the two relevant San languages to function as home-language subjects and media of instruction in a government school. That these two languages are oral-based adds a dimension to curriculum development as the qualities of oracy need to be valued and developed alongside literacy to keep cultural integrity. The expansion of home-language instruction into content subjects, for example Natural Sciences and History creates opportunities to integrate Indigenous Knowledge and languages into the formal curriculum, including the option of creating dedicated academic subjects for grades ten to twelve such as Oral History and Environmental Studies. The central role of community Learning Centres, as sites of language development and teacher training, as well as non-school based education and training programmes is discussed as well (Hays 2016, Jones 2017).

References

- Hays, Jennifer. 2016. *Owners of learning: The Nyae Nyae Village Schools over Twenty-Five Years*. Basel Namibia Studies Series 16. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.
- Jones, Kerry Lee. 2017. "Language attitudes as a change agent for language vitality: A case study of two Khoesan languages in Platfontein (RSA)." Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal.

SAHRC. 2018. Report of the South African Human Rights Commission: National Hearing Relating to the Human Rights Situation of the Khoi-San in South Africa. 25–26 November 2015; 9–10 December 2015; 18 January 2016; 11–12 & 14–15 April 2016. Released 26 March 2018.

Siegrühn, Amanda and Julie Grant. Forthcoming. Locating Spaces for San Mother-Tongue Education in the South African Education Framework.