

MCH 91-96-1-4

ATTENTION THAMI AND URIEL
Department of Arts and Culture

Report from commission formed to discuss gaps in language policy at the ANC one day language policy consultation held on the 27th February 1993

Description of the commission and its brief.

The commission was a one hour discussion of approximately 13 delegates on gaps in policy. An agenda of 13 possible points was set up and it was decided to prioritise four of the points mentioned as it would not be possible in the time allotted to do justice to all of the important matters raised.

The following 11 points were considered important by different delegates.

1. Minority languages
2. Practical implementation and economics of any new dispensation.
3. Standardisation in all languages
4. Translation of policy documents
5. Precise definitions and terminology
6. Language and industry
7. Gender and language policy
8. Literacy and language policy
9. Political position of the language policy
10. Sociolinguistic and multilingual context of South Africa vs. Nations of Linguistic purism and ethnicity.
11. Language and Publishing.
12. Language and literacy.

Only four of the above were addressed with 15 minutes given to each of the topics:

1. Minority Languages
2. Language and literacy
3. Language and gender
4. Future implementation and economics of policy.

1. Minority and Foreign Languages.

Here Raj Neehris from UDT expressed the need for clarity on the position of Indian languages and "community" languages. He pointed out that Telugu had in fact not been specifically mentioned and how it was necessary to be careful when publically listing the names of languages in public policy documents. He added that educational policy on Indian languages would need to be clarified. Suggested that Indian languages not be made compulsory.

Need for other minority languages not mentioned to have some form of protection and respect.

The arrangement of certain priorities given to certain foreign languages and their significance in the South African context needed filling out and clarity eg. it was suggested by one delegate that Arabic was an important North African and

religious role within the country.

2. Language and Literacy

Language policy and literacy was considered to be crucial in relation to debates on Adult Basic education. It was felt that the labour movements position on these matters should be considered.

It was thought that in the formulation of policy the Napi documents should be seriously considered. The influence of the Harare workshop on the Napi document was alluded to.

3. Language and gender.

This matter was addressed only in a cursory way.

4.

Practical implementation and economics of policy change.

- a) Budgetary implications
- b) Official language of communication
- c) Dynamic approach to allow for policy changes to be implemented in the future.

Comments of the Chairperson David Brown

The discussion while able to highlight a few practical points on minority languages was generally unsatisfactory given the time for discussion. I think the central problem of the formulation of language rights vs the development of policy was not addressed. This point was voiced at the plenary session by other delegates.

The commission was given only one hour to discuss gaps in policy which was not adequate. Hopefully this can be addressed more fully at future conferences. Definite need expressed in this subcommittee for the AWC language commission to establish a record centre on the matter and to clearly prioritise points of policy that require clarification.