

BELAB and mother tongue education: an interview with Mphuthumi Ntabeni

Naomi Meyer, Mphuthumi Ntabeni

SA Skoleseminaar | Schools Seminar

2024-01-17



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Mphuthumi Ntabeni. Photo: Menán van Heerden

BELAB (Basic Education Law Amendment Bill) is in the news (again). Naomi Meyer talks to Mphuthumi Ntabeni, author of *The wanderers*, about the language issue in schools.

Molo, Mpush. Ngaba kubalulekile ukuya esikolweni ngolwimi lwakho lwasekhaya?

Google Translate helped me with this question, Mpush. What do you think: is the question correct? Hopefully you understood what I meant: is it important to go to school and learn in a language you speak at home? Why or why not?

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Ja

Nee

Koekiebeleid

To answer your question, I think that it is imperative that kids are taught in their own languages, because that is the language of their worldview. This makes it easier for them to grab the learned information at school.

Ngaba ucinga ukuba bonke abazali bacinga ukuba abantwana babo bafanele baye esikolweni ngolwimi lwabo?

Again, thank you to Google Translate. Do you think that all parents think it is important that their children learn in their own language?

Most black African parents think that for their children to have a better chance in the world, they must learn to speak English. They think this also gives children an advantage in the job market later on in their lives.

Word Afrikaans in hierdie land bevoordeel as daar kinders in Afrikaans kan skool gaan maar nie in hulle eie taal nie?

Is Afrikaans a privileged language because some Afrikaans children can learn in their own language, but other children, speaking other languages, cannot learn in their own languages?

The Afrikaans privilege was fought for against English dominance. In fact, if anything, I regard the fight for Afrikaans prominence – without seeking hegemony – as something that other African language practitioners should emulate. Every parent or teacher must fight to install and instil a hybrid linguistic schooling system that empowers native languages along with the prominence of English as a lingua franca.

Is die oplossing nie om meer skole te bou vir kinders wat ander tale praat as om net op Afrikaans te fokus nie?

Ngaba ayisisombululo sokwakha izikolo ezininzi zabantwana abathetha ezinye iilwimi endaweni yokugxila kwisiBhulu kuphela?

Is the solution not to build more schools for children who speak other languages instead of focusing on Afrikaans schools?

Every area should have a school that promotes all languages of the region. Where parents take their children for school, most of the time, is not informed by language preference but quality of education. So, building more poor quality education schools doesn't solve this problem.

Can we integrate this country's children in ways other than focusing on language in schools?

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Ons gebruik koekies om seker te maak dat ons webwerf effektief werk. Stem jy in tot die gebruik van koekies as jy ons webwerf besoek?

Ja Nee Koekiebeleid

their kids to former Model C or Afrikaans schools. It is also imperative that these schools make sure, at least, that these kids don't arrive in a hostile environment.

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As per my first answer, what is more imperative for integration is the respect for all languages. This must be followed by widespread quality education. If quality schools are, due to historical or other reasons, only English or Afrikaans, then resentment builds in those who have no access to them. Our educational system still fails schools in township and rural areas. Hence parents from these areas bankrupt themselves to send their kids to former Model C or Afrikaans schools. It is also imperative that these schools make sure, at least, that these kids don't arrive in a hostile environment. By this, I mean that it is possible for an Afrikaans school or university to adapt to adopting a hybrid system, with a situation where it has a substantial number of non-Afrikaans speaking students, for instance. This doesn't mean it must give up its Afrikaans identity, but it must be accommodative to others with various other identities.

Also read:

BELAB en moedertaalonderrig: 'n gesprek met Jaco Deacon aan die begin van 2024



"Gedurende Maart sal daar 'n verkiesing in elke openbare skool in ons land plaasvind en die skool bepaal self die datum van die verkiesing gedurende die maand. Ouers moet seker maak wanneer hulle kinders se skool se verkiesing gaan plaasvind en die proses wat gevolg gaan word. Raak ... betrokke."



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BELAB and mother tongue education: an interview with Sindiwe Magona



"Learning another child's language presupposes proximity. We don't, as yet, have that, as the country is hopelessly separated along economic strata."

Ons gebruik koekies om seker te maak dat ons webwerf effektief werk. Stem jy in tot die gebruik van koekies as jy ons webwerf besoek?

Ja Nee Koekiebeleid

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELAB): what parents should know



"It is important for parents to be empowered and to get involved in the debates around education. Parents as well as learners themselves should consider making submissions and having their voices heard."



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BELA-wetsontwerp: Gaan Afrikaanse skole bly of gly?



"Ouers: Wees bewus van die implikasies van die BELA-wetsontwerp en maak seker dat die skool se beheerliggaam deur 'n beheerliggaamorganisasie soos Fedas ondersteun word."



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Reageer

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Reageer

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Ja Nee Koekiebeleid

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PLAAS

Stel my in kennis indien nuwe kommentaar bygevoeg word.

Ons gebruik koekies om seker te maak dat ons webwerf effektief werk. Stem jy in tot die gebruik van koekies as jy ons webwerf besoek?

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