

Transforming Higher Education Through Mother Tongue Teaching: A Case Study of One South African University

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on how one South African university has responded to a call for transformation in Higher Education by formulating a language policy that emphasizes the use of an African language as the medium of instruction. This was a qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm. Methods used in the study included reflections and literature review. The objectives of the study were threefold, that is, to understand how University X understands transformation, to establish how this University has responded to transformation, and to explore the extent to which University X has succeeded in implementing the mother tongue policy as a way of responding to transformation. Results indicate that the language policy is being implemented with some success. It also shows that there are negative attitudes towards this move as well as serious challenges that require human resource and materials development, which have financial implications. The paper acknowledges the need to extend the debate to include different stakeholders and to develop strategies to increase the participants' awareness of the importance of teaching in the mother tongue in institutions of higher learning.