

## **Preface**

Since South Africa's democratic transition, a lot of research has been carried out and published on South Africa's language question. Much of this research has been published in journal articles or chapters in books save for a few books that tackle the breadth and width of the language question in South Africa. That South Africa's language question attracts enduring attention is hardly a surprise. After centuries of colonialism, some of it under the Dutch and some of it under the British; and decades of Afrikaner-led apartheid in which language was used to serve the ends of social exclusion for some and social inclusion for others; and the political-ideological debate that accompanied the end of apartheid, language has always featured prominently in almost any debate on the future of South Africa. The adoption of eleven languages as official languages in South Africa's 1996 Constitution further entrenched the place of the language question in contemporary South Africa's discursive space and collective psyche. In essence, the interrogation of South Africa's language question is an enduring preoccupation.

The current book contributes to the discourse on language in South Africa with a specific focus on multilingualism and the public sector. The public sector generally includes all institutions and organisations which operate within the three branches of government; are engaged in the implementation of government policy and the administration of laws within the three spheres of government; and are ultimately accountable and responsible to a political authority. The public sector therefore includes all national state departments and provincial administrations, public enterprises, municipalities, institutions of higher learning, research agencies and a number of control and regulatory institutions which fall within the different branches and spheres of government. The book argues for and demonstrates the relevance of putting into place appropriate language policies to help the majority of the people of South Africa take an active part in nation-building endeavours; processes in which the public sector is key. The discussion tackles the intricacies of the public sector from a constitutional; legislative and policy; human resource and organisational culture; capital and infrastructure point of view; and builds a case for the provision of multilingual services in the public sector – as the benchmark of public sector service provision.

I hope and trust that the book will make a modest contribution to the debate around the language question in South Africa. I extend a word of gratitude to the peer reviewers for their invaluable

suggestions and insights. I am deeply grateful to the Office of the Dean – Faculty of the Humanities and the Directorate for Research Development at the University of the Free State for financing the publication of the book. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to the editorial and publishing team at SUN MeDIA Bloemfontein for their cooperation and sterling efforts in getting the book published timeously.