

## Abstract

For the better part of the last century the University of the Free State (UFS) – as the “most prestigious” higher education institution in the province – has been a key site for institutional language politics in the province. This brand of institutional language politics has been characterised by several contestations and permutations which can symbolically be described as a struggle for the soul of the UFS because of its far-reaching implications on UFS’s “curriculum as institution” and linguistic culture. Four critical junctures have defined UFS’s language politics over the last century. After a detailed characterisation of these critical junctures, the article argues and demonstrates that the contestations and permutations that have characterised institutional language politics at the UFS are a microcosm of the socio-political and economic struggles in the Free State Province through time, because of the centrality of the UFS in socio-political and economic discourses and dynamics of the province.