

Telegrams : Principal, Fort Hare

Telephones : { College 20  
Principal's  
Residence 43

P.O. Fort Hare

Rail : Alice



FORT HARE,

CAPE PROVINCE.

October 19th, 1950.

AFRICAN STUDIES Department  
Prof. Z.K. Matthews,  
African Studies Dept.,  
FORT HARE, C.P.

Dear Sir,

Kindly allow me to submit the following statement:

In Southern Africa and, to a certain extent, Bantu Africa, Fort Hare occupies a unique position as far as Bantu languages and their teaching is concerned. It is to this place that many students and scholars look for guidance, inspiration, initiative and solution of problems, etc. in matters concerning Bantu languages. It is also in this place that work in Bantu languages should not only confine itself merely to passing examinations, production of Bantu literary and linguistic works, but also to undertaking intensive as well as extensive research work in the subject.

At Fort Hare language study covers the field embracing what is known as the South African Bantu languages in University circles. By this is meant the following languages:-

1. Shona which comprises a number of languages and dialects.
2. Venda.
3. Tsonga, which comprises a few dialects.
4. Sotho, which comprises three main languages, viz. Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Tswana with a good number of dialects.

However, the main stress in teaching in this place is on the two main groups found in South Africa, viz:

- NGUNI - Xhosa and Zulu, and  
SOTHO - Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Tswana.

As we pointed in the memorandum that was submitted to the Arts Faculty, and finally to the College Senate last year, when we made a plea for the separation of the Bantu languages into two departments with each under its own head, these two groups are as different from one another and mutually unintelligible to each other as, say, French and English.

Notwithstanding, the greater aim i.e. unification, while there may be some justification for these two languages to be placed under one heading, and teaching them as parts of a single entity in the other South African Universities, the circumstances and purposes for which these are taught at Fort Hare are, in the main, quite different; in fact the setting may be quite different, and consequently the value and meaning of the Bantu languages have a greater and deeper significance to the African student than to many of his contemporaries in other universities.

Telegrams : Principal, Fort Hare

Telephones : { College 20  
Principal's  
Residence 43

P.O. Fort Hare

Rail : Alice



FORT HARE,  
CAPE PROVINCE.

.....Department

In regard to the two-language groups, again, problems of orthography and terminology are, to a great extent, different.

Needless to say that, up to the present time we at Fort Hare, have not made any appreciable progress in Bantu languages with regard to research, publications, development etc. This, among other things, is due to occasional staff changes and understaffing in the last four years, during which period work was not only too strenuous to the people concerned, but also suffered appreciably to the extent of adversely affecting the standard and efficiency. There is no doubt that overlapping in these languages, unless it is done under adequate staff facilities, is bound to affect the work unfavourably.

I would like also to point out that, although the time-table merely provides for Bantu languages I, II & III, there are actually five languages involved in each period of Bantu language. The result is that make-shifts have to be made here and there in the time-table in order to fit in the different languages. This is especially so in case of literature - hence the plea for immediate additional staffing.

Therefore, Sir, in view of the foregoing observations, will you kindly allow me to make the following proposals which I submit with a request for immediate consideration by your ~~College~~

(a) That the two main groups of Bantu languages at Fort Hare be separated into two departments, i.e.:

NGUNI Department and SOTHO Department, each under its own head and assistant.

(b) That the present staffing in Bantu languages at College be increased to four in order to cope up with the work, especially in view of the requirements of the new syllabus followed by Fort Hare.

(c) That the status of the Bantu languages at Fort Hare be raised in order to keep in line with the other departments at the College, especially as these languages are of utmost importance to the African people for which Fort Hare is primarily catering.

In making these proposals, Sir, one is not unmindful of the financial difficulties and commitments involved, but nevertheless one hopes that in the interests of the College the proposals will be given immediate attention and listed among the priorities.

Hoping, in the light of the pressing need for adequate Bantu language provision aid in the best interests of all for whom we work, that matter will receive your most favourable consideration.

I am, Sir,  
Yours sincerely,

*G. I. M. Mzamane*