|  |
| --- |
| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 550**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 17/04/2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 11 OF 2020**

**Dr L A Schreiber (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

Given that the University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and University of Stellenbosch have made English their primary language of instruction, where are the approximate four million Afrikaans-speaking students, some of whom live in poor rural communities where very few learn to speak English, from the Northern and Western Cape supposed to study when not a single university in the Western Cape offers Afrikaans as a primary language of instruction?

**NW737E**

**REPLY:**

The total enrolment in public higher education institutions (universities) is just over one million students (1 085 568 students). There are 11 official spoken languages in South Africa. Universities need to ensure that language is not used as a barrier to access higher education. Language has been used to exclude the majority of South Africans from accessing some universities in the past. Government supports the initiatives taken by universities to remove barriers, linguistic or otherwise, to ensure that universities across the country remain truly national entities and are accessible to all South Africans. In the democratic South Africa, there are no exclusively IsiZulu, IsiXhosa or Afrikaans language universities, but rather, South African universities that uphold the values of the Constitution and are mindful of the legacies of the past, and play their part in creating a fully transformed united South Africa that is at peace with itself and the rest of the world. Students of all linguistic backgrounds can enter any university to study, and must be supported to succeed. Therefore, students whose home language is Afrikaans or any other South African language may choose to study at any university in the country. We certainly cannot go back to a past where some of universities were earmarked for exclusive cultural and linguistic communities. Moreover, while English is utilised as the main language of teaching and learning, there is no official South African language that is excluded by universities as all universities have multilingual language policies. Universities determine their language policies and plans in terms of the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997 as amended). These policies and plans must be in line with the Higher Education Language Policy Framework determined by the Minister as well as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.