

## Linguistic cleansing

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The ANC government's appeal to the Constitutional Court to force Hoërskool Ermelo - the last remaining Afrikaans high school in Mpumalanga - to change its classes to English is tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

The arguments advanced by the state are so absurd that one wonders whether counsel did not seek advice from the Zimbabwean bench where ZANU-PF never loses a case. How can a school be linguistically punished for "having a 100 percent pass rate"? And surely, if teachers trained to teach in Afrikaans to Afrikaans-speaking children, were compelled to teach in English, the result would be something less than a 100 percent pass rate?

The issue of discrimination is a perfect tautology. Nowhere in the world, except perhaps in South Africa and in Zimbabwe, will anyone accept that providing mother-tongue education constitutes a form of "racial discrimination". In fact, the state is clearly showing its anti-white and anti-Afrikaans bias in pursuing its vendetta against Ermelo at all costs, notwithstanding the fact that some black children at the school are already happily following classes there in Afrikaans, South Africa's rural lingua franca.

More than anything, the continuing saga of Ermelo Hoërskool demonstrates the failure of the current political and constitutional order. None of the promises of equality or language rights made in the constitution have been realised. The Constitutional Court will probably pronounce on the absurdity of a "discrimination suit" brought by the discriminators in an attempt to salvage what is left of the constitution and its high-minded but soundly-ignored principles.

The centralist system imposed in 1994 is not only impractical but must, sooner or later, lead to ethnic conflict in SA. The sooner we move to a federal or confederal system that takes power away from this highly interventionist and very "English" state and give it back to citizens and communities, the better.