

ACCORD ON BASIC EDUCATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

1. Representatives of business, organised labour, the community constituency and government have met to discuss partnerships to achieve the New Growth Path (NGP) target of five million new jobs by 2020.
2. One critical challenge that was identified is the need to improve the quality of basic education. Performance in the schooling system is at the heart of building the skills base for economic growth and development and ensuring that the society is able to achieve our equity and development goals.
3. Constituencies take note of and fully support the efforts of the Minister of Basic Education to improve school performance. These efforts include, but are not limited to, actions to improve access to textbooks, better teacher development plans, improve infrastructure as well as curriculum review. The Department of Basic Education provides a framework for effective action through its “Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025”, and is currently undertaking specific interventions in terms of the Action Plan.
4. The President of South Africa has made a call to the nation to join hands in improving the education system and make partnerships a priority to achieve this. Some constituents have already responded positively and are working with government to improve school performance. These include businesses, professionals, unions, NGOs and individuals.
5. The parties support the call by the President and agree that a joint effort and partnership is required by all South Africans to substantially strengthen and support these efforts to ensure a quality basic education system.

6. They further agree that action and implementation should be the hallmark of the partnership, with constituencies identifying areas where they can make firm commitments as well as identifying actions that other constituencies would need to undertake to achieve the broad goals. At the same time they recognise and respect that authority over the schooling system should continue to vest in the Department of Basic Education at national and provincial levels.

COMMITMENTS

7. All parties agree to work together to change the mindset among teachers, learners and parents in order to rebuild dysfunctional parts of the basic education system and ensure quality education delivery for learners, particularly in poorly-performing schools;
8. The parties endorse a campaign to adopt poorly-performing schools and implement whole school development programme interventions, with individual businesses working collectively and trade unions/ community-based organisations assisting such schools to develop proper governance, high standards of teaching, basic school-level discipline and an adequate supply of essentials (including school textbooks and workbooks).
 - a. Organised labour, business and community organisations together commit to an initial target of between 100 and 200 schools to be supported in the adopt-a-school initiative during 2011.
 - b. The success of the interventions will be evaluated at the end of the period and will inform an expanded programme during 2012 that will increase the target to between 500 and 1000 schools. Prior to implementing the programme in 2012, the Department of Basic Education will hold a workshop with the NGO sector and a conference will be held with all the social partners to present the implementation plan for 2012.

- c. A protocol has been developed and approved by the Minister of Basic Education and the key partners in education participating in the Quality Learning & Teaching Campaign (QLTC). The protocol sets out the steps and procedures for the constituencies to follow when approaching, interacting with and supporting schools in the adopt-a-school initiative and in working with the relevant education authorities, i.e. National and Provincial Departments, School Governing Bodies and Circuits and Districts.
- d. A checklist of areas to be focused on in each of the selected schools has been developed.
- e. The Department of Basic Education and provincial departments of education will supply the social partners with a list of schools and the social partners will identify the schools with which they plan to work closely. The government commits to update its information on the schools and share this information with the social partners. Provincial departments of education will advise the schools concerned of the initiative and will provide the names of school principals to the social partners as the initial contact points with the schools. Social partners will also provide the name of their contact person as well as a senior official in the constituency who may be contacted in the event of any difficulties in the interaction between the constituency and the school concerned. Business will supply information where existing initiatives are underway within a period of three months.
- f. A standard diagnostic report will be developed for use by the constituencies to record the key gaps and problems at a particular school. The diagnostic report, which will contain specific proposals of interventions to address the problems in a given school and advise on who should lead the intervention in each case, will be submitted to the Minister of Basic Education and the NGP Social Dialogue Leadership Committee. The constituencies will also use existing tools that have

been developed by the Department of Education in implementing the programme.

- g. The Department of Basic Education will work through and with the provincial education departments to provide feedback on the proposals in the report and identify measures to support the constituencies concerned to undertake specific corrective actions that will improve the basic education outcomes. The Department will make this response within 30 days of receipt of the diagnostic report.
 - h. Labour will drive an advocacy campaign to support the implementation of the adopt-a-school campaign.
9. The parties agree to cooperate in developing programmes and interventions that are not confined to the list of specific schools that will be 'adopted', examples of these kinds of interventions may include training courses aimed at School Governing Bodies in a district or area, or the provision of books to school libraries. Further details of these commitments will be developed through a task team of representatives of the social partners.
10. Businesses, NGOs and trade unions currently spend significant amounts of money on basic education programmes, bursaries and support. The parties undertake to review the current spending within each constituency in order to focus it, align it with the commitments in this Accord where possible and use it to complement the efforts of government.

CONCLUSION

11. The adopt-a-school campaign emerges in the context of a rallying call to make education a societal issue. The key social partners committed to making this call a reality are the parents, teachers, and learners who are all signatories of the QLTC.

12. The commitments in this accord reflect the realisation by the nation that government alone cannot address all of the challenges of the educational system and it needs to create space for social partners who want to assist in realising the goal of Outcome 1: Improved Quality of Basic Education. While social partners have assisted government in this regard for many years with positive results, these initiatives have often lacked a centre to facilitate coordination, direction and reporting.

13. This intervention aims to produce fully functional schools in which the “Triple T” foundations of a good school are in place: effective leadership and management; teachers in class, on time, teaching; and the availability and use of learning and teaching support materials.

Based on the above, we as representatives of our constituencies, now commit to this partnership and to combining our efforts in order to strengthen basic education as a crucial pillar of social development as well as the achievement of economic development goals.

Signed on behalf of Organised Labour

Signed on behalf of Business

Signed on behalf of Government

Signed on behalf of Community Constituency

STEPS AND PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT THE ACCORD ON BASIC EDUCATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

1. The Quality Learning & Teaching Campaigns (QLTC) and existing Accords between school communities and role-players and will provide the mandate for the adopt-a-school intervention.

2. The social partners will:
 - a. seek the support of, and gradually build a good working relationship with, all key stakeholders and role-players, especially the local QLTC;

 - b. mobilise school communities, i.e. the principal, the School Management Team, educators, learners and parents, by explaining the purpose of the intervention and creating enthusiasm for it;

 - c. agree with the school community on the central challenge faced by the school, the key intervention and steps required to address this challenge;

 - d. empower school communities to drive and sustain the intervention, involving the transfer of skills where possible;

 - e. familiarise themselves with the relevant enabling policies and legislation;

 - f. work closely with the provincial departments of education, particularly the districts; and

 - g. ensure that the school day, especially teaching and learning, is not disrupted by the work of the partners.

3. Checklist of focus areas:

- a. Decide upfront how much time the social partners will devote to the intervention.
- b. Identify other partners with an interest in the initiative.
- c. Agree on a person (possibly the leader of a duly created team) to serve as the primary contact with the school.
- d. Collect information about the school using the instrument attached as “Annexure A” as a guide.
- e. Sit down with the identified school team and work on the “problem” focus areas that may hinder teaching and learning in the school. They may be linked to either one or more of the following:
 - i. the nature of the school leadership and management (strengths, weaknesses and relationships);
 - ii. professionalism of the teaching and support staff;
 - iii. the school’s relationship with the community;
 - iv. teaching and learning resources, e.g. workbooks, textbooks, stationery and furniture;
 - v. infrastructure, e.g. electricity, ablution facilities, water, libraries, laboratories and access roads; and

- vi. school safety and security issues, e.g. the absence of perimeter fences, drug and substance abuse and violence.
- f. Prioritise the issues that need to be addressed and establish which is the most important and which may underlie the others.
- g. Discuss possible actions to fix the situation.
- h. Consider the feasibility of the proposed solution.
- i. Establish who will take what action to take the proposed solution forward.
- j. Establish a date by which action must be taken and a report-back provided.

4. Diagnostic Report

- a. The diagnostic report must contain the following chapters or sections:
 - i. a profile of the school and its community;
 - ii. the approach taken by the team: relationships established, meetings held and an assessment of the success of the approach;
 - iii. challenges identified and prioritised, with reasons; and
 - iv. the way forward, including the proposed intervention, and who has to do what by when.
- b. The following principles are important to consider:

- i. The social partners must ground their interventions in an analysis of the key challenges that schools face. Given that the diagnostic exercise may uncover a range of challenges, the social partners will have to carefully prioritise and sequence their interventions in consultation with partners in the schools.
 - ii. Interventions must be realistic and achievable or the process will be discredited. Proposed interventions must identify what needs to be done, how it will be done, who will do it and when. Proposed interventions must incorporate monitoring and reporting.
 - c. The following is a list of the kinds of interventions that the social partners could consider. The list is meant to stimulate discussion about possible solutions.
 - i. *Plans to achieve national norms and standards:* For example, where national standards exist on infrastructure, security or textbooks, the intervention can involve a plan to meet those standards within certain timeframes. Additional funding may be necessary.
 - ii. *Community-based solutions:* Community-based solutions may be helpful in managing problems until resources are increased, e.g. to improve security in the schools. If relationships with the community are poor, the social partners could facilitate meetings with a range of individual leaders and groups to gather ideas about how to improve the school's performance. It is important to give feedback to the community after such consultations. Parents and community members can also play a role in improving the school, e.g. by reading to the children, helping to run and supervise afternoon activities, supporting the library,

helping with school maintenance and monitoring unsupervised places in the school.

- iii. *Popular campaigns:* For example, the social partners could launch a campaign for the community to return books, chairs, or desks that were borrowed by community members.
- iv. *External expertise:* External experts can play a role in helping schools compile budgets, financial statements and undergo audits. Teachers may benefit from sessions from managing private finances (often mentioned by teachers as a concern), especially if early departure on pay-day is part of the culture of the schools.
- v. *Working with other schools:* To encourage effective leadership, the principal and senior managers could be given opportunities to visit other schools in similar contexts that are performing well. Another example of working with other schools is that the school could contact other schools for old textbooks in the short-run, although this is not an optimal solution to the problem of insufficient textbooks.
- vi. *Mediation:* Mediation can play a role, for example, in helping staff resolve old feuds. Moreover, where the union and school management have poor relations, relatively senior members of trade unions can be brought in to help address issues of concern. External experts can also help to clarify roles and responsibilities which could, for example, improve relations between the school governing body and the senior management team within a school.

- vii. *Seeking donations*: Social partners can seek donations, e.g. for libraries. However, quality control is important in this context.