

NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FORUM (NETF)

FOUNDING AGREEMENT (DRAFT)

1. FOUNDATION AND MISSION

In response to the systemic crisis confronting education in South Africa, the challenge of education reconstruction for a democratic, nonracial, nonsexist, and just South Africa, and the need to develop an integrated approach to education and training which will better serve national reconstruction and the human, social and economic development needs of South Africa, the stakeholders in education and training hereby establish a National Education and Training Forum (NETF).

The mission of the NETF shall be to initiate, develop and participate in a process involving education and training stakeholders in order to arrive at and establish agreements on:

- the resolution of crises in education;
- the restructuring of the education system for a democratic South Africa; and
- the formulation of policy frameworks for the long term restructuring of the education and training systems

which are linked to the human, social and economic development needs of South Africa.

2. OBJECTIVES

In pursuance of its mission, the NETF shall urgently:

2.1 Crisis

seek agreement on how to resolve education crises on which effective action can be immediately undertaken.

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2.2 Transition

seek agreement on the restructuring of the education system from its racially and ethnically fragmented structure into an acceptable national system capable of correcting imbalances and of meeting the development needs of a nonracial democratic South Africa

2.3 Reconstruction

seek agreement on core values and broad policy frameworks for a future system, and on a process which will achieve an integrated approach to education and training

3. MEMBERSHIP AND FUTURE PARTICIPATION

Participation in the deliberations of the NETF shall be determined by the Plenary on the basis of recommendations made to it by the Executive Committee and with due regard to the principle of inclusivity. The Executive Committee shall determine eligibility for membership on the basis of the following criteria:

- 3.1** Participation in the NETF shall be open to national stakeholders in education and training.
- 3.2** Participants in the NETF shall subscribe to the content of the Founding Agreement.
- 3.3** Provision shall be made to accommodate further members.

4. PRINCIPLES

The Forum shall operate in accordance with the following principles:

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4.1 Inclusivity

Participation in the Forum shall be inclusive of all national stakeholders in education and training if they are a national body and continuously affected by education and training policy.

4.2 Consensus-Seeking

The NETF shall be a body which strives to reach consensus.

4.3 Authority

The authority of the NETF lies in its capacity to arrive at implementable and effective policies with wide approval among stakeholders.

4.4 State Responsibility

The responsibility for the management of the system remains with the government of the day.

4.5 Effectiveness

The Forum should be structured in such a way as to include all national stakeholders and yet be capable of effective decision-making.

4.6 Transparency and Information

4.6.1 The NETF shall use all appropriate means to ensure that it functions in a transparent and publicly accountable manner.

4.6.2 Every suitable opportunity shall be used to inform the public of the work of the NETF.

4.6.3 Parties to the NETF shall not unreasonably withhold relevant information from it.

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4.6.4 Unless media statements are jointly agreed, any party/individual who communicates with the media should do so on its own behalf, and not on behalf of the NETF.

4.7 Mandating

The needs of the parties to the Forum to consult their constituencies adequately and obtain appropriate mandates shall be respected. In this regard parties to the Forum shall respect reasonable deadlines.

4.8 Accountability

The existence of the NETF does not deprive any party to the Forum of its freedom of action in its own sphere of responsibility, or of its accountability to the people of South Africa for the manner in which it carries out its responsibilities.

5. FORM AND STRUCTURE

The need to be inclusive of all national stakeholders and yet be capable of effective decisions and action require that the Forum have a structure and procedures which ensure representativeness and effectiveness. Accordingly, the Forum shall be structured as follows:

5.1 Plenary

The Plenary shall consist of all the stakeholders participating in the Forum. The Plenary shall be the highest decision-making body of the Forum. The Plenary shall have the right to delegate powers to the Executive Committee or other committees established by it. All decisions of principle and policy must be ratified by the Plenary. The Plenary shall meet as regularly as required, but not fewer than four times per year.

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The functions of the Plenary shall be: (\pm 100 members)

- to agree the framework of values of the Forum's activities;
- to deliberate and seek agreement on any matter relating to the Mission and Objectives, and to refer any such issues to the Executive Committee for further deliberation by appropriate Working Groups;
- to receive, debate, amend and/or approve measures proposed by the Executive Committee on the basis of submissions by the Working Groups;
- to monitor progress in honouring commitments entered into by parties in relation to education.

5.2 Executive Committee

An Executive Committee consisting of representatives of the stakeholders shall be established by the Forum. It shall be responsible for planning, coordinating and driving the work of the Forum, and for constituting and managing the work of the Working Groups and making recommendations to the Plenary.

5.3 Working Groups

The Executive Committee shall establish Working Groups through a process of nominations to investigate various matters referred to it by the Plenary or any other matter which the Committee believes will advance the work of the Forum. Such Working Groups can include specialists who are not members of the Forum. The terms of reference, composition and procedures of the Working Groups shall be determined by the Executive Committee, which shall also coordinate the work of the groups to ensure effective and efficient use of resources.

5.4 Chairperson/s

5.4.1 Meetings of the NETF will be Chaired on a rotating basis.

5.4.2 The Executive Committee shall be Chaired on a rotating basis.

5.5 The Secretariat

5.5.1 The Secretariat will be designated by the members of the Forum.

5.5.2 The Executive Committee will direct the Secretariat for the NETF.

5.5.3 The Secretariat will provide logistical and administrative support to the NETF and all its operating structures.

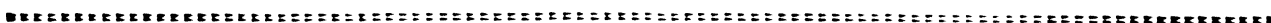
6. PROCESS

6.1 Agenda

Any party to the NETF shall be entitled to table any issue for consideration. The Forum will establish procedures to decide which issues should receive the attention of the Forum and which issues would be better dealt with elsewhere.

6.2 Consensus

The NETF shall aim to reach consensus through investigation, reason and debate on issues accepted for discussion. The Forum shall strive to reach unanimous agreements about issues under discussion. Should unanimity not be reached the principle of sufficient consensus will be applied. Agreements reached by consensus shall be upheld by parties to the agreement. Provision shall be made to record dissenting views.



6.3 Liaison with other Forums

The NETF will liaise with other negotiating, advisory or consultative forums at national, regional, local or sectoral level on matters of common interest.

6.4 Procedures

The procedures to be followed by the Forum in respect of administration and substantive issues will be specified in an annexure to the Founding Agreement.

7. FUNDING

7.1 The NETF shall establish an appropriate mechanism which will be responsible for mobilising and administering the necessary funds for servicing the needs of the NETF in an effective, efficient and accountable manner.

7.2 Funds shall as far as possible be obtained from local sources including the State.

7.3 The NETF should have total discretion over the use of its funds in accordance with the founding principles and in pursuance of its agreed work programme.

8. UNILATERAL RESTRUCTURING

As a first step in the operationalisation of this Agreement a Working Group shall be established to determine procedures and criteria for the identification of those aspects of educational restructuring which should be brought to the Forum for discussion and agreement.