

SUMMARY OF
EDUCATION POLICY

APPROVED BY THE 2023 POLICY CONFERENCE

Our plans to fix South Africa and build a prosperous and inclusive future



POLICY
CONFERENCE
2023



Education

Vision Statement

A world-class education system that provides equal access to quality education for all citizens, both urban and rural, starting with universal access to early childhood development (ECD) programmes.

This is an education system that transforms the development trajectory for all South Africans. It will not only prioritise academic outcomes but empower people with the skills and knowledge needed to be active participants in the economy and pursue a life of prosperity, however they may define it.

Our Core Principles

- » **Education is our most powerful tool in creating a prosperous society**, and a high functioning education system is central to overcoming the persisting patterns of inequality in South Africa.
- » **Education must empower our people**, and that requires that we get the basics right – access to education alone is not sufficient, the education system must transfer the skills required to participate productively in society.
- » **Education does not only take place in the classroom but requires a whole-of-society approach.** Families, communities, civil societies, the media, unions, and politicians must all unite behind improving our educational outcomes.

Problem Statement

- » Our basic education system is dysfunctional: due to weak institutional functionality, undue union influence, weak teacher content knowledge and teaching skills, and wasted learning time and insufficient opportunity to learn, South Africa's performance basic education outcomes is considered as one of the worst in the world.
- » There remains persistent inequality in educational opportunities, and South Africans living in historically disadvantaged areas still receive lower quality education than South Africans living in historically white areas. Financial

inequality is also limiting access to tertiary education.

- » The mismatch between educational outcomes and the needs of the economy means that receiving education is not a guarantee of finding employment or being able to generate an income. We are severely underperforming in literacy and numeracy indicators, limits opportunities for our young people.

What We Believe

- » Fixing South Africa's education system requires system-wide reforms, ranging from education administration and bureaucracy, the way individual schools are managed, how children access education and the focus of our curriculum. This requires dedicated and competent leadership that is capable of change management in a complex environment with millions of stakeholders.
- » Our education system must be depoliticised: the primary objective for all participants in the education system must be improved educational outcomes of learners and students. Labour unions have an important role to play in advancing the interests of teachers, but we cannot allow SADTU to dictate policy and administrative decisions.
- » Labour unions wield excessive influence over the education system, leading to significant inefficiencies in schools and the unproductive allocation of financial resources.
- » Teachers are critical reform partners, and reforms to the basic education system must be designed in collaboration with teachers, provided that those teachers are committed to improving the educational outcomes of learners, rather than advocating for the best interests of teachers.
- » No one should be denied access to education due to financial constraints. However, we need to redesign the current funding model to make it more sustainable, especially as far as tertiary education is concerned.
- » Effective early childhood development interventions are required to ensure that children establish the strong foundation required for a productive educational journey.
- » To unlock the full educational potential of our children, we must prioritise the ability to read for meaning. This is the most fundamental requirement for achieving further education outcomes.
- » We believe that mother-tongue education is an important aspect of basic education. However, we are also cognisant that the diversity of South Africa's people and the prevalence of inter-provincial migration provides a challenge in ensuring that everyone has access to education in their mother tongue, and that the use of the English language provides South Africa with a competitive economic advantage in global markets.

- » Extracurricular activities are critical for developing balanced individuals and provide opportunities for developing soft skills. All school children should have access to a range of well-resourced extra-curricular activities in their community.
- » Academic institutions cannot be the only place where education takes place: our communities, businesses and civil society must all get involved in providing a holistic education experience to learners and students and to create a culture of continuous self-improvement.
- » Our school curriculum should evolve to emphasise problem-solving skills instead of solely focusing on purely academic content. Our focus should be on teaching the skills required for self-education and critical thinking. South Africa's performance on literacy and numeracy indicators needs to improve drastically.
- » We need to introduce more diversity of choice for learners that prefer alternative education streams such as vocational training. Everyone should be able to access the education that is right for them, at the right time, in the right format.
- » Teacher training and support must improve should we wish to see improved educational outcomes. We also have the opportunity to utilise technology to improve the productivity of time spent in class.
- » A large percentage of South Africa's teachers are set to retire in the next decade, and we must prioritise the entry of new teachers into the workforce.

Policy Levers

- » **Institutional framework:** over the past three decades, government's efforts were rightly focused on increasing access to education, and significant gains have been made. However, government has failed to simultaneously focus on the quality of the education system. A significant contributor to this shortcoming is the way in which the education system functions. Our policy approach is to address the binding constraints within the education system to effect the system-wide change required for improved educational outcomes.
- » **Basic education:** the early stages of a person's educational journey lay the foundation for achieving their desired educational outcomes later in life. The ability to read for meaning, understanding basic mathematics and scientific concepts, learning how to express yourself and how to engage critically with information are all essential aspects of developing skills necessary to participate in society. Ensuring that our children have access to high quality educational opportunities tailored to their needs and circumstances is an essential requirement for improving the development of our society.

- » **Further education:** school leavers should have access to further education options that are aligned with their skills and desires. Furthermore, adult learners that wish to access educational opportunities should be able to do so, which includes basic education for adults previously denied the opportunity to access education. Finally, professional and skills development efforts should be aligned with the needs of the economy and those seeking professional advancement should be able to access high-quality further education.

Policy Highlights

1. Institutional framework

- » Merge the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training into a single Department of Education.
- » Enter a social compact with other government departments, labour, the private sector and civil society to prioritise the improvement of our education sector.
- » Reinvigorate the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) by streamlining the adoption of the NEEDU Bill and ensure its independence.
- » Review the independence of the South African Council of Educators (SACE) and ensure strict separation between unions and SACE.
- » Assign water and sanitation and broadband connectivity as key school infrastructure priorities and implement plans to ensure that all learners have access to dignified ablutions and that all schools have broadband internet access. Finally eradicate pit toilets and mud schools.
- » Introduce mandatory training to members of school governing boards to ensure that they have the ability and information required to make informed decisions on the school's governance.
- » Prohibit all officials in the Department of Education from holding elected positions in educational unions.

2. Basic education

- » Reintroduce teacher training colleges that provide B.Ed courses and further training for teachers.
- » Introduce a mandatory service year for all education graduates prior to registration with the SACE.
- » Rapidly increase both access to resources and the number of teachers to ensure our schools are fully capacitated.
- » Expand the employment of subject advisors to decrease the ratio between advisors and teachers, and ensure subject advisors are sufficiently qualified to provide subject guidance.

- » Add teachers who are proficient in teaching in English capable of teaching mathematics and science to the critical skills immigration list to address the impending teacher shortage.
- » Enforce strict compliance with minimum requirements for principals, including completion of school management training programmes.
- » Introduce measures to include principals in the appointment of teachers in their schools and improve reporting lines between teachers and principals.
- » Reintroduce Annual National Assessments (ANAs) and ensure data on school performance is publicly available.
- » Reintroduce the role of school inspectors to oversee the performance of schools.
- » Publish National Senior Certificate (matric) pass rates as a percentage of learners from the cohort that started grade 1 who finished school.
- » Abolish the 30% subject pass rate and require all learners to achieve a 50% pass rate for all subjects.
- » Take active steps to ensure that all school-aged children have access to extra-curricular activities such as sport, drama, and art to encourage the development of balanced individuals.
- » Increase investment in special education for students with learning challenges and special needs, including appropriate specialised support for blind and deaf children.
- » Ensure schools provide time at the start of each day for quiet reflection and/or prayer.

3. *Foundation phase*

- » Collaborate closely with the Departments of Social Development and Health to ensure that our early childhood development centres provide comprehensive services to children from indigent households.
- » Increase the budgetary allocations within the education budget to ECD to ensure that ECD is adequately funded.
- » Review the current foundation phase curriculum to ensure focus on language, reading, basic numerical skills and creative subjects.
- » Support mother-language learning as far as feasible within the context of inter-provincial migration.
- » Finalise the National Reading Plan (NRP) and prioritise its implementation by forming a presidential task team of non-political experts mandated to execute the NRP.
- » Introduce in-service training to improve the numerical skills of existing foundation phase teachers.
- » Implement evidence-based teaching methods for numerical skill development.

4. *Intermediate and advanced phase*

- » Provide access to free sanitary products so that girls do not miss school.
- » Conduct annual tests of subject-matter knowledge for teachers to determine teachers' capabilities to teach the subjects they are assigned to.
- » Introduce training interventions to ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge required to teach subject-specific content at an age-appropriate level.
- » Ensure alignment between the curriculum and global economic and technological trends so that our young people are empowered to deal with the complexity of a rapidly changing world.
- » Introduce a dual stream education system from the 10th grade, that allows learners to follow an academic or vocational stream.
- » Provide learners with greater autonomy over what the content they study in grades 10 to 12 and emphasise practical application of knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving and soft skills.

5. *Further and tertiary education*

- » Work toward developing a sustainable tertiary education funding model that provides appropriate funding for students, including free and subsidised education and affordable loans.
- » Redirect all existing financial support for vocational training from agencies such as the Sectoral Education and Training Authorities to the Opportunity Fund, in accordance with our Economic Justice policy.
- » Align vocational training opportunities with the current and future needs of the South African economy.
- » Invest in community centres and infrastructure to provide venues for adult education classes.
- » Allocate resources for the establishment of additional universities, technical colleges and teacher, nursing, agricultural and policing colleges.
- » Release abandoned and hi-jacked buildings near educational institutions to the private sector for mixed-use developments that must include affordable student housing.
- » Introduce a three-year compulsory module in all under-graduate degree that exposes students to a range of topics, including law, financial management, civic education, science, technology, and academic research.



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