



Prof John Volmink.

Education DialogueSA kicks off with weighty issues

The NECT's "dialogue-for-action" programme got underway on 15 November with the first meeting of about 40 influential individuals from across the basic education sector.

This group was originally referred to in the Education Collaboration Framework as the National Education Council, but has been renamed the Dialogue Group. It is jointly chaired by University of Johannesburg Vice-Chancellor Ithron Rensburg and Deputy Minister of Basic Education Enver Surty. This Group forms the core of a wider discussion and advocacy programme which is facilitated by the NECT and known as Education DialogueSA. Proposals and solutions generated by the Dialogue Group will be debated on national platforms and widely promoted.

- Two complex and critical topics were flagged for the inaugural session of the Dialogue Group:
- *Making schools effective: what actions should we as a nation take?* Discussion on this subject was preceded by a presentation by Prof Brahm Fleisch of the University of the Witwatersrand.
 - *Why do we need to professionalise teaching?* The introductory presentation on this was delivered by Prof John Volmink, chair of the SADTU Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute Task Team on Professionalisation of Teaching.

The Dialogue Group identified a range of possible actions it supported in relation to professionalisation of teaching and making schools more effective. These proposals will be further filtered by a task team and a small number will be prioritised for the NECT's focused attention.

Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga, who participated in discussions throughout the day, said she was "very grateful and very hopeful" about the progress of the NECT since its launch in July and the dedication shown not only by education specialists but also by business and funding agencies.



Godwin Khosa.

Trust names its CEO

The Board of Trustees has appointed Godwin Khosa, current CEO of JET Education Services and head of the NECT Secretariat, as the first CEO of the NECT. Making this announcement, board Chairman Sizwe Nxasana said: "Godwin was the obvious choice. He played a central role in the processes that led to establishment of the Trust, his passion for its work is unequalled and he has the management skills and the astonishing array of relationships that are needed to make this venture work."

Mr Khosa has been CEO at JET Education Services since 2009. A teacher by profession, he worked as a policy analyst and senior manager at the Centre for Education Policy Development in the 1990s before joining the Human Sciences Research Council as a research manager and proceeding to JET. There he served initially as a team leader on an education transformation programme in Limpopo and then as the organisation's Programme Director. He is also a member of the Council of the University of Johannesburg and a number of Ministerial Task Teams.

During a transitional period between now and February 2014, Mr Khosa will wind-down his responsibilities at JET and scale-up his commitments to the NECT. Other key positions in the compact NECT administration have been advertised and will be filled early in the new year.

Building bridges with the CSI community

The corporate social investment (CSI) community could contribute valuable experience to the NECT and their participation would be welcome, Godwin Khosa, head of the NECT secretariat, told a gathering of CSI managers in Johannesburg on 23 October.

He emphasised that the Education Collaboration Framework – the strategy which underpins the NECT's work – has relevance well beyond the NECT. CSI managers should feel free to use the Framework as a resource to sharpen the focus of their own efforts to support the public school system.

Mr Khosa explained that the NECT focused particularly on improving the functioning of schools and district education offices in 20 key education districts. In these districts where the NECT would be working intensively, its role would be to facilitate rather than control. "Our

approach is to provide structures and systems to get South Africans to work in a coordinated way to improve education services."

In terms of existing CSI and NGO interventions in the basic education sector, the NECT had no intention of "taking every project under its wing and sucking up all the resources". The Trust envisaged established projects and programmes would continue, but the NECT could help role-players get better returns on investment through collaboration and more focused ways of working.

In response, Tracey Henry of Tshikululu Social Investments said the NECT's central goal of building collaboration had come through loud and clear. The challenge was how to make collaboration work – how to build the structures that would enable civil society role players to participate in the processes that the NECT set in motion. Future engagements needed to focus on this challenge.

District interventions poised to roll

The NECT is ready to switch into rollout gear in most of the eight education districts that it has prioritised for intensive attention during the Trust's first year of operation.

Profiling reports, which look at each district's needs, capacity and priorities for action, have been completed in all these districts and in five of them the findings and recommendations have been presented to meetings of stakeholders.

These stakeholder meetings typically take place over two days and involve a range of local stakeholders as well as provincial education officials. The report serves as a way of holding a mirror up to stakeholders and enabling them to confront the state of education in the district. This isn't always a comfortable process, but gradually participants get round to looking at possible solutions and priorities for intervention.

The next steps in the process are setting up a smaller district steering committee, which will oversee a programme of change, and appointing a service provider to coordinate and manage the interventions identified together with the district office. Five districts have proposed members of these committees and the committee in Vhembe District is about to hold its inaugural steering committee meeting.

Because a credible and capable committee is central to the success of each district initiative, the NECT is putting in place a support programme for steering committees, which will be designed and tested by an experienced stakeholder facilitator.

The priority districts for 2013/14 are: Vhembe and Waterberg in Limpopo, Libode and Mt Frere in the Eastern Cape, Uthungulu and Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal, Bohlabela in Mpumalanga and Bojanala in the North West.

Education a way to 'unlock the shackles'

The Vhembe District Steering Committee has at its helm a man who believes firmly that education is not an end in itself but a path to freedom. "Education is one way to unlock the shackles of slavery and of poverty and hunger," says Judge Joe Raulinga, chair of the committee.

The judge's involvement in the development of education long predates the arrival of the NECT in Vhembe. He is a founder of the Madombidzha Education Trust which has built and equipped classrooms in Limpopo.

But the NECT, he says, has brought a new sense of opportunity that lies in the vision of its leadership, the receptiveness of government,

the support of business and the eagerness of communities. This combination of factors, Judge Raulinga believes, has great potential to deliver real results.

Using a snooker analogy, the judge says that efforts so far to improve education "have been missing the pocket". But the NECT could finally make it possible to sink the ball.

Judge Raulinga's position in the North Gauteng High Court means his working days are spent in Pretoria. But his roots are deep in Limpopo and his weekend home is in Makhado.

He has a sense that the NECT's Vhembe initiative has only begun to explore the potential of partnerships. "I think we need to pull in more people – there are others who are willing to come on board."



Spin-offs for youth training and work opportunities

Engaging national government departments and other public sector entities has been an important aspect of launching the NECT. This interaction is already bearing fruit in terms of responding to some of the pressing needs identified in the profiling reports on the eight priority districts.

- The Education, Training and Development Practices (EDTP) SETA has committed to paying stipends for 1 500 unemployed young people with suitable educational backgrounds who are to be placed in schools as learner administrators.
- A partnership has been formed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Rural Development (DRD) to renovate school infrastructure in accordance with the needs identified in the district profiling reports. The DRD has a database of 14 000 young people with building science training, some of whom could be deployed in the priority districts. The two departments have agreed how to share training and supervision and the provision of inputs for this intervention.

Patrons:

Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy Chairperson of the National Planning Commission; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, founder of Umlambo Foundation and former Deputy President of South Africa; Bobby Godsell, Chairman of Business Leadership South Africa; James Motlatsi, former President of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Trustees:

Sizwe Nxasana, CEO of FirstRand (Chairperson); Mark Lamberti, executive chairperson of Business Leadership South Africa; Futhi Mtoba, senior partner at Deloitte; Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education; Basil Manuel, President of the National Professional Teachers' Association of South Africa; Nkosana Dolopi, Deputy Secretary-General of the South African Democratic Teachers Union; Brian Figaji, former Vice-Chancellor of Peninsula Technikon.



Leadership get together

In October, the NECT's patrons, its trustees and the chairs of the Dialogue Group had a joint meeting designed to ensure that the governance collective is driven by a common understanding of the NECT's purpose and that there is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of members of each structure. In addition to this induction session, the patrons and chairs of the Dialogue Group were observers at the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Watch this space

The NECT is well aware that you're not real until you're virtually real. We've been getting our website into shape and you should find us live at www.nect.org.za from January 2014.

Contact details:

Godwin Khosa, NECT Secretariat, c/o JET Education Services, 5th Floor, Forum 1, Braampark, Hoofd Street, Braamfontein,
Tel: 011 403 6401 Fax: 011 339 7844 Email: GodwinK@jet.org.za