



EDUCATION NGO LEADERSHIP SUMMIT REPORT

11 March 2016



SPONSORS



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01 | Introduction

The National Development Plan (NDP) emphasises the importance of collaboration in the drive to reduce poverty by 2030. The Non-Governmental Organisation Education Leadership Summit was held to take stock of the role of the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector in implementing the NDP's education goals, the sector's operational circumstances, and its sustainability. The event was attended by government, led by the Minister of Basic Education, the Honourable Angie Motshekga, leaders of education NGOs, and education funding partners from corporate entities, private foundations, and international development agencies.

Since the 1990s, the role of the NGO sector has changed dramatically, partly due to changes in the funding context, modes of engagement with government and funders, and capacity requirements. Prior to the establishment of the first democratic government, the NGO landscape was

“NGOs and CSI programmes continue to play a very important role in advocacy. They provide useful data and test cases, which sometimes government may not be able to do, because government runs a huge system”
– Mr Sizwe Nxasana, Chairman of the NECT.

“Growth and development and reducing poverty and inequality are the core elements of the virtuous cycle. Strong leadership throughout society, national consensus, strong and capable state are key enablers”
– Thandi video, NDP)

characterised by political imperatives whereby NGOs were accredited with being the legitimate structures through which to develop disenfranchised people. In the post 1994 era, NGOs shifted towards supporting the implementation of government programmes, thus becoming partners of government in delivering public services. Various challenges related to skills and an unfavourable funding environment contributed to many NGOs, who were unable to reinvent themselves in the changed environment, vanishing; many of those remaining were characterised by lack of clear strategy and programming.

It is against this background that a national summit, the first of its kind, was organised – to reflect on the progress made by education NGOs in implementing the education goals and objectives of the NDP.



Lynn van der Elst of MiET and Sizwe Nxasana, NECT Chairperson



Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education

The summit sought to achieve four broad objectives:

- 1** Reflect on government's priorities in the NDP and the role of NGOs (including a focus on where the greatest needs are; whether they are being met; and how NGOs are engaging with NDP priorities).
- 2** Reflect on the sustainability of the NGO sector (engagement and funding modes).
- 3** Assess the capacity of the NGO sector, both in terms of organisational and sector capabilities (modes of collaboration).
- 4** Explore knowledge sharing opportunities amongst NGOs and between NGOs, government, and private sector players.

In a brief message to the gathering, the Minister of Basic Education emphasised the importance of the NDP and the role that NGOs play in education. Minister Motshekga expressed government's hope that the gathering would begin the process of strengthening the relationship between government and the NGO sector. She called for a more focused approach to inter-sectoral cooperation, which is seen as key to achieving the goals of the NDP. The Minister further cited the need to move away from small, sometimes un-scalable interventions to programmes that can broadly impact the national system. The National School Deworming Programme, which was launched in February 2016 in collaboration with a number of NGOs, was touted as an example of how the capacity of NGOs can be dovetailed to achieve systemic impact. The summit was encouraged to find similar synergies which could result in meaningful, wide-ranging impact.

02

Historic to futuristic perspective on the role of education NGOs

2.1 The Journey of NGOs post 1994

Volmink and van der Elst cited the following as the key challenges facing the NGOs. They pointed out that NGOs have always been driven by passion and mission, dating back to the period during which NGOs were oppositional to the apartheid government. NGOs developed a strong sense of purpose for development. Many that were established during this era are still active today, although they rely heavily on corporate and international funding. In the period between 1990 and 2000, there was a great deal of suspicion regarding the role of NGOs within

government, partly linked to the fact that much of the funding came from outside the country through bilateral agreements. The exodus of key skills from NGOs during this period, largely to government, further weakened the sector. By 2000, funders were becoming more discerning; there was increased emphasis on value for money, accountability, measurable outcomes and probity. Consequently, many NGOs currently face issues relating to organisational capacity, identity, and sustainability, as outlined below:

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<p>Internal Capacity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is weak leadership within the NGO sector – it very difficult to attract and retain strong leaders. 2. There is weak internal capacity at a strategic level in terms of financial management systems, administration, research, and monitoring and evaluation. 3. Skills are being lost to the private sector as more corporates are entering the education development space. 	<p>The Role of NGOs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many NGOs are reinventing the wheel and sometimes duplicate each other's roles. Many want to go it alone, rather than create collaborative networks. 2. The function of NGOs as innovators has been diminished. In this regard, NGOs risk being swallowed up as service providers and losing their agency role. 3. NGOs are not valued or respected by government and the private sector. 	<p>Sustainability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NGOs have to chase money and in the process lose focus and sight of their specialties. The international withdrawal of donor funding to South Africa in recent years has exacerbated the problem, since many NGOs lack core funding. 2. Funders do not apply the same standards to the NGO sector as the do to the business sector: NGOs are often paid less than business sector providers and funders often require NGOs to fulfil complex funding requirements. 3. There is a general lack of trust between the partners – government/private sector and the NGOs.

2.2 Key observations and further discussion

The challenges raised necessitated a further discussion regarding the future of education NGOs. In this regard the following observations were made:

- **The role of the NGOs** – NGOs need to have a clear mission and strategy. Where appropriate, they should be aligned to the goals and objectives of the NDP and the Education Collaboration Framework (ECF).
- **Increasing capacity** – NGOs need to find innovative ways of developing and retaining human capital.
- **Securing government support** – NGOs need to develop interventions that can be replicated by government.
- **Creating conversations on sustainability** – a coordinating structure which could act as a voice for NGOs could facilitate discussions around sustainability.

03

Proposals for strengthening the role of education NGOs

An opportunity to respond to the issues raised was given to the representatives from NGOs, government and funders attending the summit. Observations from each of the sectoral representatives are summarised below:





John Volmink, NECT M&E Advisory Committee, Gail Campbell, Zenex Foundation CEO and Tebogo Mahuma, CSI Advisor

SECTOR	RESPONSE/ISSUES
1. NGOs Tessa Welsh, Director South African Institute for Distance Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs are relatively small and have to develop plans in consortia – this is very time consuming. • Funding difficulties have resulted in NGOs having to chase funding from other African countries. • NGOs need to tighten their evaluation role going forward. • To sustain themselves, NGOs need to have good governance, a solid financial base, a responsive strategy, and leadership that is well connected. • NGOs need to manage the tension between having to continually procure projects in order to survive and producing quality work to attract more funding.
2. Funders Gail Campbell, CEO of the Zenex Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs need to support the developmental agenda. • More partnerships between NGOs, the funding community and government are needed. • The role of the NGOs, the funding decision process, and mode of engagement by funders have changed over the last 25 years. • The funder community has become more interventionist – creating an unhealthy discourse. • Both NGOs and funders need to develop a Code of Good Practice.
3. Corporates Jerry van Niekerk, Old Mutual Flagship Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporates are moving from being funders to project managers. • NGOs are innovative, flexible, responsive and reliable, and are able to reach into rural areas. • Leadership is important for the sustainability of NGOs. • NGOs should stick to what they are good at and should rather create alliances with universities and other innovators to develop their Intellectual Property. • NGOs and corporates need to understand each other – corporates must invest in NGOs and NGOs must understand corporate needs.
4. Government Khululekani Mathe, Presidency National Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to nurture the good work that NGO are doing • NGOs must be careful not to play too many roles as this might create friction with other partners • There are competing logics about what is the best to fund NGOs and what is the best organisational structure for NGOs • There is need to develop a more coordinated structure of NGO so government can be able to engage at that level

04 | Further inputs on key thematic areas



The following are proposals arising from four parallel thematic commissions that were set up to discuss the following issues.

4.1 Commission 1: Sustainability of NGOs (Chairperson, Teboho Mahuma – CSI Advisor)



 KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION	 FEEDBACK TO PLENARY
1. Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biggest challenge facing NGOs is funding. Whilst the funding model for some NGOs has been good, there is a need to find ways of sustainability when funding sources dry up. NGOs need to create their own endowments and reserves.
2. Relevance and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for NGOs to stick to their mission.
3. Organisational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure, capacity, leadership, and governance are very important. These need to be firmly in place if NGOs are to be sustainable.
4. Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a view that whilst NGOs have worked well together, there is still a need for the sector to develop a culture of sharing and collaboration. In particular, there is a need for the creation of a single voice for the sector.
5. Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Code of Good Practice that was previously developed by Inyathelo needs to be reviewed and updated. This will help define how we relate to other players.





4.2 Commission 2: The Contribution of NGOs to the NDP (Chairperson, Khululekani Mathe, Presidency – National Planning Commission)

 KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION	 FEEDBACK TO PLENARY
1. Active citizenry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDP has called for active citizenry – NGOs and broader civil society are best placed to promote this as this is their space.
2. Alignment to NDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs implement a lot of CSI programmes, but it is not clear if these are aligned to the NDP and what their impact is. All education players need to align strategy and programming to the NDP.
3. Sector coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a recurring need for a mechanism which will bring together all organisations in the sector. Sector collaboration will lead to greater impact.
4. Systematic intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs need to start thinking about ways of contributing to the system through interventions aimed at system-wide impact.

4.3 Commission 3: Resourcing the NGO Sector (Chairperson, Nick Rockey – Triologue)

 KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION	 FEEDBACK TO PLENARY
1. Database of services and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a growing interest in the creation of an NGO database which includes their sector offerings. This should include a list of services and products offered.
2. Funder requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs experience a lot of red tape and strict or conditional funding requirements from funders. Linked to this are the unrealistic timeframes, different standards, and urge to see immediate impact.
3. Sources of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a challenge with accessing funding from institutions which are effectively setup to channel funding to NGOs. NGOs need to enlist support from other players to extract funding.
4. A Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funders set different standards for NGOs. A Code of Conduct for funders and NGOs is required.
5. Staffing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding received usually does not cover overheads and non-operational costs. This has implications for office staff.

4.4 Commission 4: Capacity of NGOs (Mark Potterton – Holy Family College)

 KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION	 FEEDBACK TO PLENARY
1. Collaboration with government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs continue to play a complementary role and are able to reach where government cannot. It is recognised that there is a need for government and NGOs to continue working together to achieve the objectives of the NDP.
2. Unified NGO voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an emerging need to create a coordinating structure/forum to serve as a platform for driving collaboration between NGOs. The key purpose of the structure must be to build capacity of NGOs and to explore the joint utilisation of expertise.
3. Niche areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is also important for NGOs to keep to their niche areas and they should be ready to handover innovations and successes to the state once completed.
4. Local community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs need to show that they can support beneficiaries in the light of contextual challenges (e.g. rural environment) and find ways to mobilise resources for higher impact. It is important that local communities buy in and own NGO-led programmes.



Khulekani Mathe from the National Planning Commission leading one of the Commissions

05 | Charting the way forward

A consolidation of the overall summit observations and a way forward was presented was presented by the CEO of the NECT, Godwin Khosa.

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

- 1** The importance of conversation among NGOs and between NGOs and government on the one hand and private funders on the other was acknowledged. These relate to being heard and able to engage.
- 2** There was a lot of **objective self-assessment** by NGOs – not individually but as a collective, free of defensiveness.
- 3** Unequivocal support expressed for NGOs and the **constructive role** they should play in implementing the NDP.
- 4** The **importance of standards** – common sets of expectations – was stressed. Revisit the Code of Good Practice developed by Inyathelo. It was agreed that a Code of Conduct needs to be developed for the sector
- 5** A **common voice** representing education NGOs is needed.
- 6** Both the funding community and NGOs must **align their plans to the NDP**.
- 7** **Strong internal systems** in NGOs are critical – supported by evidence of success, governance capacity, ability to develop proposals, etc.
- 8** NGOs should **unlock NDP, the National Development Agency (NDA) and South African National Lotteries Commission** linked to key needs.
- 9** **Collaboration, networking and increased information** about NGOs and their capacity are needed. List of products and services should be developed.



Tebogo Mahuma, CSI Advisor leading one of the Commissions

In closing, the summit agreed that further processing of the rich inputs made will be carried out in order to design a plan for the way forward. Such processing could be undertaken by a small team comprising the summit committee and the various commission rapporteurs. It was agreed that the NECT will coordinate the setting up of a smaller committee that will take the implementation of the recommendations forward.

ANNEXURE: update on the work of the NECT

The CEO of the NECT, Godwin Khosa gave an overview of the progress made by the NECT during its first two years.

The NECT distilled six thematic areas arising from the NDP in which to partner:

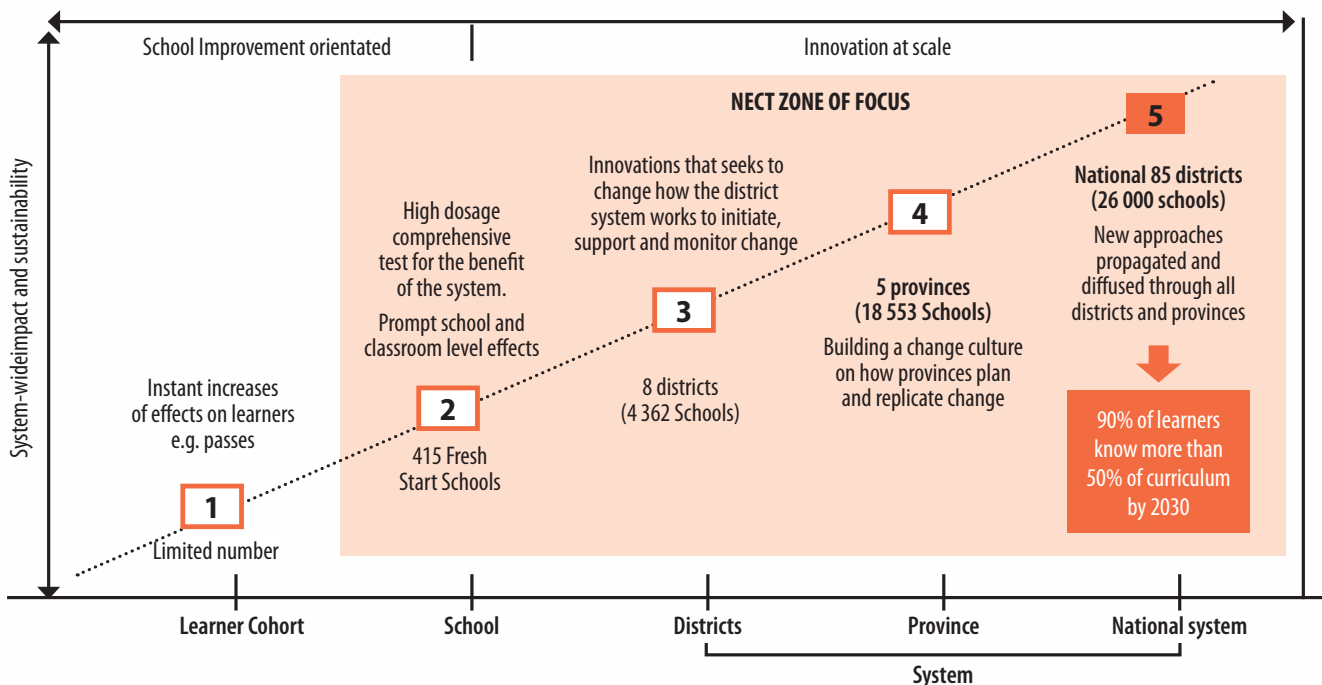
1. Professionalising teaching;
2. Developing courageous and effective leadership (leadership and management in schools and in the education system);
3. Improving government’s capacity to deliver;
4. Enhancing resourcing in the education system to ensure that we create conducive and safe learning environments in schools;
5. Facilitating community and parental involvement; and
6. Building learner support and well-being by providing programmes such as the de-worming programme mentioned by the Minister and other types of social and psychological support.

Due to the size of the public education system and the nature of the goals set out in the NDP, collaborative action is required to achieve the desired transformation. The NECT champions collaboration and has spent time determining how best to construct collaborative frameworks, taking as its starting point that collaboration should ultimately benefit the whole system.

There are different levels, ranging from the learner to the system level, at which NGOs can pitch collaborations and interventions aimed at improving education. An example of an initiative pitched at a national level is the de-worming collaboration referred to by the Minister.

The NECT identified five levels at which interventions can be made, as shown in the following diagram. The NECT’s interventions focus on the levels in the shaded area.

NECT Focus and Outcomes



The type of intervention shown on the left side of the diagram in the unshaded area is likely to impact on learners and deliver some quick returns at learner level. For example, if we bring learners together every Saturday and give them training in mathematics and science, we are highly likely to see an improvement in the learners' achievement in those subjects. However, only a few of the 12 million learners in the system would benefit, and such interventions often have a lower potential to be sustainable. Moving further to the right in the diagram, the interventions shown are more likely to impact on the larger system and have a higher potential to be sustained. Furthermore, the Minister is not able to support many, small, fragmented, uncoordinated activities. The same applies to provincial and district level officials.

The NECT therefore took a decision to avoid small scale initiatives, and its work in the districts is pitched at Level 3. The NECT works in eight districts comprising 4362 schools. It works with the district officials on a daily basis to test a number of carefully chosen innovations whose efficacy has to be proven in a number of schools. The NECT has chosen 450 Fresh Start Schools (FSS) in which to test these innovations before putting them forward to benefit the entire system. Innovations are designed and implemented in partnership on a day to day basis with those who are responsible for improving the system, in line with policy of the Department.

The CEO then presented some highlights of the NECT's work.

- The NECT constructed a curriculum management training programme for school management teams (SMTs) and has been supporting them in the schools on a quarterly basis.
- The NECT believes that school improvement will be sustained if there is sufficient locus of control in every school. On the basis of existing policies, problems, and research, the NECT has outlined the key things that all SMTs should monitor and make plans to improve on an on-going basis.
- The NECT has designed a year-long learning programme for teacher professionalisation. Learning programmes are simply structured materials and lessons that have to be delivered every teaching day

throughout the year to bridge the gap between the requirements of the curriculum and the capacity that exists in classrooms. This kind of detailed programme makes it easy for management to monitor and to support teachers. About 958 000 resources have been put into classrooms and up to 19 398 teachers and 12 998 SMT members have been involved in this initiative.

- In addition, the NECT has been running a programme with the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA) to prepare 500 mathematics and science lead-teachers. This is taking place in three provinces, Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo.
- While educationists as a group seldom agree on a single approach, whether how to teach reading or how to improve writing, the NECT has engaged the best expertise in South Africa to design the best materials to put into classrooms. This work has entailed the collaboration of 318 district officials and 170 experts. At provincial level, there is early evidence of the adoption, although not driven directly by the NECT, of the materials.
- In addition, there are some initiatives that have been pitched at a national level, for example the work of the Ministerial Committee on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The NECT has been supporting operation Phakisa and a team comprising the NECT and the Department is working on the modernisation of the South African School Administration and Management System (SA SAMS), which is quite critical to the administration of schools.

The CEO emphasised that no organisation on its own has the required capacity to change the system and thus the capacity that exists should be dovetailed in support of the implementation of national education policy and programmes. As interventions progress through the levels of the system, this should bring us closer to achieving the NDP goal of ensuring that by the year 2030, 90% of our learners will know more than 50% of what is expected of them according to the national curriculum.