

DRAFT 2016 EDUCATION CHARTER

As developed at Equal Education's Teaching and Learning Summit
Johannesburg 17-18 June 2016

Important Note: This document is a draft. It will now be workshopped in all provinces where EE has membership and be tabled for final amendment and adoption at EE's National Council meeting in October 2016. Any publication of this document must indicate that it remains a draft, subject to further amendment before October.

Preamble

Progressive learners, teachers, parents, community members, education activists, students and trade unionists all over South Africa,

Noting that the South African education system:

Remains grossly unequal, providing inferior education to black and working class communities while providing elitist education to white and wealthy communities thereby reproducing and deepening race and class inequality in society as a whole;

Motivated by our collective and lifelong commitment to continue the struggle for:

An education system that is truly emancipatory, that values creativity and knowledge for their own sake, and that contributes to the realisation of the aspirations and material needs of our people;

An education system that eradicates, rather than entrenches, the violence and inequality inflicted upon black people, women,

LGBTI community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, transgender and intersex) and particularly those who resisted centuries of oppression under settler colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and racial capitalism;

Robust grassroots community movements that provide spaces for young people to continue to radically imagine and shape the form and function of education as part of a democratic struggle for a free and equal world;

The true liberation of our communities, and communities throughout the global South, from the shackles of any form of Imperialism, in which we can safely and creatively imagine and realise new ways of organising ourselves to determine new futures based upon our own needs,

Recognising the student and learner protests of 2015, unprecedented since the struggle against Apartheid;

Hereby adopt this Education Charter of 18 June 2016

1. The Purpose of Education

- Critical Citizenship: Education must aim for active and engaged critical patriotic citizens rather than mechanisms in the economy. No education system should groom children for positions of subjugation or domination.
- Knowledge and Skills: Creativity, self-determination, equality and freedom will be the aims of education.
- Equal Life Opportunities: For as long as our society affords opportunities based on quality of education individuals have received, everyone must be given equal access to the 'finest' education available. Create an environment where everyone can uncover their own talents.
- Regular Assessment: The education system must undergo regular critical assessments regarding its aims. (Not about testing learners but assessing the state of the whole

education system)

2. Equality shall be achieved in Education

- No Stratification: There must be one equal and quality education system for every child in South Africa.
No Inequality: Education must be free from inequalities of language, geographical zoning, transport availability, funding, provision of quality teachers, infrastructure and teaching resources, subject-choice, textbook availability, and curriculum.
- Access to Education: No learner should be excluded from attaining quality education based on fees.
- Historical Legacies: Education policy must recognise and address existing inequalities. There must be incentives to allocate the best teachers and additional resources to rural and township schools to address these historical disadvantages.
- Service Delivery: The provision of school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials must be accelerated and no further delays should be accepted. All schools should have infrastructure that is suitable for quality teaching and learning to take place and is not harmful to the health of learners and teachers.
- Intergenerational Inequalities: Parents should be supported (through appropriate methods such as workshops) in order to help their children to achieve their educational goals. The home environment cannot be ignored when we speak about educational inequalities.
- Private Investment: The purpose of education should never be to make a profit for private individuals. The market should not be allowed to achieve a dominant place in the entire educational process through the ownership of schools.
- Inclusivity: There should be provision for quality education for learners with disabilities. Remedial and counselling services should be widely available to all learners.
- Social Justice: Equal education is really the struggle for an

equal society. Equal access to housing, land, wealth and employment are necessary for equal education.

3. Curriculum

- History and Literature: There must be an increased focus on the content, availability and depth of history and literature taught at school level. Understanding the history of South Africa, Africa and the world as a whole is vital to equip present and future generations with the intellectual tools needed to undertake present and future struggles for freedom and equality.
- Decolonisation: Decolonisation in relation to the curriculum means an expanded curriculum (beyond the classroom) where the history, literature and scientific achievements of African and other previously colonised peoples are studied with the utmost seriousness that is respectful to the lives and struggles of African people and their agendas, along with the history of the world as a whole, all the knowledge of which is our rightful inheritance. The ways of seeing and ways of doing teaching and learning must be critically reflected upon and the relationship between student and teacher must also be decolonized.
- Well-rounded Curriculum: An emphasis on maths and science should be accompanied by an emphasis on the social sciences, arts, commerce, languages and the development of critical thinking skills.
- Engaging Teaching: Teachers are encouraged to involve learners in an interactive and exciting process of learning which connects their lives to what is being taught and learnt, and which values knowledge for its own sake.
- Prioritise a subject in the curriculum that actively interrogates the society and centralizes racial consciousness, gender and sexuality diversity and other matters in the quest of creating an intersectional society. (This entails an urgent review of Life Orientation)

4. Language

- Language Equality: No learner should be disadvantaged based on their language. The admissions, teaching and learning processes should reflect language diversity and multilingualism rather than continuing to advantage those who are already privileged within the existing system.
- Materials: There should be a concerted effort, led by government, to create learning materials and literature in all South African languages that reflect the lived experiences of the vast majority of the population. Simply relying on translation is not sufficient.

5. Quality Teaching for Quality Learning

- Teacher Respect and Support: Society should respect and value the contributions of teachers; as teachers are should respect learners. This recognition should lead to better support for teachers in the form of remuneration, ongoing training, resources and improved working conditions. There should be a recognition that quality education will never be achieved without the support of well supported and empowered teachers. The freedom of the learner is linked to the freedom of the teacher.
- Teachers' Unions: The right of teachers to unionise and bargain collectively must be protected. Unions, like all other organisations, should be held responsible for their actions. Unions should protect the rights of teachers, but should hold their members to the highest standards of professional conduct, free from corruption, absenteeism and late-coming.
- Bursaries to Study Education: Public bursaries in the education field should be conditional on a commitment by newly qualified teachers to stay in South Africa and serve in the public sector. There should be consequences (such as being forced to repay the bursaries or not receiving certificate of qualification) for those who do not finish their term of service or leave the country.

- Principals: Principals should be continuously supported and trained to monitor the curriculum, and manage schools, and their staff.
- Violence Free Classrooms: Recognising that the history of violence in South Africa infuses daily life beyond schools, violence can have no place in our classrooms. Trauma counselors, NGO services and social workers should work closely with schools. The use of corporal punishment should not be accepted as a method of punishment under any circumstances.
- Health and well-being: Strengthen the Life Orientation curriculum to cover sexual reproductive rights. Quality sanitary pads and dignity pack must be provided in high schools.
- Class Sizes: Class sizes should be equal across all schools. Class sizes should enable teachers to know and attend to each learner.
- Reimagining Teaching: Teaching must embrace learners as active participants in their own education. Interactive, creative, stimulating and critical methods should be utilised to promote quality education for a changing world.
- Career Development: Teachers should be continuously trained, upskilled and empowered, and should be paid better, in line with their contribution to their society. The provision of paid sabbatical leave would enable current teachers to further their studies.

6. Early Childhood Development

- Earliest Injustice: All children have the innate ability to learn. Denial of early learning limits life chances and imposes inequality from the earliest age. The crucial importance of achieving foundational skills during early childhood for later success, and for closing achievement gaps, cannot be overstated.
- Potential of Each Individual: Early Childhood Development (ECD) shall be a tool to stimulate the potential of all

children and a medium for social change that will be sensitive to the social struggles children face, and will make special provision for those learners with developmental difficulties.

- Free and Compulsory: There shall be free, compulsory and publicly funded ECD for all children, united under a single Education Department.
- State and Society: The responsibility for education and development of our children is understood as a collaboration between an enabling state which funds and develops ECD centres, well-trained and compensated practitioners, and actively engaged parents and community members who take an active role in stimulating their children from the earliest age.
- Profession: Trained practitioners who run ECD centres shall be paid a wage equivalent with their value to society. They shall have proper conditions of service and receive ongoing training and support.
- Holistic ECD: Holistic ECD shall include care, attention, cognitive stimulation, nutrition and health. This shall take place in a safe and fully equipped physical and social environment. The building of this infrastructure should be the responsibility of the state.

7. Adult Education

- Justice for Parents and Families: The legacy of Bantu Education demands a properly funded, properly organised, easily accessible, high quality national adult education programme. This is particularly vital because of the role of parents in their children's education.
- Lifelong Learning: There shall be a culture of lifelong learning, to which end the State shall provide full opportunities for all adults including skills development to realise their aspirations.