

CLOSING RESOLUTION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS OF EQUAL EDUCATION 11 July 2012

Through the written input, draft resolutions, discussions and the consensus views expressed by hundreds of delegates, this resolution has been drafted to express the views of our Congress.

The First National Congress of Equal Education recognises that:

South Africa's Education System is in crisis.

Our education deepens social inequality. Quality Education is available to some, but the majority of young people in townships and rural areas sit in over-crowded classrooms, without textbooks, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities and properly qualified teachers. The system is not the one promised by the Constitution, which is a society based on "human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms". The system is not living up to the Freedom Charter which says that education must "improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person."

Education is one among many challenges. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are the foundation of poor quality and unequal education.

Our democratic government has made strides in addressing educational backlogs. However, much more needs to be done and the situation is urgent.

The worsening of inequality and the marginalisation of the poor and working class, particularly youth, is a global issue. As the world's population grows, youth unemployment is rising globally and there is a lack of access of opportunities to post-school education. The possibility of building a decent life for one's family is becoming more difficult.

The First National Congress of Equal Education believes that:

The challenges facing education and youth in general can be overcome. Through struggle, commitment, humility, partnerships and hard work we can build the future and fix our schools.

Members are the heart of the movement. EE is strong because members actively participate, whilst conducting themselves with dignity, discipline, mutual respect and understanding towards each other at all times. Punctuality can be improved!

It is vital that members are informed about the issues that affect education in South Africa, and at the same time members should recognise not only their rights but their responsibilities in giving their own education the necessary respect and time.

We need to build EE in our schools and communities. The best way to do this is through running campaigns, in schools, which mobilise learners, parents and teachers for positive change.

We should secure gains in our existing campaigns before taking on new national ones. Urgent campaigns should not be ignored.

EE campaigns must be based on the daily experiences of those affected by poor quality education and additionally mobilise members, as well as non-members in their schools and communities.

EE needs to win campaigns. This gives strength to our members. EE also must lead campaigns which might take a long time to win.

EE campaigns are strongest when they are supported by families, communities, teachers, parents, youth, an alliance of organisations, and community structures like religious institutions, stokvels, burial societies, ward counsellors and committees, traditional leaders and street committees.

EE campaigns are strong because they are peaceful and creative, and are based on sound evidence. This can be developed through the use of sport, television, music, art, all forms of media, branding and other means.

EE campaigns are strong because they are within the law. The time may come to consider peaceful civil disobedience and boycotts.

The change we seek in South Africa's education system can only be brought about through the mobilisation of all who live in South Africa committed to the ideals of a just, free and equal society.

The First National Congress of Equal Education resolves that the EE movement should:

Provide informative material and training in politics, facilitation and organising to its members.

Enhance its research, budget-monitoring, parliamentary engagement and advocacy on critical questions facing South African education, in order to ensure that EE's campaigns are research-driven and information is accessible to members.

Build independent, regular, active and visible campaigns for quality and equal education that are conceived and developed by members in their schools.

Grow through recruitment of new members and support of new and existing branches, in all parts of the country. The NC should investigate how different forms of support (human resources, training, materials and finance) can best be provided to provinces without their own EE office. All branches must be focused on as the primary organising units of the movement.

Urgently develop a branch structure that will incorporate all sectors of the movement (Equalizers, post-school youth, parents and teachers), and investigate the possibilities of developing a national, regional and local structure for the organisation.

Mobilise and organise teachers as a sector within Equal Education with the aim that at the next EE Congress they will have delegate representation.

Recruit more parents into Equal Education and develop their skills as education activists. Parents need to be able to run their own projects and campaigns. Create a platform for parents to share the work they are doing with learners and those in other provinces.

Make the conditions in our schools visible to everyone in South Africa, and to political leaders in particular.

Strengthen ties with progressive civil society and trade unions, nationally and internationally.

In regard to campaigns, this First National Congress resolves to prioritise:

A national campaign for textbooks which will hold the state accountable for delivery, and assist the state through driving down the cost of textbooks.

Community campaigns involving relevant stakeholders in communities, which address the many social problems in our schools and communities, including, but not limited to gangsterism, drugs, alcoholism and domestic and sexual violence.

A campaign to improve the quality of teaching, through training, support, recruitment, zero-tolerance for corporal punishment and sexual abuse, and greater accountability generally.

To escalate the Campaign for Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure until every school has adequate classrooms, water, sanitation, electricity, computer laboratories, science laboratories, libraries and all other facilities necessary for quality education.

The First National Congress of Equal Education calls on our Government for:

The appointment by the President of a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the tendering processes for textbooks and workbooks, particularly in regards to EduSolutions and the Libone companies. All tendering processes should be transparent and allow for community members to hold government and business accountable, so that public funds meant for service delivery are not misused.

The immediate implementation, by the Minister of Basic Education, of Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. This is what she had promised to do, and EE remains open to amicably resolving this issue and working to support implementation.

In light of serious allegations of corruption, this Congress resolves that if the above two demands are not met, EE will join the growing call to suspend both Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga and Director General Bobby Soobrayan.