



2019 NASCEE Conference Report

NPOs Working in Education: from promise to practice

28-29 May 2019



Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
CSI	corporate social investment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECD	early childhood development
eNGO	non-government organisations working in education
eNPO	non-profit organisations working in education
EMASA	Education Management Association of South Africa
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
ICT	information and communication technology
IEB	Independent Education Board
IPASA	Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa
JET	JET Education Services
LEAP	Langa Education Assistance Program
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
merSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority
NASCEE	National Association of Social Change Entities in Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NPO	non-profit organisation
PMET	Pearson Marang Education Trust
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
SC	steering committee
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics

1. Introduction

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit organisations (NPOs) address issues of inclusiveness, diversity and equity in education on a daily basis. They champion niche issues and work at central concerns such as capacity, funding, safety, quality and education reach. Collectively they have the potential for solving and addressing some of the most critical problems in the South African education system. However, they need a way of amplifying their voice and contribution. In order to solve critical challenges in education creative solutions are needed, in addition to thoughtful teams of people dedicated to realising the impact of these solutions. It was with this in mind that a summit was hosted by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) in 2016 which saw the establishment of a Steering Committee (SC) for Education NGOs (eNGOs).

Following the summit, JET Education Services (JET) took on the responsibility of chairing the SC and driving the processes forward. In 2018 a Project Manager was appointed to oversee the formation of an association. As a first initiative, the identity for an association as a collective voice for non-profit entities in education was built and it was during this time that the idea for the National Association for Social Change Entities (NASCEE) was established. The process involved the wide consultation of non-profit organisations, building on a database of potential members of roughly 2400 social change entities.

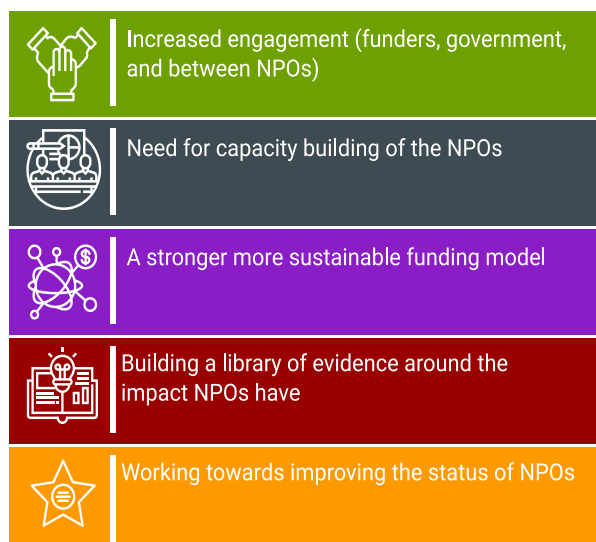
Collectively, NPOs can solve some of the crises facing the South African Education System

The steering committee went to the inaugural conference in May 2019 with the objectives of formally establishing NASCEE, adopting a constitution and electing its inaugural Board. Without a doubt, the first annual NASCEE conference was a resounding success, in terms of the formal establishment of the association, the conference themes selected, the quality of the quality of the conference presentations and the selection of guest and panel speakers. This was clearly established from the feedback received from conference delegates.

Most notably, NASCEE was able to secure a firm mandate from and the ongoing support of its prospective membership. It was at this conference that NASCEE graduated from being an initiative to a formal entity with a ratified constitution and its first elected Board.

This report shares the depth of discussions, challenges raised and recommendations made at the “NPOs working in Education: From Promise to Practice” conference. In the research report, *The Evolving Role of 21st Century Education NGOs in South Africa*, distributed to conference delegates before the conference, Professor Volmink and Ms Lynne van Elst identified five strategies that could improve the impact and operation of social change entities.

Fig. 1: Five strategies for improving the impact and operation of social change entities



2. An Overview

On 28 and 29 May 2019 the NASCEE Conference brought together more than 200 stakeholders from the corporate, non-profit, government, and academic sectors to share challenges, lessons and innovations to improve large-scale and lasting impact in the education sector.



The Crowne Plaza in Rosebank

The main aims of the conference were to:

- Set the stage around the potential for collaboration between NPOs in education;
- Expand the reach and influence of NPOs by promoting collaboration and networking between NPOs;
- Explore different funding mechanisms and approaches that can help NPO initiatives become more sustainable;
- Build the credibility of the NPOs by illustrating the impact they have on learning.

The conference opening and key note addresses established the urgency and scale of the need for collaboration to address the humanitarian crisis in the South African education system.

The two panel discussions at the conference focussed on key issues that NPOs require more engagement on and which are directly related to their own organisational sustainability:: collaboration and funding.

The session which addressed collaboration aimed to encourage in-depth discussions on collaborative partnerships in education, what works, what does not work, how we can overcome some of these challenges. The moderator facilitated inputs from each perspective - government, funder, and non-profits entities as implementers.

This session was followed by breakaway sessions constructed to address the following issues:

- Partnerships to support implementation at scale;
- How research can be used to improve educational practice;
- Organisational development for stronger social change entities in education;
- Using technology to solve problems in the field.

The conference closed with a session on funding models, which explored the challenges faced by NPOs with respect to sustainability and funding. This highlighted the various types of funding mechanisms that are available. There are several models of funding and each panel member provided their perspectives, based on their own experience of the funding models that they have implemented, initiated or evaluated.

3. The Conference Opening

3.1 NASCEE – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

In the opening address Professor John Volmink, impressed upon delegates that non-profit entities had various significant roles to play in the education sector – including being social innovators, delivery partners and agents, and acting as advocates for the marginalised. However, Professor Volmink warned that the non-profit sector needed to become more professional. He urged the delegates to remember that professionalism had three dimensions (head, heart and hands) and they should cultivate a sense of agency and reflexivity along each.



*Mr Enoch Masemola
from the Ukuqonda
Institute in conversation
with Prof. John Volmink*

Professor Volmink emphasised that NGOs (social change entities) have played a vital part in the transformation of education in South Africa, and continue to do so. This through their ongoing support of social and economic progress, by giving attention to the most critical problems in education and training.

He highlighted four fundamental challenges facing NASCEE:

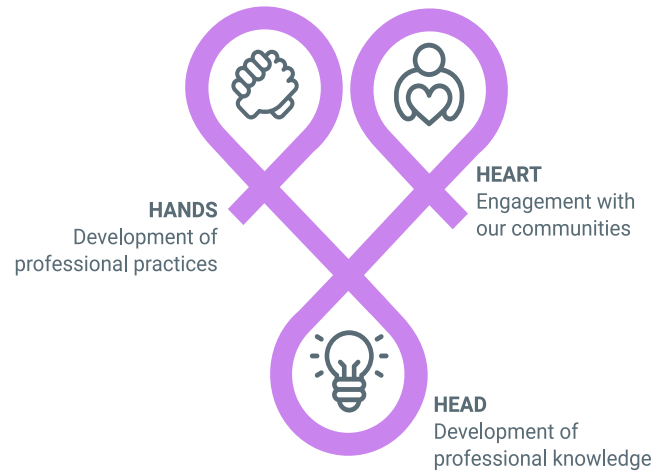


The NASCEE leadership would need resilience and mental toughness to help member organisations to face the future with integrity. So that NASCEE may deliver on the promised opportunities, while retaining its vision, purpose and humanity. A sincere appeal was made to the sector to put aside differences, and to support the NASCEE leadership, and for the leadership to stay focussed and not be distracted



It will be necessary to **restore the image of the NGO sector**. Public failures and the general frustration of South Africans have contributed to the development of a culture of mistrust in the sector. The sector would need to embrace greater professionalism, by *emphasising its sense of service to society over its concern for survival*. Professionals are characterised by their sense of agency and reflexivity in their practice, constantly reviewing, renewing and extending their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of their work. Professionals are passionate about their professional knowledge – the head; professional practice – the hand; and professional engagement – the heart.

Fig. 2: Three Dimensions of Professional Development for NPOs



A **‘walking-together’ model** is needed for NGOs to do together what cannot be done separately, each bringing their strengths to the task, with mutual respect and understanding for one another’s values. The hope was that NASCEE leadership would *restore a spirit of generosity, open-heartedness and open-handedness*. A distinction was made between a successful life, which reflects on the individual, and a significant life, which is for others. It was hoped that by finding a way of collaborating, in a way that appreciates the significance of all the roles NGOs play, the sector can become an equal partner with government and commercial enterprises to jointly deliver innovative educational solutions.



Not so much a challenge but an opportunity. NGOs must **embrace their role as social innovators**. This involves breaking out of the narrow dichotomy of being either in a transactional relationship with government or being a hostile and confrontational adversary. By balancing its multiplicity of roles amongst others as social change agents, guardians of social justice and service providers the NGO sector could collaboratively find solutions that change the lives of ordinary South Africans. As social innovators NPOs are able to focus on social dynamics in ways that government cannot, adopting a longer timeframe that allows tackling issues that the government does not yet regard as strategic priorities.

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) places the transformation of the education system at the centre of sustained and equitable development. It identifies the need for research and innovation by all role players, with the aim to improve life chances for all. The NPO sector is particularly well placed to make a contribution in this regard.

Most conference attendees work in smaller and more agile organisations than government. They are able to take decisions and act quickly. They are able to work at a smaller scale to test new approaches, often being closer to communities, and so better understanding their needs and complexities. This brings with it the special responsibilities of NPOs to find a way of making themselves heard and scaling successful solutions.

Finally, Prof Volmink expressed his hope that the conference would *give clarity to purpose, and renew the courage to think big again*. His plea was that in the spirit of collaboration, organisations should learn to walk together in service of the great country of which we all form a part.

The NASCEE Board and team have found Professor's Volmink's opening address inspiring and one that has set the tone for the work that lies ahead in ensuring that NASCEE serves its membership in addressing these challenges and in finding innovative ways of working together.

3.2 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN A THRIVING DEMOCRACY



Reverend Barney Pityana delivering his keynote address

The theme of being brave enough to confront the realities of the state of education in South Africa was continued in Reverend Barney Pityana's keynote address around the *Role of Education in a Thriving Democracy*. Reverend Pityana asked the delegates to reflect on how the education system had got to the state it was in now – where **education has become a bastion of privilege, with many South Africans not being able to call themselves free**. He asked the delegates to further consider that a true transformation of the education system would include **the ability of all South Africans to construct their own future and take responsibility for building the future of their dreams**.

He encouraged delegates to cut themselves free from the apartheid anchor and truly start embracing a future where **education in its aspirations, structures and actions "builds human capacity and unlocks its potential, recognising that everybody has the possibility to be better."**

In such a future, schools and other educational institutions would be places of "transcendence" – **"mirroring something better than we find in our communities"**. For Reverend Pityana, schools should be at the centre of building thriving, healthy communities. Facing the fact that the current solutions may be elitist, he asked the delegates why South Africa confronts its dysfunctional communities with the police alone – why could there not be a more **"creative and holistic response, bringing the support of armies of social workers, community builders and youth workers, instead of only the police?"**

The discussion endorsed that **education should be fundamental to our pursuit of "becoming everything we can be"**. This means that the time we spend in school is only a very small part of this journey and that there is a much bigger need to truly extend education endeavours beyond time governed by school bells. The feeling that we are failing most South Africans in our educational endeavours was echoed again and again – creating **"the despicable predicament of young people who have left school with no skills, no work and no dignity: there is need to think differently about that"**. And, that we could start – **not by looking for "superhero solutions", but rather that the "collective could start mushrooming small, successful initiatives"**.

DISCUSSION

The following thought-provoking comments and questions were raised from the floor:

- The address was a reminder of the UNESCO study into *why people go to school: to learn to know, to do, to live with others, and to become everything that we can be*.

It was noted that the challenge with meritocracy in education is not about doing better than everybody else, but doing the best you can, measuring your progress against yourself. We ask has this gotten lost in our pursuit of standards and recognition?

- It was observed that while private schools need to satisfy Umalusi requirements in order to be granted accreditation, the law is that public schools are deemed accredited. However, the moral purpose of schools is that the best schools should be not only for the private good, but also for the public good. *So why do only the private schools need to actively work at satisfying these requirements?*
- The argument that school activities from 08:00 to 14:00 form only a small part of education was endorsed, noting that in contexts with no adults at home and parents working long hours, *strategies must be devised for transforming schools into places of holistic learning, not restricted to academic learning.* It was suggested that the best schools have programmes of extra-mural activities offering art, sport and extra lessons for those who are struggling academically, among others, whereas many no-fee schools are barren, concrete prisons that are locked up at 15:00 to safeguard the resources. *Thought must be given to ways in which education can be extended beyond the school bells.*
- Delegates actively engaged with the theme “*Who is the custodian of education in the country?*” Asking who must be influenced, and by what strategies, given the various forces at play in schools, such as trade unions, private schools and multiple levels of government?

“Why are we not doing what seems so obvious in a country with such high unemployment, inequality and social pathologies?”

In a similar vein, it was noted that the *view from government seems so broad that most departments cannot recognise what the success is all about.* Instead, there may be greater potential for the collective to start mushrooming small, successful initiatives, rather than looking for the superman saviours.

I think it is because we are, as a society, too wedded to prescriptions of success that are elitist and well beyond the reach of an ordinary child.”

- Delegates commented that children in underprivileged communities have *no access to Early Childhood Development (ECD)*, and so start their schooling in the Foundation Phase at an initial disadvantage.
- On the other end of the spectrum, it was noted, that private schools, even though they have more resources, may not be doing well either. Teaching has not changed since the 20th Century, and schools still focus on silos of knowledge, instead of integrating knowledge with issues of how to live with others, and how to be in the world.

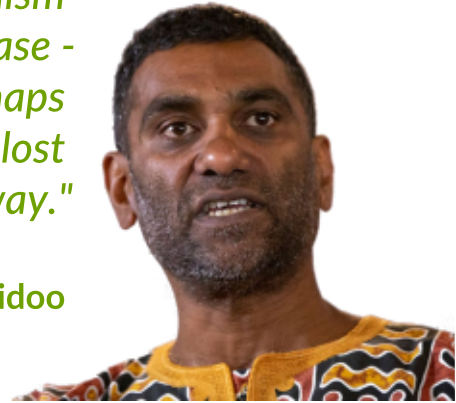
Reverend Barney Pityana

Prof Pityana concluded his address with encouraging remarks by highlighting that as a critical observer, he was excited by the NASCEE initiative, which seemed to present the possibility of communities taking charge of education, rather than leaving it to the government, unionised teacher organisations or special interest government bodies.

3.3 THE ROLE OF NON-PROFIT ENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

We have made money, capital, materialism and consumption into our God, it's a disease - you could call it affluenza. It is perhaps because of this context that humanity has lost its way."

Dr. Kumi Naidoo



Dr Kumi Naidoo, joined the conference through a live transmission from London and endorsed much of what Professor Volmink and Reverend Pityana had said.

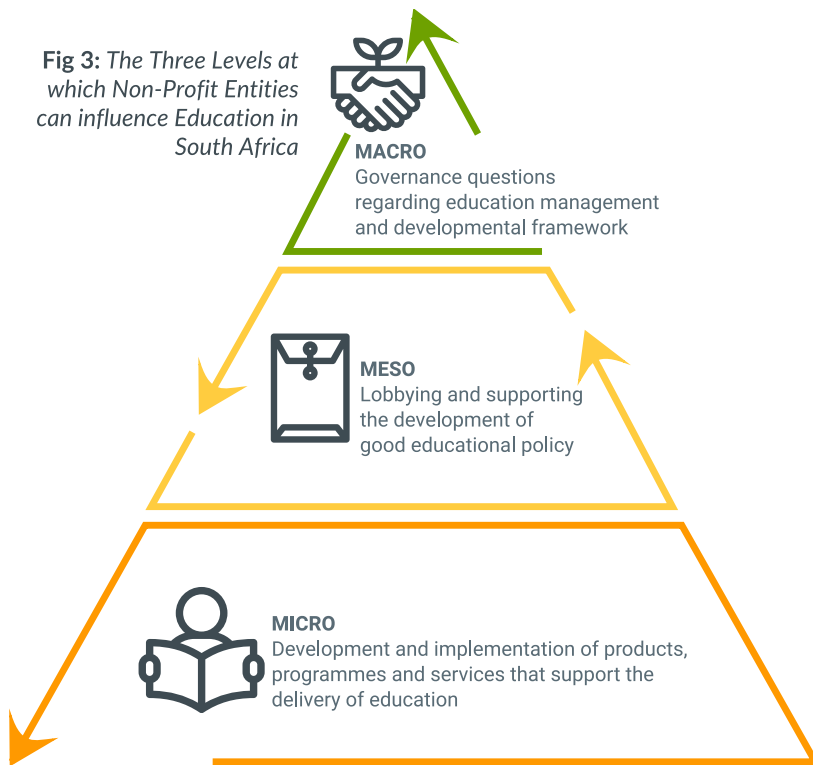
Particularly, he echoed the notion that we need to **reconnect to the values which underpin a "decent life"**, earnestly asking ourselves "what is happening in the external world, and what kind of education children need in order to succeed in that world?" This means challenging the

international state of "affluenza: a pathological condition, affecting politicians in particular, characterised by the belief that happiness and meaning of life comes from more and more and more material acquisitions".

He highlighted that the current non-profit landscape was based on a fiercely "competitive set of interrelationships". He expressed that the success of the non-profit sector, however may depend on "a maximum level of unity ensuring meaningful collaboration". This was a key space he felt NASCEE could step into; helping non-profit entities make a contribution at three levels (micro, meso and macro) of the South African reality.

We have provided a snapshot of what Dr Naidoo describes as the three levels in which NASCEE can play a meaningful role in Figure 3.

Fig 3: The Three Levels at which Non-Profit Entities can influence Education in South Africa



While most conversations about education focus on primary and secondary education, the 'step-children' of the education continuum, early childhood development (ECD) and adult education were highlighted. Unless ECD is substantially improved, and delivery and access much increased, the entire education journey of the child is compromised, since *early learning processes lay the foundation for all future education*. At the other end of the spectrum, adult

education is critically important for the economy, as well as for the education of young children in the form of provision of parental support to their children's education journey to success.

Looking at education holistically, the argument was made that it would be a major error on the part of educators not to be constantly asking what is happening in the external world, and what kind of education children need in order to succeed in that world. The convergence of a range of troubling crises was observed in the form of combined boiling points of poverty, corruption, finance and climate. ***Not to ask what values the education system should share beyond technical skills, numeracy and literacy would be to fail our children, society and the promise of education.***

We cannot ignore that we are looking at the 4th Industrial Revolution where we see the nature of work changing fundamentally, with a completely different reality that education must meet. Likewise, we cannot ignore the challenge of climate change.

DISCUSSION

The discussion emphasised that in order to be meaningful in education, education activism needs people from the communities to be informed, empowered and engaged to participate authentically.

In response to a question about what legal NGOs such as Section 27 and Equal Education, could do to make the case for better education, the recommendation was that this is *best decided in partnership with communities* that want legal resources. Working with, and listening to, the legal needs coming from the ground is a good principle. Cases that are not expected to be successful at first can be a useful way of building specialist bodies of legal knowledge. **Support is needed across the board**, in public education, informal education, civic education, and not only for formal education.

In advancing the conversation on the 4th Industrial Revolution in terms of digital technologies for teaching and learning, it is clear that *domination by the global North* will be a major challenge, although a curricular response may not yet be clear. The technology includes robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and others. This is a particular challenge for Africa because of the historical digital divide, but thought must be given to how to empower people from a position that is lagging behind. However, **thinking about technological advances should not be restricted to highly sophisticated applications, but can equally be brought to bear on basic societal needs.** This was illustrated by an example that buses in Sweden are fuelled with human faeces.

CLOSING REMARKS

Non-profit entities have to **make a conscious choice about what to focus on.**

Much of the conversation was about schools and schooling:

Social change entities must work with schools in **looking for an authentic response to the challenges**, rather than one that is compliance driven.

KEY MESSAGES

The sector, in general, and NASCEE in particular need to:

1. **Get real** – let go of crutches and fairy tales about the South African education system;
2. **Make a choice** – set its own strategic agenda, and not become a passenger to someone else's agenda;
3. **Focus on the social impact** – remember that it is about making a difference to real people – people who have been left behind, and made to feel less than;
4. **Be aspirational and inspirational** – adopt a forward-looking perspective, enabling people to be more, rather than replicating solutions with their roots in the past;
5. **Leverage the network** of social change entities – scale solutions that have merit and work in a coordinated way to affect change at all levels of the education system.

In conclusion, it was observed that one of the problems with the way in which the NGO sector operates is its very competitive set of interrelationships. The appeal was that the success of the non-profit sector and its work must be infused with a maximum level of unity to ensure meaningful collaboration. For this reason, the formation of NASCEE is seen as a wonderful expression of commitment by civil society to working cooperatively, and best wishes were expressed for the effort.

4. Panel and Plenary Discussions

In each session the panellists – representing, as far as possible, government, funders and non-profit organisations – were invited to offer opening reflections, and to introduce their organisation.



Dr James Keevy, Dr Whitfield Green, Ms Gail Campbell and Mr Dhanaraj Chetty, and Mr Sylvester Moepya listening to Mr Gidwin Khoza give his address via Skype

4.1 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR EDUCATION

Moderator:	Mr Sylvester Moepya	<i>Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator</i>
Panellists:	Mr Godwin Khoza	<i>NECT</i> (joined via Skype Call)
	Mr Dhianaraj Chetty	<i>NECT</i> (representative in the room)
	Ms Gail Campbell	<i>The Zenex Foundation</i>
	Dr Whitfield Green	<i>DHET</i>
	Dr James Keevy	<i>JET Education Services</i>

A. OPENING REMARKS

The topic of collaboration was introduced, by Mr Moepya as an imperative, if South Africa is to stand a chance of delivering on the promise of the National Development Plan.

Mr Godwin Khoza, NECT

- ➔ Collaboration part of the South African way – part of our DNA
- ➔ There is a rise of collaborative entities playing in the educational space
- ➔ Require strong project management and financial management capacity, and for deep understanding of education

Ms Gail Campbell, The Zenex Foundation

- ➔ Successful funding of social change initiatives requires a partnership - building a relationship between funders and NPOs
- ➔ An important part of these initiatives is the need for ingrained, reflexive practice
- ➔ The NPOs could strengthen their position in such negotiations through a more cohesive, unified action

Dr Whitfield Green, DHET

- ➔ Education problems are complex, eco-systemic challenges, whose solutions need multi-dimensional, trans-disciplinary thinking and trans-sectoral responses
- ➔ Resolving educational problems requires complex thinking which is only possible through collaboration
- ➔ Problems transcend the specialisations in which they are classified

Dr James Keevy, JET Education Services

- ➔ Not all aspects of developing and implementing education solutions have a dedicated funding stream. Often projects need to be cross-subsidised
- ➔ Working in the NPO sector is not about replacing government but collaborating with them, to avoid the risk of duplication and fragmentation of effort
- ➔ The innovation and investment required to make a difference requires sacrifice – of individuals working in a role as consultant-activists; of organisations incubating collaborative initiatives

B. THE DISCUSSION

The session was characterised by a vibrant discussion making the case for the establishment of NASCEE. Some of the needs NASCEE is seen as addressing include:

- **Establishing a collaborative umbrella** under which the non-profit sector could come together. This entity should act not as a gatekeeper, but rather lead the sector in building its standing. This would require a professionalisation of the sector.
- **Bringing actors together** to form complex partnerships with the aim to find solutions to educational problems: these partnerships often include government, civil society, funding organisations and institutions involved in the education space.
- **Coordinating action to straddle all levels of NGO activity** (micro, meso and macro): facilitating the involvement of civil society in the conceptualisation and understanding of the problem, right through to its solution, including considerations of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the solutions put in place.
- **Changing the nature of the relationship between NPOs and government** to one where ideas, solutions and skills are shared more equitably without government pretending to have all the solutions, or NPOs chasing all projects just to survive.
- Being able to take a long-term view **working on projects that make a difference** rather than responding to a tender. Or simply highlighting these initiatives and investments that prospective NASCEE members are already making.
- Finding ways of **helping government, funders and non-profit entities to meet on a more equitable platform**: practically that means looking at improving the reputation and standing of NPOs, addressing misconceptions around the cost of running educational projects and streamlining reporting processes and requirements.
- **Opening and simplifying the channels** along which government, funders and NPOs can interact.

NASCEE needs to differentiate itself through a commitment to taking action and demonstrating tangible results for its constituency

That there were opportunities around which collaborative partnerships could be built was emphasised both by Dr Green and Ms Campbell. These included larger multi-national tenders and the developmental priorities set by the government: ECD, STEM, Vocational Education, Preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Curriculum Development, Professional Development, Reading and Literacy.

NASCEE was positioned as a vehicle through which the non-profit sector could engage critically with itself, government and funders. NASCEE was asked to keep a broad focus (including all educational endeavours that are not centre-based). In addition, the sentiment that “trust is not enough” was expressed, with delegates feeling that NASCEE needs to differentiate itself from other collaborative initiatives through a commitment to taking action and demonstrating tangible results for its constituency.

C. THE FUNDING RELATIONSHIP

The funder-NGO partnership is a symbiotic relationship, with one party depending on the other. From a values-based perspective, the fact of bringing a resource like funding to the partnership does not necessarily make one partner more important than the other.

While donors are often heard to talk about ‘my partners’, especially when they have recently made a grant, **a true partnership exists when the partners co-develop and co-create an initiative, grapple with issues together, are respectful of the time it takes to get into a good**

intervention, and are constantly learning and reflecting with each other. **Until funders can deal with problems that hinder the relationships, it will be difficult to have truly symbiotic relationships.**

Problems raised by the NGO community about funders, and how to make collaborations work include the following:

- Funders are not in tune with the costs needed to deliver, especially if the initiative must be evidence driven, depending on research and M&E;
- Access to funding, and transparency: in this regard, there is a perception that a chosen few education NGOs receive more funding than others;
- Onerous reporting requirements;
- Expertise is not respected by funders;
- Dealing with power relationships.

Until funders can deal with problems that hinder the relationships, it will be difficult to have truly symbiotic relationships.

The *Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa* (IPASA) is an important body currently also engaging in these discussions. There is thus awareness among the funding community of what more responsible funding entails.

International NPOs seem to be supported by very long-term grants of up to ten years, whereas *in South Africa, funding is more of the order of a few months*. It was suggested that NASCEE might need to provide a master-class to address issues related to cash flow.

Funders, donors and social investors are sometimes held responsible for the precarious levels of stability of NPOs, leading to questions of the extent of independence that the sector can achieve from government and funders. **By their very nature, NPOs cannot generate sufficient income to avoid being reliant on some form of outside funding, but sustainability is much more than funding: it is also dependent on having strong systems of good governance and strong human resource capacity.**

Civil society needs to be involved in the conceptualisation and understanding of a problem, right through to its resolution

In that sense, both funders and NPOs must think beyond implementation alone, and give consideration to the time it takes to build a coalition and develop the trust, and that design and reflection are necessary, but also take time and effort. Both the NECT and government are funders, and as such must also look at funding strategies in terms of building partnerships with NGOs.

D. TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

In discussing the government's perspective of the types of partnerships that would find resonance, with particular concern not to create parallel streams that do not converge energies, the importance of the *pentahelix partnerships* construct was identified. These partnerships *include government, civil society, funding organisations and institutions involved in the education space*, and **bring the actors together in relation to addressing the problem holistically**. Just as partnerships are important in themselves, their success is also influenced by the kinds of partnerships that are put in place, and timing of putting partnerships in place.

Funders and NPOs need to consider the time it takes to build a coalition and think beyond a single implementation

The categorisation of roles that civil society plays at micro/ meso/ macro levels is also an important consideration. In putting together pentahelix partnerships for dealing with complex problems, it might be more suitable for these to straddle all three levels, rather than be pegged to only one. **Civil society needs to be involved in the conceptualisation and understanding of the problem, right through to its resolution**, including considerations of M&E of the solutions put in place. The element of ‘talking back to power’ and being critical about interventions, including being critical about the role played by civil society in those interventions, is important.

Some systems in government are out of kilter with industry and with international benchmarks, and government does not always have the answers. Giving consideration to the ways in which collaboration can be forced within the government framework without straining the precepts of the relationships has bedevilled the work in a number of ways. The crux of the issue is **how to get the right partners on board to do the right kind of work**.

Ideally, the government would like to have a number of partners engaged in an identified issue, from the perspectives of deepening the conceptualisation and understanding of the problem, working towards solutions and gauging the impact of interventions. However, *tender process systems and procedures limit the long-term partnerships* that can be put in place to address a specific problem.

When social change agents position themselves as the solution to every problem it causes significant reputational damage

Conversely, civil society organisations are often driven, by their own sustainability issues, to position themselves to be the solution to every kind of problem. This causes significant reputational damage, resulting from diluted expertise and not qualitatively addressing problems.

Resolution of the difficulties of **putting appropriate partnerships in place** to deal with all aspects of an education problem **seems to depend on co-funding and co-creation of programmes**. Devising a holistic solution requires identification of available government and other funding sources in order to create a pool of funding that enables all partners to work effectively. For example, a multi-sectoral collaboration is addressing the Primary Teacher Education Project

(PrimTEd): substantial government funding is being put towards university education aimed at better development of primary school teachers who can teach reading. Also ZENEX funding is being made available to support the role of JET in the bigger project, and the Nedbank Foundation is supporting an aspect of the work in the bigger project. This enables the multi-sectoral collaboration work to be done in ways that do not flout the regulations of the country, drawing on resources available in a number of spaces.

The observation from JET was that **the most successful partnerships are those that are co-created and longer term**. Some work that was started in JET up to 15 years ago is still continuing, having been co-created, and addressing a need in the country, rather than being based on addressing a tender.

Organisations must nevertheless respond to tenders. This is reportedly a continual and demanding pipeline process which yields partial success, whereas JET’s extensive work with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) relieves this pressure, with areas of work in the organisation that have the probability of being fully funded, and are longer-term. Many of the examples of this type of project come through donor funding with co-funding from government, with the donor as an intermediary. It was suggested however, that it might be better to work directly with the government.

CURRENT PRIORITIES IN EDUCATION

In explaining when partners should be sought and how partners should be matched to outcomes, it was observed that there are currently many opportunities in the education sector. For example, the following were listed:

- ① ECD work is on the national agenda in basic education, much of which must come from outside the DBE and DHET. Issues include financing, regulation and accreditation.
- ② A commitment has been made about a 3rd (skills and vocational) stream in the school curriculum.
- ③ Anything related to preparing learners and schools in regard to the 4th Industrial Revolution is fairly urgent.
- ④ Work is being done on a National Curriculum and Professional Development Institute
- ⑤ Work needs to be done on STEM.
- ⑥ Reading and early literacy is a significant priority. Problems in this regard can clearly not be solved by the state alone, but they present a perfect opportunity for coalitions and partnerships.

The NGO sector has significant experience in this area, dating well before 1994, and the opportunity for putting that experience to use is critically available.

Innovation is a virtue, and partnerships and coalitions provide the means to take these innovations to scale.

THE TENDER PROCESS

It was explained by Alan Moonsamy of the Gauteng Education Development Trust that the fundamental purpose of offering a public tender was to give the public access to a business opportunity. Tenders need not necessarily be based only on price, but *with careful thought, price could be made a non-fundamental criterion.*

Careful consideration of the desired unfolding of an education intervention from the conception stage to the conclusion stage, with M&E, can and should include a set of criteria for identifying the best way to access the expertise and skills required. The consideration could constitute a critical preliminary discussion involving government as well, with price not negotiated until afterwards.

If the education department funds were entailed, the entire process could be dealt with as ratification from the Tender Board, unlike the normal public tender process, which is seen as a set of rules and obstacles with no adequate interrogation of how to circumvent the obstacles while achieving the intentions. *Even at conception stage, a set of rules enabling the selection of provider/ set of providers/ collaborative partnerships can be defined that in no way infringes on the necessary governance rules.* The consideration is not only for the expertise locked up in the NGO sector, but must take into account that this needs to be utilised at scale. To have an impact on a system of 20 000 primary schools, *offerings must be made at scale or be able to be taken to scale.*

4.2 POSITIONING NASCEE – AS A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

The Project Managers report positioned NASCEE as a collaborative partnership to give a voice to all NPOs in education.

NASCEE working for the interest of all social change entities in education

Dr Rooksana Rajab reported that the Steering Committee (SC) had been put in place at the Summit held in 2016, which was initiated by all stakeholders and organised by NECT. The SC worked on the vision, mission and strategy for taking the sector voice forward, but did not gain the necessary momentum.

After the JET Board offered some funding, a project manager was appointed. Rooksana Rajab was selected to work with all the documents, strategies, and views of the SC and prospective members until it was possible to arrive at this point of the launch. With the support of all members of the SC an identity for the embryonic association was compiled over nine months. The process included lobbying and consultation with prospective members on names, vision, values and mission in a series of regional workshops.

At the launch, and with the agreement of the stakeholders in the room, the identity of NASCEE is put forward as the voice of NPOs in education.

Dr Rajab stressed that it was important that NASCEE remains transparent in its strategies, actions and processes so that this could foster collaborative partnership of non-profit entities in education working for the interest of all NPOs working in education.



Mr Duncan Hindle, Dr Rooksana Rajab and Reverend Pityana at the NASCEE 2019 Conference

4.3 PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION AT SCALE

Moderator:	Dr Lousie van Rhyn	<i>Symfonia SA</i>
Panellists:	Ms Melissa King	<i>Bridge</i>
	Mr Ayanda Mtanyana	<i>New Leaders</i>
	Mr Roger Dickinson	<i>A Better Africa</i>

This session explored effective mechanisms for partnerships among professionals and communities to ensure socially aware and comprehensive capacity development for the education sector.



The moderator Dr Louise van Rhyn and panellists (left to right) Ms Melissa King, Mr Roger Dickinson and Mr Ayanda Mtanyana

A. OPENING REMARKS

Ms Melissa King, Bridge

- ➔ Collaboration is necessary where organisations cannot take programmes to scale individually
- ➔ Taking something to scale may mean different things: Multiplying the number of instances, creating a replicable model or magnifying influence
- ➔ Co-production of open education resource is good for collaboration, but it also makes measurement of impact difficult

Mr Ayanda Mtanyana, New Leaders

- ➔ Data flow enables distributed decision making, this data flow is built through collaboration
- ➔ Structures, processes and reporting systems are often done to the implementers and not with the implementers - this threatens collaborations
- ➔ Another threat is the established competition for limited resources available in the education system

Mr Roger Dickinson, A Better Africa

- ➔ Current models of operation are outdated and that means we are not reaching every child
- ➔ To solve the global education crisis we need to be willing to challenge our established ways of thinking - willing to look for new models to guide our decisions and actions
- ➔ To transform, reform and remake the system we need to put in place people who become the guardians of building relationships that challenge our thinking and grow the diversity of influence

B. DISCUSSION

The discussion in this session recognised that although non-profit organisations offer a tremendous amount of innovation potential they do not have the complete solution.

One of the most salient conclusions revolved around the interaction with the government. It noted that we desperately need to find different ways of doing things – the current system has a couple of issues that hamper collaborative effort:

- The system (particularly government) seems obsessed with compliance rather than creating transformative outcomes.
- There is no continuity from one government administration to another,
- There is a distance between different stakeholders, exacerbated by:
 - ➔ The need for plug-n-play solutions. It may actually be better to co-develop, or create integrated solutions by taking elements from different players and not simply;
 - ➔ The lack of capacity and resources in the system;
 - ➔ The language being used – closing the avenues for discussion, and contribution;
 - ➔ A lack of channels or rather the difficulty in being able to find the right channels to engage along.

A second insight was that we need collaboration in this sector, and with government particularly, because **as NPOs we are working to nullify our existence**. Thus if we are working towards finding solutions to challenges in the education sector, we need government partnerships (or other partners) to step into the gap and institutionalise these solutions.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NASCEE

Delegates stressed that it is important for NASCEE to assist in:

- Keeping us honest – **reminding us of the values, purpose and the reason that we are doing this work**: it was mentioned that it is easy to get caught in a fight for survival and forget why we started this work in the first place;
- Helping **stakeholders in the education value chain in taking the risk of opening their practices** this includes recognising that open classrooms, etc., are daunting for many as they fear losing control;
- Striving for **collective impact** – defining measures of success that move beyond compliance (especially bureaucratic compliance);
- Establishing the **structural framework for collaboration** – because we need to move beyond our dependence on ad hoc relationships to collaborate at scale. This entails defining protocols, processes and points of contact (events and people) that systematise collaboration;
- Again delegates emphasised that the **entire educational value chain needs to be included in some part of the conversation** – in this discussion the higher education voice was weakest – there needs to be room for everyone to offer and address their concerns.

4.4 GATHERING EVIDENCE ON IMPROVED PRACTICE AND IMPACT

Moderator:	Ms Benita Williams	<i>Benita Williams Evaluation</i>
Panellists:	Ms Kaathima Ebrahim	<i>Mikhulu Trust</i>
	Dr Ronel Blom	<i>Consider That</i>
	Dr Nick Taylor	<i>JET Education Services</i>

This session explored the realities of conducting research with the intent of improving practice and the impact of the eventual projects.

A. OPENING REMARKS

Ms Kaathima Ebrahim, Mikhulu Trust

- ➔ Implementation of research findings is impacted by the flexibility and willingness of education practitioners to change the way they do things
- ➔ Adapting research recommendations or studied programmes is a complex activity influenced not only by the target environment, but also the applicability, structure and adaptability of the interventions

Dr Ronel Blom, Consider That

- ➔ Data collected to evaluate the effectiveness of projects and possibly justify funding is going to waste
- ➔ There is a dearth of data around education, especially from non-profit entities, being used in policy development and strategic direction setting
- ➔ Many projects have rich data sets that offer context and alternatives to policy makers, but this requires us to think beyond simply conducting research exclusively for M&E

Dr Nick Taylor, JET Education Services

- ➔ Research helps us replicate successful practice and create communities of excellent practice – to do this we need to understand the design of programmes
- ➔ Impact of programmes is influenced by
 - The suitability of their design
 - The integrity of the implementation to the design
 - Multiple role players (not just teachers or pupils) in the project ecosystem
 - What happens when our attention shifts away and we stop watching
 - Honesty and integrity with which we share results – do not only share the good news or information that fits into your worldview

B. DISCUSSION

The discussion started with exploring that there are multiple research methods and approaches that may offer valuable insights into the education sector. Deciding on a particular research approach depends on:

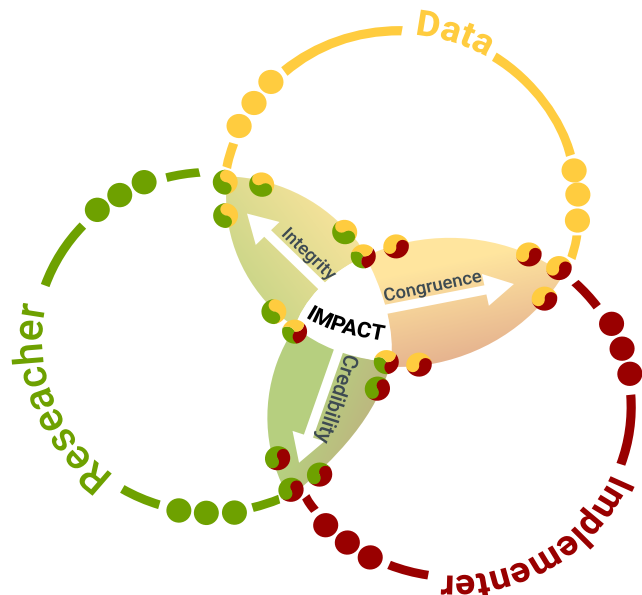
- The programme design;
- The feasibility and affordability of the research approach;
- The phase or state of research into a particular intervention or issue;
- The availability of existing data sets.



Ms Kaathima Ebrahim, Dr Ronel Blom and Dr Nick Taylor being led in discussion by Ms Benita Williams

Concrete examples were shared as to how research could be used and how its impact could be grown. The discussions show that the impact of research is dependent on the skill, network and experience of the researchers. Essentially, the impact of research is a multi-dimensional network between the Researcher, the Research Consumer (e.g. Implementer, Policy Analyst) and the Data or Data Owner.

Fig 4: Growing the Impact of Research



What we see from the discussion is that the impact research can have is more a function of the connection between the researcher and the implementer (research consumer). They need to value each other's perspective or at least afford each other some credibility and take cognisance of their different purposes and world views.

The extent to which implementers use the research outputs depends on the congruence they see in their situation and the context of the research data. They must be able to see the research as applicable to them and relate to the story the research tells.

Finally, the validity and integrity of the data influence its impact. This is a function of the researcher's skill, experience and the accessibility and quality of the research data.

The simplicity of the diagram, however, hides one of the most salient insights from the discussion, that this is a multi-layered network and subsequently data can often be shared, extended and built on across different contexts, applications and issues. This increases the impact of the research but also carries the risk of misinterpretation.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NASCEE

Delegates developed specific recommendations for the role NASCEE could play:

- Develop relationships – connecting researchers and NPOs;

- Helping NPOs structure, design their programmes to be more suitable for research;
- Collating existing studies to see if more of them have other applications or could be used in influencing policy;
- Developing standards around evidence collection, analysis and reporting;
- Addressing the active distrust between government and NPOs when it comes to information sharing and evidence gathering;
- Linking to international networks, investigating the validity and applicability of models and assumptions for the local context.

This summary hides much of the depth of discussion and issues uncovered during this panel discussion. There is much more to consider and evaluate moving forward, which is why the delegates recommended establishing a Research Working Group within NASCEE.

4.5 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STRONGER SOCIAL CHANGE ENTITIES IN EDUCATION

Moderator:	Ms Vuyiswa Ncontsa	<i>Bridge</i>
Panellists:	Ms Nazeema Mohamed	<i>Inyathelo</i>
	Mr Steve Mahoney	<i>The JumpStart Foundation</i>
	Mr Fanie Nothnagel	<i>Dalmeny Consulting</i>

During this session, the panellists and the delegates explore what makes non-profit entities more sustainable – how can they become strong enough to achieve their purpose?



The panel discussing organisational development from left to right: Mr Steven Mahoney, Ms Nazeema Mohamed and Mr Fanie Nothnagel. The session was moderated by Ms Vuyiswa Ncontsa (far right)

A. OPENING REMARKS

Ms Nazeema Mohamed, Inyathelo

- ➔ Organisations may build sustainability, but without addressing governance and leadership issues in the context of social instability, there can be no progress
- ➔ We need to think differently about governance to include issues of social justice and ethics
- ➔ Boards need to take their governance responsibilities seriously

Mr Fanie Nothnagel, Dalmeny Consulting

- ➔ Sometimes NPOs need to be pragmatic, like refusing funding that does not cover the project overheads
- ➔ Financial constraints have changed - it is important to build a blended model of sustainability
- ➔ Board meetings often do not produce the desired results; however it often is the case that the Board does not know what is expected of them by the CEO or by management

Dr Steve Mahoney, The JumpStart Foundation

- ➔ The sustainability of the NPO impacts the vulnerable communities they serve
- ➔ Funding is only one part of sustainability – start with what you have
- ➔ NPOs achieve success by solving the reason for their existence – this is unique in that they are not looking to persist but rather to cease to exist because their mission has been achieved

B. DISCUSSION

This session became a vibrant discussion around how non-profit organisations could become more sustainable, find a more humane approach to governance (moving away from business performance metrics) and develop the capacity they need to operate.

What makes a non-profit entity sustainable is a more fluid approach to resources. This entails understanding what resources are currently available and what resources are required to deliver on the planned projects to realise the organisation's purpose. That translates to understanding the resource gap (between "have" and "need") and then finding a way to position the organisation to attract the necessary resources.

This positioning requires organisations to address issues of governance, strategic management and planning head-on. To achieve such strength, there is a need for governance frameworks which hold Boards and managers accountable for achieving the intended social impact. Boards have the responsibility to take their duties seriously and they need to make sure that the organisation's intent and purpose are not damaged through a change in management or the undue influence of funding partners.

NPOs can secure a certain amount of independence from funders or tenders by saving (investing) some of the surplus funds for use in future projects.

The boundary between Board and management functions is often softer for non-profit organisations, thus it is easier to devolve into more informal processes – this, however, leaves an NPO vulnerable to failing its stakeholders or bending its own ethical processes. Most saliently, the discussion makes it clear that consistently delivering results and maintaining good standing and respect with its stakeholders are critical for an NPO's sustainability. That means that an NPO needs to build outstanding management and governance capabilities. For a short time, the NPO may be able to contract people in but this does not always translate into building the organisation's capacity.

The discussions made it clear that there was a need for NPOs to build their own capabilities and capacity, and most of the recommendations come from the need to have access to such initiatives.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NASCEE

Delegates felt that NASCEE could assist in:

- Collating, developing and sharing management best practice for education;
- Working with funders to help them understand the operational reality of NPOs and raising the awareness of the impact of underfunding initiatives or discounting operational costs;
- Engaging with corporates to support NPOs, not only through the investment of corporate social investment (CSI) funds, but also encouraging them to donate skills (time, mentorship and training) to help NPOs develop their own skills;
- Establishing a professional development framework specific to NPOs working in education;
- Creating a support, coaching and mentorship network so that NPOs can learn from each other.

4.6 TECHNOLOGY FOR EFFECTIVENESS IN EDUCATION

Moderator:	Mr More Ickson Manda	<i>merSETA</i>
Panellists:	Ms Leigh Ann Albert	<i>The Micheal and Susan Dell Foundation</i>
	Ms Omashani Naidoo	<i>SchoolNet SA</i>
	Dr Alan Amory	<i>SAIDE</i>

The question put to the panel and the breakaway group was how technology can be used to address developmental challenges in South Africa and to assist the challenges of collaboration and integration in education as a whole.



The technology panel– Ms Leigh Ann Albert, Dr Alan Amory and Ms Omashani Naidoo and moderator Mr More Ickson Manda (left to right)

A. OPENING REMARKS

Ms Leigh Ann Albert, The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation

- ➔ Pursuing a vision to accelerate human opportunity at scale, partly by providing support to classrooms and schools through high-quality tools, technology and resources through
 - Data driven education management
 - Personalised learning
- ➔ Technology is only one part of the solution, must be integrated into our ways of working
- ➔ Solutions that show success and usage are ones with a compelling value proposition to beneficiaries, that makes their solutions much better than the current ways of working

Ms Omashani Naidoo, SchoolNet SA

- ➔ Technology is not just about the solutions; it is also about building ITC and leadership skills for teachers, parents, learners and out-of-school youth
- ➔ Technology is often the driver for change, but a common understanding of the vision and end-goals of education must inform conceptions of what must be put in place for NPOs to achieve success
- ➔ Much of the potential of technology is around simplifying education management and data sharing

Dr Alan Amory, SAIDE

- ➔ Technology creates access to learning opportunities and enables the conditions for success
- ➔ Technology can have a multifaceted role, including delivery of content, enabling collaboration and communication, as well as creation of education programmes and management of programme delivery
- ➔ Much of the success of programmes is, however, the use of technology to enable content creation and extension – offering this under open content principles makes more possible

B. DISCUSSION

In discussing the strategic value of technology, panellists identified that technology has the potential to:

- Offer a transformative learning experience;
- Extend the reach of education;
- Support education management; and
- Share data for decision-making.

Delegates raised that more fundamental issues need to be addressed before these benefits can become a reality. For example, many communities in South Africa still struggle with poor connectivity. Other activities that could unlock the potential of technology include:

- Defining a standard of what could be considered a good learning application, to sort through the plethora of applications available. Criteria that should be considered are the cost, underlying pedagogy, the fitness for purpose and usability;
- Enabling teachers to make use of technology in their classrooms but also to allow students to contribute in extended learning and content creation opportunities;

- Promoting standards and protocols to enable the interoperability of data, to make data shareable and explore more trends and migration along the education value chain;
- Protecting the integrity, resilience and security of collected information;
- Evaluating the practical impact of technology on the learning and teaching practice – e.g. how to manage the impact technology has on people’s health and productivity?

Caution was expressed from the floor that forcing technology into a faulty system could just amplify the systemic problems we face. There was an emphasis that it is important to get the basics right and use technology to magnify effort – by simplifying issues of scaling, extending the reach and shortening the time it takes.

C RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NASCEE

NASCEE was seen as a potential ally and champion for issues around:

- Addressing the inequality of access to technology and connectivity in education. Delegates wanted clarity around how to campaign for greater access or facilitate connectivity for disadvantaged communities. Additionally, it was felt that NASCEE could look at finding offline solutions or at least make recommendations around such alternatives;
- Finding or developing frameworks against which educational applications can be assessed;
- Creating a more holistic model for technology enabled education practice, and looking at developing a more generic migration model from current practices to technology enabled practices.



The funding plenary was guided by Ms Najwa Allie-Edris (far right), and the panellists are (left to right) Dr Sizwe Nxasana, Mr Spencer Janari and Ms Lerato Lehoko

4.7 FUNDING MECHANISMS IN EDUCATION

Moderator:	Ms Najwa Allie-Edris	<i>The Jobs Fund at The National Treasury</i>
Panellists:	Mr Spencer Janari	<i>The National Treasury</i>
	Ms Lerato Lehoko	<i>Yellowwoods Ventures and Investments</i>
	Dr Sizwe Nxasana	<i>Future Nation Schools and IPFAP</i>

This session explored how the NPO sector accesses funding; what it takes to create a fundable project and brand; and what the government and funders look for when they want to partner with players in the education sector.

A. OPENING REMARKS

Mr Spencer Janari, The National Treasury

- ➔ There are no established models for evaluating and collaborating with NPOs – the lack of models, approaches and channels has left numerous opportunities for government working with NPOs untapped
- ➔ Government is risk averse in investing in programmes – they need concepts to be proven before extending and scaling the initiatives
- ➔ Social investors have given rise to Social Bonds which allow governments to share the risk so the potential for more funds becoming available is high

Dr Sizwe Nxasana, Future Nation School and IPFAP

- ➔ The global crisis of 2008 has sped up and focussed the debate around corporate social responsibility. The impact of this has been a diversification in the funds available for social change, growth and development
- ➔ Investment bankers in SA are only now beginning to understand that the social economy represents opportunities not only to make money but to do something meaningful
- ➔ Investment bankers need to understand the total education space and what the opportunities and risks are

Ms Lerator Lehoko, Yellowwoods Ventures and Investments

- ➔ South Africa has many sophisticated funding instruments. The right type of instrument needs to be chosen to unlock funds
- ➔ In Social Impact Bonds, funding is tied to achieving a particular outcome. Instead of paying upfront and taking a risk on the performance of the NGO or other delivery agents, payment is at the end, when the predefined impact has been achieved
- ➔ It is possible to unlock funding to address the lack of delivery capacity through co-creation and incubation

B. DISCUSSION

Panellists' emphasised that in accessing funding from government and private funding, it is important to understand the funder's investment and risk models. Understanding their frameworks and getting to know who to talk to involves a significant investment in time and the development of various financial models. This investment is probably beyond the purview of most NPOs. In short, investments need to satisfy the investors goals, but also rely heavily on the reputation, track record and momentum the NPO has been able to build. Some of the factors investors consider have been illustrated in Figure 5.

The different funding rules, roles and mechanisms within the government remain challenging for the delegates. There is a need to find a more transparent way of accessing these funds.

Similarly, when accessing private funds there is a



Fig. 5. Some of the factors funders and government consider in evaluating the investment potential of a project

need to interact with funders so that the funders know where the opportunities are. Together it is possible to define different risks, opportunities, mechanisms and success criteria – enabling the development of new funding instruments. This would, however, require a collaborative endeavour.

Donor funding often comes with specific objectives and criteria; thus even these are not simple transactions.

The fundamental note on which the session concluded was that there is money available but it is about knowing through whom, how and when to access it.

The starting point in many cases is to start at the DBE's Partnerships Team and work from there.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NASCEE

It was recommended that NASCEE:

- Run capacity development workshops enabling NPOs to complete grant applications;
- Establish a brokering service establishing contacts to government and understanding what government's requirements are – then channelling NPOs to the right doors;
- Similarly, it was suggested that NASCEE consider co-developing a couple of funding mechanisms with private funders.

It remained clear that these initiatives require an investment of time and the development of specialist expertise, but the potential benefits for the sector would be huge.

5. Founding Meeting of NASCEE

The founding meeting of NASCEE was facilitated by Mr Duncan Hindle – introduced by Dr Keevy as a stalwart of the South African education sector.

The idea of NPOs grouping together has seen many iterations, originally in the 1980s, and 1990s. The difference currently is that democracy has prevailed, and the country is in a new phase. However, the education system has been slow to respond, and it is not clear why the intractable problems that were in place at the end of apartheid are still prevailing. The government is struggling to make inroads, and government departments are struggling more to spend their budgets and prepare business plans and project plans than anything else. This is an issue to be faced by the education sector.

NGOs expose a rich and diverse network in the education landscape

NGOs – or social change entities – constitute a rich and diverse network and unique feature in the education landscape. As a non-profit community in education, the classification includes anything from soup kitchens to consultancies, competing with audit companies and big international consultancies in the work. The sector does not have a strong voice with which to engage government and donors from a position of strength. As a recipient with no long-term funding, the only bargaining power is intellectual property and credibility. Apart from these, social change entities are

at a disadvantage.

The pace in the NGO sector is relentless, and the impact of constrained funding regimes makes it a very difficult space in which to work. NASCEE is, however, not a funding mechanism. The Steering Committee held firmly to two lines during the preparatory phase.

Firstly, NASCEE is an association for non-profit organisations working in education, but not for consultancies; and secondly, NASCEE will not put in joint bids for funding, since this will lead to becoming a conduit for funding or a gatekeeping mechanism.

Research indicates that initiatives like **NASCEE are particularly relevant for low- and middle-income countries** that have seen an influx of development partners. Donors in Africa have a very strong presence, but it is important for governments to lead and set the agenda, rather than this being done by the development partner. The Kenyan initiative, Metis, and the Campaign for Popular Education in Bangladesh both have elements in common with the NASCEE initiative.

Trust is a lubricant for collaboration, which requires a mutual understanding of problems that need to be addressed and of values. Mutual understanding is also required, and in this regard, there are many insights into what needs to be done, but nevertheless, insufficient progress is being made. Huge strides are also being made in the technology area. M&E capacity is very strong, with many NGOs working in M&E. The area of **shortfall is collaboration**, and it is suggested that defining a set of activities will help to create common goals. Collaboration would also prevent over-analysis of the problem without taking action.

5.1 HOW NASCEE CAME TO BE?

The idea of non-profit organisations working together to form an umbrella structure is not new. However, particular conditions make NASCEE an imperative for the advancement of education in South Africa, these include:

- The persistence of legacy challenges (around the provision of high-quality education to ALL South Africans) in the education sector since the 90s when they became priorities;
- The diversity, variety in function, focus, purpose and approach, of the non-profit entities working in education;
- The pace of change in the non-profit sector increasing.

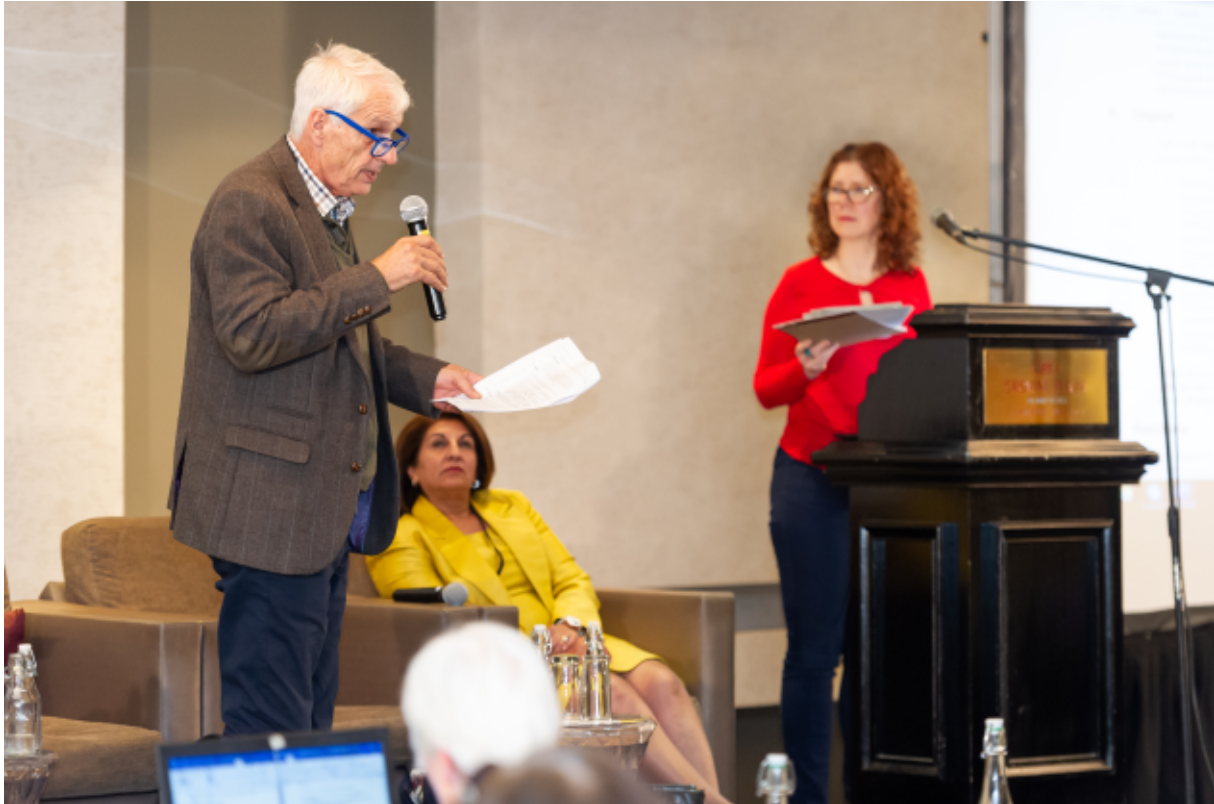
The idea for NASCEE started about three years ago with as a joint initiative between the NECT, JET, the DBE, the ZENEX Foundation and Old Mutual. A Summit was held on 11 March 2016 at which an Interim SC was established with an interim Chair, and that has managed the process since then. Importantly, a core group was formed of 8-10 individuals from diverse organisations. Part of the aims of the launch is to unlock governance and to secure funding that can take the process forward in a more sustainable way. To date the NASCEE initiative has been funded from seed sponsorship provided by the JET Board, after getting agreement from the DBE that some surplus project funds could be diverted for this purpose. The funding was used, among other things, to appoint a project manager - Dr Rooksana Rajab, who had also been instrumental in the establishment of the Association of Private Providers of Education, Training and Development (APPETD).

Actions and initiatives taken around establishing NASCEE have been informed by the understanding of the sector developed in the paper *The Evolving Role of 21st Century Education NGOs in South Africa* (John Volmink and Lynn van der Elst, April 2019).

Some of the differentiating features of the NASCEE initiative that we would like to honour and keep are:

- It is a bottom-up initiative of education non-profit organisations coming together to work on improving the sector;
- It focuses on capacity building, advocacy and professionalisation of the sector;
- It is not a funding vehicle.

5.2 THE FOUNDING OF NASCEE



Mr Duncan Hindle, Dr Rooksana Rajab and Ms Nicole Copely guiding the founding of NASCEE

It was in this context that prospective members of NASCEE convened to ratify the draft constitution of NASCEE (prepared by Ms Nicole Copely) and elect its first Board of Directors.

Noteworthy was the commitment from the floor to a bolder purpose that **NASCEE work towards building a high-quality, equitable education system for all South Africans** by:



Forging a strong **collaboration** between education non-profit organisations and becoming a strategic partner with its members in achieving their objects;



Setting up **networks** between education non-profit organisations, government institutions and the philanthropic community;



Strengthening the **capacity** of education non-profit organisations so that they have the capability to render quality services, address the social issues which hinder education and engage successfully in the education space;



Promoting and raising awareness of the work of education non-profit organisations for proper appreciation of their functions and challenges; and



Advocating for quality education by harnessing the knowledge and information from the sector to influence education policy.

5.3 THE INAUGURAL BOARD

Following an electronic nomination process and the extension of a further possibility for conference delegates to nominate additional candidates from the floor, the first NASCEE Board of Directors was elected.

Dr Veronique Genniker	<i>PMET Trust Director</i>
Dr James Keevy	<i>JET Education Services</i>
Mr Sylvester Moepya	<i>Harambee Employment Accelerator</i>
Ms Vuyiswa Ncontsa	<i>Bridge</i>
Ms Gail Campbell	<i>ZENEX</i>
Mr Giles Gillett	<i>New Leaders Foundation</i>
Mr John Gilmour	<i>LEAP Science & Maths Schools</i>
Ms Sibongile Khumalo	<i>Learning Trust</i>
Ms Estelle Nel	<i>IEB</i>
Ms Lungile Zakwe	<i>Ikang the Youth</i>

5.4 FUNDING

The immediate funding of NASCEE operations would be covered from the funds raised for the conference. Funders included

ETDP SETA;
 JET Education Services;
 ZENEX Foundation;
 NECT;
 Seriti; and
 Shereno Printers.

Funders contributed financial and in-kind support to the value of approximately R650 000. A further R150 000 was raised through conference fees. After the conference expenses were deducted, this left R160 000 in the kitty to support the operationalisation of NASCEE until December 2019.

6. International Links: Professor Melanie Ehren



Dr Melanie Ehren

At the start of day 2, a video address from Professor Melanie Ehren was broadcast. Professor Ehren is currently the Director of Research Institute LEARN! at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) and has been working as the coordinator of a four-year ESRC funded study on 'Accountability, capacity and trust to improve learning outcomes in South Africa; a systems approach to understand conditions and mechanisms of improvement of teaching and learning' (2017-2021).

She expressed her excitement and support for the NASCEE initiative, highlighting that it is important not only on the local stage but also internationally. She highlighted that research indicates that initiatives like NASCEE are particularly relevant for low- and middle-income countries that have seen an influx of development partners. Donors in Africa have a

very strong presence, but it is important for governments to lead and set the agenda, rather than this being done by the development partner. The Kenyan initiative Metis, and the Campaign for Popular Education in Bangladesh, both have elements in common with the NASCEE initiative.

These two examples vary greatly, but essentially are aimed at the same goal as NASCEE, creating a network where the collective outcome is greater than the sum of individual parts, and cross-fertilisation leads to choices and selection of activities that benefit everyone.

Questions are how to create such a network, what conditions help the effectiveness of networks, and how to avoid obstruction by institutional boundaries. Newly established networks often struggle to create space and time for the collective work and may be impeded by the individual organisational agendas of their members. Research shows that effective networks have a number of common features, including the following:

1. Leadership and role models are important;
2. Trust is important for allowing effective collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources;
3. Technology can be an enabler that facilitates members' sharing of knowledge, data and ideas;
4. Evaluation and monitoring can improve the collective work of the network, building understanding of how effective the collaboration is and whether learning outcomes are being improved;
5. A shared vision is important for binding people and organisations together.

The most important thing is just to start collaborating. Start working together on a problem –

*Just start
collaborating
– start
working
together*

something that can improve learning outcomes – and achieve quick wins that can help develop trust, celebrate success and build the legitimacy of the network.

Professor Ehren encouraged organisations to simply start collaborating on solving the most pressing issues facing the South African education system and work from there – establishing the necessary trust and relationships as we go.

7. Close



Chairman of the Board, Dr James Keevy delivering the closing address to the 2019 NASCEE Conference

In his closing remarks, the Chairman of the NASCEE Board, Dr James Keevy, reiterated that NASCEE is an association rather than an organisation, and as such will function with a small secretariat and restricted costs in order to be of benefit to all members.

The non-profit sector has substantial intellectual property and expertise that should be acknowledged, with a view to building it further and providing mutual support.

It was suggested that the 'NGO' title has become outdated, and its replacement by 'social change entities' indicates progress to a new era.

Common themes arising from the discussions were captured as follows:

- Service our own community (master classes, governance, research, ...);
- Engage other associations (IPASA, EMASA, SAMEA, ...);
- Evidence mapping, clearing house (grey literature), common indicators (how to see what's happening in the sector);
- Low hanging fruit: (i) mapping (ii) technology in education (iii) funding models;
- Peer review, benchmarking, standards.

Some next steps identified for the organisation were

1. The first meeting of NASCEE Board on 18 July;
2. Conference Organising Committee 2020: theme, location, etc.;
3. Framework for collaboration;

4. Do we start with one or two working groups?
5. Communication plan, further development of website ;
6. Planning for sustainability, registering as an NPO, engaging DBE & DHET.

8. Recommendations

In most sessions, there was a desire that NASCEE broker relationships, leverage the existing expertise and develop models of best practice.

These require the investment of time and specialist expertise more than money. In some cases, suggestions for solutions coalesce out of the sessions themselves – so, for example, engaging with businesses could provide us with access to the expertise we need to develop the appropriate funding models and instruments.

Feedback from the conference indicated that delegates would like to see more models and approaches presented explicitly. These kinds of sessions seem more appropriately addressed in provincial level meetings – where a deeper exploration can be accommodated.

NASCEE is tasked with building relationships and networks on all sides; it is suggested that the government linkages be prioritised because this represents a cornerstone of scaling the impact our members could have.

Finally, there is a clear desire by members to create a shared vision for education in South Africa that can guide the strategic decision making going forward. NASCEE needs to use this vision to build its own credible strategy going forward. It is clear that NASCEE's success will lie in its ability to increase the standing and strengthen the network of non-profit entities in education. To do that, NASCEE must build on the trust and credibility it developed at the conference.

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Dr Rooksana Rajab with the 2019 JET Streamers



Ms Zukiswa Mashigo and Ms Boitumelo Manci helping delegates register