

Submission of the South African Human Rights Commission on
Discussion Document:

**Norms and Standards for Teacher Education, Training and
Development
March 1998**

To: The Director-General
Department of Education
Pretoria

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Director: Higher Education Colleges
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The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) was established in 1995 in terms of the Human Rights Commission Act, no54 of 1994. In terms of the Constitution, act 108 of 1996, the Commission is mandated to:

- a) promote respect for human rights and a culture of human rights;
- b) promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights; and
- c) monitor and assess the observance of human rights in the Republic.¹

The SAHRC has a keen interest in educational matters and education policy development because of the crucial role the education system has to play in the promotion, protection and attainment of human rights.

The SAHRC and Education and Training

The SAHRC is of the view, as articulated in its strategy document on education and training, that the practice of human rights education should be enabled both through a cross-curricular approach and a dedicated learning area. Given our historical context, human rights education should not be diluted into soft curriculum options, but rather be practised within a strong enabling framework. The two-pronged approach (cross-curricular and dedicated area), is at the heart of developing such a strong framework. The two approaches reinforce and are complimentary to each other and also lesson the changes of the field being marginalised. We might reach a stage in our future where the need for a dedicated area will be obsolete, but for now it is imperative that we

¹ Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, section 184

maximise the entry points for the practice of human rights education into the formal education and training sector.

The SAHRC also views human rights education as a strand that have inherent links with a number of other fields such as democracy, peace, constitutional, environmental, anti-sexist and anti-racist education.

Chapter One: Introduction

The SAHRC endorses the principle of wide consultation as articulated in the terms of reference of the technical committee but would like to point out that crucial stakeholders have been left out in the series of consultations. The key guiding principles of the committee include *Sensitivity to Diversity, Relevance, Peace, Security and Human Rights, Democracy and Development* which, in the words of the discussion document, are drawn from the Constitution and other legislative and policy provisions pertaining to education. It would have been logical not only to consult with the formal-internal education stakeholders, but also to involve a number of other stakeholders. Synchronising norms and standards for teacher education, training and development, with the vision of our Constitution and the commitment of the education sector in promoting a culture of human rights, must be foremost in the minds of education policy developers. Efforts to transform our society are taking place in almost every sector and are, to a large extent, dependent on the policy framework and practices in the education sector. New policy frameworks in land reform, labour, environment, water affairs, health, justice, gender, disability and human rights are but a few transformative initiatives in the country that have to be taken into account in setting norms and standards for teacher education, training and development.

Chapter Two: Context for Change

The School Register of Needs Survey paints a very bleak picture of the context in which educational changes have to be initiated in addition to a lack of a culture of learning and teaching in the majority of our schools.

Though the report points to the ever-increasing diversification of the student population, it fails to note that the challenges manifested by this process can only successfully be taken up by the practice of human rights, democracy, gender, anti-sexist, anti-racist and constitutional education. Another issue in the context of change that has been overlooked by the committee is that change in our country today takes place amidst a lack of environmental and social justice.

Under point 2.6, the report expresses the need for a dynamic, transformative and emancipatory model that embraces the principles and values of our constitutional democracy. This in itself points to a model that should take human rights education, democracy education and constitutional education seriously, forming part of the core learning outcomes of teacher education, training and development.

Chapter Three: A Regulative and Generative Model for Professional Education, Training and Development Qualifications.

The SAHRC understands the rationale for proposing the six sub-fields on page 32 of the discussion document. However, if democracy, human rights, social justice and environmental justice issues are not reflected in the core learning outcomes, a challenge is posed as to how and where these outcomes *will* be developed. The proposed sub-fields do not allow for the creation of Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) around these issues. Though we note that new sub-fields might emerge within the National Standards Body (NSB 05) that can potentially look at democracy and human rights issues, it is still questionable whether or not NSB processes can sufficiently guarantee their centrality. The committee should propose ways and means of entrenching the values and principles inherent to the different strands of education mentioned in this paper, within the norms and standards of teacher education, training and development. These proposals can act as “terms of reference” for the standard setting process through NSB 05 and relevant SGBs.

Chapter Four: A Rationale for Outcomes-Based Qualifications

In using outcomes to describe the purposes of a qualification, the report proposes a set of principles to construct these outcomes (p.75). According to the report, these principles can be given substance by linking them to the roles or sets of practices that occur in the everyday world of work. These roles which are modelled in a qualification must both describe the world of work and seek to transform it. The report further points out that the direction and processes of transformation are based on the principles that inform education system change in South Africa. These principles are derived from the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Transformative roles should influence the development of core and elective outcomes. Since the direction of transformation gets its cue from the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, it means that core outcomes and elective outcomes and ultimately qualifications, ought to be modelled, at least in part, on the promotion of a human rights culture. To develop the role of the educator as a change agent and a transformative intellectual, requires core learning outcomes that are designed to contribute to the competencies of educators as human rights practitioners.

The SAHRC agrees with the idea to set up a committee as an interim Educator Quality Council and proposes that this committee, in co-ordinating the construction of compulsory and elective outcomes, consults with stakeholders in the democracy, human rights and environmental education fields.

Chapter Five: Learning Outcomes for Teacher Education

It is encouraging to note that the report endorses the importance of the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service Campaign (COLTS) as a short-term initiative in developing a culture of learning and teaching. The COLTS campaign emphasises the development of a human rights culture in schools and as such is an important ally of the SAHRC. The report also points out that the qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework will, in the medium to long term, influence the

practices of teachers. Therefore, in order for qualifications to build on the initiative of COLTS, they should enable teaching and learning *for* human rights.

The critical and developmental outcomes specified by the South African Qualifications Authority have, within the SAHRC, been interpreted from a democracy, human rights and environmental perspective that will hopefully allow for a broad and cross-curricular focus on these issues.

The SAHRC endorses the proposal of the committee on compulsory core outcomes that, under points 5.5.2. and 5.5.4, include human rights and environmental specific outcomes. However, given our country's legacy, the vision and direction of societal transformation and the present increase in human rights violations within the education sector, we propose a compulsory and dedicated learning area that is defined by the transformative framework of the Constitution and the quest for a human rights culture. We are aware that this proposed area of learning might be represented under the category *Life Orientations*. If so, then a conscious effort is needed on the level of developing core outcomes to allow for:

- human rights education;
- democracy education;
- gender education;
- anti-sexist education;
- anti-racist education;
- anti-bias education;
- diversity education;
- constitutional education; and
- environmental education.

The committee should also keep in mind that *human rights education* is a human right in itself² and this ought to be reflected in the way learning areas are categorised. This imperative is reflected in the UDHR and subsequent standards and international human rights provisions and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The issue here is whether or not the term *Life Orientations* adequately captures the objectives of what the democracy and human rights outcomes want to achieve.

We also propose that occupational outcomes under the heading of Teaching Studies include the *teacher as a human rights educator*. The pedagogical principles (approaches, theories of learning and teaching, methodologies, etc.) that are consistent with human rights education must be specified.

It might sound contradictory to argue for human rights and democracy education to be part of compulsory core outcomes *and* elective outcomes. However, the fields of democracy and human rights education are well developed academic fields in their own right and allow for advanced educator specialisation in these fields.

² Human Rights Education as a Human Right, A compilation of provisions of international and regional instruments dealing with Human Rights Education, January 1997, United Nations Centre for Human Rights.

Chapter Six: Designing a Learning Programme

Our concern here is linked to those of Chapter Five, more specifically around the learning area *Life Orientations*. If providers have the discretion, for example, to disintegrate the learning area into Life Orientation, Health, Environmental and Cultural Awareness, it does not allow for a category that may house democracy and human rights outcomes. Almost 50% of the outcomes under Life Orientations, can be considered to be “human rights” outcomes. However, if the field is disintegrated, under which category will these outcomes fall? The SAHRC therefore proposes that the committee suggest a category that can house democracy and human rights outcomes since these outcomes will be central to teacher education, training and development.

While the SAHRC agrees with the view that democracy and human rights education should be infused in all learning areas, experience has shown that without explicit outcome statements and explicit categorisation, democracy and human rights education will always be in danger of being marginalised. It is important, given our historical context, that enabling democracy and human rights education for teacher education should happen on two levels, that is, as an infused part of all learning activities and as a dedicated area with explicit outcomes.

Chapter Seven: Teacher Development: Lifelong Professional Education for Teachers

The SAHRC is encouraged by the centrality of in-service teacher education and its proposed linkages with pre-service teacher education. Given the present educational change initiatives, in-service teacher education aimed at capacity-building for teachers in the profession should rightfully be restructured and be positioned at the centre of teacher development. We also endorse the suggestion for the accreditation and provisioning of teacher development to take place on the basis of logically constituted consortia.

Chapter Eight: Quality-Assuring Teacher Education

The Department of Education’s perception of a teacher over-supply and the challenges facing educational transformation, calls for a sound process of quality assurance that can match the education and training demands of our constitutional democracy.

Quality-assurance, from a teacher development perspective, is important in relation to the right to education. The right to education does not only refer to the quantitative expansion of learning opportunities, it also refers to the qualitative aspect of learning and teaching. Teachers and educators, as agents in the process of realising educational and other rights, should, with and through institutions of learning, be enabled to both receive and provide quality education. On another level, one can look at quality assurance in terms of whether or not education enables learners to participate in the attainment of human rights.

We are therefore in agreement with proposals that point to the use of incentives and sanctions to ensure quality improvement. The whole idea of self and peer involvement

and consensus and partnerships in quality assurance is a sound one, based on the participation of all relevant role-players in the process.

Conclusion

The SAHRC wishes to congratulate the technical committee and DOE in producing a discussion document that seems to be well considered, well researched and in line with macro-education and training policies in the country. We hope that the commitment of the DOE to promoting a human rights culture will be reflected in the setting of norms and standards for teacher education, training and development. We trust that this submission will be of help and offer the assistance of our institution and our partners in this endeavour.

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