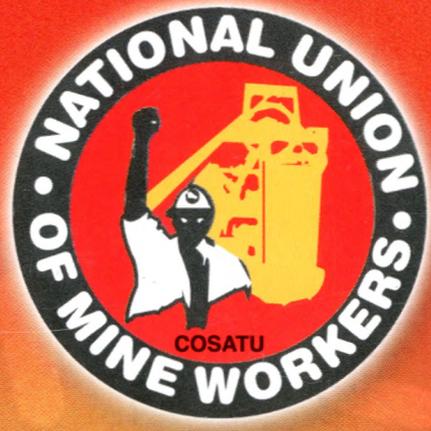


PROCESSED

TRADE UNION LIBRARY AND
EDUCATION CENTRE



NUM Education Strategic Plan



2002-2005

NUM EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2002-2005 (revised in 2001)

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1. COMPELLING REASONS TO REVIEW OUR 1999 TO 2002 PLAN

First we need to ask the obvious question, what is the purpose of a trade union education strategic plan? The answer is as follows;

- To enable the union to locate its educational concerns and plan its responses with due regard to available resources, and capacity.
- To ensure that there is a reference point for a thorough on-going assessment of progress.
- To help articulate a vision for the unions education which inspires and motivates all those concerned.

This is critical to the long-term success of our union. Assessing and adopting strategic options requires a vision to help us locate and then analyse both external and internal conditions. It helps us to formulate manageable and realistic strategies to achieve agreed objectives. It helps us to implement our plans with a clear appreciation of our true capacity and to measure outcomes accurately. Therefore, the compelling reasons for reviewal are;

- Lessons learned from 1999 to 2001
- Political developments
- Operational effectiveness vs strategic positioning
- New sector of constructions
- Economic trends
- COSATU organisational repositioning
- Balancing theory and practice
- Instilling organisational values
- Instilling mental discipline
- Membership first in everything we do



2. REFLECTION ON ASSUMPTIONS MADE IN 1999

On reflecting on the current three-year plan, it is important to outline the assumptions that were made at that time, and which informed our assessment of the context at that time. In brief these assumptions were as follows:

- That there was likely to be a decline of membership in some sectors
- That the membership was vulnerable to influence by anti-union forces
- For a variety of reasons, in some cases, gaps were opening up between the leadership and the membership particularly in relation to communication and mandating processes.
- A recognition that both new and existing union officials needed to revisit and absorb the unions history, its values and democratic practices.



- That only by achieving an advanced class consciousness could union members adequately confront the challenges they face .
- A recognition of the pre-eminent role of education in organisation building
- The need for the education work of the union to be dynamic
- The importance of integrating political education into all the Unions education programmes
- That the union would continue to commit resources to education work

A very important assumption, which we have also acknowledged over the last period, is that when the Union is under organisational and financial pressure due to a loss of members and other factors, demand from existing members for servicing, including education, in fact escalates. This places enormous resource and capacity pressures on the union., which we hope this document helps us to address.

3. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

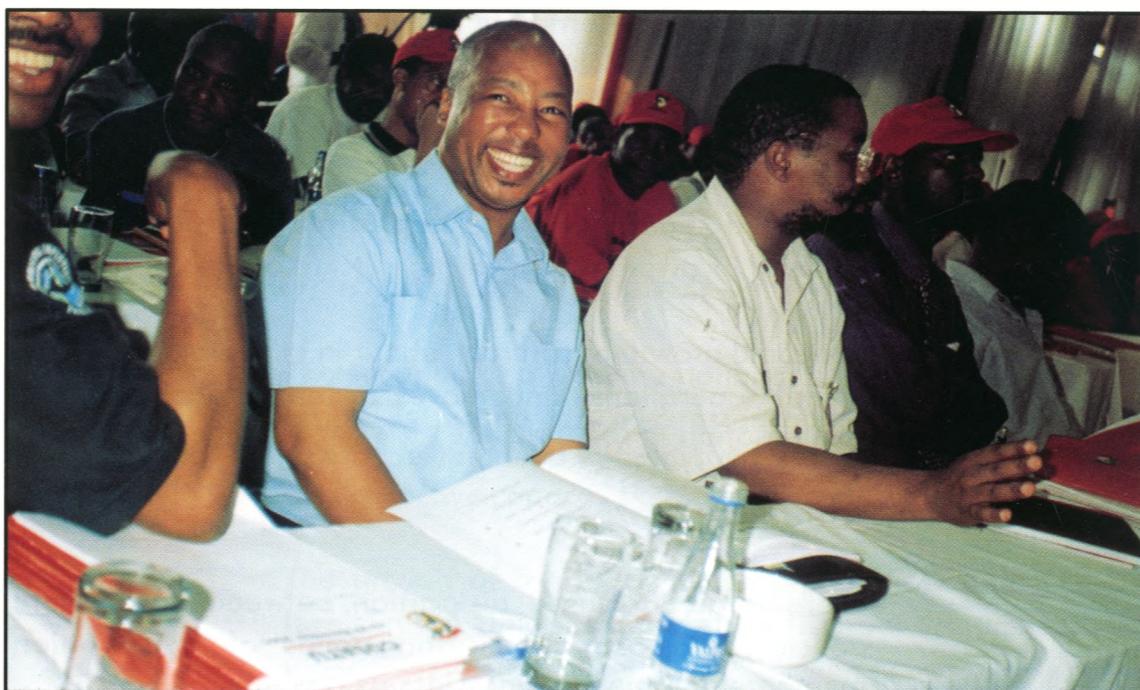
3.1 What was our plan

- To undertake a revision of the induction manual
- Develop an intermediate course manual
- Develop an advance course syllabus
- Revive education structures
- Upgrade and promote the EBMTTC
- Centralise and integrate education functions
- Integrate various themes into education programmes e.g. gender, HIV/AIDs. H/Safety etc.
- Build a useful data base at national level of those trained and their skills in order to encourage their application
- Monitor those we have trained and assess the impact they are making
- Develop computer literacy and applications
- Provide retraining and refresher courses for educators
- Access appropriate Institutes of Higher Education in order to secure accreditation

3.2. What was achieved

WHAT WAS PLANNED	WHAT WAS ACHIEVED	COMMENTS
Develop a 3 year strategic plan	The plan was developed	
Centralise education functions	In small scale	Shortage of Regional educators made it impossible to fully implement this
Build trained comrades database	Achieved at National level but not at the region and pillar	Regions and pillars not cooperative
Revive and revamp education structures	It is a process, first steps achieved	Unevenness depending from region to region and branch to branch
Build strong branches	Process is ongoing	Administration capacity for branches is the key to branch stability
Appoint branch educators in every branch	Not achieved	Very few branches have educators
Enforce and maintain a high	Partially achieved	Reports are being submitted. Quality output is suspect
Update the induction manual	Achieved	
Develop an intermediate manual	Achieved	
Develop a syllabus for an advance course	Achieved	
Develop a course for office bearers	Achieved	
Develop a course syllabus for women school	Achieved	
Set-up political cells in every branch	Not achieve	

WHAT WAS PLANNED	WHAT WAS ACHIEVED	COMMENTS
Retraining regional educators	Partially achieved and have refresher courses	Analysis of the regional educators and recommendations were not accepted by NOB's
Expose staff to political education and union organisation	Achieved but on a process basis	Not all staff have attended political and induction course
Develop mechanism of sharing what has been learned	Partially	Very few comrades do plough back and make an impact
Develop administration capacity at branch and regional level	Process	Computer course, report writing and minutes taking course, planning and time management
Facilitate political schools at regional and nationally	Partially	Not all regions were able to run political schools
Educate comrades about the sectors we are organising including economic trends and industry politics	Achieved but this is a process	
Design a course for all full time stewards	Achieved	There are still full time stewards to attend this course
Build awareness of various labour laws	Achieved	Facilitate week long and distributed material
Promote Health and Safety and HIV/AIDS awareness	On going	During advance course and women course we analyse and educate
Close identified skills gaps by engaging tertiary institutions	On going	We have identified finances, economic and sociology of work
Identify various programmes offered at tertiary level and identify comrades to be trained	Achieved	Technikon Natal WIT-MAP UNISA UCT Ditsela



4. CURRENT CONTEXT



The Education Department believes it is important that when assembling a strategic education plan for the next three years, a thorough discussion needs to take place within the Union as a whole about the context that we find ourselves in, and the challenges, which emerge, for our members.

What follows are the observations of the Education Department informed by the Unions Ten Year plan and other policy engagements. It is not an exhaustive survey that is offered here, but what are considered key points.

4.1. *The Economic Context*

- The continuing impact of the integration of S.A into the global economy, the resulting direction of government policies, the increased competition for foreign direct investment, the adoption of an orthodox privatisation programme, the decline of state influence in the private market, and the impact of largely external financial speculation on the rand.
- A marked tendency towards an over reliance on external consultants by government to lead restructuring processes which are expensive, undermine local capacity building, are often anti-union in character, and which are not accountable.
- The rapid change of ownership of mines and increasing diversity of ownership to forces outside of the country.
- The rapid growth of contract labour in all sectors especially in new operations, and moves towards generally more casualisation in the industry.

4.2 *The Political Context*

- There is an increased dislocation between government policies, the aspirations and needs of trade union members and the working class as a whole.

- There is a polarisation developing between the government and the Trade Union Movement on what practical economic measures are needed to address the needs of the working class
- There is an urgent need for trade union representatives and members to be able to articulate the Unions policies and be able to confidently popularise them more widely.
- There is a need to recognise that there has been a substantial change in the style of politics of government away from an inclusive and open exchange between alliance partners (etc) to a more closed, defensive and inflexible form of interaction.
- There has been a continuing decline in the political involvement of our people. Opportunities for maximising participation have not been rigorously explored. Instead, there appear to have been concerted efforts to marginalise genuine popular involvement in favour of substituting passive media campaigns as in many other parliamentary democracies. It is noted that demobilisation of this type is not good for any democracy and especially those like ours, which are still relatively new.
- Governments globally appear to want to distance themselves from the trade union movement, and see genuine partnerships as a liability as opposed to a key instrument for change. The role of Trade Unions as monitors of accountability and actual delivery by government is likely to increase, and be a source of some tension.
- There remains an urgent need for Unions to be alert to any measures or actions which result in divisions within the working class either by the actions of employers, or through the promotion of xenophobia for example, and other forms of discrimination by the ill-informed.

4.3 The Organisational Context

- The securing of a full time national executive to service the union is noted as a considerable achievement, but reinforces the need to help build and develop its individual and collective capacity both organisationally and politically.
- The growth of a pool of capable potential leaders at all levels in the Union is noted positively, but the unevenness of capacity is also recognised.



- Acknowledging the impact of what can be termed careerism in the wider trade union movement indicates in part the need to positively promote union values and build a sustainable working class consciousness.
- Evidence of a decline in membership involvement in union structures, with some exceptions, indicates a weakening of the effectiveness of local structures.
- Still limited and an uneven degree of participation in federation structures and the activities it organised is a cause of some concern, although a number of hopeful signs emerged during the anti-privatisation campaign.
- The continuing challenge of involving, recruiting and building the leadership capacity of women comrades in each sector of NUM remains a priority.

5. EMERGING EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

Having briefly surveyed the context we are now moving into, a number of emergent educational challenges can be noted as follows :

- We are sometimes, the victims of our own gains;
 - having successfully established agency funding, there is a need to address the misuse of agency fund benefits for personal gain
 - having successfully secured full time stewards, we then have to ensure that they do not become distant or fall outside of our traditions of accountability.
- There is a need to promote and instill the values of our Union and of socialism throughout the union as a unifying process.
- We need to both engage and then drive the processes emerging from new legislation e.g. Employment Equity and SDA etc, and in particular the development of union friendly WSP's and activity developed by the SETA's.
- There is a need to upgrade structures designed to incorporate and empower new categories of members, and in particular women members etc.
- There is a need to review the organisational elements of the Unions collective bargaining agreements in order to maintain a high degree of accountability, and ensure that members are properly serviced.



- The need to building strong branches as key focal points for membership involvement is a pressing priority.
- The need to escalate political and economic education to build confident, critical cadres who are able to engage the employer at plant and macro levels (global) remains a priority.
- We should continue to assess and acknowledge as a challenge, the potentially hazardous gaps which are opening up between the leadership and the Unions rank and file members, and seek measures to close them.
- We need to address emergent trends described as opportunism and careerism within the trade union movement which undermine notions of solidarity, collective responsibility and sacrifice for the common good.
- We need to develop an understanding of the importance of supporting our federation and ensuring close and integrated relations leading to a complementarity of the Unions education, and that provided by COSATU and Ditsela etc.
- We need to have a clear and consolidated education policy for the Union which comprehensively guides the Unions education work, and serves as a yardstick for measuring its impact.

6. THE PLAN

6.1 *Aims and Objectives of the Education Strategy*

- The overall objectives of this plan is to contribute decisively to the organisational goals as outlined in the Union's Ten Year Strategic Plan, its National Congress Resolutions, the Central Committee Resolutions and NESCO Conference Resolutions, including NEC directives.
- A key element is the provision of Political Education that leads to an enhanced solidarity within the union and that builds its strength and its determination to struggle for economic emancipation.
- To offer trade union education that enables comrades to critically see their reality for what it actually is, and not for what others outside of our movement would wish them to see. In other words to create a thinking, critical cadre who can contribute positively to defining the Unions approach to the challenges we face.
- Throughout the Union to deepen an understanding that trade unionism is a collective phenomenon, uniting all workers regardless of differences in order to protect and improve their living standard, and to transform society.



6.2 *Education as a tool of the working class*

We have learned from experience that members engage with the Union more effectively when they regard the union as their own collective property, and see themselves as the lifeblood of the union, and not some passive appendage or unimportant third party. This is the task of education. Education must empower!



Therefore, our members must be encouraged to volunteer, and when they do, they must be supported and given appropriate training and back up. Every effort must be made to engage members in organising and education drives of the union. This will help to develop a sense of ownership that the union belongs to them.

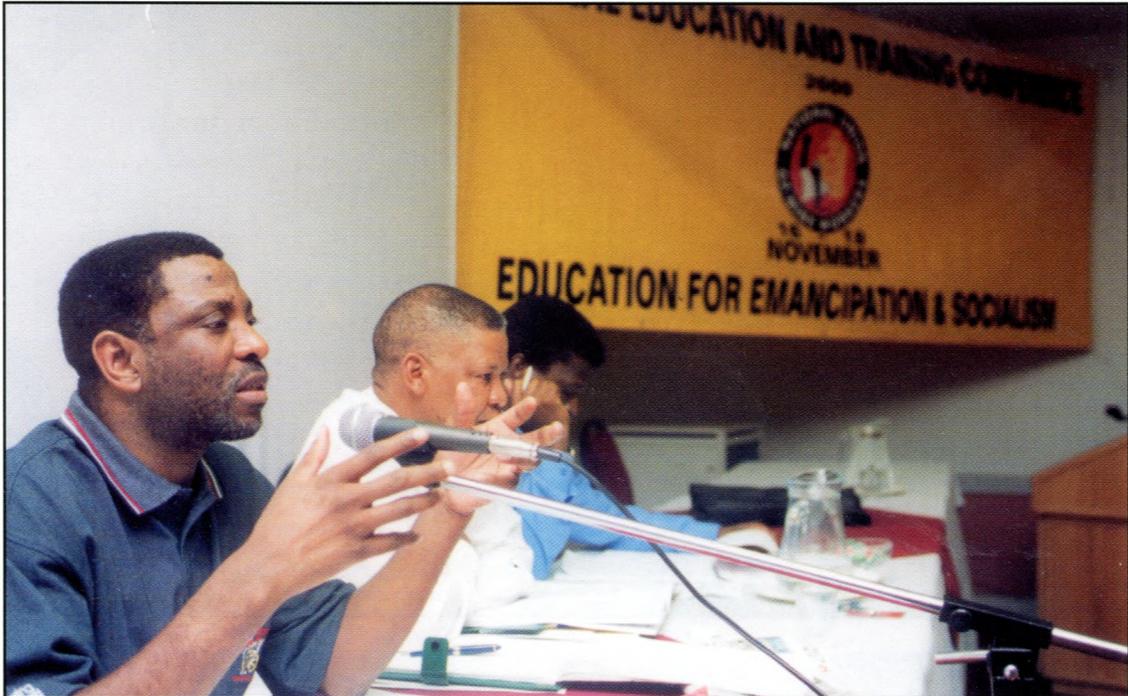
It must be understood that the class struggle is not a single event, but an on-going process, which can be aided by education for empowerment, solidarity, democracy, and a collective commitment to the aims and objectives of the union. That is why we say Education is the future.

6.3 *Basic Principles*

Our educational programme is informed by five basic principles.

- 6.3.1 It has to be universal. This means, it has to be available to everyone in the union irrespective of where they work, their sector or how big their branches are.

6.3.2 The education purpose must be to deepen organisational and political understanding. It must improve the work of the union as a collective. Our education provision is not primarily to benefit the individual or their promotion prospects. Individuals will, of course, grow and develop as a result of their involvement in education, but the emphasis must be on using new learnings to build an effective and efficient union as a collective responsibility, and through this to grasping a wider understanding and vision of labour in society.



6.3.3 Members and leaders who attend courses should be made aware that attendance carries the obligation to share their learnings with other members at branch, regional and national level. Our programmes should incorporate measures to help participants to do this more systematically.

6.3.4 The structure and content of our courses must reflect the fact that learning is a never ending process. Once comrades have started this process, they must plough back what they have learned back into the organisation and be encouraged to continue their education in order to revise and re-enforce your knowledge.

6.3.5 All of us must recognise that education in the union is a serious venture with obligations and responsibilities to organise, unite and share knowledge.

In order to fulfil these principles; a culture of valuing education must be deepened throughout the union.

Every member and staff must be aware of the importance and value of education to the union and to themselves. **Positive thinking about education is our costume of success.**

Therefore, we need to provide help and generate an interest in the work of the education department and its structures. We can do this by developing slogans and publicising our educational work more effectively through posters, pamphlets etc. and by seizing opportunities when they arise. (The stance adopted by the Minister of Education in relation to literacy gives us an opportunity to do this with support of the government.)

The success or failure of education in the union will depend on our ability to tailor education to the actual needs of our members and the Union as a whole. This will be reflected in the interest shown by our members in our education work. Our Key Performance Indicators (K.P.I.) will be a pool of members who recognise the value of education and who are intelligent and politically conscious. The ultimate goal, therefore, must be to develop and create an active cadreship with an appropriate mix of useful skills. Our approach should focus on mass education, and the education of shaft stewards, elected office bearers, and members staff of the NUM who represent the union in different structures.

6.4 Implementation tools

6.4.1 Centralisation of resources

- All education functions and resources need to be centralized to ensure that the impact is maximised and unnecessary duplication avoided. Education Officers should be deployed from time to time to run educational activities on the basis of their strengths regardless of their geographical location.
- The education work co-ordinated at national, regional, branch and company level should be captured in a national data-base. All structures shall, therefore, be encouraged to report their educational work to the department, and this information will be periodically made available to leadership structures of the Union .
- All training and self-development programmes of active union members, leaders and staff must also be reflected in our data-base.



6.4.2 Revive and revamp the role of education structures

The Regional and Branch Education Committees must be focused and be empowered to develop their programmes in line with the national education strategic plan, ten-year plan and regional strategic plans. Particular briefings may be necessary for this purpose.

6.4.3 Branch educators

Every branch shall have a branch educator to facilitate small scale and local training programmes and political cells or Umrabulo. The regional educators must be responsible for supporting the work of branch educators, education of shaft stewards and branch office bearers. We need to develop a crash course for all our branch educators.

The course should not be limited but focus on trade unionism, politics and how to deal with local issues within the framework of the union's constitution. It should give educators the confidence to deliver programmes effectively and stimulate demand further.

6.4.4 Discipline

We need to maintain a high standard of discipline. Meeting attendance targets and timings, report writing, and following-up those trained.

Specific training for Educators and Office Bearers for this may have to be provided.

6.4.5 Manual / Syllabus

The further development of manuals / syllabus on the refocused and emergent educational challenges remains essential. In addition, the capacity of the Education Department must be further built for this purpose.

6.4.6 Women Development

Education structures must continue to actively contribute to the implementation of the C.C. resolution on women development. Areas of focus such as, recruitment, the election of women stewards, and the establishment of women structures remain priorities. In addition, we must ensure that male comrades in the Union support these developments.



6.5 Education programme

6.5.1 Political cell

The Regional Educator must be responsible for the activities of the branch educators and for education of shaft stewards and branch office bearers within their respective regions or when temporarily deployed.

They must organise courses in collaboration with the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training College.

Our college must have the task of providing the national programmes for shaft stewards and office bearers, and for re-training regional educators. It must also organise workshops for all national office bearers, organisers and staff in general and provide refresher courses for each level of the union depending on the turn-over of staff.



There must continue to be an interaction between all levels so that members can see the bigger picture of educational provision in the union. Every comrade who attends a course must be encouraged and helped to report back or facilitate a similar course, so that the information and learnings acquired are spread for the benefit of other members.

6.5.2 Shaft Stewards Training

6.5.2.1 Induction Course

A basic problem remains of the high turnover of stewards, compounded by the practice or perception that management will promote the most active stewards and thereby reduce the unions human resource base.

This high turnover, may be encouraged by a tendency of some members to compete for positions because they think it will lead to promotion. Some stewards are effectively forced out of office because of rumouring, and/or personal or political rivalries.

This leads to a terrible waste of union resources and can cause disruption and disunity at branch and regional levels. Therefore, becoming a shaft steward has to be viewed as part of becoming a responsible leader. For this reason, all newly elected stewards must attend an induction course where these issues can be addressed, and where the Unions values can be absorbed.



6.5.2.2 *Intermediate Course*

Within a year of induction each steward should attend an intermediate course covering such issues as labour law, health and safety, negotiations skills, trade union organisation and understanding the political situation.

6.5.2.3 *Advanced Course*

These will be organised for all branch committee members, full time stewards, R.C members and shaft stewards who have attended their induction and intermediate courses. They will take the form of either one or two weekend courses in the region and a

one week course at the college during each year where practicable.

The purpose of the courses is to provide a deeper education in politics, economics, trade unionism, policy implementation, technical matters and in administration. After the course each comrade will be required to plough back and then attend a further national course to exchange views about the feed-backs and the problems faced by branches.

The principle of continuity must be maintained at this level so that we can provide refresher courses every year.

6.5.3 Office Bearers Course

- Members of NEC, NESCO and NAHSCO must be encouraged to attend this course. The course will deal with an in depth analysis of the main issues facing the union.
- It will cover the state of the mining, energy and construction industries, the conditions of the trade union movement nationally and internationally, the Tripartite Alliance, the wider political situation and the role of NUM at home and abroad. Appropriate specialists in various fields will be invited to lead discussions.
- The courses will deal with the problems of recruitment, servicing members effectively, factors influencing the efficiency of the union, relations with local communities, involvement in COSATU, SACP and ANC structures. The practical mechanisms for reporting back to constituencies must be agreed upon after every course.

6.5.4 Regional Educators

- Regional Educators will be encouraged to attend refresher courses in order to equip them to conduct our evolving educational work with confidence. Their courses will be a combination of political economy, project management, organisational development, and administration and facilitation methods.

6.5.5 National course for staff members

Each year we may have to ensure that every staff member in groups attend this course. The course will consist of information and discussions about the general political, economic situation, and the state of our organisation. This will ensure that staff members are consistently made aware of the issues facing the union membership and leadership. Other courses will be developed in consultation with the Human Resources Unit, NOC members and the Secretariat.

7. SUMMARY OF EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Our courses will be attached to the following pillars:

7.1 *Political Understanding and Clarity*

It is the function of the Education Department and its structures to raise the political consciousness of the membership.

By this we mean advancing an understanding by members of the South African capitalist system, the reasons for the formation of trade unions, their functions and methods.

It is vital that this understanding arises out of a class analysis of South African society. Members and staff must know that they are involved in a class struggle and it is this that generates commitment to the union and more generally working class solidarity. This will also alert staff to the dangers of class collaboration and measures, which undermine workers power, and our members' just demands.



7.2 Technical and Industrial Knowledge

A technical and industrial understanding of our industry by stewards is becoming increasingly vital. Stewards cannot represent members, or engage employers effectively if they do not understand for example, the production of electricity constructions operations and minerals, the patterns of ownership, the workings of the markets, geological considerations and the diseases and hazards associated with our industry. Our active comrades are not mining engineers or geologists but they do know a great deal about the industry. We must help them galvanise this knowledge, expand it, and be able to question the decisions of management and provide alternative courses of action. Towards the thinking union - NUM.

7.3 Administration

There is a tendency in the union, which tends to undermine administrative functions and equate administration with typing and answering telephone calls. Much of our work is administrative. Consultation, the allocation of tasks and mobilization involve administration and organizing. It also entails the convening of meetings and their facilitation, the writing of reports and minutes, the formulating of resolutions and the development of strategic plans and putting them into practice.

Members must know, what constitutes branch work and how to service members on daily basis.

7.4 Shaft Steward Training

We need to have a clear link between induction and intermediate course. An individual must graduate in the union courses because we have made provision for a systematic advancement.

7.5 Focused courses

In this case, we refer to tailor-made courses such as Compensation, Labour Law, Housing, Women and the Law, HIV/AIDS etc.

7.6 Outside Service Providers

The union will identify programmes and courses provided by service providers and select comrades to attend these courses;

- Ditsela
- Naledi
- Institutions of High Learning
- COSATU
- ICEM

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.2 Resource allocation

For the next three years the following resources must be committed to the education structures for the success of its strategic plan;

8.2.1 Staffing

- Ten regional educators that is one regional educator for the ten regions of NUM
- One National Education Co-ordinator
- Two National Educators
- Three education officers who will focus on the skills development act and the three setas i.e. mining, energy and construction

8.2.2. Finances as per attached budget guide

- In house training and development
- Structures activities and campaigns
- Membership development programmes offered by institution of higher learning and other labour service providers
- Administrative costs / overheads



9. CONCLUSION

The importance of education can be advanced by linking union education with experience in the organisation. This plan is designed in such a way that it caters for everybody in the union.

Therefore, resource allocation and prioritisation will be essential. It will be important that this strategic plan is reviewed and updated every year.

"National Union of Mineworkers"

"Projection of Education Expenses : 2002 to 2005"

Years	2002	2003	2004	2005	TOTAL
Category :	R	R	R	R	R
In - house training :	1,376,600.00	1,514,260.00	1,665,686.00	1,832,254.60	6,388,800.60
Advance course	203,100.00	223,410.00	245,751.00	270,326.10	942,587.10
Branch educators training	136,800.00	150,480.00	165,528.00	182,080.80	634,888.80
Computer Course - Basic	541,800.00	595,980.00	655,578.00	721,135.80	2,514,493.80
Full time shaft stewards course	81,000.00	89,100.00	98,010.00	107,811.00	375,921.00
Induction course - newly elected stewards	59,900.00	65,890.00	72,479.00	79,726.90	277,995.90
Intermediate courses	93,700.00	103,070.00	113,377.00	124,714.70	434,861.70
Labour law course	121,100.00	133,210.00	146,531.00	161,184.10	562,025.10
National Political School	9,000.00	9,900.00	10,890.00	11,979.00	41,769.00
Regional Political Schools	49,200.00	54,120.00	59,532.00	65,485.20	228,337.20
Women and the law course	81,000.00	89,100.00	98,010.00	107,811.00	375,921.00
Activities related :	1,538,800.00	723,140.00	795,454.00	2,020,819.40	5,078,213.40
Breakaway	15,000.00	16,500.00	18,150.00	19,965.00	69,615.00
Education staff national meetings, planning and development workshops	26,500.00	29,150.00	32,065.00	35,271.50	122,986.50
Fincom	4,200.00	4,620.00	5,082.00	5,590.20	19,492.20
National Education conference	504,000.00	-	-	655,200.00	1,159,200.00
Nesco	110,900.00	121,990.00	134,189.00	147,607.90	514,686.90
Nesco Nobs	9,000.00	9,900.00	10,890.00	11,979.00	41,769.00
Nobs regional visits	11,300.00	12,430.00	13,673.00	15,040.30	52,443.30
Regional Education conferences	377,400.00	-	-	490,620.00	868,020.00
Regional visits	3,300.00	3,630.00	3,993.00	4,392.30	15,315.30
Rescos	408,100.00	448,910.00	493,801.00	543,181.10	1,893,992.10
Resco robs	69,100.00	76,010.00	83,611.00	91,972.10	320,693.10
Membership Development :	1,226,100.00	1,603,450.00	1,763,795.00	1,940,174.50	6,533,519.50
Institutions of higher learning - K.L.S, Unisa,	-	-	-	-	-
R.A.U., Ditsela	86,600.00	350,000.00	385,000.00	423,500.00	1,245,100.00
Natal Technikon	1,139,500.00	1,253,450.00	1,378,795.00	1,516,674.50	5,288,419.50
Administration :	189,800.00	206,905.00	225,589.25	246,001.49	868,295.74
Cellular costs	12,000.00	13,200.00	14,520.00	15,972.00	55,692.00
Computer rentals	9,000.00	9,900.00	10,890.00	11,979.00	41,769.00
Consultancy fees	20,000.00	22,000.00	24,200.00	26,620.00	92,820.00
Motor vehicle costs	56,200.00	61,820.00	68,002.00	74,802.20	260,824.20
Printing	29,500.00	32,450.00	35,695.00	39,264.50	136,909.50
Salaries and contributions	62,500.00	66,875.00	71,556.25	76,565.19	277,496.44
Stationery	600	660	726	798.6	2,784.60
	4,047,755.00	4,450,524.25	6,039,249.99	18,868,829.24	

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

08 September

The Scourge of Illiteracy

The National Union of Mineworkers welcomes this opportunity to highlight the need to eradicate the apartheid scourge of illiteracy from our country. We say scourge because it lies at the base of the social evils we have to tackle if we are to give all people full and happy lives. Illiteracy is confined to the poor; it is the source of ignorance and the cause of uninformed and misguided action. It can lead to political manipulation because illiterate people do not have access to the ideas, wisdom and experiences of others in history and contemporary society.

A Collective Cultural Question

We in the NUM see the need for literacy from two perspectives. Firstly, and most profoundly, it is a collective cultural issue. People who do not read and write cannot benefit from the vast literature that tells us about the developments, successes and failures in the social, natural and physical sciences. They cannot learn from the experiences of others that their poverty and social deprivation is suffered by others beyond their villages and townships, in other communities and lands. Nor can they communicate their own beliefs to others. They cannot learn about the universal and structural causes of their suffering and interact with others about it. In other words, illiteracy obstructs the development of a collective consciousness that leads to political enlightenment and progress. Under apartheid, it was a deliberately conceived device to impose repression. It is no less an important source of repression, though of a different kind, in the New South Africa.

The Avenue to Material Advancement

The second perspective has both individual and societal implications. Illiterate people cannot proceed through the educational system; they cannot develop their skills and obtain the material benefits for themselves and their families from having valued occupational qualifications. Related to this is the critical need for an educated, skilled labour force to enable South Africa to supply its citizens with rising living standards in a competitive world economy. South Africa's future lies in its competence to move with new technology, not in its military prowess.

An Intolerable Situation

What NUM is saying is that literacy is the base line for political, social and economic progress. If this is the case, then the question is why do we not treat it as such? Why does the government tolerate intolerable levels of literacy? We in the mining industry have a workforce of which approximately 20 per cent is entirely unschooled and 40 per cent is functionally illiterate. If this picture is a reflection of the national situation then it is entirely intolerable. In other words, it is a national crisis.

Inadequate Steps

We recognise that the government has taken many steps, such as the Skills Development Act, the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Levy Act to improve the level of education and that schemes such as ABET, RPL and AA have been initiated, in which we play an important role. We have found, however, that those schemes in which employers have a role as partners are manipulated to suit their needs rather than those of the workers. In any case, ad hoc measures cannot solve such a massive, universal problem.

Universally Free Education

NUM suggests taking two steps. The first is to establish a universally free education system through which children can proceed without impediment until they have passed through the functional literacy stage and, if they wish, to higher education. By no reckoning can our education be described as free. Nor is it adequately funded. The problem of illiteracy is far greater and more immediate than external threats. NUM suggests that money designated for defence should be re-routed to education.

Community Campaigns

Illiteracy is not confined to children. The most seriously afflicted are those who in the past were denied schooling. Literacy would benefit all people of all ages. We cannot achieve it, as we have learned, by voluntary measures that rely on individual initiatives. We need a mass campaign, of the kind successfully undertaken in Cuba after its revolution, where young people with reading and writing skills go into the villages and townships through the organisation of the ANC and the SACP, and under their protection, to teach everyone who needs it to be literate.

Action Now

Eliminating illiteracy can be an exciting political venture. NUM urges the government to embark on it immediately as its first priority. It could make this International Literacy Day a day to be remembered in the annals of South African history.

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