

## **NASCEE's Regional Chapter Event in Johannesburg: Enhancing Educational Change through Collaboration**

18 JULY 2024



Collaboration stands as a crucial driver for educational change, and forming strategic partnerships can significantly amplify the impact of social development interventions. The multifaceted challenges in education demand more than isolated efforts; they require a collective approach to identify problems and implement sustainable solutions. Recognizing this, the government has increasingly prioritized the collaborative social compact approach, seeking practical ways to implement it.

NASCEE, an organization rooted in the power of collaborative networks, facilitates dialogues among key stakeholders on this topic. The NASCEE Gauteng Regional Chapter Networking event, held at Rand Merchant Bank on 18 July, brought together government officials and numerous guests to explore how NGOs and NPOs can better collaborate with the government to improve educational outcomes.



## Panel and Participant Discussions

The event featured a panel discussion with key figures from the Gauteng Department of Education and the National Education Collaboration Trust. The panelists included:

- Thea Coetser: District Director, Tshwane North
- Somikazi Chabalala: District Director, Gauteng East
- Thapelo Dlamini: Director of Strategic Partnerships
- Deva Govender: Education Programme Manager, National Education Collaboration Trust
- Giles Gillett: Panel Moderator and NASCEE CEO

**The overarching question addressed was: “How can NGOs/NPOs work better with government?” Each panelist shared their insights on the following topics:**

1. **Priorities and Challenges:** Identifying district-specific needs and how NGOs can support them.
2. **Successful Programmes:** Highlighting effective educational initiatives and their outcomes.
3. **Collaboration Improvements:** Discuss how NGO-district collaborations have worked and can be enhanced.
4. **Engagement Advice:** Offering strategies for NGOs to effectively engage with government at provincial or district levels.



## Summary of Panelist Inputs

THEA COETSER: GDE DISTRICT DIRECTOR, TSHWANE NORTH

Coetser emphasized the importance of integrating district officials in NGO planning to ensure sustainable outcomes. She shared that effective communication between districts and NGOs is crucial, and district officials can assist with school selection and smooth project implementation.



Successful examples included the involvement of district curriculum coordinators in the INVESTEC Saturday workshop programme and the continuation of the 6 Bricks LEGO project through planned handover processes.

SOMIKAZI CHABALALA: GDE DISTRICT DIRECTOR, GAUTENG EAST

Chabalala highlighted the district's focus on building learning foundations for improving literacy and numeracy, especially with the migration of Early Childhood Development functions to the Department of Basic Education. She stressed the importance of good communication systems and shared successful collaborations with NGOs like the [South African Depression and Anxiety Group \(SADAG\)](#) and [Teach SA](#).

THAPELO DLAMINI: GDE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Dlamini discussed the role of his directorate in aligning NGO projects with government priorities through an assessment tool that maps NGO offerings to district needs. He advocated for an integrated approach to interventions, involving multiple government departments to address complex challenges comprehensively. He emphasized the importance of proactive engagement with both funders and implementers.



Govender outlined the NECT's role in enabling key stakeholders to collaborate effectively with government. He advised NGOs to align their focus areas with government priorities and to consider interventions at various levels, including district, learner, teacher, and parental. He highlighted the [Integrated District Improvement Programme \(IDIP\)](#) as a framework for NGOs to use in aligning their efforts with district needs.

## Key Discussion Themes

### Challenges and Processes of Collaboration

Participants shared their experiences and challenges in establishing and maintaining partnerships with districts. Communication blockages and staffing capacity issues were noted, along with the need for a centralized database to link NGOs with the appropriate district officials. The idea of joint discussions among NGOs with Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) was considered to explore demand and supply issues in support programmes.

### Attitudes and Funding Models

The importance of mutual respect and understanding between NGOs and government officials was emphasized. Attitudes towards collaboration should shift from competition to cooperation, informed by government plans. Funders' involvement in NGO-government conversations was also highlighted to ensure alignment of priorities and long-term sustainability of programmes.

### Technology Interventions

The need to avoid duplication in technology interventions was noted, with an emphasis on effective change management for long-term impact. Higher Education Institutes were also recognized for their role in partnering with districts, especially in teacher development.





## Literacy, Numeracy, and Multilingualism

Support for literacy and numeracy in early education was deemed critical, with ongoing questions about the role of multilingualism. The complexity of language issues in Gauteng, due to the diverse population, was acknowledged .

### Data as Evidence

The importance of using both quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate successful programme outcomes was discussed, with a call to shift the emphasis to include crucial qualitative insights.

### Conclusion

The NASCEE Regional Chapter event in Johannesburg underscored the significance of collaborative efforts in addressing educational challenges. By fostering open dialogue and sharing successful strategies, the event provided valuable insights into how NGOs and government can work together more effectively to create lasting educational change.

