

**Essential requirements for an effective education strategy**  
**Yusuf Sayed**  
**Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa and University**  
**of Sussex, UK**

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Let me begin by thanking the Chairperson, the Independent Expert, and the Secretariat for inviting me and arranging this discussion on what is a most neglected aspect of education. And as more and more children enrol, it is the most marginalised and vulnerable, the minorities, who have no access to good quality education. And it is not just children, there are about more than 770 million illiterate adult the majority of who are women. And if Education for All is to be achieved by 2015, then the education rights and needs of minorities must become paramount. And this urgency is more pressing; as the Education for All goal of universal primary school requires that all children should be in school by no later than 2009 if we want each child to complete a minimum cycle of 7 years of good quality primary schooling by 2015.

The first and obvious point to make is that a more inclusive education system is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected, promoted and advanced. What is also needed are, as learning from experiences of promoting gender equality reveal, conditions outside the education system, in society, in which the rights of minorities are guaranteed. Greater synergy between education reform and societal transformation is crucial in developing a more coherent, holistic and joined up approach to protecting and advancing the rights of minorities.

Drawing on my research and policy experiences, I will consider two aspects in relation to the section '*essential requirements for an effective education strategy*'. First I will reflect on the recommendations highlighting key issues. Second, I will consider key aspects that need further attention.

But I think it is most appropriate to begin by stating that what is listed as essential requirements of an effective education strategy might be better cast as principles (perhaps they can be considered as operational principles) for designing and delivering education systems that are responsive to the needs of minorities. Otherwise it is likely that the discussion will focus on what is essential and what is not, and, also, much of what is listed as recommendation from part IV onwards of the document are also essential. Thus, it is much better to start off by outlining key principles for education delivery as the first section of the recommendation.

Second, a starting point is that ultimately the need of minorities are in one way similar to that of all learners, that is, the need for good quality education that is accessible, relevant, responsive and acceptable. Minorities don't need, as the South African apartheid system prior to 1994 poignantly illustrates (although note here we were talking about a majority but the principle is the same) a segregated, separate and inferior, second chance education system. This does not however preclude us from considering certain conditions under which affirmative action is necessary and important in ensuring equality for all. Unity can be achieved through diversity – they are not two opposing approaches and value systems.

In reflecting on the recommendations listed (note I refer to them as numbers 1-10 although they are not numbered in the document –see Annex below), it is helpful to consider them as related to five sets of principles; principles which are key to an education system that meet the needs and rights of minorities:

1. Principle One (*the legislative framework*): the protection, promotion and advance of the right of minorities to, in and through education is not a matter of political charity, or benign rule. It is right which must be constitutionally and legislatively enshrined as captured in the first two recommendations
2. Principle Two (*Financing*): Constitutional and legislative guarantees are not sufficient if they are not matched by adequate resourcing and financing of education provision that is tailored to meet the need of minorities as captured in recommendations 4 and 5. However, a question to consider is whether constitutional and legislative guarantees should include what financial support should be guaranteed for minorities.
3. Principle Three (*Voice and participation*): The principle of voice and participation is captured in recommendation three which is that any education decision about minorities should include their participation.
4. Principle Four (*Delivery and input*): Recommendations 6, 7, 9, 10 relate to specific aspects of education delivery, availability and input for minorities. In essence they refer to the need that education should be made available at all levels (not just basic), that it should be accessible, and that it should be responsive
5. Principle Five (*Teachers*): This is an important principle/element as teachers are the single most important investment in education as well as being key to what learners experience. The actions of teachers can do much to overcome discrimination yet their practices may have an adverse effect on the demand for, and experiences of, education by minorities.

In the time remaining I want to add to the five principles and suggest what could be added/nuanced to increase their effect and impact.

1. *Financing*: it is important to clarify what is meant by 'to the maximum of their resources available'. In this respect, it needs to be made clear that lack of resources cannot and should not be used as an excuse for the denial of the rights of minorities to education. It should also, as the experiences of the charging of school fees illustrate, reduce and remove all other education cost that minorities

bear including tuition fees, cost, etc. Thus there need to be a clearer statement that costs cannot be a deterrent for minorities to access good quality education. It is also important to clarify what is meant by 'international assistance and cooperation'. It should state precisely that international aid should include education financing that support the rights of minorities.

2. *Voice and participation:* the recommendation on voice and participation could be strengthened as it should be more than just being heard. It should be about control over decisions and about the obligation on state to consult meaningfully with minorities. In other words, minority participation should be more than advisory. Thus the recommendation on voice should include clear reference to decision making powers and should specify the mechanisms and structures through which participation is elicited. It should also make consultation with minorities by state parties on education matters mandatory.
3. *Teachers:* There is a need| to clarify that there are important principles which relate to the role of teachers in promoting the rights of minorities to, in, and through education. First, it is clear, as the recommendations state, that adequate financial and other incentives need to be put in place to attract teachers to work in areas where minorities are located. Second, the principle of teachers should, also consider creating incentives to attract more teacher from minorities into the teaching profession and overcoming current obstacles and barriers. Third, it is important that the initial (and ongoing) teacher education training and support should more adequately prepare teachers for working with minorities in a positive and affirming manner. Fourth, in ensuring that minority groups are well served, it is important that attention is paid to instruction in home language and that teachers are competent to do so.

While the above has focused mainly on the recommendations relating to this session, I would like to end by making three general remarks which I consider important in the discussion over the two days

1. It is important that there is an explicit recommendation regarding the collection and reporting on education data and indicators relating to the position of minorities. I note that this is stated as a core principle but I think there should be a specific recommendation on this. Otherwise it will be difficult to hold state parties and other role players such as international agencies accountable for progress. The recommendation on reporting should be based on the discussions that emerge during these two days.
2. Greater alignment and coherence is needed between the recommendations on minorities that is being discussed during these two days and existing instruments and processes. Such a list (which is by no means exhaustive) include instruments such as CEDAW, UDHR, CRC, ICESCR, OCHCR and processes such as the EFA Working Group and the Education High Level Group (HLG).
3. It is important in a document of this kind to clarify what the definition of minority is. Such a definition will enable a much sharper and focused discussion about whose rights are being discussed.

Thank you.

*Annex One: Draft Recommendations 'Essential requirement for an effective education strategy*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. States should approach the education of minorities in a positive spirit. Measures should be adopted by States to actively implement education rights to the maximum of their available resources, individually and through international assistance and co-operation.</li><li>2. States should review, enact and amend legislation where necessary to eliminate discrimination and promote quality education for all members of minorities.</li><li>3. States should create conditions enabling institutions which are representative of minorities to participate in a meaningful way in the development and implementation of policies and programmes relating to education for minorities.</li><li>4. The costing of educational policies should proceed accurately as possible on the basis of holistic appraisals of minority needs.</li><li>5. Budgetary allocations for minority education should be transparent and amenable to external scrutiny.</li></ol>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Institutions and programmes for the education of minorities must be made available, including buildings, teachers and appropriate teaching materials including books in the mother tongue of the minorities.</li><li>7. Educational services should be arranged in order to reach minority communities throughout the national territory, and should be adequate to address the needs of such communities.</li><li>8. States should recognise that the adequate recruitment, training and incentivisation of teachers to work in areas inhabited predominantly by members of minorities is a factor of utmost importance in the delivery of adequate educational services and should arrange teacher training programmes accordingly.</li><li>9. State or local policies of educational segregation through special classes or special schools for minority pupils, including policies leading to over-representation of minority pupils in such, are strongly discouraged and in no case should minority pupils be assigned to special classes or schools simply on the basis of their ethnicity.</li><li>10. Education should be available at all levels for minorities, from pre-school to tertiary education, as well as technical and vocational education, on a basis of equality with other learners.</li></ol> |