

MTP/204/204/4  
National Co-ordinating Committee

**NCCR**

for the Repatriation of South African Exiles

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The Director-General  
Department of National Education  
PRETORIA

*M. Tickly*

Dear Dr Garbers

Request for interview

As already mentioned to Mrs van As per telephone, we request that you agree to meet a delegation of four people representing the NCCR and some of the bodies associated with its National Education Task Force, in order to discuss and consider the issues raised in the enclosed memorandum. It would be appreciated if you could set an early date in view of the point made in No. 18 of the memorandum.

The delegation will consist of

Dr F.E. Auerbach  
Mr No. Cloete  
Mr L. Mabandla  
Mr M. Tickly

We do hope you will accede to our request, and look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

*F. E. Auerbach*

Chairperson  
National Education Task Force, NCCR



## RETURNING EXILES : LANGUAGE PROBLEMS IN THEIR EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that of ca 30 000 returnees some 7 000 are likely to be of school-going age; in addition some others will clearly wish to enter tertiary education.
2. Many of these children and young people will not enter our schools with the language knowledge they would have acquired if they had grown up in South Africa, but this is not unique, as we have had large numbers of children in our schools in the past who have come from various parts of the world with language capacities that did not match those of local children at the time the immigrants entered our schools.
3. There are certain concessions that are made in our education regulations to allow "immigrant children" to acquire the language competencies of South African children. These should be applied to the present group of children and young people entering the country. NB The argument that these are South African children, not "foreigners" entering the country, should not be used against them, as they are in fact entering the country after schooling - and in many cases having been born - abroad.
4. A factor to be borne in mind is that most of the principals and teachers who will be asked to admit and to teach these pupils have little experience of accepting and helping pupils in this situation: they need to be informed about the nature and normality of such problems.
5. At Junior primary level newly enrolled pupils will soon adapt to the language medium of the school, even if it is new to them, particularly if it is widely spoken in their neighbourhood and in the playground, and possibly in their homes. At this level, lack of knowledge of the language of instruction should therefore NOT be used to deny returnee children access to the school, nor should they, save in exceptional cases, have to be "put back" a year because of the language problem. Especially at the beginning of the school year they will have time to adapt to the local situation during the school year.  
*Educ Dept will help*
6. Schools should, however, make arrangements to help returnee children by arranging additional tuition to help them adapt more rapidly to the school's language situation. Possibly methods of handling such tuition could be discussed at regional level among inspectors, principals and teachers once the nature of the problems is better known.  
*Guidance for Depts*
7. It is likely that quite a number of returning children, while unacquainted with Afrikaans and possibly with the school's African language, may in fact be more competent in English than some of the local pupils. Since English is of increasing importance in education as pupils advance up the educational ladder, such improved competence, where it exists, will benefit the pupil in his/her school progress.  
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8. As is the case with other "immigrant" children, concessions need to be laid down concerning the postponement of any requirement that Afrikaans must be a passing subject before the pupil can be promoted to the next higher standard. It is suggested that any such requirement, where it is applicable, be postponed for three years in the case of returning exiles. (They must study the subject, but failing it should not debar them from promotion to the next higher standard.)
9. It should be noted that such concessions need to be made not only in DET schools, but also in schools under other departments, in which children competent in English and possibly living near the schools concerned may be enrolled.



10. In Stds 3 - 5 in African schools there will be no problem with the medium of instruction where the children who are coming home have had previous instruction through the medium of English, though they will have to adapt to the African language being taught in the school where applicable, and of course to Afrikaans.
11. Similar remarks apply to Stds 6-8 in high schools: concessions need to be made about pass requirements in languages other than English during the first 2-3 years. These would need to be agreed to at national level, and communicated to all schools systems affected.
12. At Std 9 and 10 level there are existing concessions that apply to immigrant children, concerning Afrikaans. These would need to be applied to the returnee children as well.
13. In addition, there may be a problem concerning children enrolling in Std 9 and 10 who have no second language to offer: this would debar them from obtaining a Std 10 qualification entitling them to go to university in South Africa under present conditions. Some of them, because of their previous schooling, may be able to offer Portuguese, or possibly German, but many may not. Here again, a reasonable exemption from a second language, and possibly instead the inclusion of another subject, needs to be allowed for a limited period.
14. It is recommended that such concessions as are made to returnee children and young people be granted for a four-year period, i.e. 1992-1995.
15. Concerning university admission, it is recommended that candidates with 4 or more subjects at O-levels be given conditional exemption for a period of 3 years, provided that the passes are at grade C or above. Admission would need to be jointly arranged by the JMB or its successor body and the universities. Candidates with conditional exemption should be submitted to university selection procedures.  
? { On completion of 3 or more courses during 2 academic years the student should be given full exemption. This could be done in a manner similar to that used by universities for mature age exemptions.
16. Concerning technikons and colleges of education, it is suggested that a similar conditional exemption be granted, except that possibly a minimum of 3 O-level subject passes be accepted as the minimum. The first year should be passed within 2 years of study.
17. UNICEF expects most people to have been repatriated by the end of April 1992. Moreover, almost 1000 people of school-going age ranges have already returned. It is therefore very important that these issues be decided on in time so that they may apply from the opening of the 1992 academic year.
18. In conclusion it should be emphasised that adaptation to new social and educational circumstances is of itself a fairly traumatic process. It is therefore important that schooling or post-school study should ease that process. These pupils should be welcomed and helped. We should therefore avoid placing educational and bureaucratic hurdles in their path.