

NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
(NUSED)

ASSESSMENT REPORT OF NUSED SECRETARY GENERAL
AND SECRETARY GENERAL ELECT

49th NUSAS CONGRESS

RHODES UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 30 to DECEMBER 3, 1972

(B) ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING OF NUSED

This assessment will focus on three main aspects in order to provide a basis for analysis of what the delegates to this Congress want NUSED to become during 1973: firstly an assessment of what NUSED consists of at present and of what it could comprise, ie what is involved in NUSED and what could be involved in NUSED; secondly, we have looked at some of the problems which have hampered the functioning of NUSED over the past two years; thirdly, we have looked at some of the areas in which NUSED could function next year.

It must be remembered how NUSED was conceived in this discussion. It was felt in 1970 when the affiliate structure was evolved after a long and painful assessment of the National Union, NUSED was seen as a student organisation involved in education based on the individual motivations of the students. In this way, it would be an individual membership organisation involved in education in South Africa today. Around this specific interest and motivation, it was hoped that NUSED would develop.

At the reassessment congress in July 1970, the first programs were developed, including such programs as Education Reform, Residence Reform, Political Awareness and so on. These names and descriptions have been analysed, criticised and sometimes rejected. But their shadows still haunt us, as shown in a recent NUSED circular at UCT.

This is how it began. What exist now?

NUSED, FUNCTIONALLY

Today, NUSED functions as officially on six different campuses. Here there are chairmen and committees of various sizes.

At Wits and UND, the committees have functioned reasonably effectively. At Rhodes and UCT, the committees have functioned sporadically. At JCE and UNP the committees have hardly functioned.

Nevertheless, on these campuses we have groups committed to being involved in education and change in South Africa. They have structures and resources. And they form part of the loose national organisation which comes together at congresses, seminars and other meetings.

What are their resources? (i) They have individual members, some of whom are actively involved (ii) They have finance and administrative resources - in varying degrees (iii) The members are deeply concerned about the state of education in our society - and they are committed to change in this particular field and, indeed, in the whole society

(iv) The NUSED committees have some degree of legitimacy in that they are officially recognised within the universities

Then, there is NUSED head office, consisting of an elected Secretary General and a General Secretary the former works fulltime on NUSED and the latter spends approximately three quarters of her working time on NUSED.

Head office resources include (1) considerable amount of resource material on education (2) a large number of press cuttings on education (3) administrative resources, particularly finance, printing material etc. (4) Administers loans, scholarships and prison education program (5) the full time involvement of two officials.

OTHER GROUPS NOT INVOLVED IN NUSED

Various groups function on the campuses in similar fields to NUSED but with no official link and frequently little involvement and co-operation. Indeed, in most cases student involvement in education reform is limited and sporadic.

These groups include (i) the Education Commissions and Education Committees which are subcommittees of SRCs affiliated to the National Union

(ii) education subcommittees in the faculty councils.

- (iii) various senior students who have either served on SRCs or in NUSED committees previously
- (iv) the education programs initiated by Staff and Lecturer Associations at the universities

Outside of the universities links have been maintained with various organisations involved in education programs. These organisations include SPROCAS 2, SA Institute of Race Relations, SACHED, teachers organisations and other groups. Essentially contact and liaison with these groups by NUSED Committees or to other university groups is often sporadic and short-term although NUSED head office tries to keep in touch on a regular and effective basis with most of these groups.

In general, therefore, NUSED does not involve many groups at present and it is often sporadic and short term revolving around immediate problems.

PROBLEMS OF DIRECTION

Numerous problems of direction can be isolated with the existing situation in NUSED

- (1) on a local level, committees have involved themselves in too many diverse and broad goals and projects. Rather than limiting themselves to specific attainable goals they have faced the broad issues without getting down to the nitty-gritty of it all. This involves hard work and dedication. It also involves setting attainable and realistic goals. This means that a realistic assessment of the resources of the NUSED committees must be made before any projects are undertaken. In particular, the broad and ill-defined Education Reform or Political Awareness programs proved to be a major bug bear in the organisation.
- (2) On both a local and a national level, students have not defined their areas of action sufficiently. NUSED groups cannot ever reform the whole education system on their own. It is naive to either attempt to do so or to implicitly have this as an underlying motive. In other words, we must restrict our perspective to attainable goals and programs.
- (3) Not enough students are involved in educational work. While considerable concern was expressed about education during the FREE EDUCATION campaign, NUSED was not able to provide a constructive and relevant outlet in which students could work when the mass involvement died down. There were projects into which students could have spent their energy, but the committees and other groups were not able or did not do anything about it. The NUSED committees have thus tended to become small groups without strong grass roots links with other students.
- (4) In this respect many of the projects already undertaken by the NUSED committees did not motivate either the members of the committees or others sufficiently to see them through. For example, how many fundraising programs were discussed? and how many were actually implemented?
- (5) In all the committees, there has been considerable lack of continuity with a high turnover of students - with the subsequent lack of effectiveness. In addition few senior students have been involved in these programs and this has affected effectiveness.
- (6) In this set up it is not surprising that the contact between the NUSED committees and the general mass of students has been limited and not very effective. NUSED must be able to communicate with students - and students must be able to communicate with NUSED. At present this is not really taking place.
- (7) Communication between Head Office and local committees and vice versa has not been good. On one level, this has particularly been the fault of the head office. For example, one can hardly hope for much to be achieved with fundraising if the people who should be doing the work on the campuses have not actually been informed for example of the medical scholarships program and why South Africa needs more doctors. The lack of communication takes place on various levels - and it is a two-way process. It is not much fun for a Secretary General to write letters or send circulars which are unanswered - and to which there has not been much

response. This has been illustrated on some levels with Funda the main interest for which has not been from students.

(8) The present Secretary General has been involved in NUSED from the start and is a little tired. New enthusiasm and ideas are very necessary in head office.

These are most of the main problems with NUSED as we see it at present

BUT

While this assessment is harsh, one must nevertheless appreciate that NUSED has achieved much :

- (1) More students have been assisted by NUSED in the medical scholarships program than ever before
- (2) More was given out in loans as far in 1972 than ever before since 1949
- (3) a general scholarships program has been launched
- (4) Two trust funds for the scholarships and loan programs have been established
- (5) In spite of considering difficulties the prison education program functions reasonably well
- (6) Much of the impetus behind the Free Education campaign came from NUSED committees
- (7) Funda has been launched and established, providing useful outlet for new ideas on education
- (8) NUSED has evolved into the largest student charter organisation in South Africa
- (9) A much praised and sometimes criticised YOU AND YOUR PASS booklet has been published and distributed widely
- (10) A CHARTER OF STUDENT RIGHTS has been adopted and accepted by most SRCs affiliated to NUSAS. This charter lays down what students regard as their rights
- (11) An education conference is being arranged before congress next year
- (12) A large number of students are being tutored by university students in one of the most significant programs carried out by NUSAS
- (13) A large number of schoolbooks were distributed to African schools during the year.

.....AND NOW

We believe that there are a number of projects which can involve students significantly more than ever before and which can help overcome the problems outlined above:

Firstly, we propose that the whole area of alternative education should be explored more fully. Shadow Schools (Wits), Free Universities (Rhodes) and Anti Universities (UCT) have existed before so that people can participate in a self-education process in new and exciting ways. Roy feels that this is one area which should be developed so that students can promote the sort of education they want in their own way.

This is an area of activity which has been considered before, but has not been effectively established on a long term basis. Indeed, we believe that alternative education processes may well provide the attainable goal which will motivate students and NUSED committees sufficiently to really accomplish something.

Perhaps some level of alternative education could be launched at freshers reception next year.

Secondly, we believe the tutoring programs - that is where university students teach individual students during the year - is one of the most important undertaken by NUSED committees. However, frequently this program is wrecked by faulty administration and pure inefficiency. We suggest that NUSED committees should place greater emphasis on the functioning of tutoring schemes.

Thirdly, we believe that far greater attention should be placed on fundraising for the loan/scholarships programs. This means that local committees should be drawing up longterm outlines of fundraising for the whole of 1973. It also means that NUSED head office should send out more information to the campuses concerning these programs so that fundraising can become more relevant. However, the local committees should also consider ways and means of fundraising on a regular basis.

An area which should be explored is the selling of publications - eg SAIRR, Spro cas, Funda etc - on the campus along the lines of the UCT Arts and Crafts stall.

Fourthly the education conference planned for July next year must be given considerable attention so that it can involve a large group of people involved in education. We believe that with good planning and wide participation, this conference could have considerable bearing on the future direction and thinking of education in South Africa.

Fifthly, we believe that Funda should be developed to include more original articles and be distributed more widely among students. The new printing process of Funda should help in this regard.

Sixthly students should be involved in more educational research. Very little relevant research is coined out at present and there are a number of areas in which students could produce the sort of research which wages and economics groups are doing at present. An example of such an area could be disruptions in black schools in both rural and urban areas; the educational needs of particular areas; the extent of exploitation by correspondence schools etc.

Seventhly, the NUSED committees should be concerned about the school system in this country. On both a student and teacher level much could be done. However, we believe university students should be a resource group in this area of activity - acting when necessary but not expecting to be the main initiator of change in the school systems.

On this basis the resolution adopted at the NUSED congress should suffice as a starting point.

We believe that if NUSED committees were to limit their sights to these targets they would be able to be extremely effective. They need not even involve themselves in everyone of these activities but they should plan and get moving along these lines as soon as possible.

ON A FUNCTIONAL LEVEL

Briefly, we regard the appointment of a Deputy Secretary General as an important step is the Deputy is to be a real help to the NUSED Head Office. There have been times when people have assisted Barry - and this has immediately given him and head office more scope. Then, the Secretary General's function should be agreed upon by those involved in NUSED at present. There seem to be differing expectations of this role - which does make things difficult. The Secretary General plans to travel to the campuses earlier in the year in 1973 so that the committees can have his help then.

In addition, we believe the Secretary General should confine himself/herself more to NUSED work than to general office and NUSAS work. There is enough to do in NUSED at present without any other work being taken on. Until such time as a scholarships program director is appointed and paid the general secretary will have to limit her general activities.

CONCLUSION

Provided planning along these lines is done, we are convinced that NUSED can overcome the difficulties encountered at present. NUSED will have to involve other groups in this work; it will be providing direction and motivation to committee members and it will be fulfilling a real need in South Africa.

BARRY STREEK
SECRETARY GENERAL

ROY AINSLIE
SECRETARY GENERAL ELECT