

**Mennonite World Conference  
Education Networks (GAHEN and GAPSEN)**

**Terms of Reference  
In preparation for 2021 Meetings  
December 2019**

**Background**

Hundreds of primary and secondary schools exist in our global Mennonite World Conference family, reaching students from early childhood to grade 12/13. In addition, MWC member churches operate dozens of higher educational institutions - Bible schools, seminaries, liberal arts colleges and universities - that prepare students for life in the church and the world, and equip church leaders.

Between 2007 and 2011, ICOMB successfully sponsored three educational consultations: two for higher education institutions focusing on networking and stronger partnership with the church; one for revitalizing DR Congo primary and secondary schools. These consultations brought together leaders mainly, but not exclusively, from Mennonite Brethren churches. The value of networking became evident, and various goals and activities resulted from these consultations.

At the 2009 Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Paraguay, Mennonite educators (primarily those at the elementary and secondary level) gathered for a half-day symposium. Representatives focused on the value of Mennonite schools, historic development, and looking at the present and future.

In 2012 MWC sponsored an education consultation following the General Council in Basel, testing ideas that could bring educators together to build, strengthen and inspire a clear vision for Mennonite education that transcends a single nation. One result was the Global Education Conference held prior to the MWC Assembly in 2015. This led to a one-day discussion among a representative group of global educational leaders about the value and felt need for networking. A follow up survey of participants gave more clarity to what educators are thinking.

The committee in charge of the 2015 Global Education Conference continued to meet at the request of MWC and under the authority of the Faith and Life Commission. In November 2017 they presented a proposal to the Faith and Life Commission which could lead to either a network or a commission, depending on MWC's capacity. In 2018, the committee was encouraged to continue working toward a network event in 2021 with a view to establishing an educational network.

The Education Networks therefore arise out of a significant amount of experience and reflection within the global community of education leaders at different educational levels during the past 12 years.

**Rationale**

Our institutions help to provide identity and cohesion to our national and regional churches as centers of theological reflection and teaching. Leaders associated with these institutions are interested in strengthening the network of educators to share ideas about pedagogy and resources, and more generally to support one another in the work. MWC is a great space within which to strengthen our schools and their engagement with Christ-centered faith formation, and their role in strengthening the church.

The Education Networks provide space for a global network of Anabaptist-related education institutions, networks of Anabaptist scholars/teachers outside of such institutions, and centers of Anabaptist thought/scholarship, being committed to the work of the church in our communities, nations and world.

### **Mission**

Education Networks seek to foster collaborative engagements in education (schools, administration, teachers, scholars) to live out and teach Anabaptist convictions and spirituality so that our communion can more fully embody a Christ-like way of being in the world.

### **Dual Network Approach**

There are two related educational networks:

GAPSEN: Global Anabaptist Primary and Secondary Education Network – focused on schools serving students from early childhood through high school

GAHEN: Global Anabaptist Higher Education Network – focused on schools serving higher education (post-secondary) students.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. Reflect together on what it means to be Anabaptist education institutions
2. Encourage better/stronger collaboration amongst members;
3. Share best practices among members;
4. Accomplish things together that each could not attempt individually;
5. Provide opportunities for training, growth and development;
6. Increase the capacity of members;
7. Increase awareness and understanding of global Anabaptist education activities.

### **Membership**

The Education Networks primarily connect Anabaptist church-related educational institutions. An organization that is a member of one of the Education Networks:

- Engages in education ministries
- Self-identifies as Anabaptist with commitment to the MWC *Shared Convictions*
- Exhibits formal organization (e.g., Bylaws, departments of other organizations, regular meetings, etc.).
- Agrees to participate in a fair share contribution for involvement calculated with a complexity beyond the wealth of the particular country.

Beyond the primary institutional connections, the Education Networks are eager to include Anabaptist-oriented centers within larger institutes. We also welcome Anabaptist scholars and teachers, whether as individuals or in a network.

### **Administrative Structure:**

#### **Steering Committees**

The Education Networks are formed according to the principles outlined in the MWC constitution (5.1-5.2).

GAPSEN and GAHEN Networks shall each be administered by a Steering Committee whose responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Overseeing the work of the network

- Planning network meetings/events
- Liaison with members
- Interacting with the other network regularly to address matters of mutual interest
- Managing nominations of persons to serve on the steering committee
- Liaison with the MWC Faith and Life Commission

### **Composition and Internal Organization of the Steering Committees**

GAPSEN and GAHEN Steering Committees will be composed of the following members:

- Each network will have at least one member from each continental region (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America)
- One staff person serving both GAPSEN and GAHEN as Network Coordinator
- One or more advisors as deemed necessary

The internal leadership of each committee will include a chair, vice chair, and secretary.

### **Relationship with the MWC Faith and Life Commission**

Education Networks function under the auspices of the Faith and Life Commission of Mennonite World Conference. To strengthen links with the Faith and Life Commission, each Education Network shall appoint one individual (member of the Steering Committee) to serve as a member of the Faith and Life Commission. Nominations will take into account the appointments of the General Council of Mennonite World Conference to the Commission in order to achieve an appropriate balance of continental representation.

### **Meetings**

1. The members of Education Networks shall meet face-to-face every three years, normally in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference General Council meetings.
2. The Steering Committees shall meet as often as necessary by electronic means.
3. Additional meetings can be called by members as needed.

### **Decision-making Process**

As member networks of Mennonite World Conference, our official decision-making process shall be by consensus as practiced during all the official meetings of MWC General Council.

### **Finances**

1. GAPSEN and GAHEN Steering Committees shall establish a minimum three-year budget for operation and general consultations to be presented for approval by all the members of the network during the face-to-face meeting every three years.
2. Each participating member shall contribute to the budget according to the fair share system as practiced by Mennonite World Conference.
3. Other arrangements for financial participation, if needed, shall be made individually based on an institution's financial capacity.

Terms of Reference Writers/Contributors:

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