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**04 October 2024**

**ATTENTION: MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION (DBE)**

**MS SIVIWE GWARUBE**

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**To:**

**MINISTER OF FINANCE (Treasury)**

**MR ENOCH GODONGWANA**

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**BY EMAIL**

**EXTREMELY URGENT**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: BUDGET CUTS AFFECTING THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

1. We refer to the abovementioned and acts on behalf of its members employed within the education sector as well as the broader South African public who has a direct and indirect interest in the education sector of this country.
2. Solidarity represents approximately 4 918 educators and other professionals employed at various schools within this sector. In this regard, as a matter of **extreme urgency**, we are raising our concerns with you, as well as the DBE and Treasury whose actions have a direct impact on the education sector.
3. The DBE manages the following:
  - a. Allocated budget
  - b. Projects and targets within the Education Department
  - c. Acts as the employer and provider of funds, through provincial departments, to various schools and institutions.
4. Treasury is responsible for the funding and budget needs of the DBE.

5. We emphasized that this letter is not intended to be exhaustive of all matters, disputes, and/or rights of our members. We therefore reserve the right to address the aforementioned at an appropriate time and in the appropriate forum, should it become necessary to do so.
6. The DBE has recently made several public announcements concerning the allocated budget it has received from treasury regarding the budget cuts as well as the resulting impact thereof on the sector, with reference to the extent at which specifically educators and other staff members at schools will be affected.
7. Although effort has gone into informing the public of the fiscal position, the country finds itself exposed to the same financial challenges as the various state departments. Education has always been emphasised as one of the most important sectors which plays a vital role in addressing any inadequacies and inequality, promoting economic progress within South Africa.
8. The extreme budget cuts imposed by treasury and announcements with regarding the implication of the Minister's accompanying budget cuts within the education sector, however, does not support the stated views and may in fact result in regression of any progress made in basic education.
9. Solidarity is aware of the fact that the mentioned budget cuts will not immediately threaten the employment status of current educators and other employees employed within the sector. Having noted that, Solidarity is also aware that projections made by Minister Gwarube did not, however, paint a reassuring picture of how the status of employees would be affected in the near future.
10. We are therefore pointing out that the loss of educators and other employees at schools by means of retrenchment by the department would be detrimental, if not fatal, to the South African education system and will lead to a national catastrophe. It is in the public interest and that of all stakeholders to avoid the aforementioned at all costs and as such every measure should be explored, investigated, and exhausted to safeguard these positions in order to avert the implosion of the South African Education system.
11. Should the abovementioned measures become a possibility, Solidarity will not hesitate to act on behalf of our members as well as the broader public, as stated above, to protect positions of employment that will not just affect the employee, as the minister has herself stated, but also schools and the learners.
12. The fact that the DBE has decided to not fill vacated positions within schools, as has been announced, will have equally far-reaching negative consequences on employees at schools as well as the broader public. The DBE is well aware that the majority of teachers has an immense academical responsibility, spend a tremendous amount of hours on administrative functions, coaching extra mural activities and supportive teaching such as extra classes.

13. Considering the abovementioned it is unjustifiable, irresponsible and unconstitutional to refuse to fill vacated positions and burden educators beyond their already overreaching capacity. As employer the state is in this instance not acting in the best interest of their employee, nor the public interest, but rather through self-interest through the intention to absorb the financial challenges created by the state itself which resulted in the scenario where dedicated educators and other staff members now become the innocent victims of the State and its maleficence.
14. The resulting fallout of the abovementioned lack of fundamental recourses would also be the extreme negative impact on learners. As stated above, education is deemed one of the most important aspects of any country and particularly this country, as specified within the Constitution.
15. It is worth noting that not only are thousands of people employed within this sector, but it is also the sector that has the greatest effect on our children and their future. Should positions at schools be left vacated, these gaps within our education system will have a devastating effect on learners.
16. In 2023, as published by the DBE, only 59,2% of learners that started gr 1 in 2012, entered matric exams and only 57,2% actually wrote their exams whilst a mere 47,4% passed matric. These shocking statistics paint a devastating picture about the current situation the DBE, and the broader South African public is faced with.
17. It is unimaginable that less teachers will be able to rectify this situation for the positive and establish a culture of learning. This serves as a reminder that the availability of teachers as well as the quality of education has a direct impact on how able learners will be reach gr 12 and to study further or join the workforce as an able young person and contribute to this country as a whole, especially in a country struggling with an exceptionally high unemployment rate.
18. The South African government, and more specifically the DBE along with Treasury, has a responsibility to execute the laws of this country and to ensure that all basic human rights, consistent with the Constitution are met and therefore make and implement decisions that are in the best interests of all South African children and their educational needs. Cutting this budget to such an extent that the education, and thus the future of South African children and the fiscal future of this country will be affected in a negative way, is nothing but reckless, irresponsible and contrary to the responsibilities bestowed to the state by the Constitution.
19. We urge the various Ministers and their departments to work toward a practical solution and invest in education rather than to strip it of the resources it cannot survive without.
20. Having stated the above, Solidarity does not deny the financial crisis experienced by the DBE as well as the challenges Treasury face to ensure some form of liquid governance. We are therefore concerned that the DBE is attempting to take on responsibilities that may be devolved, resulting in successes, to schools and more particularly the SGB's of said schools, which by law, is still responsible for the governance of that particular school. Should a provincial department of education liaise with a

school pertaining to its specific needs and challenges, it opens the door to negotiation which would result in unique and creative solutions being reached which may very well assist the DBE in this crisis.

21. Furthermore, Solidarity encourages the DBE enable SGB's to be creative and engage with their school communities as well as other stake holders such as the private sector in an effort to find workable solutions that may implemented in practice, resulting in possible positive effects on the budget of the school.
22. Solidarity has, along with its comments on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill, added a Proposed Draft Section 21A (see Annexure A) that would enable current public schools to apply for so called self-management status. Such an option would enable the DBE by relieving it of the financial burden and responsibility it has towards these schools and educators as these much-needed funds can now be allocated to schools that are in dire need of more resources and support.
23. We therefore strongly recommend engagement and conversation in an attempt to present the DBE and Treasury with functional solutions for schools which are able to embrace the responsibilities quality education demands.
24. Kindly consult directly with the writer hereof concerning the content of this letter.

Regards,



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Johan Botha  
Deputy General Secretary: Professional