

ADDRESS

Theme: Advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 for the Attainment of quality Education in relation to National School Funding in the South African Context.

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“Did you know that 78% of Grade 4 pupils in South Africa cannot read for basic meaning in any national language? In other words, eight out of 10 9-year-olds in South Africa are functionally illiterate. A 78% illiteracy rate in Grade 4 means the next generation will enter the workforce without the basic skills needed to raise themselves out of poverty. It means a generation without the capacity to learn, to teach, and to lead. More alarmingly, it means a generation unable to pass on literacy to their own children, exacerbating the situation still further with every passing year.” (PRETORIA NEWS / 15 DECEMBER 2017). THIS IS SHOCKING INDEED.

Teachers cannot restrict their attention to the classroom alone, leaving the larger setting and the purposes of schooling to be determined by others. They must take active responsibility for the goals to which they are committed and for the social setting in which these goals may prosper. If they are not to be mere agents of others, of the state, of the military, of the media, of the experts and bureaucrats, they need to determine their own agency through a critical context of their calling (Scheffler, 1968, p. 11).

Mr M.J Kutumela the president of Professional Educators Union, the Vice President, Mr J Motona, Mr M.B Machipi, the General Secretary, the deputy General Secretary and the entire national leadership present here today, all PEU Provincial Delegates,

fraternal organisations from within the borders of South Africa, delegates from the Association of Non-Aligned Teachers Union of South Africa (ANTUSA) family of unions from Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and other countries, ladies and gentlemen, I salute you.

It offers me great pleasure to be with you this evening at the National Peu Presidential Gala dinner to deliver a discourse on a pivotal subject “Advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 for the Attainment of quality Education in relation to National School Funding in the South African Context.”

The rhetoric that emanates here and from my opening quotes Mr President is; what is quality education, where do we start building quality in our education system, who is responsible for the advancement of this quality education, is this an attainable goal or is it just a mirage in the South African Context, if yes, how so, and if no, what requires attention in order to actualise this global sought after education attribute. It is an undisputed fact that government is already putting in a lion’s share into basic education sector, but the question that remains is who is not doing what and what can be done to correct the anomaly in order to place our country in a position that we can proudly compete on continental as well as global platforms. The question that remains is, does this Sustainable develop goal 4 prepare learners for the eminent and birthing of the 4th industrial revolution, does it lay a solid foundation that prepares learners for tertiary education, is it suited and relevant to the ever-changing times while eradicating and redressing the imbalances of the past prevalent in the existing systems of private schools, rural public schools and former model C schools while bridging the gap that existed for decades among these calibre of schools.

It is undeniably true that there has been a great leap of transformation that took place in the education system of South Africa with the dawn of democracy in 1994. Doors of learning were opened to all South African children without the division of education in terms of race, colour or creed. Schools are now divided into quintiles with numerous funding modes by government depending on the severity of the poverty grading of various communities and resources availability within those schools. The connotation

of the entire process is that the less resourced schools in the previously disadvantaged communities are allocated more than those in suburbs and townships. National Schools Nutrition programme (NSNP) was introduced, which meant no South African child would be taught on an empty stomach. This I believe had a greater role it played in the education setting, but the question remains, has that improved the quality of education to all South African learners on an equal footing. Does the child in the deep rural villages of South Africa receive similar education to those in town schools, and are resources that enhance teaching and learning processes i.e. human resources, physical resources, financial resources equivalent in all schools that we can proudly say all South African school children are on par and receiving equal quality education? To some extent one is a bit sceptical as homicide cases of children who fell into dilapidated toilets in some of our schools are reported. To some degree one might be tempted to indicate the greater burden that the government is faced with, with so much damage to repair on what the previous apartheid regime perpetrated, but hijacking of state resources and corruption activities instead of channelling such resources to where they are supposed to go by some self-centred individuals who want to enrich themselves under the current regime is a greater cause for concern. The question that remains here is, with the prevalence of such poor resources in some of the schools in the reported cases can we therefore guarantee that the education received by such children in those settings is of improved quality?

Mr President, when we talk about quality education it is pivotal that we also include infrastructure in the previously disadvantaged schools, help uphold the maintenance of discipline in our schools aiming at creating emotionally sound/ intelligent learners in these depressing times with the envisaging of prospective citizens that will be able to face global challenges without fear of intimidation by the developed countries. The end product in the entire equation should be learners that perceive themselves as global citizens who are able to contend with their global counterparts knowledge wise without feeling substandard, inferior, or insignificant, while remaining self-confident devoid of any element of arrogance, motivated, self-driven and possessing pride of

who they are and having pride in their diversity and where they come from. The education system should produce leadership and role modelling attitudes as a symbol of patriotism and global citizenry, pride that is open to new challenges the world poses. The envisaged learner through this quality education should be the one that is well equipped and relevant to the ever-changing world, learners that are innovative job creators, instead of job hunters, scholars of note, business men and women who contribute positively to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of our country in these trying times of high unemployment rate with so many retrenchments looming and creating uncertainties within our learners and the country at large. This calls for the education system that is skills development oriented with proper career guidance anchored on proper relevant Further Education Training band (FET) subject choices. Subject choices that contribute and provide development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as against those that just fashion learners who will merely pass matric as part of the statistics without qualifying for careers of their choices emanating from the quality of results they got. Quality results that enable them to venture into those career fraternities that are relevant to the South African as well as global job market. This cannot be done while the curriculum still expects the majority of the illiterate black parents to be incorporated within the education of their children through their assistance with homework which they themselves do not comprehend. On the contrary even the so-called educated parents are either too busy with their daily chores that they are unable to help their children or they are also not in a position to help with homework as they are not subject specialists in the subjects their children are doing. With the emanating artificial intelligence, internet of things that includes both robotics and cobotics, and virtual/augmented/mixed reality that come up with the 4th industrial revolution do we have relevant human resources within our schools that are patriotic and philanthropist enough to deal with this challenge? All the above cannot be achieved without the creation of a conducive school climate for instructional management, leadership, administration and delivery

According to the National School Funding the following constitutional approaches should be curtailed to basic education funding in an endeavour to provide quality education:

- Universal Access where everyone has the right to a basic education, this means;
 - No-one may be denied access to education on any ground.
 - Basic education must be physically and economically accessible to all.
 - Physical access means that schools must be within a reasonable distance of learners, and transport must be available, at the state's expense, to carry learners who live beyond a reasonable distance to the nearest school
 - Economic access means that no-one may be denied access to a public school due to an inability to pay fees or to pay for basic school supplies.
- Adequacy and quality where the right to basic education is the right to an education of an adequate quality, meaning;
 - Resources – which are sufficient to ensure high levels of quality throughout
 - The basic education system – must be raised and invested by the state.
 - This includes that all educational infrastructure and goods, and teacher training and development, must be adequate to meet the needs of teachers and learners.
- Substantive equality and redress where education of an adequate quality must be provided and made available and accessible to all, where a progressive funding model must be in place which ensures that;
 - all schools have the resources necessary to provide a quality basic education
 - schools that were underfunded in the past must receive relatively more resources from the state than schools that were well funded during apartheid, in order to rectify past funding imbalances and ensure substantive equality
 - Under-performing schools must receive funding which, in conjunction with other reforms, is sufficient to bring them up to standard.

- Prioritisation of the provisioning of an adequate quality basic education that is to be made available to all immediately in ensuring equal access to quality basic education must be treated as a priority in government budgets.
- Efficiency and effectiveness where resources allocated to public schools and basic education more broadly must be used as efficiently and effectively as possible to achieve their intended aims. This means that;
 - A lack of available resources cannot be a justifiable reason for the state failing to provide a quality basic education.
 - Schools (including their teachers, learners and parents) who feel that the quality of education being provided is being limited by a lack of resources can claim more resources from the state, and sue the state for more resources if necessary.
 - Teachers, learners and parents can also sue their school or their provincial government if the resources that are being made available to the school are being misused, or otherwise inefficiently or ineffectively used towards providing quality basic education.

Based on the above it is clear that quality education vis-à-vis school funding entails just more than a single element in order to be attained. On the other hand it is clear that everything rests on the government to ensure that proper structures and processes are in place in order to attain this development goal with the engagement of various stakeholders responsible to carry out their expected mandates. The policies set are clear and vocal enough, yet, a call to move from policy to practice remains as the core business to be accomplished.

Reminiscing that educators are key to the delivery of quality education without overlooking the collaborative and corroborative workmanship with other school stakeholders, attention should be given on capacitating these stakeholders in order for them to carry out their instructional delivery with passion and dedication. Dr Mpofu in “Do teachers in South Africa make the grade? THE HUMAN FACTOR, ISSUE 01. NOV 2018 is quick to point out that “research shows money is not what motivates

teachers, it's being appreciated that does. "Money becomes secondary to teachers being able to work confidently in their schools and communities, and being able to make a difference," she says. Nevertheless this might true, or there might be some elements of truth in this sentiment, but I still argue it might not be totally true as money answereth all things. Research needs to be done on what can inspire educators to carry out their job with lots of excellence. Believing that money is another form of motivation as opposed to what Dr Mphofu alludes to, educators need to be paid enough, though enough is never enough, in order to execute their teaching tasks with pride and confidence. This does not exonerate other contributing factors that might be the key elements prohibiting quality service delivery by educators within the South African classroom. Believing that teachers are at the heart of this transformational goal, celebrating days like world teachers' day which recently passed, rewarding good performance while levelling the playground for all educators in South Africa, providing incentives for educators, and making teaching lucrative, on the job training or in-service training workshops, having qualified teachers who teach subjects they were trained in or specialised in, and practical learner teacher ratios, all have the potential to boost the morale of educators in ensuring that the classrooms become the productive ground for excellent education in South African Schools. The role played by educator unions in training their members around the constant curriculum evolutions cannot be overlooked. This will help bridge the gap that the education department though remaining the accountable body in this regard is unable to fill.

On the other hand Mr President, we cannot just reduce quality education to good grades without considering the changed behaviour of the recipients of such education. Moral degeneration portrayed in the level of criminal activities and ill-discipline prevalent in our schools as a microcosm of what happens in the broader spectrum of our beloved country, rape, women and child mortality rate and abuse, ill-disciplined learners and educators, high rate of drug intake, loss of personal identity, high rate of teenage pregnancy and matric products that are unable to either further their studies

at tertiary institutions or even venture into the economically sought after professions to cite a few, are a great cause for concern in this regard.

I am totally of the opinion that it is fruitless to always blame apartheid 25 years into democracy in South Africa, but the long effects it played seem to be still looming in many South African people's minds. The crippling effects it played seem not to have totally being eroded on many minds of our people, leaving scars that are forever paralysing our minds to move on. According to Basic Education Rights Handbook – Education Rights in South Africa – Chapter 2 on Funding Basic Education, “Equal access to education is critical for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate equally in society and fulfil their potential. The Constitution of South Africa guarantees everyone access to basic education; and ensuring that basic education is adequately and equitably funded by the state. This has been prioritised since the democratic transition, in order to promote more equal access to quality teaching and learning.” We cannot therefore Mr President, talk about quality education if the attributes mentioned above have not yet been actualised.

The extract from the same handbook alludes to the fact that the apartheid regime that ruled South Africa until the dawn of democracy in 1994 was well cognizant of the muscle that education possesses together with the fundamental role that access to quality education could play in the development of any given country. Yet, the racial, gender and class bias of that government meant that it purported the provision of quality education for only a minority of the population. It appears as though majority of Blacks, coloureds, Indians and Asians, as well as women and the disabled in South Africa, received a mediocre basic education to that contrary to their white counterparts. By stating such data, one might be perceived as retrogressive in nature as opposed to various assumptions, progressive policies and legal frameworks that govern this our rainbow nation. But this discrimination was especially evident in the highly inequitable resource apportionments that were provided to schools according to their racial classification, which with closer look the gap created might never be totally closed.

By providing as much as ten times more funding to white schools than black schools, the previous administration made certain that economic and social opportunity would be prescribed based on one's race, gender or class as the handbook states. Unfortunately the long term effects of these policies continue to hamper the provision of equal education today. Though the current administration tries hard, it appears as though it is unable to close the prevalent gap and this unfortunately calls for the previously disadvantaged communities to work ten times more in order to close the gap created.

In conclusion I wish to indicate that I concur with this handbook on maintaining that "Education takes place over many years, and is a cross-generational exercise involving learners, teachers and parents, so the inferior education provided to the majority of people until 1994 continues to reproduce unequal outcomes. This can be seen in the legacies of substandard infrastructure and teacher subject knowledge, lower scores, and higher dropout rates at historically black schools. The post-apartheid democratic administration inherited a segregated education system based on a highly inequitable funding model designed specifically to promote certain groups over others. The question of equalising resource allocations and ensuring economic access to a quality education for all has been at the centre of debate on how to overcome the legacies of the past, and – as the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training promised – 'open the doors of learning and culture to all'. The policy guidelines adopted at the 1992 National Conference of the ANC and published in 'Ready to Govern' committed the ANC government-in-waiting to 'equalising the per capita expenditure between black and white educations', and ensuring that 'resources are redistributed to the most disadvantaged sectors of our society, in particular, women, rural and adult students, and mentally or physically disabled children and adults'."

The question that remains is, has the delusion been achieved, if not, we cannot sacrifice the education of the innocent South African child, let us, with the available resources join heads and try our best and pledge our unsurpassed determinations as

a nation in ensuring that the African child moves on par with the rest of the world, after all it is not at all gloom and dark and hopeless. Let us take up arms and educate this nation in today's era for the times to come.

Allow me ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests to pause here with words of gratitude for the attention you gave me. I thank you all and God bless.