



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

MOTION BY THE HON NICO SMIT ON THE INVESTIGATION AND FULL AUDIT OF THE EXPENDITURE OF THE N\$ 14.1 BILLION ALLOCATED FOR THE FY 2022/23 TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO INFRASTRUCTURE AND TEXTBOOK EXPENDITURE

MOTIVATION

**Hon. Speaker,
Hon. Members,**

1. We profess, in terms of our National Development Plan 5 that we aspire to and commit ourselves to building a knowledge-based economy - a major requisite of which is education. The same document highlights that quality human capital is *crucial* in our endeavour to optimise productivity and yield the associated socio-economic benefits for our citizens. Thus education, economic development and social welfare go hand in hand, with education as a determinant of the other two.
2. Growing from an input-based economy to a knowledge-based economy implies maturing our economy from primary sector dependence to developing our secondary and tertiary sectors. Thus if we are serious about the aspirations of our NDP 5, we must take cognisance of the fact we ought then to be developing the human capital of this country in a manner that graduates our labour force from being extensively semi-

skilled, to being advanced and highly trained – a process which starts in the classroom. Only then can we profess to be on track towards a knowledge-based economy, with robust, innovative solutions-based markets.

Hon. Speaker,
Hon. Members,

3. The critical role education plays in shaping and determining the performance of every other sphere of our development, cannot be overstated. It is thus appropriate, I believe, that education is given a budget that reflects its crucial influence on key developmental outcomes.
4. This, however, entails that the investments made into education ought to yield returns – value for every hard-earned tax dollar. This means that when the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture reports that a mere 21.4% of Grade 11 learners have qualified for AS Levels, with the remaining 78.6% neither qualifying to access tertiary institutions, nor progressing to AS this does not meet the aforementioned criterion.

This failure rate, of truly catastrophic proportions is a far cry from the vision of preparing learners to enter the labour market as leaders and shapers in the secondary and tertiary sector, towards the advancement of our economy. Moreover, this failure rate is a gross injustice to both the Namibian child and to parents. I contrast to the aforementioned pass rate of 21.4% with the N\$14.1 Billion injected into the ministry. To me, the outcomes of the ministry are hopelessly disproportionate to its inputs and are indicative of a need for an investigation into the management and use of its budget.

5. Mr. Kavihuha of the Teacher's Union of Namibia (TUN) rightfully stated that we should not see education as charity to parents because we describe it as free – which strictly speaking, it is not. The education of Namibian children is funded by taxpayers and the leveraging of the resources of this country, commonly owned by all Namibians, under the custodianship of government. I believe we owe it to parents and we owe it to tax payers, to the Namibian people, to account for how the N\$14.1 Billion of the last financial year was spent. I am well aware that salaries

will account for a significant proportion of this expenditure – with which I have no problem. But the remainder of the budget expenditure begs clarification and account.

Hon. Speaker,
Hon. Members,

6. Textbooks are among the bare minimum of what we expect our children to be provided with at school – they provide the very content the curriculum sets out for them to learn. Yet, we hear, at every turn, of a dire scarcity of textbooks in our schools – to the detriment of learners. Without data which disproves anecdotal evidence of the serious lack of textbooks as reported in the media, it seems to directly contradict the implementation of the curriculum by failing, by a wide margin, to provide textbooks to learners. It begs the question, ‘what are the priorities that influence the expenditure of the ministry?’ Where is the value for money that we expect when we allocate billions in taxpayer’s money to take care of the educational needs of our children? How can we trust a government that fails in such a basic need?
7. Moreover, the physical conditions at all too many of our schools are deplorable, indeed shameful. They fail to reflect a conviction that the youth are the future shapers and leaders of a prosperous Namibia. They fail to reflect empathy for our children, and a commitment to upholding the dignity of the girl and boy child.

Hon. Speaker,
Hon. Members,

8. We are constantly confronted by media reports and photos of dilapidated infrastructure, which poses serious threats to the well-being of the Namibian child. Not only does it affect the morale and self-worth of learners, but it presents serious health and safety hazards as well. Overcrowding in hostels, poor living conditions, lack of ablution- and toilet facilities, let alone functional ones, pit latrines, bat-infested or collapsing ceilings, compromised roofing, lack of adequate protection from the elements; these are just some of the realities that shape the educational experiences of our learners in an independent Namibia. All too often we

are met with the desperate frustration of teachers, parents, and learners at the shortage of libraries, laboratories and kits required to prepare learners for practical exams in Biology, Physics and Chemistry. I add to this list a shortage of computers and computer labs, not to mention access to the Internet.

Without these, can we claim that we are preparing our learners to be innovators, producers, thought leaders – on par with their international counterparts? Or are we setting them up for failure and consequently poor employment prospects? The conditions I outline negatively impact the educational outcomes of Namibian learners – which is why we expect that the budget expenditure addresses the infrastructural needs that support high academic performance and the overall development strategy of this country.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

9. To allow an injustice and failure rate of this proportion, and the contributing deplorable learning environment and lack of crucial resources for our learners, to be swept under the rug by this August House will constitute a gross neglect of the mandate given to this Assembly by the Namibian voters and tax payers.
10. At this juncture, the Ministry of Basic Education, Art and Culture received nearly N\$ 16.8 Billion of this year's budget. An increase from the last financial year. This government has failed to create confidence amongst our people that the ministry can manage an investment of N\$14.1 billion, let alone N\$16.8 billion, to provide learners with text books, maintain and develop infrastructure, train and then appoint the required number of teachers and ultimately create a learning environment that lends itself to academic performance.
11. The Namibian people want value for their hard-earned dollars, and want not only the assurance but also the evidence that this government is dedicated to investing in education, meaningfully and tangibly. They want to see schools being built and maintained. They want our facilities to reflect that we are a forward-looking nation strategically positioning itself

to produce world leaders, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists, innovators, problem solvers, a competitive labour force, the makings of an advanced, prosperous, and equitable society. This is what Namibians want to see in the regions, on the ground, in their towns. This is what they want our books, our accounts, our audits to reflect. How can we assure them that this is the happening, when this August House does not inquire for itself by means of an audit and gain a comprehensive insight into the ministry's expenditure?

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

12. I believe we have reached a fork in the road regarding our nation's education and future, and urge this August House to consider the following: To either let reports of dilapidated classrooms, inhumane hostels, the near non-existence of textbooks in class rooms, and the long delays in appointing qualified teachers to simply blow over and hope for the best as we look to this new financial year; OR to take stock **now** of the ministry's expenditure, fully employing the checks and balances at our disposal and request to be presented with an account from the Executive, for the conditions under which our learners are expected to achieve the desired results.

It is against this background, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, that I move that this House officially inquiries into the expenditure of the Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture by way of an investigatory audit which will provide this House with a comprehensive view into the priorities regarding infrastructure, textbook expenditure and teaching appointments during the last financial year. This audit should be tasked to a team comprised of the Auditor General along with 2-3 retired judges, who will submit their report to the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, who will report to this house within 3 months. Further, that this motion be referred to the relevant standing committee.

I so move, Honourable Speaker. Thank you.