



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS, AND CULTURE

RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENT QUESTIONS

BY

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MINISTER

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

I rise to respond to the questions asked by **Hon. Reggie Diergaardt of PDM**, in relation to voluntary contributions *by parents.*

In accordance with the Education Amendment Act No. 14 of 2017, which introduces changes to section 25 subsection 9 (a), the matter of parental contribution is addressed. This Education Amendment Act of 2017 outlines that a School Development Fund (SDF) comprises of funds gathered from various sources, including voluntary contributions from individuals, donations, bequests, or any other source, such as the official school related fundraising campaigns, as approved by the Principal and the School board.

The Ministry can therefore make a pronouncement that such a contribution is a voluntary exercise as provided for in the Amendment Act No.14 of 2017. This means, activities such as civic days, fun days, establishment of school gardens, etc., can be used to generate funds to supplement the material needs of the school, in particular, cleaning material and stationery. In addition, parents who cannot afford financial contributions are encouraged to contribute through in-kind undertakings. These are the most practical ways how every school community can contribute to the up-keep of a school and establish a sound ownership of the school by the community.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

It is important to clarify that the contributions mentioned here and in the question raised, are intended be a voluntary undertaking, as it is explicitly provided for in the Education Amendment Act of 2017. In fact, these provisions emphasise the voluntary nature of these contributions and underlines that they should not be enforced as compulsory payments.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that this contribution is not solely limited to parents, but academic sympathizers and supporters of education, including all community members around a school, are strongly encouraged to participate in this voluntary exercise and the Ministry will highly appreciate the contribution made.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

The Ministry has recently obtained Cabinet approval for the School Grant Policy. This policy caters for the basic school needs. It describes the ideal allocation of this grant to public schools and is disbursed by
x Head Office directly to the schools. *accounts.*

This is done in conformity with the provisions of Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, which makes provisions for compulsory free primary education. The Ministry is therefore obligated by law to ensure that every eligible Namibian child is afforded an opportunity to attend school. In the same light, the principle of free

education aligns with the country's values of equitable, accessible and inclusive development. The Ministry's role is to ensure that free education remains accessible to all eligible Namibian children, without hindrance related to financial background of a learner.

I must indicate that to date, the Ministry has not received any report where academic progress was halted due to school omissions of contributions, which on its own, is an indicator of the Namibian education status.

The voluntary contributions from the parents, guardians or any volunteer, are complimentary to what government is providing to schools. However, these complimentary contributions are essential, given the imbalance between the annual school grant allocation and the ever-increasing number of learners, yearly.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

It is without a doubt that the schools belong to their respective communities, that is why their basic administration is solely governed by their school boards. In school boards, the parents, school management and members of the community are represented. Therefore, the contributions requested by schools from the parents/guardians or community members are jointly agreed upon with parents and the school management during their engagements.

The academic performance of a school is dependent on a conglomerate of factors. Some of these are infrastructure, general discipline and yes, resource provision. Apart from these, it is also attributed to the school culture, the school ethos and merits it strives for excellence - therefore its academic achievement is not guaranteed by resources only. The Positive Deviance Report on school performance proved this as well that where the school's vision is aligned towards producing excellent results, their learners are likely to achieve better results. By that, I refer to the school community at large, where all are geared up to the concerted efforts and strive towards excellence. The same is true with parents' eagerness and support to their children's education, understanding that these contributions are navigating steps towards improved academic performance of their children.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

Given the constitutional framework in place, the Ministry, as the custodian of education in the country, and by the constitutional provisions, has a legal obligation to cater for all State schools' educational needs in Namibia. However, the attainment of this obligation is primarily determined by the financial year budgetary allocation.

The fact of the matter is that, schools have unique challenges, thus certain schools may need supplementary allocation. The government may provide funds that might not be adequate for school needs. When

these funds get depleted, schools may then request for contributions from parents in accordance with the Education Amendment Act No.14 of 2017, Section 25, subsection 9 (a) as outlined in the Constitutional provisions. However, it should be understood that all kinds of contributions are voluntary.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

With the increasing number of learners' enrolment, annually, there are limitations to available resources per learner. It should be understood in this context that parents have an obligation to also invest towards their children's education as education is a shared responsibility.

As alluded to before, schools have unique needs, hence it is rather difficult to state the specific needs at this juncture. However, contributions may vary from contributing towards learners going to attend a sporting activity, to school debate, and various activities alike. These are day-to-day activities in schools, hence contributions may not be once-off, but a continuous necessity.

I should therefore emphasize to this **August House** that schools will always have needs for extra resources which could not be catered for through the School Grants. It is for that reason that parents may be asked to contribute towards certain school initiated activities that allow learners to learn and that may enhance academic excellence. It has

become a global practice, that parents meet the government halfway towards their children's education.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

Fundraising activities at primary and secondary schools are allowed, as specified in the Basic Education Act, 2020 (Act No. 3 of 2020) - Section 69, subsection (2) paragraph(c) which came into effect as from the 01 October 2023. According to this section, fundraising activities can be organised at state schools by individuals or groups. These activities may include fundraising campaigns or official school-related activities that have been approved by the Principal and the School board.

Such activities are explicitly mentioned as an acceptable means of raising funds for schools.

This means that schools can organize and conduct fundraising events or activities to generate funds for various purposes, such as improving facilities, purchasing educational materials, or supporting extra-curricular activities.

These activities are officially sanctioned and approved by the school's Principal and the School board, in consultation with parents.

It is important to note that while fundraising activities are allowed, they are always conducted in accordance with the guidelines and approvals outlined in the Basic Education Act, 2020.

The Regional Education Directorates are mandated by the Ministry to ensure transparency and accountability in the handling of funds raised through these activities, and use these funds for legitimate educational purposes that benefit the learners and the school community. The Act recognizes the financial and material needs of both primary and secondary schools and provides a framework for raising additional resources to supplement the government funding they receive.

In summary, both Education Act, 2001, and the amended Basic Education Act, 2020, allow fundraising activities in primary and secondary schools. However, the guidelines on how fundraising activities are regulated and approved may vary based on school policies and the discretion of school authorities, as indicated by the need for approval from the Principal and School board in the Basic Education Act, 2020.

It is essential for schools to adhere to these regulations and ensure transparency in fundraising activities, while considering the different financial and material needs of primary and secondary schools.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

The fundraising activities at schools are not limited. It is worth noting that although there is no law that regulates or governs the number of activities at schools, it is imperative to note that our teachers are conscious of their primary objective, which is curriculum

implementation, as well as time on task for teaching and learning, which is central and of utmost importance. In addition, syllabi coverage also requires a certain amount of time to complete, hence it is part of the Ministry's strategic objective to consistently ensure regular engagement with teachers. This is done to ensure that teachers do not deviate too much from the actual learning and teaching in classrooms, while involved in extramural activities.

I so submit.