

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Motivation by Hon. Hamata (PDM) regarding the Motion to discuss the issue of poor performance *vis-à-vis* government schools

February 27, 2024

Honorable Speaker,

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1. I stand before you today as a voice for the fundamental right to education enshrined in our Constitution. The vision laid out by our Constitution is clear: "All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory, and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge."
2. The government's first commitment is to provide universal basic education. Extending access to education has two principal components. *First*, we must expand capacity. We must increase the number of schools and classrooms to be sure there are sufficient places for all Namibian children. We must also be sure that those schools are adequately staffed, that they are located where they are needed, and that they are in fact accessible to learners in their areas. It is a waste of resources to have underused school buildings in one place and very overcrowded classrooms in another. *Second*, we must address the barriers that keep our children from going to school.
3. However, the reality in our schools paints a stark contrast to this noble aspiration. Parents are burdened with the financial responsibilities of purchasing school stationery, providing food for those in hostels, and

meeting various other expenses, which is not good at all. These financial burdens, in direct contradiction to the constitutional mandate, hinder the realization of free and accessible education for all.

4. **Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members**, the current government practice of providing a mere N\$300.00 per child per year falls drastically short of meeting the basic needs of our schools. One wonders how the Swapo-led government arrived at this amount. This amount is insufficient to cover essential expenses such as making copies, buying papers for copies, and acquiring necessary supplies like copy machine ink. As a result, our dedicated teachers are forced into the unenviable position of seeking additional funding through fundraising and soliciting donations. This not only diverts their focus from teaching but also compromises the quality of education our children receive.
5. Is it true that government schools are far behind in comparison with the private schools? This question arises in each and every individual for the last few decades. Which is why, most of you send your children to private schools.
6. **Hon. Members**, it is disheartening to witness the strain on parents (who are already financially struggling to put food on the table) and teachers as they grapple with the financial challenges imposed upon them, hindering the academic performance of our government schools. The burden of seeking resources should not be a weight carried by parents and teachers—it is a shared responsibility that our government must bear to uphold the constitutional promise of free education.
7. Poor performance in government schools has been linked to the privatization of the education sector. Education experts say some of the private schools are owned by government officials who are not bothered by the quality of education but focus on making money from the sector.

8. **Hon. Speaker**, I implore this honorable assembly to recognize the urgency of addressing this matter. We must take immediate action to rectify the disparity between constitutional ideals and the current state of affairs in our educational system. The performance of government schools is compromised when parents and teachers are preoccupied with the demanding task of resource procurement.
9. **Hon. Members**, let us reconsider our allocation of resources and prioritize the future of our nation—the education of our children. I urge the government to cease the current practice and institute measures that truly align with the constitutional mandate. Adequate funding for our schools is not just an investment in education; it is an investment in the prosperity and progress of our great nation.
10. I urge this house to advocate for a return to the old, but proven, method of direct procurement and distribution of essential supplies to every school through established circuits. In the past, this approach ensured that schools received the necessary resources without placing undue financial burdens on parents or distracting teachers from their primary task of educating our children.
11. By adopting a centralized procurement and distribution system, government can:
- *Ensure Equity*: Every school, regardless of location or socioeconomic status, will have equal access to essential resources, promoting equity in education.
 - *Simplify Processes*: Eliminate the need for teachers and parents to engage in fundraising or donation solicitation, streamlining the education process and allowing educators to focus solely on teaching.

- *Cost-Effectiveness*: Benefit from economies of scale by procuring supplies in bulk, potentially reducing costs and optimizing the allocation of resources.
- *Transparency and Accountability*: Establish a transparent system where the government can be held accountable for the efficient and fair distribution of resources to schools, fostering public trust.
- *Relieve Financial Burdens*: Alleviate the financial strain on parents, ensuring that the promise of free education is not compromised by the need for additional financial contributions.

12.I, therefore, urge this esteemed assembly to consider the tangible benefits of returning to a more straightforward and efficient method of providing resources to our schools. We must reinstate a system that aligns with the constitutional vision of free and accessible education, unburdening parents and teachers, and ensuring the prosperity of our nation through an investment in the education of our children.

13.Let us ensure that the promise of free and accessible education is not a distant ideal but a tangible reality for every child in Namibia. Let's do it for our children. **Honorable Members**, let's do it now.

Thank you.