



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Motivation by Hon. Hamata (PDM) regarding the Motion to discuss the issue of private educational institutions *vis-a-vis* regulatory framework

March ~~24~~, 2024

26

Thank you, Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Members of Parliament (PMs),

1. My mother Joolokeni Ndahambelela Hamunyela Hamata a former teacher, once told me that "*Unregulated private schools are a disservice to education, casting shadows on the pillars of fairness and equality. The absence of oversight leaves a void where the seeds of discrimination and exploitation can flourish, hindering the growth and potential of both educators and learners.*"
2. Today, I stand before you to address a pressing concern that affects the very foundation of our education system in Namibia – the unregulated practices within our private schools. While private education can contribute significantly to our society, it is crucial to ensure fairness, equality, and ethical treatment of both teachers and/or instructors and learners.
3. It is quite disheartening to note that some private schools in Namibia are neglecting their responsibility to provide fair wages to our dedicated

teachers. These educators, who play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our nation, deserve adequate compensation for their tireless efforts. It is imperative that we establish regulations to ensure private schools meet minimum salary standards, fostering a supportive environment for our educators.

- 4. Furthermore, the alarming reports of learners being chased out of school due to unpaid fees are unacceptable. Education is a fundamental right, and no child should be denied access to learning due to financial constraints.**

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members,

5. Leveraging upon the private sector to achieve specific educational goals cannot be underestimated. Equally, the experience so far has been that the regulations create entry and exit barriers in the provision of education by entrepreneurs, thereby reducing competition and keeping the cost of education high.
6. Government intervention is essential to establish guidelines that prevent such discriminatory practices, ensuring that education remains accessible to all, regardless of their economic background.
7. Additionally, the restrictive policies imposed by some private schools, hindering teachers from pursuing better opportunities through interviews, must be addressed. We must promote an environment that encourages professional growth and development, ultimately benefiting the education sector as a whole. Regulations should be in place to protect the rights of teachers to seek advancement in their careers without fear of consequences. **Also, the persistent practice of some private schools preferring foreigners over Namibians when it comes to job openings must be looked into.**
8. **Honorable Speaker**, recently, the PDM had to intervene by releasing a statement strongly condemning the conduct of private schools, denying

learners the chance to mourn their President (*may his soul rest in eternal peace*), citing deviations from the state school calendar.

9. **Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members**, I am going to provide a few international examples as regards best practices in regulation of private education: In one Asian country, South Korea, the public school system distinguishes public schools from private schools *de jure*, however there is no *de facto* difference between public and private schools.¹

10. That is because most private schools, which account for over 15% of total schools in South Korea, are run on government funding. Because formal private schools in South Korea receive government funding, they are required to follow the same procedures for admission and teaching as state-run public schools.² Therefore, even though formal private schools are technically non-public entities allowed to have their own set of rules, the conditions for government funding eliminate the differences between government-run schools and privately-run schools.³

11. In the Namibian context, in terms of section 76 (1) of the *Basic Education Act, 2020 (Act No. 3 of 2020)*, private schools are required to apply for registration to the Minister of basic education. Therefore, I ask that all private schools be henceforth required to reapply for registration before the commencement of each school calendar year. This is to ensure that the schools' educational and/or curriculum requirements are up to standard and that their fees are reasonable.

12. Against this background, some regulations that could be considered to help the Namibian situation include:

- Regulations stipulating a minimum wage for educators in private schools, ensuring just compensation for their professional services and

¹ Best Practices in Regulation of Private Education: Centre for Civil Society, 2015.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

mandating private schools to equitably compensate teachers for any overtime work undertaken, thereby acknowledging and remunerating additional hours beyond the standard workload, ensuring private schools adhere to fair labor practices;

- Regulations to delineate and restrict the maximum working hours applicable to teachers in private schools, mitigating excessive workloads and fostering a healthier equilibrium between professional and personal life;
- Regulations preventing private schools from selectively excluding students from educational activities based solely on unpaid fees, thereby ensuring equal opportunities for all learners.

13. The financial burden placed on parents by exorbitant requests for additional payments, on top of tuition and hostel fees, is unsustainable. Private schools must be held accountable for their financial practices, ensuring that parents are not unfairly burdened. Government oversight is essential to strike a balance between sustaining private institutions and protecting the interests of parents.

14. The regulation of private schools is also essential to address fraudulent practices related to tax and social security deductions. Private schools must be mandated to regularly report and provide evidence of accurate payments on behalf of employees, backed by periodic audits and inspections by relevant authorities.

15. In addition, transparent communication regulations must ensure private schools disclose salary details, including tax and social security deductions. Establishing clear legal consequences for fraudulent practices, protecting employee rights to accurate financial information, and implementing whistle-blower protection mechanisms are essential components of these regulations. By enacting these measures, we aim to

uphold accountability, transparency, and fairness in the financial dealings between private schools and their staff.

Honorable Speaker, Fellow MPs,

16. Allow me now to speak on the private Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). There are major concerns regarding these institutions. One of the concerns is regarding remuneration. The dedicated instructors at these centres, instrumental in equipping individuals with essential skills, deserve fair treatment and compensation.
17. This will not only foster equality but also promote a sense of value for the instructors who contribute significantly to our workforce development.
18. Moreover, it is disheartening to hear reports of delayed or insufficient payments to VTC instructors, despite the substantial funds received from the Namibia Training Authority (NTA). This situation is untenable and requires urgent attention.
19. Government oversight should be implemented to ensure that these funds are allocated appropriately, prioritizing the welfare of employees and the improvement of educational facilities.
20. **Honorable Speaker**, it is unacceptable for vocational education and training providers to prioritize personal luxuries over the well-being of their instructors and needs of their trainees. Government intervention is necessary to establish guidelines preventing the misuse of funds and promoting responsible financial practices within these institutions.
21. In cases where VTCs are found violating employee rights or failing to meet educational standards, strict penalties or withdrawal of funding should be implemented. This will serve as a deterrent and ensure that private VTCs adhere to the regulations set forth, fostering a culture of accountability and commitment to quality education.
22. Let us collectively advocate for the regulation of private VTCs, creating an environment where instructors are treated fairly, educational standards are

upheld, and funds are used responsibly for the betterment of both staff and learners.

23. Lastly, the pressing concerns within Namibia's private education system, including fair compensation for teachers, access to education for all students, and responsible financial practices, necessitate immediate government intervention and the establishment of comprehensive regulations to ensure fairness, equality, and ethical treatment within both private schools and vocational training centres.

24. As representatives of the people, we can do this.

Thank you.