



EFF STATEMENT ON THE THREAT TO TEACHER JOBS DUE TO BUDGET CUTS

Saturday, 07 September 2024

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) notes, with concern, the looming threat to thousands of teacher jobs across South Africa as provincial departments of education face severe budget constraints, increasing learner numbers, and rising salary costs. The ANC government's mismanagement of public resources and lack of prioritisation of education has pushed our basic education system into a crisis, threatening the futures of millions of learners and the livelihoods of thousands of educators.

The recent reports that up to 11,000 teacher jobs are under threat in KwaZulu-Natal alone is a glaring example of the government's failure to manage the education sector effectively. This catastrophe is not isolated to one province but extends across the country, with all nine provincial departments under severe pressure. The Western Cape has already announced the termination of 2,400 contract teaching posts at the end of 2024, which disproportionately affect black schools, while Gauteng and the Eastern Cape are also facing budget shortfalls that will result in significant cuts in teaching personnel, infrastructure, and operations.

This dire situation has been exacerbated by the increased pupil numbers and the rising salaries, which saw a 4.7% inflation-linked salary increase for teachers from July 2024, as well as a 1.5% pay progression bonus. Yet, instead of addressing the root causes of the funding crisis in education, the ANC government has continued to reduce budgets, forcing provincial departments to make impossible choices. The decision to cut teaching posts will not only increase class sizes but will undoubtedly result in poorer educational outcomes, particularly for learners in already under-resourced schools.

The Department of Education's failure to act decisively on these issues is long-standing. For years, the budget for goods and services has been slashed, and provinces like KwaZulu-Natal have seen reduced transfers to no-fee schools and

unpaid bills amounting to R1.5 billion by July. Gauteng is struggling with severe funding pressures across personnel, infrastructure, and operations, and early childhood development (ECD) programs are being stalled. These austerity measures continue to decimate the quality of education in this country, with learners being deprived of the resources they need to succeed.

It is unacceptable that the DA-ANC coalition has chosen to continue to cut the education budget while mismanaging public funds and failing to hold corrupt officials accountable. This is the same government that has wasted billions on fruitless expenditure, corruption scandals, and ill-conceived projects, yet has consistently failed to invest in the most critical sector for the future of our country—education. They are the reason why children still fall to their death in pit latrines in school, children learn on empty stomachs, and have to travel many kilometres and across rivers to get to mud schools with no proper desks.

As the EFF, we reject the narrative that budget cuts are inevitable, and we condemn the government's approach of sacrificing essential services like education while protecting the bloated salaries of senior officials and a bloated cabinet with extreme benefits. This crisis in education is a direct consequence of the government's inability to reprioritise its budget and rein in its wasteful expenditure. It is also a reflection of the broader failure of the ANC's neoliberal economic policies, which place austerity and cost-cutting above the well-being of the people.

We also acknowledge that this crisis has been brewing for years, with education budgets declining in real terms since 2019. Per capita spending has dropped from R30,000 per pupil in 2019 to a projected R27,000 by 2026, further compromising the quality of education in South Africa. The National Treasury's expectation that provincial departments will "reprioritise" their budgets to avoid cutting teacher jobs is nothing but wishful thinking. Without a serious commitment to increasing education funding, reprioritisation is a farce.

The EFF recommends that the Department of Basic Education and the Treasury immediately halt any plans to cut teaching posts and instead allocate additional funds to address the crisis. There is also need for a complete overhaul of the DA-ANC Government austerity policies, which continue to disproportionately impact the poor


and vulnerable. We will not stand by while the government jeopardises the futures of South Africa's children and the livelihoods of hard-working educators

The EFF will continue to advocate for a radical increase in education funding to ensure that no teacher loses their job and that every child has access to free, quality education. We have consistently called for the government to commit to creating jobs for educators, reducing class sizes, and improving infrastructure. Education must be treated as a priority, not an afterthought, and the government must be held accountable for its continued failures in this critical sector. The future of our nation depends on it.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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