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## **MEMORANDUM OF DEMANDS**

**Subject:** Go Public! Fund Education- The Impact of Austerity Measures on Education, Mental Health, and Economy

**Date:** 23 April 2025

We, the members of SADTU representing more than 275,000 members in both the basic and higher education departments having noted the ongoing challenges we, the children and the communities we serve continue to face and confront on a daily basis, come here today to declare that our patience and flexibility has now been tested to the extreme end.

Firstly, it is important to remind you and government that education is the right guaranteed in Section 29 of our Constitution. As a democratic government, you should be the first to always remember this and remember your obligations in terms of Section 8(1) of the Constitution to adopt measures to promote, protect and fulfill this right. We are disappointed that in addition to the difficult task we have to teach in the present circumstances, it has also become our job to keep reminding you and government of your constitutional obligations. We hope that

you appreciate that our patience is not endless and urge you and government not to test it beyond here.

We wish to remind you that our rights as workers, the rights of our children and the rights of communities are not a privilege but a right indeed. We are therefore not here to ask for any privileges. We are here to demand the realization of the objectives and goals of our struggle. We are here to demand no less than the real and immediate opening of the doors of learning. We are here to demand no less than the implementation of our rights.

We should and would not be here today if you and the government respected our rights and that of the children. We would not be here today if the many concerns we raised over many years had been addressed. We would not be here today if the poor and working class receive quality public education. We would not be here today if enough resources are put into education particularly for the poor and working class.

We have over many years interacted with various government Ministers to address some of the persistent problems in education covering both the conditions of service and other pertinent issues in education. We have been promised that outstanding anomalies would be addressed. We have been promised that education infrastructure would be improved. We have been promised that more resources would be availed in education. We have been promised that conditions of service and other collective bargaining matters will be resolved.

### **Preamble:**

This memorandum aims to highlight the severe consequences of the current austerity measures on our education system, teachers, learners, mental health, and the broader economy. The implementation of these measures has led to significant challenges that require immediate attention and action.

It further aims to force Treasury to stop neoliberal policies in order to reverse the severe damages that have been inflicted on our education system.

### **Background to the March by SADTU Members Against Austerity Measures and Budget Cuts in Education:**

The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) has organized a national protest march on 23 April 2025, targeting the offices of the National Treasury, Department of Basic Education, and Department of Higher Education and Training in Pretoria. This march is a direct response to the ongoing austerity measures and budget cuts that have severely impacted the public education system in South Africa.

### **Importance of Public Education**

Public education is a cornerstone of societal development and equality. It provides accessible education to all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to society.

### **Quality public education is essential for:**

**Economic Growth:** Educated individuals are better equipped to participate in the workforce, driving innovation and economic development.

**Social Equity:** Public education helps bridge the gap between different socio-economic groups, promoting social mobility and reducing inequality.

**Civic Engagement:** Educated citizens are more likely to engage in civic activities, fostering a more informed and active society.

## **Impact of Budget Cuts on Public Education**

The austerity measures and budget cuts have had devastating effects on the public education system in South Africa. These cuts have led to:

**Overcrowded Classrooms:** With reduced funding, schools are unable to hire enough teachers, resulting in overcrowded classrooms that hinder effective teaching and learning. The lack of substitute teachers has increased the workload for the remaining teachers and impacting their health.

**Unfilled Vacancies:** Budget constraints have left many teaching positions vacant, increasing the workload on existing teachers and compromising the quality of education. This has not only affected teaching vacancies but leadership positions as well. The worst of unfilled vacancies is felt by those who act without any compensation for indefinite periods.

**Lack of Resources:** Schools are struggling to provide basic educational materials and infrastructure, affecting the overall learning environment. The special schools' infrastructure has dilapidated to a deplorable level that even animals cannot live in such conditions.

**Privatisation Threat:** The erosion of public education funding paves the way for increased privatisation, which can lead to unequal access to quality education. The systemic defunding of public education has created a fertile ground for private schools which perpetuate inequalities.

The summary of the shortfalls in provincial budgets below paints a picture of a public education system in a crisis and teachers suffering from depression and other conditions and learners dropping out.

| <b>BUDGET SHORTFALLS PER PROVINCE</b> |                               |                                   |                                   |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>In R billions</b>                  | <b>2021/2022<br/>in R..bn</b> | <b>2022/2023<br/>in<br/>R..bn</b> | <b>2023/2024<br/>in<br/>R..bn</b> | <b>2024/2025<br/>in<br/>R..bn</b> |
| <b>Limpopo</b>                        | 0.34                          | 3.15                              | 1.95                              | 0.73                              |
| <b>Northern Cape</b>                  | 0.31                          | 0.35                              | 0.56                              | 0.80                              |
| <b>North West</b>                     |                               | 0.40                              | 1.16                              | 0.28                              |
| <b>Free State</b>                     | 0.95                          | 1.30                              | 0.90                              | 1.56                              |
| <b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>                  | 1.56                          | 0.67                              | 0.72                              | 1.80                              |

### **Budget Deficits or Shortfalls per Province in South Africa:**

#### **Eastern Cape:**

The Eastern Cape has faced significant budget shortfalls, impacting the ability to maintain and improve educational infrastructure. The province has struggled to fund essential services, leading to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of resources.

The province has a budget shortfall of approximately R3.5 billion. This deficit has led to overcrowded classrooms, a lack of educational resources, and deteriorating school infrastructure. Many schools are unable to provide basic supplies, and teachers are often forced to buy materials out of their own pockets.

#### **KwaZulu-Natal:**

KwaZulu-Natal faces a budget shortfall of around R2.8 billion. The province has struggled to maintain school facilities, leading to unsafe learning environments. The lack of funding has also resulted in insufficient support for special education needs.

**Gauteng:**

Gauteng has a budget deficit of approximately R2.5 billion. This shortfall has impacted the quality of education, with larger class sizes and reduced access to learning materials. The province has also seen an increase in teacher burnout due to the increased workload.

**Limpopo:**

Limpopo's budget shortfall is around R2.2 billion. The province has faced significant challenges in maintaining school infrastructure, leading to unsafe and inadequate learning environments. The lack of funding has also affected the provision of essential services such as school transport. The province has normalised acting without compensation.

**Mpumalanga:**

Mpumalanga has a budget deficit of approximately R1.9 billion. The shortfall has led to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of educational resources. Many schools are unable to provide adequate support for students with special needs. This is a province that purchased one laptop for R98,000.

**North West:**

The North West province faces a budget shortfall of around R1.7 billion. This deficit has impacted the quality of education, with larger class sizes and reduced access to learning materials. The province has also struggled to maintain school facilities.

**Free State:**

The Free State has a budget deficit of approximately R1.5 billion. The shortfall has led to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of educational resources. The province has also seen an increase in teacher burnout due to the increased workload.

### **Northern Cape:**

The Northern Cape faces a budget shortfall of around R1.2 billion. The province has struggled to maintain school facilities, leading to unsafe learning environments. The lack of funding has also resulted in insufficient support for special education needs.

### **Western Cape:**

The Western Cape has a budget deficit of approximately R1 billion. This shortfall has impacted the quality of education, with larger class sizes and reduced access to learning materials. The province has also seen an increase in teacher burnout due to the increased workload.

SADTU's march aims to draw attention to these critical issues and demand greater investment in public education to ensure that every child in South Africa has access to quality education. The union believes that reversing these budget cuts is essential for the future of the country's education system and the well-being of its citizens.

### **Impact on Teachers and Learners:**

#### **Killer Number One: Increased Workloads**

Teachers are facing overwhelming workloads, which is detrimental to their health and well-being. For instance, one dedicated Grade 5 teacher in Gauteng, often works late into the night preparing lessons and grading assignments, leaving her exhausted and stressed. Similarly, a high school teacher in Kwa-Zulu Natal, has seen his class sizes double, making it nearly impossible to provide individual

attention to students. The pressure to manage large classes with limited resources is unsustainable and negatively impacts the quality of education.

### **Modern Day Slavery-Wages of Grade R Educators :**

The wages of Grade R Educators are alarmingly low, amounting to modern-day slavery. A passionate Grade R practitioner in Mpumalanga, struggles to make ends meet despite her full-time commitment to nurturing young minds. Another Grade R practitioner in the same school has had to take on additional jobs just to support his family, leaving him exhausted and unable to focus fully on his teaching duties. This undervaluation of their work is unjust and demoralizing, leading to high turnover rates and a lack of motivation among educators.

### **Killing Curiosity and Innovation-Violence in College Campuses:**

Budget cuts have resulted in deteriorating infrastructure in higher education institutions, contributing to increased violence and safety concerns for students. For example, a university student in Western Cape, was assaulted on campus due to the lack of proper security measures. In Gauteng, another student, has had to navigate unsafe conditions daily, which has severely impacted her ability to concentrate on her studies. These conditions create significant barriers to learning and personal development.

### **Our learners are Human beings: Condition of Special Schools:**

Our special schools are in a deplorable state, unfit even for animals. A mother of a child with special needs in Eastern Cape, shares her heartbreak over the inadequate facilities and lack of resources that fail to meet her child's needs. A teacher at a special school in Free State, recounts how he often has to bring his own supplies to ensure his students have basic learning materials. The lack of adequate funding and resources has led to substandard facilities that fail to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

### **Mental Health:**

The mental health of both teachers and learners is severely impacted by the austerity measures. Increased stress, anxiety, and burnout among educators, coupled with the unsafe and inadequate learning environments for students, are leading to a mental health crisis. One high school teacher in Limpopo, has been diagnosed with severe anxiety due to the constant pressure and lack of support. A student in Eastern Cape, has experienced depression as a result of the stressful and unsafe school environment. This crisis further hampers the ability to teach and learn effectively.

### **Impact on Parents:**

#### **Parental Concerns:**

Parents are deeply concerned about the impact of austerity measures on their children's education and well-being. A mother of two primary school children in Gauteng worries about the large class sizes and the lack of individual attention her children receive. She has noticed a decline in their academic performance and an increase in their stress levels.

#### **Financial Strain:**

Many parents are struggling to afford additional educational resources and support for their children due to the inadequacies in the public education system. The financial strain is exacerbated by the need to pay for private tutoring and extracurricular activities to compensate for the gaps in the school system.

#### **Safety Concerns:**

Parents are also concerned about the safety of their children in schools with deteriorating infrastructure and inadequate security measures. A mother whose daughter attends a local high school in Gauteng, fears for her child's safety due to the frequent incidents of violence and theft on school premises.

#### **Additional Stories from Teachers:**

One primary school teacher in Eastern Cape, shares how she often has to buy classroom supplies out of her own pocket because the school budget is insufficient. This financial burden adds to her stress and affects her ability to provide quality education.

A High School Teacher from Kwa-Zulu Natal recounts how he has seen a decline in student engagement and performance due to the lack of resources and support. He feels helpless as he watches his students struggle to keep up with their studies in overcrowded classrooms.

A special education teacher from Northern Cape, describes the emotional toll of working in a dilapidated school environment. She is deeply committed to her students but feels that the lack of funding and resources is a constant barrier to providing the care and education they deserve.

### **Teacher Burnout Statistics:**

Teacher burnout is a significant issue, with 44% of teachers in Grade R – 12 reporting that they very often or always feel burned out at work. This figure is even higher among female teachers, with 55% experiencing frequent burnout. Teaching staff report the highest rates of work-related stress, depression, and anxiety compared to other professions. Almost two-thirds (62%) of teachers believe that stress affects them more than 60% of the time. This higher level of stress is more common among female respondents (65%) compared to male respondents (54%). Additionally, 74% of teachers have had to take on extra duties due to staff shortages.

### **Case Studies of Affected Teachers:**

#### **Case Study: Kwa-Zulu Natal**

A primary school teacher in Kwa-Zulu Natal has experienced significant challenges due to austerity measures. She reports that the reduction in school funding has led to larger class sizes and fewer resources, and she often has to

buy classroom supplies out of her own pocket, adding to her financial strain. The increased workload and lack of support have resulted in severe burnout, impacting her ability to teach effectively.

### **Case Study: Limpopo**

A high school teacher in Lephalele has seen the effects of austerity measures firsthand. The cuts have led to a decrease in per-pupil spending, making it difficult to provide quality education causing what he has noticed as a decline in student performance and engagement, as well as an increase in behavioral issues. The stress of managing these challenges has taken a toll on his mental health.

### **Case Study: Eastern Cape**

A special education teacher in Gqeberqa, has been deeply affected by the austerity measures. The lack of funding for special schools has resulted in inadequate facilities and resources causing the teacher to often bring her own supplies to ensure her students have basic learning materials. The emotional toll of working in such conditions has led to burnout and a sense of helplessness.

### **Case Study: Mpumalanga**

In another case study, a secondary school teacher in Bushbuckridge, has faced significant challenges due to austerity measures. The reduction in school budgets has led to larger class sizes and fewer teaching assistants causing the teacher to often works late into the night to prepare lessons and grade assignments, leaving her exhausted and stressed. The lack of support and increased workload have resulted in severe burnout, impacting her ability to teach effectively.

### **Case Study: Free State**

In another case, primary school teacher in Parys has experienced the impact of austerity measures on his mental health. The cuts to school funding have led to a lack of resources and support, making it difficult to provide quality education

causing the teacher to notice a decline in student performance and engagement, as well as an increase in behavioural issues. The stress of managing these challenges has taken a toll on his mental health, leading to burnout and a sense of helplessness.

### **Case Study: North West**

In North West, a Grade R educator of 12 years who is 55 years old has experienced uncertainty due to the non-permanency of her post, she cannot buy a house or a car as she is not considered to be full-time employed. This has now affected her teaching quality as the stress of not knowing if she has a job or not has affected her negatively. She is concerned that with her age she will not have a pension and that her qualifications are not sufficient to find employment in the department and her age is now against her to change careers.

### **Case Study: Critical Conditions at a Northern Cape Primary School**

#### **1. Nutrition Programme Crisis**

**Issues:** Unsafe shack used as kitchen; no nutrition funds since March 2025.

**Impact:** Learners bring food from home, causing inequalities and hunger, affecting concentration and performance.

#### **2. Multi-Grade Teaching Challenges**

**Issues:** Overcrowded classes (Grade 1: 22 learners, Grade 2: 31 learners); doubled workload for teaching and assessments; lack of support for learners with barriers.

**Impact:** Teacher stress, frequent headaches, and fatigue.

#### **3. Urgent Needs**

**Requests:** Immediate release of nutrition funds, safe kitchen structure, assistant teacher for multi-grade classes, reduced class sizes, and specialised support for learners with barriers.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The conditions at the primary school compromise education quality and safety. Urgent action is needed to support teachers and learners.

### **Case Study: Deplorable Working Conditions at a Secondary School in Gauteng**

#### **1. Overcrowded Classrooms**

**Issues:** Teaching classes with learner numbers exceeding 130 per group.

**Impact:** It's difficult to keep track of and support every learner in very large classes. This makes it easy for some students to fall behind unnoticed.

#### **2. Inadequate Infrastructure**

**Issues:** Out of the three classrooms taught in, only one is in a brick-and-mortar structure. The remaining are mobile classrooms that are physically unsafe, thermally uncomfortable, acoustically disruptive as well as dilapidated and broken.

**Impact:** Poses risk of injury and illness to both learners and educators. Noise pollution is disruptive.

#### **3. Impact on Teaching and Mental Health**

**Issues:** Professional frustration, emotional distress, loss of professional dignity, mental exhaustion.

**Issues:** Feelings of Inadequacy and consideration of resigning from the profession altogether.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Despite the nobility of teaching and your pride in it, the current risks experienced by the educator is grounds for failure by for both learners and teachers.

### **Case Study: Overcrowded, Dilapidated Classes at a High School in Northern Cape**

## **1. Dilapidated infrastructure**

**Issue:** School built in 1994, no major renovations

**Impact:** Severe overcrowding with classes of 50-70 learners.

## **2. Financial Neglect**

**Issue:** No Section 21 allocations for 2024/2025

**Impact:** Educators using personal funds for supplies.

## **3. Sanitation**

**Issues:** Dysfunctional facilities

**Impact:** Health and safety concerns.

## **4. Teaching Conditions**

**Issue:** Overburdened teachers, large class sizes

**Impact:** Mental exhaustion, and stress.

## **5. Conclusion**

The situation violates learners' right to education and teachers' right to a supportive work environment.

## **Student Performance Statistics**

**Decline in Academic Achievement:** Recent data shows a significant decline in student performance due to the austerity measures with fewer students achieving top grades. This decline is attributed to the lack of resources and support in schools.

**Retention Rates:** Retention rates in schools and higher education institutions have also been affected, with more students dropping out due to the challenging learning environment. This trend is particularly concerning as it indicates that

students are struggling to cope with the pressures and lack of support in their educational institutions.

**Demands:**

1. **Increase Funding for Educational Institutions:** Allocate more resources to reduce workloads, improve infrastructure, and ensure adequate supplies for teachers and students.
2. **Ensure Fair Wages for Grade R Educators :** Address the low wages of the Educators to improve their financial stability and motivation.
3. **Formalisation of Grade R Educators sector.**
4. **Management positions must be filled by professionally qualified personal with immediate effect.**
5. **Allocate Sufficient Resources to Upgrade Special Schools:** Invest in special schools to ensure they have the necessary facilities and resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
6. **Implement Mental Health Support Programs:** Provide mental health support for both teachers and learners to address the stress, anxiety, and burnout caused by the current conditions.
7. **All Provinces must start paying pay progression in terms of resolution by 1 July each year.**
8. **All those in acting positions must be paid an acting allowance.**
9. **Address the Inequalities in Education:** Eradication of all pit latrines, mud schools where they are remaining as well as equipping all schools with broadband, mobile libraries, mobile laboratories.
10. **Promote Public Education:** Reform legislation to reduce subsidies to private / independent institutions and re-direct it to public education funding to promote parents trusting the public education system again.
11. **Stop corruption in Education:** We demand that those involved in any form of corruption be dealt with the full might of the law as they are stealing from the working class and poor as well as stealing from the future of the children in our country.

12. **The status, rights and working conditions of Education Support Personnel:** We demand the end of privatization, commercialization and outsourcing of ESP duties that denies the intrinsically interdependent nature of their work in the education sector. ESP must be recognised and respected for their role in providing quality, public education.
13. **Non-Implementation of policies due to lack of funding:** We demand the urgent implementation of Indigenous African Languages, MTbBE, Three-Stream Model.
14. **Safe, reliable school transport:** We demand safe, reliable school transport for our children.
15. **Re-Appointment of Grade R Educators:** We demand their urgent re-appointment of these educators in the North West province as well as the space to allow those studying to conclude their studies so that they are qualified.
16. **Extortion of Workers:** We demand the end of the ever-life threatening environment that workers are subjected to.
17. **Increased psychosocial support personnel:** We demand an increased provision of such support in order to deal with the increasing mental health problems the workforce faces.

The following demands aim to address the critical issues highlighted in the memorandum and improve the overall quality of education and well-being of all stakeholders involved.

### **Demands to Deal with Violence in Schools:**

**1. Implement Comprehensive Anti-Violence Programs:** Develop and implement programs that address bullying, harassment, and violence in schools. These programs should include education on conflict resolution, peer mediation, and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion.

**2. Enhance Security Measures:** Increase security personnel and surveillance in schools to ensure a safe learning environment. Regular safety audits and risk assessments should be conducted to identify and mitigate potential threats.

**3. Provide Training for Teachers and Staff:** Offer training for teachers and staff on how to manage and de-escalate violent situations. This training should include techniques for identifying early signs of aggression and effective intervention strategies.

**4. Engage Parents and Communities:** Involve parents and community members in efforts to prevent violence. Community engagement can help shift social norms and create a supportive environment for students.

#### **Demands to Support Grade R Educators:**

**1. Increase Wages:** Ensure fair and competitive wages for Grade R Educators to reflect the importance of their role in early childhood education. This will help improve their financial stability and motivation.

**2. Provide Professional Development Opportunities:** Offer ongoing professional development and training programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of Grade R Educators. This will help them stay updated with best practices and improve the quality of education they provide.

**3. Improve Working Conditions:** Ensure that Grade R Educators have access to adequate resources and support. This includes providing well-equipped classrooms, sufficient teaching materials, and access to mental health support.

#### **Demands to Alleviate Workload and Pressure on Grade 12 Teachers:**

**1. Reduce Administrative Tasks:** Implement policies to reduce the administrative burden on Grade 12 teachers. This includes delegating non-

teaching tasks to administrative staff and streamlining processes to minimize paperwork.

**2. Increase Support Staff:** Hire additional support staff, such as teaching assistants and counsellors, to help manage the workload and provide support to students. This will allow teachers to focus more on teaching and less on administrative duties.

**3. Promote Work-Life Balance:** Encourage principals and school leaders to prioritize the well-being of teachers by promoting work-life balance. This includes setting realistic expectations, providing flexible working hours, and offering mental health support.

**4. Foster Collaboration and Support:** Create a collaborative environment where teachers can share resources, strategies, and support each other. Regular meetings and peer support groups can help alleviate the pressure and provide a sense of community.

These demands aim to address the critical issues highlighted in the memorandum and improve the overall quality of education and well-being of all stakeholders involved.

### **Conclusion:**

The budget cuts across the provinces have had a profound impact on the education system, leading to overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating infrastructure, and increased teacher burnout. It is imperative that we stop these austerity measures and prioritize investment in education to ensure a brighter future for our students and the broader economy.

**Take note: The Minister concerned need to note that after 21 days of no positive action, the union shall embark on processes in terms of its constitution for a strike action.**

*"Austerity = Inequality"*  
*"Stop the Cuts!"*  
*"People Over Profits"*  
*"Invest in Our Future"*  
*"No More Austerity!"*  
*"No More Violence!"*  
*"Stop Violence!"*  
*"Stop SGBV!"*  
*"Austerity Hurts the Vulnerable"*  
*"Cuts Today, Crisis Tomorrow"*  
*"Austerity: The Wrong Solution"*  
*"Build Communities, Not Cut Them"*  
*"Economic Justice for All"*  
*"Austerity Is Immoral!"*  
*"Neoliberalism Is Poison!"*  
*"A Better Future For All!"*  
*"Stand Up Against Austerity!"*  
*"Join the Fight for Fairness!"*  
*"Speak Out Against Cuts!"*  
*"Together We Can Make a Change!"*  
*"Demand Transformation Policies!"*  
*"Demand Decolonization Curriculum!"*  
*"Formalize Grade R Now!"*  
*"Fund Our Arts!"*  
*"Fund Our Sports!"*  
*"Stand Up for Public Education!"*

**1. Issued on behalf of SADTU Secretariat**

**Name:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Received on behalf of the Ministry**

**Name:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_