

From: <i>The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU)</i> Portion 74 cnr Dann Road & Loam street, Glen Marais, Kempton Park, 1619 TEL: (011) 971 2000 cindy@sadtu.org.za	To: Hon. Minister of Higher Education and Training <i>Department of Higher Education and Training</i> 123 Francis Baard Street, Pretoria 0001 Tel: (012) 312 5911 nkabane.n@dhet.gov.za
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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 lecture rooms: With reduced funding, schools are unable to hire enough lecturers, resulting in overcrowded lecture rooms that hinder effective teaching and learning.

Unfilled Vacancies: Budget constraints have left many workshops positions vacant, increasing the workload on existing lecturers and compromising the quality of education and training. This has not only affected lecturing vacancies but leadership positions as well. The indefinite acting in leadership and management positions is undermining education and training for students.

Lack of Resources: Colleges are struggling to provide basic educational materials and infrastructure, affecting the overall learning environment.

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.

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 Lecturers 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.

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.

Mental Health:

The mental health of both lecturers 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.

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.

Lecturer burnout in South African TVET and Community Education Training centers is a significant issue.

High Workload: Lecturers often face heavy teaching loads, administrative duties, and additional responsibilities.

Inadequate Support: There is a lack of effective stress management strategies and support systems.

Poor Working Conditions: Many TVET centers have insufficient resources and facilities, contributing to stress and dissatisfaction.

Impact on Lecturers

Mental Health: High levels of stress lead to mental exhaustion, anxiety, and burnout.

Job Satisfaction: Many lecturers report low job satisfaction due to the demanding nature of their roles and inadequate support.

Demands

Improved Support Systems: Implementing better stress management strategies and providing mental health resources.

Enhanced Working Conditions: Upgrading facilities and ensuring adequate resources to support teaching and administrative tasks.

Professional Development: Offering continuous professional development opportunities to help lecturers manage their workload and stress more effectively

Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the well-being of lecturers and the quality of education in TVET and Community Education Training centres.

Further Recommendations to deal with Lecturer burnout:

Professional Development

Regular Training: Offer continuous professional development programs to help lecturers stay updated with the latest teaching methods and technologies.

Mentoring: Establish structured mentoring systems where experienced lecturers can guide newer staff.

Improved Working Conditions

Adequate Resources: Ensure that lecturers have access to necessary teaching materials and facilities.

Reasonable Workloads: Balance teaching loads and administrative duties to prevent burnout.

Mental Health Support

Counseling Services: Provide access to mental health resources and counseling services to help lecturers manage stress.

Stress Management Workshops: Conduct workshops focused on stress management and well-being.

Community Building

Networking Opportunities: Facilitate regular networking and socializing activities to build a supportive community among lecturers.

Collaborative Planning: Encourage collaborative lesson planning and peer observation to share best practices.

Recognition and Rewards

Acknowledgment: Recognize and reward lecturers for their hard work and achievements to boost morale and motivation.

Austerity measures have significant impacts on students and retention in TVET and Community Education and Training Centres in South Africa:

Reduced Funding

Limited Resources: Austerity leads to budget cuts, resulting in fewer resources for educational materials, equipment, and facilities.

Maintenance Issues: Insufficient funds for maintenance can lead to deteriorating infrastructure, affecting the learning environment.

Increased Dropout Rates

Financial Barriers: Students from low-income backgrounds may struggle to afford fees and other costs, leading to higher dropout rates.

Support Services: Cuts to support services such as counseling and career guidance can negatively impact student retention.

Quality of Education

Overcrowded Classes: Budget cuts often result in larger class sizes, which can hinder effective teaching and learning.

Lecturer Burnout: Increased workloads and stress among lecturers due to austerity measures can affect their ability to deliver quality education.

Access to Education

Geographical Barriers: Reduced funding can limit the availability of transportation and accommodation support for students from remote areas.

Program Availability: Some educational programs may be cut or reduced, limiting students' choices and opportunities.

Austerity measures create significant challenges for TVET and Community Education and Training Centres, impacting student retention and the overall quality of education. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions and increased investment in education.

Retention rates in South African TVET and Community Education and Training Centres:

TVET Colleges: The completion rate for students in TVET colleges was around 8.7% in 2022.

Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges: The completion rate for the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC): Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Level 4 was below 50%, with a notable drop to 35.9% by 2016

These figures highlight the challenges faced by these institutions in retaining students and ensuring successful completions.

Demands:

1. **Increase Funding for Educational Institutions:** Allocate more resources to reduce workloads, improve infrastructure, and ensure adequate supplies for teachers and students.
2. **Respect Collective Bargaining in the TVET Sector:** The employer representative must stop shifting the responsibility of signing collective agreements so that workers can be protected.
3. **Accelerated release of certificates for students who have qualified.**
4. **Stop the Victimisation of TVET Lecturers.**
5. **Management positions must be filled by professionally qualified personnel with immediate effect.**
6. **Enhance Security Measures in College Campuses:** Improve safety and security in higher education institutions to protect students and create a conducive learning environment.
7. **Implement Mental Health Support Programs:** Provide mental health support for both lecturers and learners to address the stress, anxiety, and burnout caused by the current conditions.
8. **Payment of 37% in lieu of benefits in colleges must be implemented timeously.**
9. **All Provinces must start paying pay progression in terms of resolution by 1 July each year.**
10. **All those in acting positions must be paid an acting allowance.**
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. **Implementation of NSFAS for Missing Middle:** We demand that DHET expedite and finalise the provision of the student financial aid scheme for children of the working class to allow them to access tertiary education.
13. **Extortion of Workers:** We demand the end of the ever-life threatening environment that workers are subjected to extortionists or what they refer as mafias.
14. **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 and GBV in colleges :

- 1. Implement Comprehensive Anti-Violence Programs:** Develop and implement programs that address bullying, harassment, and violence in colleges. 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 in colleges 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 Lecturers and Staff:** Offer training for lecturers 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.

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 these colleges have had a profound impact on the education and training system, leading to delayed results and placements, deteriorating infrastructure, and increased lecturer burnout. It is imperative that we stop these austerity measures and prioritize investment in education and training 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:**_____