

Swaziland National Association of Teachers

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RESPONSE BY THE SNAT ON THE STATEMENT THAT WAS MADE BY THE CURRENT CHAIRPERSON OF THE TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION [TSC]

I. INTRODUCTION

On Monday (24-05-2021), the SNAT came across an article that was run by one of the country's dailies, 'The Swazi Observer,' on page six [6], in which the newly appointed TSC Chairman Dr. A. M. Mahlalela was denying knowledge of critical issues that have engulfed the Teaching Fraternity. Mahlalela further opines that as the SNAT we were supposed to engage him as a natural person first before proposing to deliver a petition to the Acting Prime Minister's Office.

II. GIST OF THE STATEMENT

As the SNAT, we deem it worthwhile to educate the new person of Mahlalela as follows. That;

- I. It is true that he may be a new occupant of the seat that he is currently occupying but that shall never be accepted as an excuse for him to be out of touch with the problems that are engulfing the Education System of this country. Our ardent belief is that as



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a teacher himself, he possesses some knowledge of such problems even though there was never any proper handover that was conducted between himself and the former chairperson of the commission, something we refuse to believe it could have escaped these two officers.

II. Leadership is a perpetual practice and that, as a new Chairman, there is a reasonable expectation that he becomes seized with the matters that involve his office. As an academician, he is supposed to know this better. Since these matters were raised with the Administrative and Political leadership of the department under which he serves, he was supposed to be appraised by his superiors in the Ministry of Education and Training [MoET]: unless he thinks of himself and the TSC as a totally independent body that operates parallel to the Ministry of Education and Training [MoET]. The argument that the SNAT should have consulted him is seriously misdirected. The SNAT will never engage himself as an individual but will engage him as part of the TSC collective.

III. It is true that as the SNAT we have not yet met the TSC under his leadership to exchange pleasantries and we appreciate the fact that there is a dire need of such a meeting. We therefore hope that the Principal Secretary [PS] in the Ministry of Education and Training [MoET] will facilitate this kind of a meeting at the soonest possible time. However, clarity ought to be made that this shall not be a familiarisation meeting only but will be a meeting wherein serious purely sectoral and professional issues shall be discussed. In this meeting, the SNAT is expecting the Chairman to;

- A. Present a comprehensive strategy through which he hopes to strengthen the country's Teaching Service after more than ten [10] wasted years under the leadership of a Lawyer, a person who had never prepared a single lesson plan in his life. As a teacher, we expect him to rise to the occasion.
- B. Present to the SNAT and the entire country all the policies that the TSC uses as it executes its legal mandate. These include but not limited to the following; Relocation Policy, Promotion Policy, Employment Policy and Teacher Disciplinary Policy, Transfer Policy etc. The time in which the management of the Teaching Service depended on one's individual views on issues is long gone. The Teaching fraternity demands more transparency, accountability and trustworthiness in handling teachers' issues. We therefore implore the Chairman to hit the ground running in this regard so that by the time our meeting materialises, we discuss substantive issues that seek to improve the condition of teachers.



III. CONCLUSION

The SNAT, as an Organisation of employees, is indeed walking on two legs. One concerns the furtherance of bread-and-butter issues for our members and the other concerns the furtherance of purely professional and sectoral issues for our members. We have a duty to ensure that we strike a dynamic balance between these issues. Our demand for the employment of teachers on a permanent and pensionable basis shall be amplified going ahead and we will not retreat unless and until the Government of Swaziland takes the lives of teachers and that of the learners seriously. Crippling the education system by reducing the number of teachers or by engaging them on a fixed term contract basis ultimately kills the education system and compromises the future of our children and by extension, that of the country. We shall, therefore, stop at nothing until this demand is adequately met by the government of Swaziland, the employer of choice.

Issued By The SNAT SG on May 24, 2021



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