

## **Priorities from the teachers and the learners of South Africa**

Greetings to the Chairperson and General Secretary of the ELRC, The DG and all Heads of Departments, Leaders and comrades of the Trade Unions in Education.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the ELRC for convening this 2nd Education Indaba. We are indeed pleased with the work we are doing in the ELRC as we transform our education.

The Indaba takes place at the time we are celebrating the centenary of the Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu. Nelson Mandela characterized education as the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. We meet at a time when the world we must change is changing our rapidly. We are a generation that witnessed the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid in our country and many other world events. We thought we were making progress in creating a better world.

However The world has become so brutal. Racists, despot, fascist and right-wing populists are being elected as leaders of nation states. This has emboldened capital in its endeavor to marketise, commercialise and privatize education. When Mandela asserted that education can change the world, the neoliberal agenda sees education as a commodity. Edupreneurs and Edubusiness see education as a profit making venture. These edupreneurs working together with politicians see our teachers as tools to be overloaded and deprofessionalised so that they can derive profits from lack of training and resourcing.

Before stating our key priorities let me paint a picture that we all know very well. In SA everyone blames the teachers for poor performance of learners. WDR blames basic education for poor economy growth in SA. The WEF blames basic education for the high rate of unemployment in our country. The IMF blames the teachers for poor performance in

mathematics and literature. The OECD reports paint a depressing picture and basic education is blamed. From economic perspective let me paint this picture.

SA is the most unequal society. Why violence? The GINI coefficients ranges from 0,660 to 0,696 today. The most equal societies are characterized by GINI coefficients of 0

World Wealth Levels by 2017

South Africa still ranked between \$500 to \$25000 whilst we have mineral resources that enrich the West at \$100,000

Our unemployment rate is officially at over 27,7% whilst the Youth is 54,4%. Who to blame? Basic education we hear.

The 4th Industrial Revolution has both threats and opportunities in our sector. Who will benefit from this revolution? The West. Why blame basic education. SA is a semi periphery whilst the entire Africa is peripheral in terms of connectivity.

Taking into account the issues I have raised I have confidence that we can address the following priorities

Fund and develop mother tongue

Fund Professional Teacher Development

Formalize the working conditions of the ECE teachers or practitioners. This include addressing their qualifications and salaries. Provide them with benefits like all teachers because they are important as anchors of education. Professionalise them and allow them to have autonomy in choosing the activities in the implementation of the curriculum.

Total transformation of the infrastructure

Provide Safety for the teachers and children. Violence is very costly and we cannot afford to lose more teachers.

Appointment teachers permanently and ensure that assistance teachers are also appointed to assist the learners and teachers.

Do not standardize the curriculum but enrich and make it flexible so that we can participate in the 4th Industrial Revolution

Mathematics and LOLT must be a focus area and let's not commit suicide by doing away with mathematics.

Appointment support staff in all schools and ensure that they enjoy promotion as well

Review the Collective agreements dealing with recruitment and promotion to respond to the needs of the 21st Century.

Rural education must not reduce our children to hunters because the 4th IR demands that all learners be equipped with communication and mathematical skills.

We in the education can leverage the opportunities offered by the 4th IR and train and reskill the teachers to teach our children the skills that can make employable and self employed. I mean we have the opportunity to increase their chances of a better life if we together resolve to work in the spirit of uTata Mandela.

### **In conclusion**

Don't create a fertile environment for private schools. Doing this is to deviate from the vision uTata Mandela set for all of us we can only celebrate and honor his vision by funding public education

Don't overload the teachers and implement managerialism and standardized curriculum.

Do not deprofessionalise the profession with the hope that technology can replace teachers. Harness the possibilities that ICT offers by training the teachers to use ICT as a resource and support.

Through our collaborative professionalism we can restore and promote the academic freedom for our teachers to bring back creativity in our classrooms and not reduce our classrooms into exam factories.

When the world has become so brutal, the teaching profession can change how we teach to create people with good heads and good hearts because the combination of the two is always formidable.

With all the blame game we as professionals in SA can't adopt the Adam blame Eve and Eve blame the snake. Who will blame the snake then, and thereafter what do we achieve. We in this beautiful country have to work together to transform our education system to address the needs of our learners and economy. The DG spoke about the virtual classrooms and us as unions being able to recruit more members. Let's take this as a challenge and embrace the digital or cyber-physical systems because this is a reality.

It's a reality and we acknowledge that indeed the physical, digital and biological worlds continue to converge offering us as a profession to produce knowledge, skills and attitudes that will create a better world.

Lesson number one is that do not expect us to obey in advance because history doesn't repeat itself but it does instruct.

Thanks for listening DG. Last year I said your equitable share is not equitable at all.