



Fees must fall #FeesMustFall movement

The recent student uprising is the culmination of 20 years of broken promises. Free education was major campaign commitment made by the ANC in the first democratic elections. The ruling party's failure to keep that promise, while presiding over an explosion of student fees, have sown the seeds of discontent that has spilled over to the street, the lawns of the Union Buildings, and grounds of parliament. As a democratic we have a moral obligation to provide our youth with the opportunity to gain the skills and qualification necessary to this a winning nation. It is not about handouts, but about investing in the future prosperity of our country.

Nor is it a question of a lack of revenue, but rather the skewed priorities of the ANC government. Vast sums of money are misspent, wrongly allocated, or outright looted by corrupt politicians and officials. The education finance scheme fosters inequality. This scheme has in fact produced, and will continue to produce, a large pool of unemployed young people. Some are found idle on the street corners with no prospects for the future.

Recently, we have been exposed to the collapse of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) due to corruption led by the deployed cadres and with the participation of the student body aligned to the ruling party. Whilst the graduates are relegated to joblessness, the select few occupy lavish office space in both the private and public sector, earning large salaries for mediocre performance, some with false qualifications.

Our technical and vocational education and training colleges are not properly marketed and thus do not draw great numbers of students when we need people who are empowered with skills required to make our economy flourish. Where they do exist, there is corruption and lack of transparency about the funding of students and programmes. As a consequence, the country is unable to count the number of plumbers, electricians, and other artisans produced by these institutions.

Sometime in 2015, City Press, has reported that millions of rand's meant for skills development through SETAs have been siphoned off into the coffers of the SACP (through its investment arm: Masincazelane), putting a lie to the SACP leader and minister of Tertiary Education's supposed commitment to the plight of poor students. One is left with the impression that the sharing implied by the name Masincazelane means 'looting together'.

The outstanding matter in the catastrophe of the #FeesMustFall, is the source of extra funds required by government to substantiate 'free education'. According to Minister Blade Nzimande, R37 billion is needed to roll-out free university education over the next three years. However, this money is more readily available than what the government makes us believe.

Irregular expenditure and corruption is between 25-30 billion Rands per annum, which along with other measures we are proposing, could easily fund free tertiary education.

For instance, in 2011 alone, the country lost R237 billion in illicit financial flows (IFFs) and in eight years, 2002 to 2010, over R 1 trillion. This besides preventive measures including the Financial Intelligence Centre Act (FICA), the Financial Advisors and Intermediate Services Act (FAISA) and the Financial Regulation Bill-FRB, according to African Monitor.

If government tackles Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) for 2017/8 alone, there shall be sufficient funds to provide free quality tertiary education. This could be achieved without changing any law, but simply enforcing existing ones. It would further assure an abundant surplus for further planning, upgrading and qualitative transformation of tertiary education.

Kind regards

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