

April 2003

Botswana Teacher Organisations Position paper on the unique pay structure and the strike

1. The leadership of teacher organisations have to be in control of events and issues surrounding the strike. The leadership will have to come up with minimum conditions that have to be met by the Gov for the strike to be stopped and the compromise conditions. The leadership will have to appreciate that a strike is not an end in itself and it should be a last resort option. The strike is also a high-risk option especially if it is protracted. There are many inherent dangers in any strike action as JEUT participants can testify. A strike action could lead to the downfall of organisation, division of membership between those that comply with the strike and those that do not. We have to be mindful of the public opinion and perception. While the public is still behind us, if we appear to be intransigent this could alienate us from the support base of the population. We should therefore aim to always a positive perception by the population. The press is currently behind us, save for one news house and the government press. While BTV is still with us, it is subject to government control and we could easily vanish from the BTV screens. The fluid and unpredictable factors mean that we should always be ready for compromise or change strategy. For example while the question of implementation date is one of the core issues (non negotiables) we could opt for a court action just on the interpretation of implementation date alone.
2. The teachers have been on the offensive and the govt is on the defensive so we dictate terms. Date is no longer the burning issue. The organisation has to reduce emphasis on just the release of the structure and rather focus on the substance of the structure. That is to say even if we are given an implementation timetable which shows November as the release, we should accept it provided we are satisfied with the substance of the structure.
3. We should insist on an implementation timetable that will include date of effective implementation and date on which the structure will be released. We need to be emphatic that the government must not renege on the issue of date of implementation. We must insist on 1st April 2002 as the date of implementation as was originally stated in the white paper on Tsa Badiri Report. It is obvious that the government is intending to renege on this one from pronouncement by Minister Kgoroba and Ass. Minister Mfa.
4. We accept the principle that Parallel Progression and Unique pay structure are not synonymous with a salaries review. We are aware however, that the spirit and letter of the "a unique salary structure was to improve the remuneration package and conditions of service of teachers." The philosophy behind the structure and parallel progression was to address long standing and deep rooted problems that affect salaries and conditions of service of teachers, to include inter alia professional allowance, housing allowance, separation of deputy and head of department posts, enhanced entry points, to name but a few points. We must develop a minimum standard for acceptance of the structure by ourselves.

BOFESETE National Executive Committee