

08 March 2006

**BOFESETE RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON
PROFESSIONAL ALLOWANCE FOR TEACHERS**

Botswana Federation of Secondary School Teachers (BOFESETE) would like to clarify a response given in the National Assembly recently by the Honourable Minister of Education, Jacob Nkate.

While responding to a question by MP for Palapye, Hon Boyce Sebetlela on the 7th February 2006 on progress made regarding professional allowance for teachers who are subjected to working odd hours at evening and during weekends, Minister Nkate's answer partly referred to Section 17 of the Teaching Service Act CAP, 62:01. Nkate quoted that a) "every teacher shall place the whole of his time at the disposal of the school to which he is attached, posted or transferred; and b) no teacher may claim as of right additional remuneration in respect of any official duty or work he is required to perform by the Director, an appointing authority or the person in charge of his school". This response gave the impression that this section was meant exclusively for teachers only and not other government employees. A similar section is also available for the Public Service and Unified Local Government Service employees. For instance, Public Service CAP 26:01, Section 18 states that: a) every public officer shall place the whole of his time at the disposal of the Government; and b) no public officer may claim as of right additional remuneration in respect of any official duty or work that he is required by competent authority to perform.

The Unified Local Government Service CAP 40:06, Section 15 reads that a) "every local government officer shall place the whole of his time at the disposal of the local authority to which he is attached, posted or transferred; and b) no local government officer may claim as of right additional remuneration in respect of any official duty or work he is required to perform by the Establishment Secretary, an appointing authority or a local authority".

BOFESETE takes serious issue with the Minister's response in parliament because it gives the impression that teachers don't have a right to ask for professional allowance because of legal provisions. This is discriminatory and the issue has become extremely

contentious and need urgent attention from the Ministry of Education and Cabinet. Besides it being a serious affront to ILO provisions on working hours it is also straining working relations between MOE and teachers.

What is further worrying is that the MOE is ignoring the Revised National Policy On Education which states that “government intends to embark on a number of measures aimed at raising the status and morale of teachers so that they can perform their tasks more effectively. Such measures will include ...a package of incentives and improvement in the conditions of service”. Teachers have raised this issue so many times and nothing seems to be done to raise their morale.

Minister Nkate also rightly pointed out that his ‘Ministry presented a recommendation to Cabinet on the payment of an allowance that takes into account the peculiarities of the teaching profession’. He further said the “proposal was not approved on account of it being considered unaffordable”. BOFESETE and other teacher organizations had asked for 30 % as this was offered to some other government employees. BOFESETE feels the Cabinet is capable of suggesting an alternative proposal to what teacher organization had asked than saying what we requested was ‘unaffordable’. We therefore call upon the Minister and Cabinet to reconsider our proposal as they were not aware of the above quoted provisions of the Public Service and Unified Local Government Service acts. In addition, the 1977 and 1993 Government Commissions on education both expressed the sad state of teachers’ remuneration compared to other government employees. The commissions states that it “has evidence received from both the Teachers and the general public confirming that the teaching profession is characterised by low morale and declining professional status. Even though Teachers’ salaries compare favourably with other public officers of comparable qualifications, Teachers have not received many of the benefits available to public servants due either to administrative problems or communication lapses”.

BOFESETE further applauds the MP for Palapye for raising such an extremely painful and old issue and that other legislators should also continue to eloquently raise teachers’ welfare issues in the august house.

Justin C. Hunyepa
BOFESETE PUBLICITY SECRETARY