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| <b>MEDIA RELEASE</b> | PSA calls for urgent provincial education summit to address looming job losses and systemic challenges in KwaZulu-Natal |
| <b>DATE</b>          | 11 October 2024   |
| <b>EMBARGO</b>       | None  |
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is urgently calling for a provincial education summit in KwaZulu-Natal to address severe challenges facing the province's education system, particularly view of 11 000 educator posts that are at risk owing to ongoing budget cuts.

The PSA is alarmed by government's inability to safeguard critical education positions and its failure to provide the necessary resources to sustain quality education. As KwaZulu-Natal faces the prospect of significant educator shortages and mounting pressure on strained schools, the PSA insists that a provincial summit be convened immediately. This summit must bring together key stakeholders, including the Department of Education, unions, school governing bodies, and provincial leadership, to assess the crisis in education, reflect on progress over the past 30 years, and identify solutions to present and future challenges. This includes long-term strategies to maintain job security for educators and ensuring that learners receive a quality education.

It is further essential to assess whether past policies have addressed fundamental issues facing education and to set a roadmap for future success. The summit must focus on strategies to maintain manageable educator-learner ratios to ensure effective teaching and learning environments. Budgetary shortfalls and the mismanagement of provincial education budgets must be examined. The urgent need for increased financial resources to ensure that schools can operate effectively must be addressed. Without proper funding, the future of education in KwaZulu-Natal is at risk.

The PSA is extremely concerned that budget cuts will lead to the loss of thousands of educator posts, with a catastrophic impact on educators and learners. Overcrowded classrooms, overworked educators, and a declining quality of education are inevitable consequences.

Government's approach to addressing this crisis has been grossly inadequate, with temporary, substitute, and promotional posts particularly vulnerable to these cuts. This will further destabilise the fragile education system, threatening to undermine years of progress in reducing inequality and improving access to quality education for all learners in the province.

The PSA demands a comprehensive plan to protect the 11 000 positions at risk and to fill critical vacancies across schools in the province. It is unacceptable that schools are forced to operate with insufficient staff, creating untenable conditions for educators and learners. Provincial authorities must take immediate, decisive action to avert the loss of thousands of teaching jobs and protect the integrity of the education system. A provincial education summit is a critical step in addressing the pressing challenges and safeguarding the future of thousands of educators and learners in KwaZulu-Natal.

The PSA urges the provincial government to act with urgency and convene a summit without delay. Failure to do so and implement actionable solutions will result in massive disruptions, including protests and strikes, as

educators and unions will not stand by whilst the future of education is undermined. The PSA remains steadfast in its commitment to defend the rights of educators and learners. The PSA will continue to hold the provincial government accountable and will not hesitate to mobilise its members to ensure that the voices of educators, learners, and communities are heard in meeting their needs.

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