



**PEACE**

**POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION**

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES**

M6 VOL 17 Issue 9 SUNDAY EXPRESS JUNE 8-14 2025 PAGE 10

**THE TICKING TIME BOMB OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: WHY PARLIAMENT  
MUST STEP UP**

***By /PEACE/, POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION***

Lesotho, like many developing nations, is grappling with an alarming rise in youth unemployment—particularly among educated young people. Despite a growing output of university graduates and an adult literacy rate that surpasses the sub-Saharan average, the job market continues to shrink for those most qualified. This contradiction points to a deeper structural failure—one that Parliament must urgently address before this crisis explodes into full-blown social and political instability.

According to recent UNESCO data, Lesotho boasts a high adult literacy rate, with 95% of women and 83% of men able to read and write. While this is a commendable national achievement, it is being undermined by the misalignment between education and employment opportunities. Former Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili once noted that the top three drivers of development are “Education, Education, and Education.” Yet today, education seems to be a ticket to unemployment rather than empowerment.

Despite the rollout of free education, most high-level jobs are increasingly reserved for politically connected individuals, many of whom lack even basic qualifications. In some cases, uneducated individuals have developed a sense of entitlement to public office, while qualified graduates roam the streets, jobless. It is an ironic and troubling phenomenon: in Lesotho, the educated are unemployed while the uneducated govern.

This misallocation of human resources not only wastes talent and taxpayer-funded education but also leads to social exclusion, rising inequality, and a cascade of societal ills. Surprisingly, unemployment rates are highest among those with university degrees, followed by high school graduates, and lowest among the least educated. This pattern reflects a deep crisis of governance and misplaced priorities.



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## **Why Parliament Matters**

Parliamentarians are elected not just to pass laws but to hold the Executive accountable. MPs create robust discussion in parliament about the budget and other policies that are geared towards employment creation. Their role is central to shaping policies that foster development, create jobs, and provide hope to the nation's youth. Yet, when Parliament itself is populated by members who lack the education necessary to understand national and global policy issues, the legislative branch becomes a rubber stamp rather than a check on power.

Parliamentary committees—where laws are scrutinized and national issues debated—require members with a basic level of expertise. A Member of Parliament who has not completed even a junior degree cannot meaningfully participate in such discussions, let alone represent the country on international platforms. Recently, even the Minister of Finance expressed frustration over the ineffectiveness of MPs who lack the requisite knowledge to contribute to policy discussions or budget analysis.

Countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania have already moved to professionalize their legislatures by requiring MPs to hold at least a junior degree. Lesotho must follow suit. Parliament should not be a refuge for the underqualified, especially in an era of free education.

## **Voters Must Demand More**

Voters must hold their MPs accountable about the policies of government relating to employment creation and developments at the local level. It is through this process that the Executive will produce quality budget and improve service delivery.

Ultimately, the power lies with the voters. Robust political engagement must begin at the village level, where citizens question their MPs about policies affecting job creation and development. MPs must be held accountable not only during elections but throughout their term. Voters should demand transparency in how the national budget is crafted and how it addresses local economic



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needs. Voters must ask how the current budget relates to their local needs. It is through these robust voters and MPs engagement that, MPs will be able to hold members of the Executive accountable about their roles.

Only through this continuous dialogue between voters and their representatives can Lesotho's Parliament be transformed into a body that delivers on its promises. MPs should not only be educated but also trained to conduct effective oversight, ensuring that government policies lead to real employment and improved services. The current rampant unemployment in Lesotho could only be addressed through this process.

The fact that Lesotho has free education does not guarantee that people will be employed, but the creation of an enabling environment must be generated through policies by MPs who can be able to hold the Executive accountable. MPs must be extremely concerned about the current unemployment in the country by pressuring the Executive to address this unemployment with sound policies that create sustainable jobs and development.

### **A Call to Action**

Youth unemployment in Lesotho is a ticking time bomb. Without urgent and informed action from Parliament, the situation risks escalating into widespread unrest. The solution lies not just in more education, but in making sure that education is reflected in leadership, policy, and practice. Lesotho must legislate higher standards for public office and empower MPs to hold the Executive accountable. Only then can the nation turn its hard-earned literacy rates into real, tangible progress.