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POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION
PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION (PEACE)

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

By [Your Name], Staff Writer

Maseru, Lesotho – 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.

Why Parliament Matters

Parliamentarians are elected not just to pass laws but to hold the Executive accountable. 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



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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

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 needs.

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.

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Lesotho like many third world countries has recently witnessed a new phenomenon of growth of joblessness especially amongst the educated youth. This phenomenon took place even where output has increased, such as in Universities and other centers of higher learning. The youth unemployment in Lesotho, therefore, remains a ticking time bomb if it is not addressed urgently by parliamentarians.

According to UNESCO the adult literacy rate in Lesotho is above sub-Saharan Africa average. Recent statistics, reflected that, 95% of women are literate compared to 83% of men. This makes it more imperative to have educated people deployed properly and this national achievement must be reflected not only in public offices but the whole economy. Education is development and development is education. Former Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili once observed that, if he could be asked to name just three things that would spur Lesotho development; he could choose in equal succession "Education, Education and Education".

Despite the introduction of free education, most high demanding professional jobs in Lesotho goes to underserving political appointees or political parties followers. This pattern has gone to the extent that, some uneducated candidates have developed a sense of entitlement. It is only in Lesotho where, the majority of graduates can be found walking the streets without jobs. This takes place in an environment where uneducated fellows are Members of Parliament. It is only in Lesotho, where you hear an uneducated politicians promising educated people jobs. The question is? What do they know? What skills do they have to make such profound declarations?

Lesotho employment patterns represent an enormous waste of resources and an unacceptable level of human suffering. It has led to growing social exclusion, rising inequalities and plethora of social ills. This unemployment is higher with levels of schooling. For instance, those who have completed university education are higher than those who completed high school and followed by people with less education. This puzzling pattern has been exacerbated by visionless politics whereby people with



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relatively less education are deployed to lead National institutions while those with requisite education are left behind. The most conspicuous unemployment dimension has been the youths. Mostly highly educated, but can't find jobs because people with less education are occupying institutions that have to create jobs and lacks the skills to deliver those opportunities.

WHY PARLIAMENT MATTERS

Members of parliament (MP) are elected to hold the government accountable and ensure that policies created by government generate the needed employment and development in the country. They have to interrogate budgets so that governments produce quality budgets. By asking relevant questions, they can force the government to deliver quality services that create sustainable jobs and manage unemployment. Being a Parliamentarian requires expertise and an intellectual capability. In parliament, MPs becomes members of select committees where legislation is fully discussed. You cannot have a primary school MPs in these Parliamentary Committees. He or she cannot even understand or follow discussion. This makes it difficult for the Speaker of Parliament to nominate an educationally defunct member to these committees. Furthermore, this educationally deficient MP cannot even represent parliament outside Lesotho. If he cannot represent the country, he has no business in parliament. Recently, a Minister of Finance voiced her frustration about some Members of Parliament who have been appointed in some parliamentary committees without requisite expertise and skills.

As a country, we must come up with the legislation that ensures that, you cannot be a Member of Parliament without at least a junior degree. This does not augur well for a country with free education. In Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania to name few examples you cannot be a Member of Parliament without a junior degree. The danger of having uneducated parliamentarians is that, they will never conceptualize their legislative role. How can you legislate for others when you donot understand your environment? How



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can you explain the rationale behind enactment of some legislation if you are not capable to dissect the global challenges facing the population of your country? If you are not conversant with all these issues, you cannot qualify to occupy the public office. This also means that, you cannot hold the government accountable since you lack the intellectual capacity to do that.

VOTERS TO HOLD MPs ACCOUNTABLE

MPs create robust discussion in parliament about the budget and other policies that are geared towards employment creation. These debates must start at the village level. Voters must hold their MPs accountable about the policies of government relating to employment creation and developments at the local level. 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. It is through this process that the Executive will produce quality budget and improve service delivery. The current of rampant unemployment in Lesotho could only be addressed through this process.

For the government to manage this rampant unemployment before it create instability, it must train MPs to be able to conduct robust debates that will influence creation of employment policies that would create deserving jobs .. The fact that Lesotho have free education does not guarantee that people will be employed but enabling environment must be created 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 ticking time boom with sound policies that create sustainable jobs and development.