

Teachers' Strikes and the Right of Learners to Education in South Africa: A Critical Literature Review

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ABSTRACT This review was motivated by the incessant teachers' strikes in South Africa and the poor academic performance as well as poor quality education, which is a general concern in many circles. Therefore, literature review critically examines teachers' strikes and the right of learners to education in South Africa, with some emphasis on the Eastern Cape Province. The literature shows that the impact of teachers' strikes on learners' academic performance, especially in the Eastern Cape Province is enormous. This was gauged through the number of years learners took to complete the Matric studies, the number of times they wrote Matric, intimidation and loss of motivation during teachers' strikes among other factors. Closely related to this is the poor quality of education that students received, not only because of teachers' strikes but also because of factors such as infrastructure problem and lack of teachers. It was also found out that the cost of teachers' strikes was a drain of both national and provincial government resources.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the South African education system has been marked by the terror of teachers' right to strike with negative consequences on learners. This right as observed by the government has been over exercised and the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the government want education to be declared an essential service to ensure that children's right to education is respected (Fredericks 2011). Nonetheless, Section 36 (1) unequivocally states that "the rights in the Bill of Rights may be limited only in terms of law of general application to the extent that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom, taking into account all relevant factors..." Sub-section 2 also states that no law may limit any of these rights, except those mentioned in section 36 (1).

Legislative Framework

Teachers have a constitutional right to freedom of expression through demonstrations and strikes. The Bill of Rights, Section 23 (1) affirms the worker's right to fair labor practices while 23 (2) (a-c) respectively provides for the right to form or join a trade union, participate in the ac-

tivities and programs of a trade union, and the right to strike. Also, Section 23 (5) stipulates, "Every trade union, employers' organization and employer has the right to engage in collective bargaining." Similarly, the Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 also recognizes the right of teachers to collective bargaining and to embark on strike action, if there is a need. The right to strike is also recognized in the UDHR in Article 19 as well as Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Furthermore, this labor relations right is also enshrined in other regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Articles 9 (2), 10 (1) and 11). This freedom enhances the teachers' ability to become informed and articulate about issues regarding their welfare. Freedom of expression affects other fundamental rights such as the freedom of choice, religion, association, protest and political affiliation.

The right of learners to education is affirmed in many international and regional conventions as well as in national legislation. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 26 spells out the right to education. This right is also enshrined in Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1996. Finally, Article 11 (3) of the International Covenant on Economic, Po-

litical and Cultural Rights is the recognition of the right of everyone to education, which should be directed towards the development of human personality and towards the sense of its dignity. It shall strengthen the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, Articles 17 and 11 respectively of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990 affirm the right to education. There are other international instruments wherein the right to education is entrenched and these include the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (Articles 28 and 29). Article 28 (1) is on the right of the child to education, which should be achieved progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. Article 29 (1) (a) states that education should be directed towards the child's personality development, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Other subparagraphs (b-e) are respectively on the fact that education should be geared towards human rights and fundamental freedoms, parents, responsible life in a free society, and environment.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960 in Article 1(a) states that no one should be deprived of access to education of any type or at any level. Articles 4 (a) provides for free and compulsory primary education as well as accessibility and availability of secondary education, and that higher education should be accessible to all based on individual capacity. The World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (1990) recognizes education as a fundamental human right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout the world. Articles 1 (1) and 3 (1) respectively state the need for every person to benefit from educational opportunities to meet their needs and the provision of basic education to all children, youth and adults. Section 29 (1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 provides for the right to basic education and basic adult education. The right to further education is also affirmed in Section 29 (1) (b) of the Bill of Rights through reasonable measures, which should be made progressively available and accessible.

It should be stated that children's rights developed from the long-established moral and legal traditions, and as such, situates these rights

and responsibilities within a social contract (Jones 2012). Although children have rights to education, this is possible if the local and national governments assume this responsibility for the provision of this service. The definition and implementation of rights, responsibilities and social contract are linked to different conventions, laws and acts described in the preceding paragraphs. One of the core principles of the UNCRC 1989 is the 'best interest' of the child, which is presented in Article 3. This Article states, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private bodies, the 'best interest' of the child shall be a primary consideration." According to the Vienna Declaration 1993, the 'best interest' of the child relates to the legal protection and care of children. Therefore, governments and other agencies should be involved in the provision, legislation, programs and policies that positively impact children (Jones 2012: 7).

History of Teachers' Unionism in South Africa

The history of teachers' unionism is a long one given the political, economic and social dynamics of the country. Teachers' unions were established in the 1960s and evolved along racial lines as prescribed by a racial policy of separate education department by the apartheid government. While White unions were well represented at the decision-making at the state level, other non-White teachers' unions were left in the wilderness until early 1990s (Chisholm 1999). The development of teachers' union in the country according to Whittle (2007: 271) mirrored the broader socio-political change and ideological tension between professionalism and unionism. Therefore, there were different unions for Whites, Blacks, Indians and Colored teachers established in the 1960s whose primary strategies were consultation and persuasion without militant or political action (Hyslop 1990).

However, the political struggle for liberation in the 1980s resulted to the emergence of progressive teachers' unions whose purpose was to deal with educational change and policy, and hence, the political and educational agenda (Whittle 2007). According to Whittle, these unions were constituted on non-racial line and allied themselves to the African National Congress (ANC), COSATU and SACP, and began to attack other 'professional' associations as con-

servatives and apolitical associations. This resulted in a backlash, accusation and counter-accusation and in the late 1980s, a single teacher union on non-racial line failed to be established by the National Teachers' Unity Forum. In the early 1990s, the National Professional Teachers' Organization of South Africa (NAPTOSA) and SADTU were established because of disagreement on political alignment between professionalism and unionism (Govender 1996). While SADTU wanted teachers' right to strike, NAPTOSA insisted on learners' right to uninterrupted learning and the two also disagreed on where the united organization should be federal or based on a unitary organizational structure (Whittle 2007: 272).

The new education and labor legislation of the 1990s remarkably influenced teachers' unions. For example, the National Education Act No. 27 of 1996 provided for the management of education at the national and provincial levels, hence, teachers' unions had to restructure so as to ensure their presence in the provinces (Whittle 2007). More so, the government was required by law to consult with stakeholders in the areas of education, in this case, teachers' unions both at the national and provincial levels. According to SADTU (1995), the dawn of democracy swelled its memberships, especially from the ranks of Black teachers. On the other hand, NAPTOSA, which was formed in 1991 with 16 affiliates, started fragmenting because of its politics of non-racialism and other tensions including the effects of the new legislation. This resulted in white Afrikaans-speaking teacher union, NAPTOSA in June 1996 and the formation and recognition of a third teachers' union, the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU) (Whittle 2007:273). Another blow to NATOSA was that several of its funding members between 1994 and 1998 joined other unions or formed new ones or simply disbanded. According to Whittle (2007), the National Union of Educators (NUE) formed in 1997 was formerly part of NATOSA.

An Overview of the State of South Africa's Education System

The state of South Africa's education system is being portrayed as one that is chaotic and characterized by corruption, poor academic performance, strikes, intimidation and incompetent

teachers as well as the lack of qualified science teachers (Daily Dispatch 2011a:7). The World Economic Forum recently castigated the low level of the country's education system as one of the worst in the world—a situation that jeopardizes the right of learners to effective and efficient education. The department has been faulted as lacking neither insight nor capacity to deal with the crisis in the country's education sector (Mohamed 2012: 1). There is an ongoing debate regarding the state of education in the country. While a majority of Black South Africans think that the education system is good (72%) and are happy with it (60%), Whites, Colored and Indian/Asian South Africans hold a contrary view (Higgs 2012: 1). Nonetheless, Higgs (2012) noted that most South African adults in the metropolitan areas think the education system is generally good while those in the rural areas are less satisfied. There is no doubt with these findings, as it obvious that cities have good and well-equipped schools unlike in the rural and remote communities where the situation is unacceptable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the right of learners to education in urban towns and cities is realized more than those in the rural townships and communities. Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu decried the education system and said the former President, Nelson Mandela would cry, especially as the country had its first Black president 18 years ago and the education system is still hobbled by poor management and low standards (Agence France Press 2012: 1). Children are at the heart of President Mandela and he would have loved to see their right to education realized at all costs. President Mandela puts children at the top of the country's priorities and pledged one-third of his salary to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and his government also started the National Program of Action for Children (Daniels 1998: 13). This is an indication of the attachment of the former President to children's rights and their wellbeing.

Kunene (2012: 1) describes the education system as one that is in a mess from where other problems emerged. The researcher attributes the impaired and stagnant economic growth because of the cracks within the education system and the August 16, 2012 Marikana massacre of 34 miners to the non-existence of quality education. State public schools are characterized by lack of water facilities, teachers not knowing what or how to teach and some schools having pit

latrines or relied on bucket system (Kunene 2012: 1) and other schools are held under trees (Blaine 2006: 6) while most schools do not have teachers (Fengu 2012: 1). This poor performance of the education sector according to HSRC is due to poor teacher training, lack of skills, poor support to learners in their homes and shortages of educational resources (Skillsportal.co.za 2011: 1).

Apart from teachers' strikes, various practices and school funding policies compromise the constitutional right to education. The fee policy is contained in the South African School's Act, No 84 of 1996, which permits public schools to charge fees. This is tantamount to denying the right to education of learners. Others have accused government of tight spending, which has:

Created a climate in which inadequate resources are being allocated to improve human and infrastructure needed to transform South African education and provide a quality education for all pupils (Veriava and Ramadiro 2003:15)

SAPA (2012) maintained that ten percent of state schools lack water facilities and 11,450 schools used pit latrines and 155 others rely on the bucket system. Many learners walk for about 10km to schools due to lack of transport and get robbed on their way and many engaged in alcohol drinking and drugs abuse (Hollands 2011: 5). SAPA also reported that South African teachers spend less than half of their time in class each week. All these problems will definitely impede the realization of the right of learners to education.

One writer said it is not a secret that education is in serious crisis, over-politicization, introduction of education models unsuited to the nation's education needs and maladministration. Consequently, the children in the rural and underprivileged areas are those suffering most regarding the realization of their right to education (Weekend Post 2011: 8). The increasing "rejection of the value of education in poorest communities of South Africa" has been attributed to the department of education's lack of responsiveness in solving the current crisis in education (Mohamed 2012: 1). The authorities would only intervene if their positions were at risk. Zille (2010:22) pointed out that matric results have been dropping by ten percentage points in the past decade while fifty percent of learners do

not reach matric and that SADTU is responsible for forty-two percent of work days lost across the country since 1995. She noted that while children in good schools attend classes for about 200 days in a year, those in poor performing schools attend only about 100 days. Unfortunately, she held that SADTU members do not send their children to such schools that are vulnerable to strike actions by teachers.

The Department to Basic Education has acknowledged its failure and poor performance in what it calls "inappropriate schools" (500 nationwide), which are deemed not to be suitable for teaching and learning due to infrastructure problems (iafrica 2012). The government has also repeatedly admitted its failure and shortcomings in the education sector. It acknowledges the mismanagement of institutions and policies as the biggest threat to progression and to date, its biggest failure in the sector (Payle 2012: 1-2). This acknowledgement is also an indication that the right of learners to education is a failure. Hence, learners have been led 'down' by the government and the department of education. In addition, the government recently recognized the need for urgent action to redress and remedy the shortcomings in the education sector. In its Commission's National Development Plan drawn up in 2012, the government maintains that:

South Africa has set itself the goal to eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, growing the economy by an average of 5.4 percent, and cutting the unemployment rate to six percent by 2030. Education, training and innovation are critical to the attainment of these goals (Jones 2012: 1)

Therefore, it sets a target that "by 2030 all South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes" (Jones 2012: 1). To salvage the situation created by teachers' strikes, national and provincial departments of education have come up with different plans, especially regarding the grade 12 learners who are at the verge of writing their matric examinations. One educational authority said:

Adequate contingency measures are in place to ensure that any unforeseen eventualities are dealt with forthwith, that any unlikely irregularity that might arise is swiftly and decisively expedited to ensure that continued validity and integrity of examinations (Fengu and Nini 2011: 1)

Reasons for Teachers' Strikes

There are a variety of reasons that have been advanced for teachers embarking on strike leaving learners stranded and jeopardizing their future as well as violating their right to education. Generally, the most important include poor working conditions under which teachers work and poor salaries paid to teachers as well as long working hours (Gernetzky 2012: 4). One teacher supporting strike action said, "these increases in food, fuel and electricity prices are an attack on the working class, and we need to take immediate action" (Jack 2008: 1). Similarly, another teacher reported that they are on the streets to protest against high food and petrol prices because of their concern for the poorest of the poor (Matomela 2008: 2). Consequently, teachers feel that if they are unhappy, they will pass the unhappiness (through strikes) to the learners (The Herald 2010a: 8). In another vein, teachers complained that an important reason they go on strike is because they have not received any pay progression since 1996.

In-as-much-as teachers go on strikes, they also have sympathized with learners on the issue of their right to education. Many have been concerned with the downward spiral of matric results and also the confusion of both learners and teachers when it comes to the demands of the curriculum, which has increased administrative burden on them (Zukiswa 2010: 2).

Effect of Teachers' Strikes on Learners' Academic Performance and Quality of Education

It is acknowledged that the state has made significant strides in the field of basic and further education in South Africa, thereby discharging its constitutional mandate. However, many challenges still face the department of education, particularly its inability to address sufficiently the plight of poor learners, especially learners from in the most rural areas across the country. The role of teachers has been acknowledged in the success or failure of the public education system in South Africa. One report sums this up as follows: "only an insane would dispute this: teachers do matter" and it concludes: "bad teachers not only blind lives, they destroy nations" (Sikhakhane 2001: 25).

The issue of strikes in schools brings to mind the performance of learners in tests, examinations and negative impact on their future lives. As Tshangela (2010:1) noted, the greatest fear of strikes is their impact on learners' overall performance, non-completion of syllabuses in most subjects before their final examinations (Matriculation). Consequently, this affects matric pass rate, especially in the Eastern Cape Province known to be the worst-performing province (Mbabela 2012a: 1). The province is seen as one "forever consigned to the bottom of the pile, thanks to the never-ending infighting between those who are responsible for ensuring that our children get a decent education" (The Herald 2012b: 20). Not ensuring that learners are afforded quality education as enshrined in the Bill of Rights is a flagrant disrespect of the right of learners to education.

The quality of education that learners received these days leaves a lot to be desired and this does not augur well for their right to education. Learners are leaving school ill-equipped for the outside world because the education system places too little emphasis on well-staffed schools by trained, motivated and dedicated teachers (Weekend Post 2011: 8). Similarly, during strikes, learners sit for examinations not as prepared as they should be and the unfortunate learners are those not attending Model C schools (The Herald 2010a:14). The quality of matric graduates from public schools has not only being a problem to government and education officials but also to employers. It is noted, "across the spectrum employers are experiencing difficulties with new employees who lack even the most basic problem solving and interpersonal skills" (Mail and Guardian 2009: 27). The consequence of lack of adequate preparations of learners to write their matric examinations is gross irregularities noticed over the past years.

It is widely acknowledged that the poor quality of education of learners who intend to enroll into university will subsequently present a hassle to learners to complete their studies within record time (Kaburise 2010). Eyewitness News (2011) contends the issue of Matriculation pass rate and maintains that the pass rate should not be on quantity but on the quality of the pass. It has become a phenomenon for the educational authorities to lower subjects' pass marks each year in order to increase Matriculation pass rates in different subjects. This is a deception regard-

ing the full realization of the learners' right to education. This brings to question the quality of students who are prepared to enter the workforce and higher education institutions. Similarly, Maqhina (2011: 4) quoted sources that indicated that the matric results for ten subjects were adjusted by the department of education in order to increase the pass rate in those subjects. Therefore, Daily Dispatch noted that skeptics would doubt the authenticity of the results. The matric results that are adjusted are criticized on the basis of the fact that they give children a false sense of hope and when they get to the university, they fail flat (Sokopo 2010a: 1). If learners who are in grade 12 tend to teach their peers using supplements supplied by the Daily Dispatch and the department of education (Ngcukana and Sokopo 2010a: 1), the quality of education is anyone's guess. In a similar vein, first year university students are brought in to help execute the national school recovery plan (Mtshizana 2007: 1). In another twist, about 1500 learners who failed grade 11 were promoted to grade 12 further endangering the matric results and its quality (Matomela 2010: 5). One wonders the quality of education these will acquire at the end of the day. In addition, some experts have described the quality of the results in the following words:

Some of those, who were fortunate enough to have obtained a place at a university to further their studies, will be disillusioned and disheartened by the huge gap between the level of education of their matric year and that at tertiary institutions. That will be the acid test for many (Daily Dispatch 2011a: 7).

Learners have also acknowledged the negative impact of strikes on their lives and future. One learner lamented that "it's going to be difficult for us, our future is at stake now (Ngcukana and Sokopo 2010b: 1) and this is because of the failure of teachers to let them enjoy their constitutional right to education. According to Mngxitama (2007: 6), one learner who intends to enroll at the university regretted the strike action and said he does not like the strikes, as they (learners) cannot apply for university admission and bursaries without results. More so, the learner said he was intending to enroll for Marine studies, which need physical sciences and mathematics, but because of the suspension of their matric examinations, he was frustrated and his right to education trampled upon. Being on the

receiving end and not unionized, the learners have very little to do to regain their right to education.

Consequently, some stakeholders have suggested the need for a bridging year between matric and higher education (Kunene 2012: 1). This can also explain the establishment of foundation programs to assist students with poor Matriculation results to later gain access into degree programs of the university. It is no doubt that student throughput and retention rates at the university level is low with about thirty-four percent of students failing to complete their programs in record time (Matomel 2010b). If learners' right to education was constitutionally respected by the educational authorities, there would probably be little or no such problem as presented here.

Perceptions About Teachers' Right to Strike and Learners' Right to Education

The treatment of children in society shows the nature and caliber of that society. It is the responsibility of every society to ensure that no child is out of school and the wellbeing of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habit. It shows how the society is democratic and governed. Therefore, the survival, protection and development of children ensure the wellbeing of society (Daniels 1998: 13). Daniels (1998: 13) noted, "When children's interests are at the center of a society's concerns, that society becomes humane. When forgotten, that society is thrown off balance." According to Carelse (2011: 9), the stability to a child's life is the key to his or her success and if children are the 'future', it is argued, there is a need to look at educating them at the best educational facilities. Therefore, a solid foundation needs to be laid in the life of every child and not only for a selected few in Model C schools (Zukiswa 2010: 2).

The right to strike is one of the essential means through which workers and their organizations can promote and defend their economic and social interests. "In South Africa the whole issue of a possibility of a strike by teachers has been presented as unprofessional and disruptive to the educational process" (New Nations 1992a: 23). Therefore, SADTU believes that an injury to one teacher is an injury to all. There is a prolonged debate about the right of learners to education and the right of teachers to strike

and collective bargaining. There has not been any acceptable one over the other as both rights are recognized in international conventions and national legislation. According to the Daily Dispatch (2007: 12), teachers complained that:

We have had to make the decision to strike or not to strike in our country where we propagate "freedom of choice". I respect the decision of those who want to strike and was under the impression that my decision not to strike would also be respected, but what verbal abuse and criticisms from even my own colleague! Threats from people knowing where I leave to burn my house down (I don't live in so-call "townships"), and threats from people who know what car I drive. All these happened in our beloved country where we talk about freedom of speech and choice.

Many people including officials from the education department to parent groupings argue that teachers' strike will not promote the best interest of children's education. SADTU however argues that their teachers' union is fighting for improved working conditions and a living wage. The argument holds that teachers cannot use their rights and power as workers because they are teachers and as such, have a responsibility to their students (New Nation 1992b: 12). Furthermore, SADTU questions that if the job of teachers in educating children is so important, why then are they being paid so little, and so unprofessionally treated? Therefore, teachers should enjoy trade union and labor rights as in all democracies in the world (New Nation 1992b: 12). SADTU also argues that protests show that teachers are not prepared to play a secondary role in education when their rights are ruthlessly trampled upon (New Nation 1992b: 12). Similarly, SADTU Vice President in an open debate forum raised the question of whether or not teachers have the right to strike. He said legally and morally teachers have the right to strike and the question here is, what obligations do they have towards civil society? (Daily News 1992: 3). He concluded that just like a teacher has an obligation to teach, the state also has an obligation to provide an adequate background in which to teach. However, he emphasized that the child's right to learn was all-important. Although the above points gained some considerations, some education officials felt that strike action by teachers was "force-feeding the forces of illiteracy (Daily News 1992: 3). Teachers'

strike according the New National Party could be an unconstitutional infringement of pupil's rights. It stated that:

In weighing the right of teachers to strike against the right of learners to receive education in terms of the constitution, the right to education should receive greater weight, given the considerably number of school hours already lost inter alia through strikes and the untimely staging of the current strike (The Citizen 1999: 4).

The debate as to whether teachers' right to strike overrides children's right to education and/or vice-versa has been very controversial, posing questions that seem difficult to handle (Diamond Fields Advertiser 2006: 4). Striking by thousands of teachers on the eve of end-of-year examinations could be an infringement of the pupil's right to education. In 1999, the South African Human Rights Commission undertook to strike a balance between the right of teachers to strike against the right of learners to education. However, before the Commission could begin its work, one of the officials acknowledged, "teachers had a right to strike but there was a feeling that certain rights of children to education were being violated" (Bhengu 1999: 7). The argument and debate raged on. In as much as it is the democratic right of unions to strike, it is also the right of learners to education.

Despite the right of teachers to strike as enshrined in the Act No. 66 of 1995, any good teacher would put the interest of the children they teach first (Weekend Post 2011: 8). Teachers have been accused of using learners as 'pawns' to get better wages for themselves at the detriment of learners' right to education. Therefore, some experts have suggested that teachers' right to strike must be revisited and that the right to strike must be earned (Hendricks 2011: 12). Hendricks further maintained that there should be a limit to the right to strike until all children are able to read and write as well count and that the constitution needs to be reviewed. The researcher concludes, "Just as companies have contingency plans, so there must be contingency plans for strike" (Hendricks 2011: 12). Teachers have been labeled as greedy, and people who want a share of contracts' billions. Others described teachers as selfish and irresponsible and said irrespective of what the department is doing, a strike is "totally unprofessional" (Rogers 2011: 1). The Herald (2010b:14) remarked with dismay that

strikes cannot be acceptable as the future and right to education of many learners is blighted and compromised.

Although teachers' strikes have generally generated sympathy from the general public, the incessant nature and intimidation of non-striking teachers and learners alike as well as the negative effects on the right of learners to education have swelled the public against them. This is not only a violation of learners' right to education, but also the right of others who do not want to participate in strikes but are intimidated, molested, harassed and sometimes mishandled. Perhaps, this is because the teachers unionized under SADTU in the province have a large membership of more than 56,000 (Mbabela 2012b). Concerns and frustrations have been expressed regarding the fate and future of children who go to schools and are not taught because of strikes (Mati 2007: 7). The Mail and Guardian (2009:27) indicated that the society could boast of itself if only its students are successful, achieving their potential as well as happy, which will enhance their ability to give something back to society. It is warned, "Education is too important to be treated as a commodity in the marketplace. Education is "a vehicle to transmit knowledge, skills and values for the public good"" (Veriava and Ramadiro 2003: 15). If teachers strike as it is their constitutional and labor right, many argue, the policy of 'no work no pay' should be applied (Daily Dispatch 2011b: 7) but teachers have vehemently opposed it (Stander 2011: 1). This is ironical, as teachers are likely to trample upon the learners' right to education while jealously protection their right to salary payments during strikes.

CONCLUSION

The literature review shows that the impact of teachers' strikes in South Africa has mostly been documented based on perceptions, and mostly in newspaper articles. It is not all teachers who are advocates of strikes. Some of them do not condone strike action as it disrupts the future of learners who are the leaders of tomorrow. Experts have acknowledged the right of teachers to strike but the striking teachings must also be ready without complaining of docking of their salaries. Although attempts have been made both by national and provincial governments and education departments through var-

ious examination and other supplements to ward off the effect of these strikes, the impact is usually enormous that these recovery plans cannot overcome. More so, these plans are most exclusively for the grade 12 learners preparing for their matric examinations. The rest of the learners are never catered for and hence, their right to education is compromised by teachers' strikes. There are fifty percent learners who dropped out along the way before reaching matric class. Although teachers' unionism began a long time ago, the dawn of democracy has worsened the realization of learners' right to education, as there are yearly strikes organized by teachers' unions and/or COSATU.

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