

# TTUTA ON TUESDAY

## TTUTA'S Wish List 2022

AS THE new year unfolds TTUTA in its unrelenting quest to promote the cause of education through advocacy and dialogue has a number of ongoing concerns that continues to occupy its attention.

Of paramount importance is the need for teachers and students to teach and learn in safe and secure environments. Checks with numerous schools would reveal significant deficiencies in that regard. These issues range from malfunctioning sewer, electrical and plumbing systems to dilapidated buildings and crumbling infrastructure to inadequate furniture and equipment.

These issues have repeatedly caused disruptions at many of the nation's schools, with promises from the authorities to address same. Facility management has and continues to be a major challenge for the Ministry of Education. Various strategies adopted over the years to ensure that all

schools are safe and secure have been met with limited success.

It is hoped that the necessary funds will be allocated and released for these issues to be addressed in the coming year and adequate systems for monitoring, evaluation and redress be established and maintained in a systematic and timely manner.

Foremost on the minds of teachers is the issue of adequate compensation for the work they do. Given the steady increases in the cost of living and a virtual wage freeze imposed on public sector workers since 2015, teachers have watched their standards of living endure a constant decline.

It is hoped that this year would see concrete and significant steps being taken to ensure teachers' salaries are commensurate with the vital work they do and that such salaries are current and consistent with the external labour market.

In this regard, the union will continue to vigorously pursue all legal avenues to ensure that this injustice is addressed by the authorities in 2023.

The reluctance of the Ministry of Education to meet and treat with the union on a one-on-one basis via statutory monthly meetings continues to be a source of great concern. It is the continuation of a trend of contempt that began in 2017, where there has been an almost total disregard for the union as the legally recognised majority unit representing teachers. This has resulted in an obscene backlog of issues affecting thousands of people.

These range from people not being paid at their correct incremental point, people not getting acting allowances despite performing duties in higher posts for several years, positions remaining vacant or people awaiting upgrades for years because of poor communication and collaboration between the ministry and the commission to address basic issues of confirmation and appointments.

It is hoped that this year a more conciliatory and collaborative tone will be adopted by both the minister and ministry officials in treating with these matters.

As the trend of violence and indiscipline

continues to plague the school system, it is hoped that 2023 will see parents assuming a greater sense of responsibility for the proper upbringing of their children, instilling in them a greater value for education and an enhanced sense of discipline, respect and tolerance. Most acts of violence and indiscipline can be traced back to the home and the upbringing of the child where moral values are supposedly instilled in the child from a young age.

The abdication of parental responsibilities coupled with the miseducation of children by many parents under the misguided notions of rights devoid of responsibilities has and continues to be a source of grave concern for teachers. Parental responsibilities cannot be easily reassigned to state agencies and schools cannot be given the absolute responsibility for the moral development of the child.

Parents must play their part and be held accountable when they do not. Schools need parents to work with them to ensure the holistic development of the child, ensuring that children are guided by a strict moral compass in their quest to become decent productive citizens.

Teachers too must accept responsibility for their continuous professional growth and development. As education practitioners, they must epitomise the concept of self-directed lifelong learning as a fundamental foundation of professionalism, constantly reflecting on their practice with the aim of continuous improvement. Conversely, the ministry must also ensure that they have the necessary tools to engage in professional practice along with the commensurate training on an ongoing basis.

While not exhaustive, the list serves to remind stakeholders that education is all our business and we must do everything within our respective remits to ensure we deliver the quality inputs necessary to achieve the required output.