

THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT IMPASSE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) is an association for all the social work education units / departments and their constituent academic staff across South African universities. It aims to promote social work education, training, research and practice in South Africa in pursuit of enhanced psychosocial functioning of individuals, families, groups, and the development of organisations and communities. ASASWEI values, above all, human rights and the pursuit of social justice and equality for all the people of South Africa.

ASASWEI is deeply concerned about the current circumstances in higher education across South Africa, which we view as a crisis. Noting –

- The importance of higher education for the wellbeing of the people of South Africa and the development of the country as a whole;
- The fact that South Africa's current levels of spending on higher education are below that of comparable countries;
- That student demands for free higher education are in line with the Bill of Rights, which stipulates that 'everyone has the right to further education' and requires 'the state' to make this 'progressively available and accessible' to all;
- The trauma suffered not just by students and university staff, but also parents, guardians and other individuals who are supporting students;

We wish to publically state the following:

1. ASASWEI supports the pursuit of free quality higher education;
2. ASASWEI calls for a negotiated settlement of the current crisis based on inclusive dialogue with all role-players and in particular the students whose lives and future are most affected by these events;
3. ASASWEI condemns the violence of all parties and calls for a peaceful resolution to the conflict;
4. ASASWEI supports the call for the demilitarisation of campuses, which is fuelling further violence and escalating the current impasse between students and universities;
5. ASASWEI calls on the South African government to address one of the root causes of the current impasse – which is the decrease in subsidies to universities. We demand an increase in subsidies to higher education institutions to a minimum 1.5% of the GDP;
6. ASASWEI supports the call for, and is actively working towards, decolonised education and curricula to which it commits itself in the training of social workers and social service professionals;
7. ASASWEI calls on its members, other professional bodies, and the Department of Social Development, and non-governmental organisations to assist with trauma support, community based responses to trauma, mediation, and conflict resolution wherever possible and required.

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