**The Effects of Lack of Funding on Public School System Employees**

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  Many students and employees of public schools are affected by the lack of funding. Although students are affected, the effect it has on employees are overlooked. The drop in the economy due to many circumstances has created money issues for the CNMI Public School System because they are being funded by the government. This academic essay will discuss how Typhoon Yutu, government austerity, and the pandemic caused issues in paying employee salary by discussing the information found in news articles collected and conducted interviews.

           The first factor that caused an issue in funding is Typhoon Yutu. In 2018, Typhoon Yutu made landfall on Saipan causing damage to the island and its economy. It caused a pause in the tourism industry which the government heavily relies on to receive revenue (Perez, 2018). As a result, this was the beginning downfall of funds for the government. PSS was greatly affected because they are funded by the government, and although PSS receives federal funds, the majority of employees’ salaries are paid out of the local government’s share.

           The second factor that caused an issue in funding is government austerity. The government was facing financial issues in 2019 and made drastic cuts to the education budget which affected employees. A memorandum was issued to all employees that authorized PSS to make any salary cuts. With employee salaries being reduced, those who refuse to sign the memorandum would lose their jobs (Encinares, 2019). I interviewed a PSS employee and asked how they felt when salary cuts were implemented.

Although I felt disappointed, there was nothing I could do, especially the fact that the reason for this cut was because of the economic downfall due to the events that occurred during the years. Any salary cut will affect a person in many ways. Nobody wants it, but sometimes it’s the only route to take because there aren’t many options in the island. Either you take the cut or resign. I am saddened that education was not prioritized. (personal communication, November 9, 2020)

While government austerity was ongoing, another factor was added to the funding issue, causing PSS to search for ways to pay their employees.

           The third factor that caused an issue in funding is the Coronavirus pandemic. Along with austerity, the pandemic took a toll on the island's economy, making matters worse. Both of these factors together caused PSS to once again deduct from salaries and also forced teachers to be furloughed because there wasn’t enough money (Bautista, 2020). Drastic cuts for employee salary were made once again, but for PSS officials, managers, and personnel. I interviewed another PSS employee and asked how did the pandemic affect them.

Due to further budget cuts that were affected by the pandemic, PSS had to furlough most of its instructional staff in April. During the school year 2020 to 2021, another cost saving strategy was implemented. Personnel in the admin level incurred their second cut while instructional staff worked not 80, but 64 hours bi-weekly. To alleviate the hardship due to the furlough and salary cuts of staff, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance helped to relieve the burden incurred due to the shortfall. (personal communication, November 12, 2020)

As of now, furloughed employees have returned to work, but the approved budget for PSS for the fiscal year 2021 is still not enough to support the full operation of the system which includes the salaries of personnel.

 This essay has discussed the major factors that affected funding for public school employee salaries. Typhoon Yutu put a set back the tourism industry, affecting the economy because the government relies on it greatly. Austerity forced PSS to cut the education budget. The pandemic along with austerity caused more salary cuts and forced employees to be furloughed. In summary, these series of events made a big impact, causing many employees to face hardship. All employees of the public school system deserve to be paid their rightful salary.

**References**

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