

NAPTOSA STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2019

South Africa will once again be celebrating Human Rights Day on 21 March 2019 and a stew of positive statements about equality, freedom , freedom of expression and association, political rights, etc are bound to be heard.

But what about the Human Rights scorecard in our schools?

Last year the President of NAPTOSA, Mr Nkosipendule Ntantala, ended off his Human Rights Day message with the following words “We pride ourselves in South Africa on our human rights culture. How can we stand by and watch those rights being regularly trampled in our schools?”

Reflecting on the human rights situation since then, the question must be whether there has been an improvement in the human rights experience of educators and learners? Sadly NAPTOSA’s answer must be an emphatic “NO”.

Safe and conducive school working environments have deteriorated even further leading to yet another pit latrine death of a learner. The walkway collapse at a Vanderbijlpark school elicited sympathetic responses and an infrastructure audit rush, but with what infrastructure improvement results? Parts of some schools are still closed off because it has become too dangerous to use; water and sanitation problems still abound, overcrowding of classrooms is still the norm in many schools, whilst some Education Departments still battle to spend the little that they have for infrastructure maintenance and development.

As for violence in schools, the first term of school this year has seen an unprecedented increase in the level and intensity of school violence. Deaths involving learners as

victims and perpetrators are now moving into the realm where it is no longer received with utter shock and condemnation.

The School Safety Conference, hurriedly arranged by the DBE last year, has yielded no tangible improvements in school safety or in curbing school violence, as NAPTOSA members will attest to. What is needed is a strong national department that is willing and able to implement and enforce policies on these critical areas – not the toothless department we now have.

The scholar transport system is still a shambles with little or no movement on a coherent transport system. How many more pupils must lose their lives because they have no option but to utilize un-roadworthy and unsafe transport if they wish to get to school?

Educators are not divorced from all these problems, over and above which they continue to suffer work overload abuse. There is no let up as far as administrative duties, assessments and forced attendance of non-value added workshops and conferences presented by departments are concerned.

To, amidst all this, have some acquired rights watered down through collective agreements in the bargaining council, is to add insult to injury. Members were informed last year that the employer and the majority union in the ELRC agreed to the downward variation of the re-appointment provisions after a break in service as well as the removal of the rights of educators to internal disciplinary and appeal procedures in cases of alleged misconduct of a sexual nature. NAPTOSA vehemently opposed these agreements.

In TVET and CET Colleges we have seen the rights of our members abused by the unruly behavior of members of another union with little or no support from the DHET as employer. That is why NAPTOSA is doing all in its power to campaign for TVET and CET lecturers to be placed under the auspices of the ELRC where their issues can receive dedicated attention.

In summary, the human rights scorecard for educators and learners show no improvement from last year. In fact it is probably worse.

NAPTOSA will continue fighting these human rights neglects in the forums that we serve in, as well as in the media. As the saying goes “Bad will triumph when good people do nothing”. And NAPTOSA members are good women and men!!

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