



NAPTOSA MEDIA STATEMENT ON MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION'S BUDGET VOTE SPEECH: 16 JULY 2019

“Yes, NAPTOSA is thankful that government has once more confirmed its commitment to the education of our children by increasing the budget for Basic Education over the MTEF period. But will the Department, this time round, be able to ensure that the sector gains the maximum advantage from the assigned budget?” asked Mr Nkosiphendule Ntantala, President of NAPTOSA. “Or are we yet again going to see certain education departments failing to fully utilise their allocations as has so often happened in the past”.

The Minister announced 11 priority areas for the Department in her Budget Vote Speech, all of which, on face value, appear commendable. Strangely though, the Minister only elaborated on 9 of them in her speech. Notable was the omission of priority no.8, “Cooperate with the South African Police Services and the Departments of Health, as well as Sport, Arts and Culture, to teach and promote school safety, health and social cohesion”. And this on the very day when 2 learners were shot and wounded outside the gates of their school, while another suffered fatal injuries at school from a falling tree branch.

NAPTOSA has said this many times before, and will continue to do so, that the best laid plans for education are bound to fail if a safe and conducive learning environment, for both learners and educators, cannot be secured.

“Whilst NAPTOSA is completely supportive of the fact that improving the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy is now the highest priority of the Department – how

grateful we are that the President prompted this priority shift by the Department when he shared his vision that “every child should learn to read with meaning by the age of ten”- we call on the Minister to reprioritize her priorities to move safety in schools, inclusive of the combatting of violence in schools, up the priority ladder to become one of the most urgent issues to be addressed in the short term”, said Mr Ntantala. “We are in a war zone in our schools. The safety of our members and learners is paramount. We must secure a culture of order and stability in our schools”.

To say that the Minister’s announced priorities are ambitious, is an understatement. There seems to once again be an attempt to take on too much, all at the same time. Infrastructure backlogs will probably be with us forever, at this rate. Every year we applaud the further elimination of unacceptable sanitation facilities and the provisioning of water to more schools. “Why doesn’t the Department limit the priorities and once and for all eliminate the backlog in basic infrastructure needs”, asked Mr Ntantala. “ICT advances are great, but not to the learner whose dignity is daily under siege because of appalling, or even non-existent, ablution facilities”.

Whilst many of the Department’s plans seem to still be in the incubation phase, it is nevertheless good to hear that there is progress with the implementation of the Three-Stream Curriculum Model (academic, technical-vocational and technical-occupational) and the Systemic Evaluation (provided it is the evaluation model determined in conjunction with the trade unions), as well as the roll out of the IIAL project (though extremely slow due to resource constraints).

“Apart from the focus to be given to the improvement of foundational literacy and numeracy skills, NAPTOSA is most pleased that work on the General Education Certificate (GEC) will be accelerated”, said Mr Ntantala. This matter is long overdue. Instead of losing children to the streets, gangs and hopelessness, the introduction of the certificate will give children who leave school after Gr 9, but before Gr 12, the opportunity to gain access to training facilities where they can acquire technical and vocational skills that our country is in dire need of.

NAPTOSA wishes the Minister and her Department well in achieving the priorities they set for themselves. “As a union, we will continue playing a constructive role in the sector”, said Mr Ntantala.

END OF STATEMENT

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