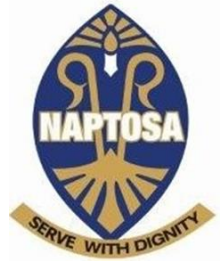


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DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION MUM BEFORE RETURN TO SCHOOL OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMTs) ON 11 MAY 2020

School Management Teams are expected to return to schools on Monday, 11 May 2020 as per the instruction of the Minister of Basic Education.

By close of business on Friday, 8 May 2020, education trade unions have still not received any direction from the DBE on certain critical areas.

As NAPTOSA, we participate in meetings with the Department, but once the computers and phones have been switched off it is up to the Department to take action, give direction and communicate outcomes. But when the Department remains silent, NAPTOSA has no choice but to step in and give direction to its members. Their health and safety remain our priority.

NAPTOSA has consistently indicated that there could be no return to school, be it the SMTs, the general educator population, education support personnel or the learners, if the non-negotiables have not been complied with. We have also said that there needs to be a public declaration by the Minister and MECs that the non-negotiables are in place before any educator or education support personnel member is to set foot in a school.

If the Department believes that by remaining mum on the subject, the situation will resolve itself, they are sadly mistaken. What makes matters worse is that absence of proper communication leaves stakeholders no option but to rely on media reports and these reports indicate that provinces are not close to meeting the preconditions for a return to school. For example, face masks have apparently not been procured, whilst screeners and tester have not been contracted.

In the absence of guarantees from the Department, NAPTOSA has no option but to take the protection of members upon itself. We therefore advise our members who serve on SMTs not to report for duty on 11 May 2020 and to await confirmation from the Minister/Department, but also NAPTOSA, that all the health and safety measures have been complied with. NAPTOSA is not prepared to gamble with the lives of our members.

Over and above the issue of non-negotiables, we have also requested the Department for direction on educators and education support personnel who are 60 years and older, as well as those with proven comorbidities. It is generally acknowledged by health experts that these persons are at greater risk than the rest of the population. Before sending members, who fall into these categories, into the firing line, it is essential that the Department expresses a view on their position.

Sadly, also on this matter there has been no direction from the Department. So, until the Department has issued an official direction in this regard, our members who meet the above-mentioned criteria are not to return to school, even if the measures are in place for the safe return of SMTs to school.

NAPTOSA will be meeting with the Minister on 9 May 2020. Members will be kept informed.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR