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UNEMPLOYMENT: EDUCATION REMAINS THE ANSWER

The employment figures for South Africa for the second quarter of 2021, released by Stats SA earlier this week, makes for depressing reading.

An official unemployment rate of 34,1%, the highest since the start of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey in 2008, is indeed sad. The impact on job losses as a result of the recent protest action and violence in Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng has probably still not been fully discounted, which could result in an even bleaker picture.

Some of the detailed information from the survey, pertaining to women and the youth, in particular, is also distressing. In women's month 2021, where one of the most atrocious acts of violence against a woman was committed, where crime statistics showed sexual offences skyrocketing, it is just adding to the woes of women to learn that our labour market remains more favourable to men than women. The rate of unemployment among women was 36,8% in the second quarter of 2021 compared to 32,4% amongst men.

As far as the youth is concerned, the unemployment rates could be demoralising, especially to educators, because it could raise questions on the worth of their work. The unemployment rate among the youth is the highest of all with a rate of 64,4% for those between 15 and 24 years and 42,9% for the 25- to 34-year-old group. It is heart-breaking to see that after all the time and effort put in by educators, the employment prospects for the youth are so poor.

But, considering that 51,5% of all unemployed persons have qualifications below matric and that graduates represent only 2,4% of the unemployed and those with other tertiary qualifications only 7,7%, educators can rest assured that their contribution to the education of our youth is not in vain.

NAPTOZA finds it peculiar that the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET), to our knowledge, have never exploited this type of information as "marketing" tools. What more could the DBE need to convince learners to remain in school and to encourage those that have dropped out to return to school? Equally, the DHET should use the information to encourage learners to pursue post matric studies, whether academic (in study areas that can contribute to the economy), or non-academic, such as trades.

The quarterly employment statistics once again highlighted how thankful every person should be who is in full/permanent employment and how important it is to protect your work at all costs.

The majority of NAPTOZA members are fortunate to be in this position and to have received their full salaries and benefits throughout the pandemic period whereas the survey shows that 8,5% of those in employment did not receive pay during the second quarter of 2021 while 12,8% received reduced pay.

Let us therefore continue our work with grateful hearts, forever knowing that without our contribution to education in South Africa, our children would have slim hope of a future.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR