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NAPTOSA MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR THE NSC EXAMS AND MATRIC CLASS OF 2020

There can be no denying that the Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted education in South Africa in 2020, more especially the Grade 12 learners who, in addition to the anxiety of the matric year, had to contend with the pandemic and the added stress and uncertainty it brought.

Labour therefore made representations to the DBE and Umalusi to reconsider the 2020 NSC examination and to amend the papers that had been set before the advent of the pandemic. This request was based on the disadvantage most of the learners faced. Unfortunately, this request found no favour.

The 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination that commences this week is certainly not the normal annual examination we have become accustomed to, instead it sees a mammoth enrolment of 1 058 699 candidates. The increased number of candidates brings with it added pressure on the system regarding accommodation and managing the entire examination process. NAPTOSA commends the Provincial Education departments and DBE on its readiness for the examination.

NAPTOSA also applauds the DBE for the measures it put in place to address the unprecedented loss of academic time as a result of Covid-19, such as the provision of supplementary material, vacation classes, after-school programmes, teacher content training, placement of volunteer teachers, as well as alternative (differentiated) ways of grouping and teaching learners.

We, however, believe that while significant efforts have been made to recover the academic year and provide extraordinary support to the learners, the total impact of the abnormal educational context remains an unknown and therefore a concern. NAPTOSA was therefore perplexed by the alleged claims by Umalusi that the NSC class of 2020 was no less disadvantaged than previous years.

NAPTOSA notes that the Department, after seeking the expert advice from the Department of Health, has amended its writing protocol to allow learners that present a temperature of above 38°C, during the screening process, to write the examination in isolation and that such learners will not be allowed to associate with other learners after the examination and will be referred for medical attention. While acknowledging the right of the learner to sit for an examination, NAPTOSA calls on all parties responsible to ensure that the safety and well-being of teachers and other learners are not compromised.

NAPTOSA applauds all learners, teachers, SMTs, Teacher Union representatives, PED and DBE leaders and officials for the resilience they have shown in defying the pandemic with a sole purpose of ensuring that the Class of 2020 receives optimum support. Equally, sincere gratitude must be bestowed on all provinces, partners, educational stakeholders, parents, and civil society for going

beyond the call of duty to assist and support Grade 12 learners. Thank you for your sacrifices and commitment to the education of our young people.

The Leadership of NAPTOSA wishes all candidates who will sit for the 2020 examination the absolute best in their efforts and wishes them every success going forward. Finally, NAPTOSA urges that candidate who are overwhelmed and anxious not to lose heart but to commit to writing the examinations at the next opportunity. It is never too late.

BASIL MANUEL

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