



MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION'S WALKING AWAY FROM ANA MEDIATION CAUSES TURMOIL IN EDUCATION

Joint Media Statement

Organised labour in the Basic Education sector, regrets the unilateral withdrawal from mediation by the Minister of Basic Education despite an agreement on the Annual National Assessment(ANA) being reached on Thursday, 19 November 2015. This is the second withdrawal on the agreement reached with the unions on the issue by the Minister that has put education in turmoil.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), in their letter to the mediator, signed by the Director General, indicates that the mediation process failed on account of; “The last insertion of suggested wording to the settlement agreement that sought to make the writing of the ANA 2015 voluntary, defeated all attempts to find each other.” What this indicates is that the mediation process failed on the basis of the word “voluntarily”. We must clarify that this clause was included in the initial draft settlement that they themselves had agreed to (*see attached draft agreement*).

Organised labour agreed to a mediation process on ANA at the behest of the DBE to find a solution on the ANA deadlock. The unions agreed because we were of the view that space for negotiation between employer and employee must always be open. It thus shocks us that the DBE has now decided to walk away from the agreement despite our willingness to cooperate.

It is our view that this is a missed opportunity for an amicable solution to be found and that the DBE has taken the wrong route and is destabilizing the sector. The DBE is once again proving itself to be insensitive to the needs of both the learners and the teachers. The decision to insist on writing the ANA during the period 26 November to 4 December is further proof that the DBE has lost touch with the realities that prevail at school level at this time of the year.

We remain committed to the process of reviewing the ANA. It is clear that the ANA for 2015 is further compromised as it has no credibility.

We want to make it clear that any test that is not based on validity, integrity and reliability defeats the purpose of being an educational tool and therefore only serves a business interest. It is public knowledge by now that the DBE has invested R 200 million for the administration of ANA and therefore cannot afford to forego the business interests of its partners. We want to insist that in its current it is a futile exercise and is tantamount to wasteful expenditure. The DBE has clearly put business interests above the education of millions of learners in South Africa.

We are further dismayed by the fact that on Monday, 23 November 2015 the Minister addressed school governing body associations, a learner representative body COSAS, and the South African Principals' Association (SAPA) on what labour deems to be bargaining issues. It must be noted that SAPA members are also members of the teacher unions and therefore cannot have a voice separate from the unions. This is a desperate attempt to divide the teaching fraternity and in the process, isolate labour. Organised labour appeals to these groupings not to allow themselves to be abused by the Minister as a divisive tool. We urge them to stay away from bargaining issues.

We further note, with disappointment that the intimidation and bullying of our principals has begun across the country to the point where they are being given an ultimatum to either collect the ANA or disciplinary letters.

It is imperative to note that the agreement dealt with more than just the ANA, but also the remodeling of ANA, the dispute of the DBE's failure to pay teachers the 0,5% pay progression and to implement the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) which have both remained unresolved since 2008.

The Unions remain committed to remodeling ANA. We are thus left with no choice but to revert to our original position which is that our members will not be taking part in any ANA-related activity in its current form in 2015. This is our collective decision as labour and we will not be intimidated by the employer to continue to implement what is clearly a flawed instrument. ANA will not be reduced into a tender on our watch!!!!

END OF STATEMENT

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Jointly by SADTU, NAPTOSA, SAOU, NATU and PEU***

CONTACT:

<i>Mugwena Maluleke</i>	<i>SADTU General Secretary</i>	<i>082 783 2968</i>
<i>Anthea Cereseto</i>	<i>NAPTOSA Deputy President</i>	<i>082 610 5756</i>
<i>Chris Klopper</i>	<i>SAOU - CEO</i>	<i>083 708 7733</i>
<i>SA Thompson</i>	<i>NATU - Deputy President</i>	<i>073 607 8141</i>
<i>Malose Kutumela</i>	<i>PEU – President</i>	<i>082 886 1637</i>