



NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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NNF XX of 2020

5 October 2020

DATE SET FOR HEARING OF SALARY DISPUTE AND JOB CREATION IN EDUCATION

NAPTOSA received information on two important matters the past few days. One pertains to the salary dispute which NAPTOSA is involved in with the other unions to the PSCBC regarding the State as employer's failure to implement the third leg of the wage agreement concluded in 2018, and the other the announcement of a job creation package in education as part of the President's fiscal stimulus plan for the country.

As far as the salary dispute is concerned, we have been informed that the matter will be heard in the Labour Appeal Court on 2 December 2020. Normally a matter would first be heard in the Labour Court and only if one of the parties lodged an appeal against the judgement would the case be elevated to the Labour Appeal Court. The fact that the Judge President of the Labour Court decided to allow the matter to be heard by the Labour Appeal Court directly is an indication of the importance thereof. We trust that we will see a positive outcome for our members before the end of this year.

We are aware of reports that NEHAWU has reached a wage agreement of 6,5 % with the employer of employees in the national and provincial parliaments of South Africa. These employees are, however, not public service employees. The wage agreement therefore does not have any bearing on NAPTOSA members, but be assured that in the next round of negotiations in the PSCBC, labour will be referring to this agreement to support our demands.

As indicated, the job creation package announced for education is part of the economic recovery plan for the country and must be viewed as such. In other words it is to create jobs, even if only for the short term, for which those to be employed, will be paid, and which they, in turn, will hopefully pour back into the economy through buying power.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) an amount of R 7 billion has been allocated to education, the bulk of which will be used to-

- provide **200 000 Education Assistants and 100 000 Other Assistants** (Janitors, Screeners, Cleaners, Caretakers, etc.) to schools to ensure continued learning and teaching in a safe environment; and
- support the **saving** of SGB posts at fee-paying schools and posts at government subsidized independent schools

It is intended to draw the Education Assistants from unemployed youth between the ages of 18 – 24 years old with a NQF level 4 qualification, whilst Other Assistants will be drawn from unemployed youths up to 35 years of age with/without NQF level 4 qualification. Recruitment will be from communities where the schools are located.

In the allocation of Education Assistants priority will be given to schools for learners with special educational needs, quintile 1 - 3 schools, schools with multigrade classes and rural and township schools. The allocation will be according to a specific ratio, capped at 20, and with a minimum of 10, such Assistants per school. The Other Assistants will be assigned according to a different ratio, provided that every school shall have at least 2 each Janitors, Cleaners and Screeners.

The DBE proposes that Education Assistants be utilised for *inter alia* the following functions:

- Support to the teachers
- Technical preparation of the classroom
- Oversee learners to ensure social distancing
- Provide after school support to learners
- Support the implementation of the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures
- Assist the school to collect and collate COVID-19 school related data
- Carry out administrative tasks
- Operation and maintenance of water supply & sanitation infrastructure

The time frame for the contract appointments is very tight and the DBE expects the “appointments” to be finalised in November. The contracts are set to run for a period of 4 months.

The allocation for the saving of SGB posts at fee paying schools and posts at government-subsidised independent schools, will be contingent upon there being evidence of the inability to pay for such posts.

While NAPTOSA supports efforts to put the unemployed in employment, we are concerned whether schools will, amid all the other pressures that they have to contend with, be able to ensure the success of this project. With such a huge amount of money involved, we would also not want to see a repeat of the sale of jobs and the PPE corruption.

Our members need to be our eyes and ears on the ground.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR