



NAPTOSA CONDEMNS VIOLENCE AGAINST TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

(17 SEPTEMBER 2018)

The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) is deeply saddened by the untimely death of the 24 year old North West teacher, Mr Gadimang Daniel Mokolobate, at school at the hands of a learner. This incident reminded teachers across the Country of the harsh and hostile conditions in which they are forced to work. Teachers are concerned that not enough is being done by their employer to ensure their safety. Violence against teachers is not a new a phenomenon. Violence and the indiscipline of pupils in schools are, however, under-reported. NAPTOSA argues that violence in schools is a reflection of South African society, generally. When pupils see adults manhandling one another in high places of society such as Legislatures and Parliament they start to think that violence is an acceptable norm to resolve differences.

NAPTOSA has been inundated with disturbing testimonials concerning the levels of violence against teachers in schools, said Mr Ntantala, President of NAPTOSA. The Country has also been witnessing a series of shocking videos showing violence by learners towards teachers. Violence in schools has resulted in some teachers leaving the profession. People in positions of authority in communities should intervene in order to safeguard the integrity of the teaching profession.

The *Business Day* of 12 June 2018 highlighted the violent situations in schools in which learners were involved in verbal abuse, including assaulting teachers and other learners. In Limpopo alone the Department was handling 942 cases of attacks on teachers. Gauteng schools had expelled 151 learners, 31 of them for assaulting teachers and other school staff. It was disturbing to learn of so many cases of violence perpetrated against teachers in a single year. Teachers have reported that their personal property is being vandalised on school property, when they try to instill discipline in the classroom and perpetrators often go unpunished, said Mr Ntantala. These incidents are indicative that the Department of Basic Education's measures to deal with violence in schools is failing. The Department must employ stringent measures such as working in collaboration with police who must conduct regular searches for weapons and drugs and provide trained security personnel at schools to deter learners from assaulting educators, said Mr Ntantala.

Whilst NAPTOSA acknowledges that violence in schools requires a multi-facet approach to curb, NAPTOSA is of the view that the Department can do much more to protect its employees. The Department should ensure that teachers receive the much needed psychological help.

The Department has to accept that current measures employed to deal with disruptive learners who physically and psychologically assault teachers, are not effective at all. For example, the relocation of abusive learners to other schools merely shifts the problem from one school to the next and only perpetuates the cycle of violence against teachers and, furthermore, puts other learners at risk. These inalcitrant learners should be provided with professional help to rehabilitate them before they are placed in any other school.

Mr Ntantala concluded that NAPTOSA does not wish to see a situation wherein teachers refrain from instilling discipline in schools for fear of being attacked by their own learners. If the delinquent's behaviour is allowed to go unaddressed in schools, the consequences may be dire for the delivery of quality education as teachers may leave the profession in droves, and it may not be easy to replace them. The safety of teachers and learners in schools requires urgent attention from the Department.

End of statement

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