What price, the education of the girl-child?

The shock created by the abduction of more than 200 girls from their school in Nigeria reverberated around the world. NAPTOSA and its members were equally dismayed to learn of the plight of these girls and we are concerned for their safety. NAPTOSA has been in contact with Education International (EI) to request that our world-wide federation use its influence to seek the release of these girls. We demand that the authorities in Nigeria put every resource into securing their release.

The wider picture is even more distressing. There are so many countries and regions where the education of girls is viewed with suspicion for whatever reasons, including cultural, social and religious. Any attempt to deny education to any child should be viewed as criminal.

As teachers we ignore these threats to the right of each child to education at our peril. We need to voice our indignation at the abduction of these girls which has resulted in them being denied not only their education but also their freedom. Speak out against any attempt to deny the right to education for any person, irrespective of race, gender or religion.

We encourage teachers and schools to devote some time to organise activities for teachers and learners aimed at alerting one another to this danger in general and specifically to the situation that these girls from Nigeria find themselves.

Sexual Violence by Educators in South African Schools – Gaps in Accountability

The Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits and Cornell’s Law School have produced a damning report on the role of a small number of educators in the vile practice of sexual violence on learners. NAPTOSA is of the view that such acts are a stain on the image of our profession. We are all tainted by such behaviour. It is difficult to defend our professionalism if there is indeed a conspiracy of silence as reported in the study. Speak out if you are aware of any acts of sexual violence against learners.

While it is true that we will defend any member who is charged by the GDE with a sexual offence against learner(s) and who professes his/her innocence, we will not assist anyone who is guilty of one of these offences. Nor will we permit continued membership of NAPTOSA. Fortunately the overwhelming majority of our members are committed to professionalism and a philosophy of the placing the child first in our teaching.

The report makes a number of wide ranging recommendations after identifying gaps in the legislation, policies and the compliance with these. It is worthwhile reading the report.

Scandal over “Buying of Posts”

The media (radio, TV and press) have relayed reports of corruption in education through the alleged payment of bribes to secure a promotion post. Reports of such illegal practices have been around for some time. It seems as though there is some fire beneath the smoke!

NAPTOSA states categorically that we are opposed to any such practices and will not tolerate these practices. We do not believe that any of our members have been involved in either the asking, or the giving, of a bribe in an effort to secure appointment to a promotion post. However, if a member is proved to have been part of this corruption, the Union will not hesitate to take steps to terminate his or her membership.

The Minister for Basic Education held a meeting with Unions on Friday 17 May 2014 about this scandal. She stated her intention to institute a Ministerial Commission to investigate reports of “buying promotion posts”. She did not rule out the possibility of a Judicial Commission of Inquiry. NAPTOSA supports the establishment of this Ministerial Commission.

We have noted that the rumours of such practices which we have heard do not just refer to union involvement (not NAPTOSA) but also SGB and district officials. Certainly the connivance of a number of persons appears to be necessary to corrupt the appointment process.

Have you heard about such instances where a post has been “bought”? Do you have any evidence? Were you ever asked to pay a bribe to secure a promotion post? If so please contact me in confidence (mikem@naptosa.org.za). I will only release the information and your name if you authorise this.

Of some interest is the fact that certain departmental officials have used these reports as a motivation to motivate a change to the appointment of Principals from the current system to one controlled entirely by the departments of education. What about the reports of district officials taking bribes!

Help us and the DBE stamp out corruption. Speak out about all forms of this illegal activity. It is time to clean up education and remove ALL illegal and improper influence over decisions on appointments.

M J MYBURGH
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER