Programme Director  
Members of the NAPTOSA National Executive Council  
Members of the NAPTOSA Provincial Executive Council  
Branch Leadership  
Shop Stewards  
Distinguished Guests and  
Delegates  

Sanibonani  

I feel really honoured and appreciate your invitation to address this conference. Feelings of immense admiration overwhelms me as you allow me to be here as part of this history making elective conference in the province.  

Educational Landscape  

We need to acknowledge and appreciate the role played by NAPTOSA in the educational development of the African Child in our province and country.  

The hard work has just begun in moving South Africa Together Forward towards amongst others the realisation of improving and expanding education and training, building an inclusive economy that creates jobs, transforming our rural areas and ensuring decent living conditions and sustainable human settlements as spelt out in the African National Congress 2014 Elections Manifesto.
We should all, as stakeholders and role-players ensure the enactment of the National Development Plan and take South Africa’s development forward. In that regard let us put the interests of the nation and the country ahead as we work towards making early childhood development a top priority among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations.

We also need all children to have at least 2 years of pre-school education to leverage the educational standard and foundation at an early age.

As a lot of our resources are channelled to education, let us thus also ensure that about 90 percent of learners in grades 3, 6 and 9 must achieve 50 percent or more in the annual national assessments in literacy, maths and science.

We should at the same time make sure that the teaching and learning climate is made conducive by eradicating infrastructure backlogs and ensuring that all schools meet the minimum standards by 2016.

Comrades and compatriots, we also need to increase the school thorough put by having between 80-90 percent of learners to completing twelve years of schooling or vocational education with at least 80 percent successfully passing exit exams.
Focus for the Department

As the Mpumalanga Department of Education, we affirm our commitment to the National Development Plan. We also have teacher development programmes that will run parallel to the NDP.

We are very considerate of our teachers working under trying conditions which ultimately undermines the teaching and working morale and consequently dampen the teaching and performance output.

It has been of great concern to us that there is a huge number of teachers who are either resigning or taking early retirement. As a department, we want to discourage any form of unnecessary resignation as this stands not to benefit but only to disadvantage officials. There may be a lot of factors that are a cause to this. We would however like to dispel the misconceptions that officials stand to lose their pension funds because of the harmonisation of the provident and the pension fund.

As a Department, we have thus conceptualised the Teachers' Call Initiative which aims to inspire, motivate and appreciate educators within Mpumalanga. This will be done by engaging teachers on issues pertinent to their well-being taking into consideration the stressful and challenging circumstances under which teaching and learning takes place. This will also be collaboration with the banking sector, SARS and the Government Employees Pension Fund based on the ethos that “Teaching is a Calling”.

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Contact sessions will be taking place in this regard on the 04 September at Emalahleni Civic Centre, 19 September at World Life Church in Shatale, Bohlabela District and 02 October 2014 at Iziphunzi Municipality Hall in Piet Retief. All these Teachers Call Initiative contact sessions are planned to take place at 13H00 and we appeal to the circuits concerned to buy in and support these sessions.

We believe that these sessions will be beneficial to all our teachers, hence we encourage your attendance when these sessions reach your circuit and district.

As we look into the support structures and services of education, let us not be sidetracked from our main mandate of education delivery in the classroom. The Department has made great strides with regards to the improvement of grade 12 examination results by reaching the 80% pass mark in 2013.

This has made Mpumalanga the most improved province nationally. Our teachers, learners and NAPTOSA in particular should be commended for their contributions. The support and participation that NAPTOSA has provided concerning the Grade 12 intervention programmes has gone a long way and made this feat possible.

We want to make a plea to all stakeholders to pull together and play their part in ensuring that the Province maintains and even improves on both improvements made in the grade 12 and ANA results.
At the same breath, our determination and application in terms of the 2014 Intervention programmes cannot be over-emphasised. The Dial A Tutor Programme, Winter Classes are some of the programmes that are in place for the department to improve on learner performance. We are making a call to NAPTOSA and Teachers to popularise and encourage learners to take advantage of these programmes as they are there for their advantage.

The department is also in the process of finalising the Tweet A Tutor programme which will also assist learners who encounter difficulties in their studies to have a direct interaction with tutors through their cellphones. This educational cellular telephone application usage will be the first in the country and will allow graphic presentation of the Mathematical lessons under discussion making it a bit easier for learners to follow the lessons under discussions.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education has also made great progress in improving school infrastructure. We have delivered 50 new state of the art schools during the previous administration. On top of this, the department has constructed additional classrooms, kitchens and administration blocks as adds on to already existing structures. We intend to carry on with our plans to do away with the infrastructure backlog and have habitable school structures throughout the province.

Responding to the urgent national call of making Mathematics and the Sciences the most prevalent learning areas in the nation, the
Mpumalanga Department of Education held a Maths Indaba to chart a way forward towards making a meaningful imprint in the Maths, Science and Technology field.

In 2013, we mulled the launch of the Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy which seeks to improve on the intake and performance of Maths, Science and Technology in our schools. Moreover, the Academy will render training to educators with regard to content development and lesson delivery. A hundred schools will be participating in this programme equitably from the four districts.

As much as we are focused on matters of curricular development, we should not forget to involve ourselves on matters that are closer to our hearts, matters that have resonance to the welfare and wellbeing of those who are less fortunate and marginalised.

I also want to thank NAPTOSA for participating in the Caring4Girls Campaign and ensuring that the girl child is taken care of and is not thwarted by developmental issues of puberty to attend school and get an education.

It is very important for me to highlight this during the August Month, also known as Women’s Month. Your participation has elevated matters of female development, health and puberty to the fore and has alleviated the challenge of girl classroom absenteeism due to menstrual matters to some extent.

Appreciate the Working Co-operation with NAPTOSA
NAPTOSA is renowned for the sterling work done in dispensing quality education throughout the nation which has also benefitted the province through the improvement of the Grade 12 results up to 80% in 2013.

Our gratitude goes to all the NAPTOSA members and teachers who have shown their dedication to the teaching profession by not sparing any effort to guide our learners through the learning phase to realise high levels of performance as indicated in the 2013 Grade 12 and ANA results. We attribute these learner performance improvements to such heroes and heroines within NAPTOSA.

We want to urge you to continue in your selfless journey to eradicate illiteracy and educate the masses of our people without compromise. Your unity in purpose is essential and required to drive the education delivery mechanism forward at all times. Let unity reign in the ranks and file of NAPTOSA.

Back to the business at hand, your elective conference marks an end to a term of office for the outgoing office bearers. Our gratitude and well wishes go to all of them as well as those who will be elected in office. We wish the new office bearers all the best in dispensing their responsibilities during their term of office with diligence and honour.

**Conclusion**
Allow me to conclude with an appeal to all delegates and members of the mass democratic movement in general to heed the words of wisdom and an appeal for unity by the late President of the African
National Congress, Oliver Reginald Tambo in his opening address to the ANC's 28th National Conference on 02 July 1991 in Durban where he said;

Open Quote:
"We did not tear ourselves apart because of lack of progress at times. We were always ready to accept our mistakes and to correct them. Above all we succeeded to foster and defend the unity of the ANC and the unity of our people in general. Even in bleak moments, we were never in doubt regarding the winning of freedom. We have never been in doubt that the people's cause shall triumph."

Close Quote
I want to appeal to all the people of Mpumalanga and to members of NAPTOSA in particular not to be hindered by doubts and any forms of negativity in our quest to fully liberate the African Child through knowledge and education. Let us pursue on the course and drive towards the liberated future of our country and province.

I Thank You.