

DON'T THREATEN STUDENTS, PARENTS OF SA

- Cape Argus
- 20 Aug 2020
- BRIAN ISAACS



I HAVE on previous occasions in my letters to the Argus and my Education Watch articles called for an independent enquiry into the operation of the Labour Relations' Department (LRD) of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

My understanding is that the task of the LRD is to maintain harmony between parents, teachers and students and the WCED. It is my opinion, backed up by evidence, that the LRD's main aim is to monitor teachers.

I have no problem with LRD investigating sexual abuse by teachers, stealing of school monies, fraud and physical abuse of students, but I am against the abuse of the LRD, discriminating against teachers who criticise the WCED because of its retrogressive policies in education.

The WCED charges teachers who are outspoken on the clause "bringing WCED into disrepute".

Teachers do not have to do it; the department does it on its own. It has made so many blunders since 1994. The quintile system in 1996, the rationalisation of 20 000 teachers in 1996 with millions of rands spent on early retirement packages, the introduction of Outcome-based Education in 1998 at much expense to the public, the closing down of teacher-training colleges in 1998, closing down of schools in poor areas in 2011, especially Uitzig High, in 2019 in the middle of an academic year, and now in 2020, the threat to dissolve school governing bodies if they defy the department and keep the children at home. Now, with all the blunders the Department of Basic Education and WCED have made, who can trust them in making sound decisions?

In a recent circular to schools, the national department has come out strongly against progressive SGBs, threatening to take them to court and dissolving them if the SGBs decide to close schools. Have I come out of a slumber for the past 26 years and find myself in a South Africa that is not taking up the concerns of the majority of South Africans about the Covid-19 crisis?

In the Western Cape, people are organising and educating themselves about the Covid-19 pandemic and the return of students to school. Government at first listened attentively to the people and set dates for the return.

It changed the dates again because of pressure from the people of SA. Government is now stating that all students must return by Monday, 24 August, 2020. What madness and kragdadigheid,

There is an organisation called the Progressive Organisations' Formation (POF), formed in June 2020 to address the concerns of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and students about Covid-19.

There are two views in POF. The one view feels that all students should be at home until the curve levels off. The other view is that only Grade 7 and 12 students return to school and

grades 1- 11 remain at home. The logic is that schools should be able to cope only with Grade 7 and 12.

These two views should be considered in the interests of the majority of our students. I prefer the second option, that grades 7 and 12 return to school.

My argument would that in an ideal world, due to Covid-19 all workers should be at home except essential workers.

We know this is not possible and workers have to go to work to put food on the table. So it is with Grade 7 and 12s. They face leaving school and need their results to enter high school and tertiary education institutions next year. Grades 1-11 students could be promoted to the next grade.

This happened in December 1985 in the so-called "coloured" schools when the Grades 8-11 students, because of their opposition to apartheid, never wrote the final examinations at the end of 1985.

The NDBE and WCED should consider these proposals seriously and not threaten the parents, teachers and students of SA. They must be respected.