

The Crisis of the 2020 Academic Year

It is sad that under the current COVID-19 pandemic, our parliamentarians only dare to meet via screens but teachers and children are being forced to go back to school physically and operate in classrooms on a daily basis. For most teachers who teach in township schools, teaching online is a challenge because most learners are from working class families who cannot afford to buy enough data for the online classes.

“Data is our biggest challenge because it is expensive and most of the money in the household is used to buy food. The expense for food has doubled since children are at home.” Said Vannesa Sebataladi, a concerned parent.

Mental health is also an issue for many learners at this time. Learners are doing the best they can, despite high levels of anxiety and stress. Matriculants bear the greatest pressure. With the pressure they have and the amount of work that needs to be done in the middle of constantly opening and closing of schools due to COVID-19 cases; the country may experience high levels of matric dropouts in 2020 and very low marks for the National Certificate.

Maria Motshabi* (not her real name), who is a grade 12 teacher at Rivoni Secondary School, in Daveyton said “I am concerned about my learners, especially those in difficult home situations where they cannot even study for ten minutes without being disturbed. I have tried teaching my learners on WhatsApp since that is the most used app by teenagers and adults but some are still missing in action and I am worried about how they will catch up”.

There has been a clear voice and message from organisations, teachers, learners and parents that the government should listen to and engage with them when they have their meetings so that they can all come up with a solution that will benefit everyone involved but the government has not done that. This has left many frustrated.

This article was submitted on 5 August 2020. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.