



Breakthrough for Grade-R Practitioners

Lorvica Matthews

NAPTOSA proudly announces a major victory for Grade R practitioners following the conclusion of the Collective Agreement on the Upgrading of Qualifications for Unqualified Grade-R Practitioners at the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC).

As the chief negotiator of the Combined Trade Unions—of Autonomous Teacher Unions (CTU-ATU), NAPTOSA played a pivotal role in the negotiation and drafting of this landmark agreement. This achievement is the result of tireless advocacy and principled engagement on behalf of Grade R practitioners, who have long been denied professional recognition and equitable treatment in the education sector.

This initiative follows the promulgation of the *Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act* earlier this year, which officially incorporates Grade R into the formal schooling system. As a result, Grade-R has become a vital component of basic education, and Practitioners in this phase must now hold a minimum qualification at REQV 13, such as a Diploma in Grade-R Teaching or a Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase. This legislative milestone underscores the urgency of upgrading the qualifications of Grade R Practitioners and ensuring their full integration into the professional teaching framework.

The agreement provides a framework for upgrading the qualifications of Grade-R Practitioners employed in public schools and who do not currently meet the minimum qualification requirements for appointment as educators. It also establishes employer-funded support for eligible Practitioners at NQF Levels 4 and 5 who are willing to study towards a professional teaching qualification, with the first intake scheduled for 2026. Practitioners will be granted five years to complete their studies, marking a meaningful investment in their professional growth and the quality of early childhood education.



NAPTOSA has consistently called for the recognition, fair remuneration, and improved working conditions of Grade-R Practitioners – many of whom have served with dedication under temporary and precarious contracts. This agreement is therefore a significant victory for dignity, justice, and professionalisation within the education sector.

“NAPTOSA remains steadfast in its mission to defend and advance the rights of all education workers. We will continue to fight for the working conditions of Grade-R Practitioners, teachers, and all staff in the education sector,” said NAPTOSA’s Executive Director.

NAPTOSA extends its appreciation to all parties who contributed to this milestone and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that every education worker – regardless of grade or post – is valued, supported, and empowered to deliver quality education for all.

PSCBC Annual General Meeting

Gregory Masondo

The PSCBC held its 28th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 26 June 2025 at the Radisson Hotel OR Tambo in Gauteng. The meeting was hosted under the theme “From Struggle to Structure, One Agreement at a Time”, indicating an emphasis on structured bargaining and building increments one agreement after another.

The theme aptly captures the evolving role of the PSCBC from a forum of reactive labour conflict, to one of structured collective bargaining, governance and strategic labour-relations management.

The event brought together government representatives, organised labour, sectorial unions, and bargaining council officials to review the current state of Public Service collective bargaining, present recent resolutions, and set priorities for the upcoming period.

PSCBC General Secretary, Mr. Frikkie de Bruin, delivered a detailed presentation on the determination of vote weights, followed by the presentation of the Annual Report, Financial Report, and Auditor’s Report, collectively reflecting the Council’s performance for the 2024/25-financial year.

The AGM highlighted the Council’s journey and progress in advancing collective bargaining in the Public Service. Sessions at the AGM focused on matters such as collective bargaining, dispute resolution, workforce planning, inclusion, and employee mental health.

Two major resolutions were highlighted at the AGM

◆ **Resolution 1 of 2025:** Agreement on salary adjustments and improvement of conditions of service in the Public Service. It must be noted that the PSCBC concluded its wage negotiations with a majority agreement (84.34%) after a 21-day consultation period.

🔑 The key point: a 5.5% wage increase for the 2025/26 financial year and wage/adjustments for 2026/27 and 2027/28 linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

◆ **Resolution 2 of 2025** sets out a series of important “future process” items, i.e., death grant, childcare and breastfeeding facilities, recruitment policy, bursary scheme for dependants, uniform standardisation, incentive framework, and comprehensive danger-insurance.

🔑 Two committees have been established to deal with these process issues.

The AGM placed emphasis on immediate wage and allowance issues but on structural transformation and collective bargaining capacity. Points of emphasis included *inter alia*:

- ▶ Strengthening the labour-employer relationship with acknowledgement of improved cooperation and the drive for professionalism.
- ▶ Acknowledging the agenda around professionalisation of the Public Service, recruitment uniform/policy standardisation
- ▶ The need for research and evidence-based negotiation processes (Resolution 2 of 2025 calls for investigative/research work).

The Election Results were as follows:

🔑 Mr Magate Phala was elected as chairperson (replacing the late Ms. Ingrid Dimu)

🔑 Mr David Phala from SADTU was elected Vice Chairperson Labour (replacing Mr Aubrey Zungu)

🔑 Mr Mompoti Jones Galorale continues to serve as Vice Chairperson Employer.

🔑 The **Executive Committee of the PSCBC** comprises the following unions, **NAPTOSA, PSA, HOSPERSA and POPCRU**. NAPTOSA is represented by Ms Lorvica Matthews who replaces Mr Gregory Masondo who will be retiring at the end of the year.

It must be noted that NAPTOSA had previously been excluded from EXCO, but has for the last two years been represented. The PSCBC’s 2025 AGM marked a significant milestone: The achievement of above-inflation wage growth, a broadening of bargaining scope beyond pay, and a signal that the council is maturing into a strategic labour relations role player. For Public Service employees, the wage increase is welcome. For unions and government, the structural agenda sets the tone for more sophisticated, future-oriented bargaining.

Workers, Justice and the Climate Transition

Thirona Moodley

Climate change is no longer a distant warning - it is reshaping the world of work. South Africa is warming nearly twice as fast as the global average, and the consequences are already visible: Droughts, floods, damaged schools, and disrupted learning. These are not just environmental crises, but they are labour crises that threaten livelihoods, infrastructure, and the right to decent work.

For education workers, the classroom has become part of the climate frontline. Schools are damaged by storms, lessons are lost, and inequality deepens in affected communities. Unions such as NAPTOSA are calling for climate justice to be placed firmly on the agenda of social justice.

Fair and Just Transition

South Africa's Just Transition Framework outlines how the Country must shift toward a low-carbon economy whilst ensuring fairness and inclusion. For workers, this means being part of the decision-making process. The move to net zero cannot come at the cost of jobs, communities, or dignity.

The transition brings both risks and opportunities. Studies show that up to five million new green jobs could be created in renewable energy, manufacturing, and sustainable agriculture. But without proper planning, these could simply replace stable, unionised work with insecure employment.

That's why skills development is vital. NAPTOSA is advocating for education systems to equip both teachers and learners for a green economy – ensuring that tomorrow's workforce is ready for a decarbonised future.

Youth, Gender, and Inclusion

Young people - particularly young women - must be central to this transformation. With youth unemployment at record levels, the green economy offers a chance to create millions of new jobs by 2030. Yet, women remain underrepresented in renewable energy and other emerging sectors.

NAPTOSA joins the broader labour movement in insisting that gender equity must be at the heart of the Just Transition. Empowering women with technical and leadership skills isn't only a matter of fairness - it's an economic necessity.

Protecting Workers and Communities

As the climate crisis deepens, social protection becomes essential. The International Labour Organisation warns that countries most exposed to climate shocks often have the weakest safety nets. South Africa must ensure that displaced workers receive unemployment support, retraining opportunities, and income security.

NAPTOSA's message is clear: No worker should be left behind. Public sector workers – many of them women - must be protected from both economic and environmental disruption. Investment in public services is key to building resilience and social cohesion.

Unions at the Frontline of Change

The Just Transition cannot be imposed top-down - it must be negotiated through social dialogue amongst government, employers, and workers. Unions have the power to secure commitments on reskilling, green jobs, and fair financing for affected communities.

Around the world, unions are already shaping the green transition - from Kenya's transport workers leading an electric bus shift to Brazil's expansion of social protection for informal workers. These examples show that organised labour can lead the change, not follow it.

Education for a Sustainable Future

Education is both a casualty and a catalyst of climate change. NAPTOSA believes every school should be a hub for climate literacy, where learners are taught sustainability and teachers are supported to lead environmental initiatives. As climate disruptions affect attendance and learning, strengthening psychosocial support and education funding becomes not just policy - but justice.

A Call to Action

The Just Transition is about more than cutting emissions - it's about shaping the kind of society South Africa wants to build. It's a chance to tackle inequality, empower youth, and ensure progress rooted in dignity and fairness.

Unions must be architects of this new future. NAPTOSA stands ready to educate, mobilise, and negotiate for a transition where no worker is sacrificed for progress - and where climate justice and social justice move forward together.

#ClimateJusticeChampions



**PRESIDENTIAL
CLIMATE COMMISSION**
TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

A New Generation Rises: African Youth Demand a Delivering Democracy at ITUC-Africa Conference, in Togo

Michelle Mosupye

Lomé, Togo (September 24–26, 2025) – The first ITUC-Africa Youth Conference concluded in Lomé, Togo, with a clear and urgent mandate: African youth are no longer asking for a seat at the table. They are demanding a fundamental re-engineering of the economic and political system. Under the banner, "**The realities of the African political economy and young people: Posing pragmatic collective and inclusive trade unions responses,**" the Conference outlined bold union strategies to combat unemployment, informality, and the rise of plutocratic power.

The Global Crisis and the "Billionaire Coup"

The tone was set by ITUC General Secretary, **Luc Triangle**, who addressed the conference from Brussels, warning that the world is immersed in political turbulence and a direct attack on democratic values.

"We need to know precisely where we are fighting for... The society that we want is based on **democracy**," Triangle stated. He pointed to the rise of authoritarian politicians and, crucially, the "**billionaire coup**". He argued that ultra-wealthy individuals, who are not elected, are gaining unprecedented, non-removable power by controlling social media, mainstream media, and the future of **Artificial Intelligence**.

The ITUC's response, Triangle noted, is a global campaign: "**Take Back Democracy**" and "**Stop the Billionaire Coup**". He stressed that the trade union movement must ensure that democracy "**delivers to workers**" to combat the appeal of populist and extremist messages amongst disillusioned young people.

Africa's Demographic Dilemma and the Union Mandate

With over **60%** of Africa's population under the age of 25, the continent faces a deepening crisis fuelled by a neoliberal political economy that is failing to deliver a "trickledown effect". Discussions highlighted the prevalence of high unemployment and high **NEET rates** (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), as well as a severe deficit of decent work, particularly in the massive **informal economy (ILO Recommendation No. 204)**.

The Conference crystallised three strategic pillars for the youth-led union response:

1. Decent Work and Skills (YES-Africa!)

The consensus was that job creation must be at the heart of all policy. Unions pledged to champion the **AU-ILO Youth Employment Strategy for Africa (YES-Africa!)**, which focuses on **structural economic transformation** and **just transitions** (green and digital). A critical takeaway was the need for workers' organisations to **institutionalise their participation** in national TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) and skills anticipation systems, ensuring that skills training is market-driven and inclusive.

2. Trade Rights in the AfCFTA Era

The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, particularly its **Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade (PWYT)**, was seen as a major opportunity, but only with aggressive union oversight. Key actions include:

- 🌐 Demanding that **labour rights be embedded** as conditions in all AfCFTA-driven investment contracts.
- 🌐 Pushing for **formal union representation** in AfCFTA monitoring bodies.
- 🌐 Extending union representation and services to **cross-border informal traders** to bridge the gap between trade policy and labour rights.

3. New Leadership and Structural Inclusion

Presentations stressed that for the union movement to remain viable, it must transform from within by achieving true structural inclusion of youth and women. Proposed strategies included:

- 🌐 Developing **solidarity and alternative financing** (communal funds) to fund youth and women's leadership programs independently of external partners.
- 🌐 **Institutionalisation from grassroots**, ensuring that young people and women are integrated into local decision-making bodies and negotiation cells, rather than being confined to symbolic training programs.

The conference concluded with group-work sessions aimed at building concrete action plans, culminating in the adoption of the **Declaration of Young African Trade Unionists**, signalling a decisive step towards a more representative and transformative labour movement.

Post Provisioning Under Pressure: A National Snapshot of Education Budget Realities

Rishal Juguth

As provinces prepare for the 2026 - academic year, the second ELRC workshop on Budget and Post Provisioning for the year revealed a sobering truth: South Africa's education system is grappling with deepening budgetary constraints. From the leafy corridors of the Western Cape to rural schools of the Northern Cape, the message was consistent: More learners, fewer resources, and mounting pressure on Compensation of Employees (CoE) budgets.

National Context: A System Strained

The education sector remains one of the largest consumers of provincial budgets, yet the 2025/26 MTEF allocations show a worrying trend. Provinces are increasingly unable to meet the 80:20 split requirement between personnel and non-personnel expenditure. Worryingly, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal all reported CoE ratios exceeding 90%, leaving little room for essential goods, services, and infrastructure.

The unfunded 2024/25-and 2025/26-wage agreements - 4.7% and 5.5% respectively, have compounded the crisis, forcing provinces to reprioritise budgets, often at the expense of LTSM, infrastructure, and learner-support programmes. This has resulted in a growing backlog in textbook procurement, delayed school maintenance, and underfunded Grade-R expansion.

Provincial Comparisons: Shared Struggles, Divergent Strategies

Despite regional differences, several themes emerged across the presentations:

COMPENSATION OF EMPLOYEES AS % OF EQUITABLE SHARE

Province	Audited 2022/23			Audited 2023/24			Pre-Audited 2024/25		
	Equitable Share Budget R'000	CoE Expenditure R'000	CoE Expenditure as % of ES Budget	Equitable Share Budget R'000	CoE Expenditure R'000	CoE Expenditure as % of ES Budget	Equitable Share Budget R'000	CoE Expenditure R'000	CoE Expenditure as % of ES Budget
EC	35 869 582	30 205 772	84%	37 508 264	31 320 836	84%	38 454 346	33 057 739	86%
FB	16 006 107	13 212 234	83%	16 470 946	13 855 472	84%	16 154 813	14 416 382	89%
GP	56 929 000	41 725 735	73%	59 867 429	45 159 059	75%	62 218 739	48 800 586	78%
KZN	55 788 671	50 082 582	90%	57 638 609	51 942 728	90%	58 084 256	52 596 029	91%
LP	24 265 894	27 519 031	89%	35 979 872	28 920 828	80%	36 644 109	29 949 364	82%
MP	22 654 056	18 909 222	83%	23 195 397	19 730 396	85%	24 151 069	20 946 349	87%
NC	6 939 239	5 675 218	82%	7 616 595	6 026 999	79%	7 144 288	6 350 734	89%
NW	18 747 008	14 548 885	78%	19 407 285	16 337 777	84%	19 762 544	17 142 650	87%
WC	26 162 452	19 813 390	76%	28 581 670	21 675 793	76%	29 023 170	22 339 860	77%
TOTAL	273 353 009	221 692 069	81%	286 266 667	234 969 888	82%	291 637 334	245 699 693	84%

(Source: CFO Presentation on budget constraints within the department)

- All provinces reported high CoE ratios, exceeding the 80% benchmark.
- Placement of excess educators remains a challenge, with rates below 50% in most provinces.
- Grade R expansion is underfunded or delayed, despite national policy imperatives.

Infrastructure development is consistently hampered by slow implementation and budget cuts.

Spotlight on KwaZulu-Natal: Growth Meets Constraint

KwaZulu-Natal, with over 2.6 million learners and a provincial establishment of 86 737 (90 057 being the total number of educator posts) continues to struggle to carry the staff establishment.

Between 2022/23 and 2024/25, the Department of Education experienced a dramatic escalation in unauthorised expenditure, rising from R4.080 million in 2022/23 to R63.458 million in 2023/24, and surging to R521.296 million in 2024/25.

Looking ahead, the Department is projecting an over-expenditure of R1.224 billion by the end of the 2025/26-financial year. This fiscal pressure has severely impacted its ability to fund the full staff establishment, particularly *Public Service Act* employees, and has rendered the conversion of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Practitioners financially unfeasible.

Of the fixed approved establishment, the Department cannot afford 8,715 posts - his includes 3,015 educator posts and 4,263 Public Service posts.

Due to the ongoing moratorium, critical vacancies in both school and administrative support remain unfilled. The department also faces challenges in budgeting for Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), as Treasury does not provide a baseline at the start of the financial year, necessitating a fully funded wage agreement to meet these obligations.

Public Ordinary School Education reflects projected over expenditure of R1.372 billion, which relates to overspending on compensation of employees, resulting from the underfunding of the wage agreement.

Conclusion: Reform Requires Resources

The 2026 Post-Provisioning cycle underscores a critical truth: Policy ambition must be matched by fiscal commitment. Provinces are doing their best to stretch limited resources, but without national intervention - particularly to fund wage agreements and Grade-R expansion - the system risks stagnation.

As the ELRC continues its oversight, the call is clear: Equitable, sustainable funding must underpin any effort to improve learning outcomes. Otherwise, the vision of quality education for every child in every classroom will remain just that - a vision.



NAPTOSA OFFICIALS: (From Left) Greg Masondo (National), Rishal Juguth (KZN); Lorvica Matthews (National); Tumi Madika (GP); Riedwaan Ahmed (WC).



NAPTOSA President Reflects on PACTED 2025

Thabo Manne

The Pan-African Conference on Teacher Education (PACTED 2025), held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 1-3 October. Which was a historic gathering of education leaders, teacher unions, and policymakers from across the continent. Representing NAPTOSA, the President, Mr Thabo Manne, joined discussions focused on reimagining the teaching profession and strengthening teacher development across Africa.

A major highlight was the launch of the African Union's Decade of Accelerated Action for Education and Skills Development (2025–2034), a call for renewed investment in teacher education and innovation. The introduction of the Teacher Community of Practice (CoP) Platform stood out as a transformative tool that will connect teachers across Africa for collaboration, mentorship, and continuous professional growth.

Africa's future depends on the teachers who shape it. Every classroom and every learner are part of the continent's transformation story.

For South African educators, the message is clear: We must continue to champion teacher empowerment, inclusion, and digital innovation, whilst prioritising teacher well-being and professional respect.

NAPTOSA returned from Addis Ababa inspired to strengthen the Union's advocacy and partnerships, ensuring that the spirit of PACTED lives in every classroom across the nation.

#PACTED2025 #NAPTOSA #AfricanTeacher #EducationForAll #TeacherEmpowerment



