



From Policy to Protection—Our Schools Must Finally Be Safe

Yasierah Adonis

“What matters now is action: uniform vetting of all school staff, mandatory reporting, and a fully integrated child-protection system so no learner remains vulnerable.”

When the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education convened its statutory-rape stakeholder engagement in the NCOP chamber on 11 November 2025, the disturbing truth became painfully clear. Despite laws and policies meant to protect learners, far too many children remain at risk in our schools. The engagement was attended by representatives of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), unions, SACE, social-development partners, learner bodies, and community stakeholders. The engagement uncovered a broken pipeline from commitment to implementation.

Official data shared during the meeting is alarming: out of approximately 405,738 public-school educators, only 78,509 (about 19%) have been vetted against the National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO). Even more concerning, vetting often excludes non-teaching staff. This includes cleaners, ground workers, and administrative personnel. These are individuals who also work directly with learners daily.

In addition to screening, the committee was frequently informed about systemic shortcomings in reporting and follow-up, including a lack of strong aftercare or psychosocial support for victims, underreporting by principals or families, and confusion among educators over mandatory

reporting requirements. Teachers who are accused of sexual misconduct sometimes quit only to reapply somewhere else, avoiding responsibility.

In order to prevent offenders from slipping through the cracks, a cross-sector, child-protection framework that includes comprehensive and updated vetting, mandatory and easily understood reporting protocols, psycho-social care for survivors, and a centralized, transparent tracking system must be implemented immediately. As a union leader and supporter of the welfare of educators and students, I think that the only way our schools can genuinely become safe learning spaces where learners may develop fearlessly and offenders are permanently prohibited from working with our children is via determined collective action.



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Highlights from the NAPTOSA Gauteng TVET/CET Conference 2025

Tumi Madika

NAPTOSA Gauteng held a significant TVET/CET Conference on 25 October 2025 at the School of Achievement, bringing together lecturers, policymakers, unions, and education partners to review major reforms in South Africa’s post-school education system.

Strengthening Skills for an Inclusive Economy

Discussions centred on aligning education with the country’s Medium-Term Development Plan and addressing youth unemployment through stronger, work-ready training. DHET reiterated its vision for a coordinated PSET system that supports economic growth, job creation, and a capable developmental state. Publishers and the Government Employee Pension Fund (GEPF) also engaged delegates, with GEPF emphasising pension preservation and retirement planning.

TVET Reforms: Transition to Occupational Qualifications

A key development is the phase-out of NATED programmes and the shift to QCTO-aligned occupational qualifications. The teach-out plan runs from 2026 to 2029, with no new N4 enrolments permitted from January 2026. Progress includes expanded Centres of Specialisation and improved artisan training output, though lecturer shortages and outdated curricula remain concerns.

Growing the CET Sector

Despite funding and infrastructure challenges, CET colleges are expanding community-based skills programmes. Highlights include a R200 million investment in skills training, the introduction of digital and entrepreneurship programmes, lecturer upskilling, and stronger alignment with community economic needs. Completion rates have improved, with further enrolment growth expected

The QCTO’s Role

The QCTO continues to lead the development and quality assurance of occupational qualifications. While most TVET colleges are accredited, only two of the nine CET colleges hold QCTO accreditation, signalling a critical gap.

NAPTOSA’s Advocacy

NAPTOSA reaffirmed its commitment to better working conditions, increased skills development funding, and professional growth pathways for lecturers.

The conference highlighted a system in transition – moving toward modern, industry-aligned, digitally enabled skills training. TVET and CET colleges remain central to reducing



A Milestone for Africa, and a Proud Moment for NAPTOSA

Lorvica Matthews

The G20 made history this year by convening on African soil for the first time – and South Africa proudly hosted this significant global gathering. For NAPTOSA, this moment was more than historic; it was an opportunity to ensure that educators’ voices shaped the global agenda. We are proud to share that our contributions formed part of the final G20 Leaders’ Declaration, which was unanimously adopted by all member states.

NAPTOSA’s Active Role in the Education Working Group

NAPTOSA participated actively in the G20 Education Working Group (EdWG), a permanent platform dedicated to global education issues. Under South Africa’s 2025 G20 Presidency, the EdWG focused on three key priorities:

🌐 **Quality foundational learning**

🌐 **Mutual recognition of qualifications**

🌐 **Professional development for educators in a changing world**

We ensured that the perspectives of South African educators – and the broader Global South – were strongly represented. It was a moment of pride to see the importance of foundational learning highlighted prominently at the G20 Leaders’ Summit, aligning with the positions we consistently advocated for

Representing FEDUSA at the G20 Social Summit

NAPTOSA also had the honour of representing our federation, FEDUSA, at the G20 Social Summit. This provided a valuable opportunity to engage on broader social and labour issues, while continuously elevating education as a key pillar of social and economic development.

Deliberations on the SDGs: Education at the Centre

In addition, NAPTOSA played an active role in the working group focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These discussions explored global challenges affecting education, including equity, access, and the realities facing learners.

During these engagements, NAPTOSA raised a crucial issue: **the profound impact of hunger on learning**. We reminded global partners that eradicating poverty and strengthening food security must remain high on the agenda, because no child can be expected to learn effectively on an empty stomach. *(Visit our social media pages for videos and more updates from the Summit.)*

Our Voice in the Final Declaration

Our participation was hands-on and dedicated. NAPTOSA delegates worked through late-night drafting sessions to ensure that our input was captured accurately and fed into the G20 Declaration. Seeing our contributions reflected in the final document was a moment of collective pride for the union.

A Milestone for Africa, and a Proud Moment for NAPTOSA

The first-ever G20 hosted on African soil has elevated the voice of the continent – and NAPTOSA is proud to have played a meaningful role in shaping its outcomes. We remain committed to advocating for quality public education, advancing teacher development, and ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive.



Early Retirement and Voluntary Exit Programmes

Gregory Masondo

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) issued a Determination and Directive on incentivised Early Retirement Programme (ERP) and Voluntary Exit Programme (VEP) in the Public Service.

The Directive applies to early retirement (ER) approval in terms of section 16(6) of the Public Service Act, 1994 (PSA), without penalisation of pension benefits (ERP) and employees who want to retire at ages 60 to 63 years through the Voluntary Exit Programme (VEP).

The implementation period of the incentivised ERP and VEP will be effective from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2027. Sectors and Departments are expected to develop programmes based on their unique needs.

Priority will be given to those departments that are experiencing significant pressures within their compensation budgets in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The approved special dispensation provides for:

- A financial incentive for employees retiring early at age 55 to 59 years, calculated at two (2) weeks' basic salary per year for the first twenty (20) years of pensionable service and one (1) week's financial incentive for each completed year of pensionable service thereafter; and
- financial incentive for employees retiring at ages 60 to 63 years, calculated at two (2) weeks' basic salary per year for the first ten (10) years of pensionable service and one (1) week's financial incentive for each completed year of pensionable service thereafter.

Exclusions:

The policy outlines the following categories of employees who will not be eligible for participation in either programme:

- Employees appointed on a **contract basis**.
- Employees appointed on a **temporary basis**.
- Employees with **less than ten (10) years of pensionable service**.

Criteria for Consideration

Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- The implementation of the ERP and VEP must **not negatively impact service delivery** within the Department.
- The programmes must **not create a skills deficit** within the education system.
- Under these conditions, employees identified as possessing **critical and scarce skills** will be excluded from participation. Criteria for Consideration in the education sector:

Teachers qualified in or teaching:

- **STEM subjects** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).
- **Arts**.
- **Coding and Robotics**.
- **Afrikaans** teachers, both as a subject and as a **Language of Learning and Teaching LOLT**.
- Teachers of **African Languages** in the **Foundation Phase**.
- **School-based therapists, psychologists, and counsellors**.

NB. The Employer confirmed in the ELRC that **Foundation Phase teachers will not be considered** for either the ERP or the VEP.

Re-employment Restriction

It is important to note that approval for participation in the ERP or VEP is **not automatic**. Furthermore, employees whose applications are approved will be **precluded from any future re-employment** in the public service.

Approved applicants will receive notification in **December 2025** and will be required to serve their notice period from **January to March 2026**.

Incentive Calculations

2 weeks' pay (ERP)

If we take notch 12 of salary level 10, at R617 622, and 10 years of pensionable service, the calculation will yield the following result:
R617 622 x 10 years

26 (weeks)
= R237 546.92 (once-off)

1 weeks' pay (VEP)

If we take notch 12 of salary level 10, at R617 622, and 10 years of pensionable service, the calculation will yield the following result:
R617 622 x 10 years

52 (weeks)
= R118 773.46 (once off)

In summary:

For employees aged **55 to 59**, the financial incentive is calculated at **two (2) weeks' severance pay** for each completed year of pensionable service up to the first **twenty (20) years**, and **one (1) week's severance pay** for each additional completed year thereafter.

Season's Greetings from the President

Thabo Manne

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND ESTEEMED NAPTOSA MEMBERS,

As we draw near to the close of yet another remarkable year, allow me to extend my heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering commitment, professionalism, and steadfast service. The progress we continue to witness in our education system is rooted in your resilience, your dedication, and your unshakable belief in the transformative power of teaching and learning.

This festive season offers us a moment to pause, reflect and celebrate the strides we have made together. Despite the challenges we have faced, our collective strength has shone through in our unity of purpose. We remain bound by our duty to uphold the highest standards of our profession and to advocate tirelessly for safe, supportive, and functional schools for all learners.

As we take stock of our achievements and the responsibilities we carry as educators,

education workers, and leaders in society, let us do so with pride and gratitude. Our resolve remains firm, our calling remains noble, and our vision for an equitable and flourishing education system remains as bright as ever.

May this season bring peace, joy, and renewal to you and your families. May you find rest and warmth among loved ones, and may the coming year bless us all with renewed hope, strength, and courage as we continue to serve with dignity, integrity, and purpose.

On behalf of the NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE and the broader leadership of NAPTOSA, I extend my deepest gratitude and warmest festive wishes to each and every one of you. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our shared mission.

Season's greetings, and may 2026 be a year of progress, unity, and enduring resolve.





WOMEN'S SHUTDOWN 21-11-2025

Calling to attention the national crisis of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SBGBV)

NAPTOSA rejects all forms of GBV and SBGBV in our schools, communities, and workplaces. We support the spirit of the G20 Women's Shutdown and stand in solidarity with its objectives. However, we are not calling for a stay-away, especially during this critical period of end-of-year assessments and Matric Examinations.

