

# The **NAPTOSA** **IMPACT**

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Latest News and Updates



## REFLECTIONS OF THE 2025 DBE BASIC EDUCATION LEKGOTLA

By Michelle Mosupye

The 2025 Basic Education Sector Lekgotla held between 28 February and 1 March 2025 was a turning point that brought together key players in the education sector, industry, academia, and international organisations. At NAPTOSA our interests were particularly in the discussion of foundational learning, teacher development, inclusivity, and adopting Artificial Intelligence in the education sector. These conversations must inform the future of South African education.

### Day 1: Fundamental Learning and Education Equality

The Lekgotla was launched with a strong emphasis on enhancing foundational learning by South Africa's G20 Education Presidency and the African Union Education Agenda. Ms. Sophia Ashipala of the African Union addressed the significance of education policies having to align with the AU's Agenda 2063 so that learning poverty can be eliminated. She emphasised the significance of early childhood education with skills that develop literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and life skills.

UNICEF's Dr. Pia Britto set out the social and economic benefits of quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) as the greatest return on investment in human capital development. Other key discussions were by OECD's Prof. Andreas Schleicher, who emphasised the importance of ongoing professional learning and teacher support to improve the impact on learning, and Prof. Mary Metcalfe, who outlined how multilateral alliances through the G20 could drive systemic reform in education. One of the highlights was the session by Mr. Jace Nair of *BlindSA* and Ms. Ingrid Parkin of *DealSA*, highlighting the need to implement inclusive education, train special teachers, and make learning materials accessible. Their call for policy reforms in support of students with disabilities resonated with the audience.

### Day 2: Teacher Development and Industry Collaboration

The second day was devoted to aligning learning with industry needs to build future-fit people. This a reminder that planning for future occupational trends is vital and equipping learners with such skills is key. Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr. Buthi Manamela, reiterated the commitment of the government towards work-related learning and vocationally based education and the need to invest in STEM, digital fluency, and teacher development.

Teacher professional development was the subject of a G20-themed discussion chaired by Prof. Veronica McKay from UNISA. Arrangements were made to empower teachers with the capacity to evolve in an ever-changing world, and the importance of continuous training, mentoring, and professional learning communities was emphasised.

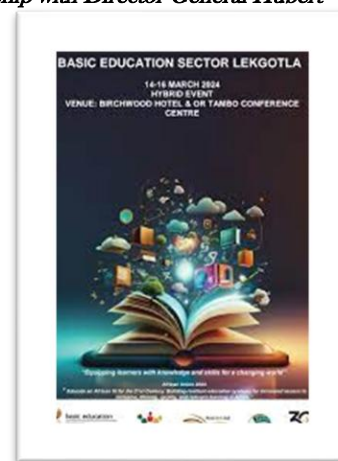


Above: NAPTOSA's Hema Hariram (SEO) providing input at the Lekgotla

Left: NAPTOSA leadership with Director General Hubert Mathanzima Mweli



NAPTOSA's President Thabo Manne, Ms. Rene Marncce (VP) and Nkosiphendule Ntantala (DP)



NAPTOSA's Deputy President delivered a compelling presentation emphasising the crucial role of unions in the education sector. He underscored the necessity of a consultative process, as mandated by the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), between the Department of Basic Education and unions. This approach ensures continuous engagement to drive meaningful improvements within the education system. His remarks served as a strong reminder of the importance of collaboration in shaping effective policies and ensuring that educators' voices are central to decision-making processes.

One of the most thought-provoking sessions was on Artificial Intelligence in education, where specialists like UNESCO's Prof. Shafika Isaacs debated the practical and ethical aspects of applying AI-enabled tools in classrooms. The debates were about ensuring that AI enhances inclusivity rather than creating gaps and getting teachers ready to have the capacity to integrate AI into their practice effectively.

### Day 3: Commission Feedback and Recommendations

The final day of the Lekgotla included the tabling of proposals by most commissions. The highlights were:

- 🎓 Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: Giving high priority to formal learning programmes, re-strengthening teacher training, and baseline testing to track progress.
- 🎓 Early Childhood Development: Improving access to quality ECD programmes, re-strengthening practitioner training, and inclusive learning support materials.

- 🎓 Care and Support for Teaching and Learning: Developing a five-year Psychosocial Support Strategy for trauma-informed classrooms and mental health literacy.
- 🎓 Teacher Professional Development: Encouraging micro-credentialing, professional learning communities, and instructional coaching to better equip teachers.
- 🎓 ICT in Education: Finalising e-Education policies, ensuring equitable access to technology, and using AI responsibly to enhance learning outcomes.

### Reflections and Key Takeaways:

The 2025 DBE Lekgotla reaffirmed the revolutionary power of co-operation. The discussion reaffirmed the need for multi-stakeholder action in addressing systemic challenges in education. Prioritisation of foundational learning and placing inclusivity at the forefront of policy is required. Additionally, teacher development is the foundation of any effective education system.

NAPTOSA's continued engagement in such deliberations ensures that teachers' voices are heard when national education policy is developed. The insights gained through this Lekgotla will most definitely inform professional development programmes and campaigns aimed at improving teaching and learning outcomes across South Africa.

The future is rugged but promising. A resilient and equitable education system that works for all learners can be built through collaboration, innovation, and lifelong learning.

## Labour Matters: ELRC and PSCBC

By Lorvica Matthews and Gregory Masondo

NAPTOSA has formally requested the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) to conduct a comprehensive study on the current state of overcrowding in schools and its impact on the quality of education.

Overcrowded classrooms are a growing concern, as the greater the number of learners in a class, the less individual attention each learner receives. This is particularly detrimental to struggling learners who require additional support, leading to lower academic performance and poor test scores.

Beyond academic challenges, persistent overcrowding has negative psychological effects on both teachers and learners. Teachers, overwhelmed by excessive workloads, may lose confidence in their abilities and become disengaged from their work. Learners, in turn, feel neglected and struggle to stay motivated in an environment that lacks sufficient support.

Additionally, overcrowding has a direct and severe impact on teachers' working conditions. Large class sizes increase administrative tasks, making lesson planning, assessing, and classroom management more demanding. Teachers face higher stress levels, exhaustion, and burnout, which ultimately affect their job satisfaction and retention in the profession. In extreme cases, poor working conditions may lead to high teacher turnover, further destabilizing the education system.

As the demand for quality education continues to rise, it is essential to assess the extent of this crisis, determine its root causes, and explore practical, evidence-based solutions. NAPTOSA believes that the findings from this study will provide critical insights to guide policy decisions and interventions aimed at improving teaching and learning conditions.

Instead of delivering quality education, teachers have been reduced to crowd controllers in chaotic classrooms. Overcrowding not only undermines the learning experience but also raises concerns about safety and overall well-being of both educators and learners. Addressing this issue is imperative to ensure that both teachers and learners can thrive in a supportive educational environment.

### Early Retirement Discussions Underway at PSCBC

Early Retirement is currently under discussion at the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC). The employer has presented their research findings and proposals to the council, outlining potential approaches to implementing the programme.

Labour has committed to engaging with sector councils to investigate the possible impacts of early retirement on various sectors, including education. NAPTOSA is particularly concerned about the potential consequences for the stability of the education system and is committed to ensuring that critical posts are protected and promptly filled.

Once the standard operating procedures for early retirement are made available, we will work closely with the employer to refine them, ensuring they align with the best interests of both educators and the sector as a whole. Additionally, NAPTOSA strongly advocates for a structured transfer of skills to prevent gaps in expertise and institutional knowledge.

Under this premise, NAPTOSA has formally requested the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) to conduct research on the potential impact of the early retirement programme within the education sector. The findings will be crucial in shaping informed policy decisions that balance workforce sustainability with the sector's long-term needs.

We remain committed to safeguarding the interests of educators while ensuring that the education system continues to function effectively.



### Special Attention Needed for the TVET Sector

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector requires urgent and dedicated focus. Despite its critical role in shaping skilled professionals, policy development for this sector often follows an indirect and ineffective route. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) formulates policies within the General Public Service Sector Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) and later presents them to the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) for mere rubber-stamping. This approach sidelines meaningful engagement and undermines the voices of key stakeholders in the sector.

A major concern is the relegation of the Public Colleges Administration Measures (PCAM) to the periphery. The PCAM is a fundamental document that defines the duties, responsibilities, and expectations for all staff within the education system. It ensures fair workload distribution, sets clear performance standards, and provides a structured framework for managing lecturers. Marginalising the PCAM weakens the governance and operational efficiency of TVET colleges, further straining an already challenged sector.

NAPTOSA remains committed to advocating for TVET colleges. This sector cannot be abandoned. Strengthening policies, ensuring proper engagement, and reinforcing the importance of the PCAM will help restore dignity and efficiency in TVET institutions. NAPTOSA stands firm in its resolve to protect the interests of Lecturers and students alike, ensuring a stronger and more sustainable future for technical and vocational education. We firmly believe that, since TVET falls under education, it naturally resonates within the ELRC. Therefore, we will continue to fight for the ELRC to remain its bargaining council.

## NAPTOSA Calls for Urgent Investigation into Over-Enrolment Crisis in Special Needs Schools

NAPTOSA has urgently requested the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) to investigate the growing crisis of over-enrolment in Special Needs (LSEN) Schools. The alarming overcrowding in these schools poses significant risks to both learners and teachers, compromising the quality of education and the overall well-being of all involved.

Compounding the issue, the progress of constructing additional LSEN schools must be thoroughly assessed. Many LSEN classes in mainstream schools are severely overcrowded, often mixing inappropriate age groups, which hinders effective teaching and learning. The lack of dedicated facilities is exacerbating an already dire situation, calling for immediate intervention.

Another pressing concern is the urgent need for accreditation of the Technical Occupational Curriculum (TOC) and the Differentiated Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DCAPS). These curricula remain unaccredited by UMALUSI, resulting in a severe lack of necessary resources, further disadvantaging learners with special needs. Without proper accreditation, schools struggle to provide learners with quality education and skills development.

Furthermore, NAPTOSA has called for a thorough review of the staffing of Inclusion and Special Schools (ISS) units. The increasing influx of learners requiring specialised education demands a well-resourced and adequately staffed system to provide the necessary support. Without sufficient personnel, the ability of ISS units to function effectively is compromised, ultimately impacting the learners who rely on these services the most.

NAPTOSA remains committed to advocating for immediate action to address these critical issues. The union urges all relevant authorities to prioritise the needs of learners with special educational needs and disabilities, ensuring that they receive the quality education and support they deserve.

## South Africa: Education unions call for copyright reform to protect learning Equity and Inclusion Education, Research and Copyright Mirjam Nilsson

Education International Website



### Background

Education International (EI) and its member organisations are calling for urgent copyright reforms to remove barriers to quality education for all and ensure that teachers and students have access to the learning materials they need.

Restrictive copyright laws in South Africa and many other countries make it difficult—sometimes even illegal—for educators to adapt materials for students with disabilities, use online content in classrooms, or develop decolonised curricula.

At the Copyright & Public Interest Conference, co-sponsored by Education International and held from 3-6 February in Cape Town, EI affiliates the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), and the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), joined librarians, legal experts, academics, policymakers and creatives to advocate for balanced, flexible copyright laws that support education and the public good—not corporate interests.

The main focus was on South Africa's Copyright Amendment Bill (CAB), which has been delayed for years despite its potential to bring South Africa's copyright laws in line with global best practices. The projected learner ratios (as seen below) left much to be desired as to HOW it would translate into the classroom.

### Was I a criminal for using that song in my class?

In his keynote address, Education International President and SADTU General Secretary, Mugwena Maluleke, underscored the urgent need to decolonise education and remove copyright barriers that prevent teachers from delivering quality, inclusive teaching.

Reflecting on his own childhood in rural Limpopo, Maluleke recalled how being forced to learn in English and later Afrikaans denied him and his peers the right to education in their own language—one of the many ways knowledge access has historically been restricted in South Africa. The same systemic barriers continue today through copyright laws that prevent teachers from accessing and adapting learning materials.

"The right to education is a fundamental human right. Our teachers should not be criminalised for striving to provide quality education to our children. Unfortunately, copyright laws for education are often overly restrictive, creating barriers for teachers and the right to education," Maluleke stated.

The EI President added a personal anecdote about using music in the classroom to teach mathematics: "—Was I a criminal for using that song in my class?" he asked, questioning whether such an innovative teaching method should be considered a crime under current copyright laws.

### South Africa's restrictive copyright system

Speakers across multiple panels at the conference highlighted that South Africa remains one of the most restrictive countries when it comes to copyright exceptions for education, research, and cultural heritage. Tobias Schönwetter, Director of the Intellectual Property Unit at the University of Cape Town, opened discussions by emphasising that the Copyright Amendment Bill does not introduce radical changes—many countries already have fair use provisions.

"The South Africa Copyright Amendment Bill isn't introducing a radical new approach to copyright. Many countries around the world already have fair use. It has been proven over and over again that it balances the rights of creators and users. Let's not get lost in redundant discussions—let's move forward," Schönwetter stressed.

### EI calls for immediate action: South Africa must lead the way

Education International and its member organisations in South Africa, SADTU and NAPTOSA, are calling on President Cyril Ramaphosa to sign the Copyright Amendment Bill into law without further delay.

The Bill has faced strong opposition from multinational corporate lobbyists, despite aligning with global best practices and balancing the rights of creators and users. Without fair use laws, teachers, researchers, and students in South Africa are forced to operate in legal grey zones, restricting access to knowledge and undermining quality education.

EI's main demands reflect the urgent need for a copyright system that protects the right to education and empowers teachers, rather than restricting their ability to access and use knowledge in the classroom. Teachers must be able to use and adapt materials to provide quality, inclusive education without fear of legal repercussions. Their voices must be included in copyright reforms to ensure that policies support real classroom needs.

In addition, teachers need proper training and resources to navigate copyright laws effectively and make full use of available materials. At the global level, international WIPO treaties are essential to advance national reforms and protect cross-border collaboration in education and research, ensuring that knowledge remains accessible to all.



## NAPTOSA Staff amplifying the 'Go Public, Fund Education' Campaign!





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