NAPTOSA NATIONAL NEWSFLASH 39

URGENT INTERVENTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS GROWING CRISIS IN PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

NAPTOSA is deeply concerned by the challenges confronting Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), as highlighted during the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) Workshop held on 22–23 October 2026.

During the workshop, provincial departments provided updates on their respective circumstances, painting a worrying picture of mounting financial and administrative constraints that threaten the effective delivery of education. Despite the presence of National Treasury, several critical questions raised by the PEDs remained unanswered, leaving provinces without the clarity and support needed to address their challenges.

The situation appears particularly dire in the majority of provinces. Provinces operating under Section 18 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) face even greater difficulties, with delays in obtaining provincial Treasury approvals further hampering their ability to fulfil their responsibilities.

NAPTOSA is concerned that bureaucratic obstacles, administrative inefficiencies and what appears to be malicious compliance are preventing education departments from responding effectively to the needs of schools. Provinces cannot be expected to deliver on their mandates when essential processes are delayed, and decisions are not aligned with the realities confronting educators on the ground.

While acknowledging the financial and administrative constraints faced by provinces, we are also deeply concerned that some Provincial Education Departments appear to be using these challenges in ways that further hamstring schools. Delays in filling vacant posts and the failure to make timely appointments to cover educators on maternity and sick leave are placing additional pressure on schools that are already struggling with staff shortages and overcrowded classrooms. These delays leave schools without the necessary human resources, increase the workload of serving educators and disrupt teaching and learning. Financial constraints cannot become a justification for administrative inaction at the expense of learners and educators. Provinces must exercise their responsibilities diligently and ensure that essential appointments are processed timeously. Schools cannot be expected to maintain quality education when they are denied the staffing support needed to function effectively.

Overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads and teacher burnout are not theoretical concerns, they are the daily reality of many educators. Teachers are increasingly expected to compensate for systemic failures, inadequate provisioning and administrative shortcomings. This is neither fair to educators nor sustainable for the education system.

NAPTOSA is also disturbed by the integration of learners from special schools into full-service or other mainstream schools without sufficient consideration of the actual conditions in which teaching and learning take place.

While we acknowledge that inclusive education is a global trend and that every learner deserves access to quality education, the implementation of this approach must be guided by the needs of learners and the capacity of individual schools. International trends cannot simply be adopted without critically assessing whether our schools have the necessary infrastructure, resources and support systems to accommodate learners with diverse needs.

Many schools are already grappling with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate toilet facilities, limited infrastructure and shortages of appropriately trained staff. Introducing additional responsibilities without addressing these existing challenges risks compromising the quality of education and the support available to learners who require specialised attention.



Inclusion without the necessary resources is not meaningful inclusion. We risk setting both learners and the education system up for failure if policy decisions are implemented without adequate planning, funding, infrastructure and staffing. The best interests of learners must remain central, and their placement must be supported by the necessary facilities, specialist expertise and appropriate learner-to-educator ratios.

NAPTOSA therefore calls for a realistic, adequately funded and carefully planned approach to inclusive education. The needs of learners, the capacity of receiving schools and the professional support required by educators must be assessed before implementation decisions are made. No learner should be disadvantaged by an approach that fails to provide the conditions necessary for their development and success.

NAPTOSA welcomes the decision taken during the workshop to convene a follow-up engagement involving provincial Treasury departments and the PEDs. We view this as an important step towards addressing the financial and administrative bottlenecks raised by provinces. However, this engagement must go beyond discussion and result in practical, time-bound solutions that enable education departments to fulfil their responsibilities without unnecessary delays.

NAPTOSA believes that financial controls and accountability measures must never become obstacles to the effective delivery of public education. While responsible financial management is essential, it must be accompanied by practical solutions, timely decision-making and an understanding of the conditions under which teachers are expected to work.

We therefore call on National Treasury, provincial treasuries and the relevant education authorities to intervene urgently and address the bottlenecks undermining provincial education departments. Clear accountability measures, improved intergovernmental coordination and time-bound interventions are essential.

The PPN process must be responsive to the realities in schools, including learner enrolment, classroom overcrowding, infrastructure constraints and the need for adequate educator provisioning. The voices of provinces and the experiences of teachers must inform decisions that directly affect teaching and learning.

NAPTOSA will not accept a situation in which educators are expected to carry the burden of systemic failures while the underlying challenges remain unresolved. Teachers cannot continue to be the shock absorbers of administrative and financial shortcomings.

If we are genuinely committed to protecting the future of our learners and safeguarding the quality of public education, decisive action is required now. Every delay has consequences for schools, educators and learners.

The time for intervention is now. Our education system cannot afford further delays.

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