



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs
Angie Motshekga, MP, at the NAPTOSA Congress, held at
the Emperors Palace Convention Centre**

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Programme Director,

NAPTOSA President, Mr Nkosiphendule Ntantala

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NAPTOSA leadership at all levels

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour and privilege to address the 7th National Congress of the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) held here in Kempton Park.

Let me recap on our delivery outcomes as a sector for 2019-2024.

Our outcome number One is improved school-readiness of our children.

Outcome 2: All 10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools read for meaning.

Outcome 3: Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9.

Outcome 4: Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa.

Outcome 5: School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach.

Programme director, that is what the President of the Republic expect from me and, by extension, everyone in the sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, the theme of the congress is interesting, if not spot on.

It pronounces: “Professional autonomy – defend it or lose it.”

It is indeed germane to the profession of teaching to defend one’s professional autonomy at all costs.

By its very nature, the basic education ecosystem is built around professional teacher associations, labour unions and bureaucrats.

Each constituent part is crucial in the value chain and must guard its professional autonomy jealously.

Professional autonomy involves the freedom of professional actors to define the nature of professional work concerning its formal contents,

quality criteria, entry barriers, formal education, control mechanisms, ethics, et cetera.

As a sector, we must guard against the de-professionalisation of the teaching profession in the name of efficiency and value for money.

In fact, plans are afoot to professionalise the entire public sector beyond the teachers and accountants.

Last month, the cabinet adopted the National Framework for Professionalisation of the Public Sector.

The National Framework towards Professionalisation of the Public Sector seeks to stem the tide of the systematic weakening of organs of state as seen during the state capture years to achieve political expediency.

At the heart of the Framework is the need to build a public service that is professional, ethical and driven by merit.

The idea is to increase the professional accountability of public servants so that they are not beholden to politicians but to their professions, first and foremost.

The Framework envisages that most public servants will become part of professional bodies like lawyers and accountants to increase both prestige in one's profession and accountability.

Furthermore, the Framework will also help to reduce the undue pressure placed on Directors-General and CEOs of public entities to

carry out unlawful instructions, break public procurement rules or favour certain private sector interests.

The Framework is one of the most significant developments in public service reform since the advent of democracy

The finalisation of the Framework, which will be applied across all spheres of the public sector, said President Ramaphosa, and lays down, among other things:

- Clear requirements for recruitment and selection processes;
- Mandatory induction for new public servants and performance management;
- Compulsory pre-entry course for middle and senior management officials, including ministers;
- Competency and integrity assessments within 90 days of an officials appointment;
- Merit-based appointment for board members;

As a country, we have learned bitter lessons from the state capture era, which laid bare just how fragile the country's public sector can be and that it needs to be strengthened.

Programme director, don't take my word for it, but just browse online news reports to see the number of director generals and civil servants facing a host of charges, including corruption, fraud and money laundering.

All the criminal charges emanate from their conduct in executing their professional duties or, more precisely, the neglect of their professional responsibilities in pursuit of political folly.

Programme director; our country is steadily returning to the age of accountability.

The National Prosecuting Authority has promised a further enrolment of seminal state capture corruption cases before Christmas.

If you recall, in October, we celebrated World Teachers' Day under a similar theme about the professionalisation of the teaching profession.

We need more, not less, professionalisation.

The theme in question was: "The transformation of education begins with teachers".

The World Teachers' theme called for the Government to support teachers in their professional duties and obligations towards the learners without bureaucratic impediments.

Moreover, World Teachers' Day 2022 highlighted the critical work of teachers and called upon governments to 'invest in teachers, involve teachers, and trust and respect teachers.'

We salute the indomitable spirit of all teachers, especially those affiliated with NAPTOSA.

Our teacher's determination and diligent efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic stood our country in good stead.

Thus, we should be celebrating our teachers every day.

Programme director, the sector is in recovery mode after the hurricane known as Covid-19.

Since its outbreak two years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems globally, affecting the most vulnerable learners the hardest.

It has increased inequalities and aggravated a pre-existing education crisis.

Enrolment in the first quarter of 2021 was around 50 000 (0.4%) lower than expected. The problem is concentrated in lower grades.

Almost 54% of contact time was lost in 2020 due to closures and rotations.

In the second half of 2021, 22% of contact was time lost due to rotations and regular absenteeism. These averages hide huge inequalities across grades and schools.

In historically disadvantaged schools, around 70% of a year's worth of learning was lost in 2020.

Researchers say for every day of schooling lost, around 1.3 days of learning are lost.

We have been working flat out as a sector to reboot and rebuild the schooling system.

We are encouraged by the overwhelming support from teacher associations and trade unions in the sector.

Our mission remains to reboot, recover, and build back better together to meet the UN Developmental Goals in basic education.

Programme director, as I mentioned earlier, reading is and should ideally remain a *raison d'être* of basic education.

After years of policy formulation, we are beginning to see green shoots in implementation.

A selection of 900 storybook titles for Grades 1 to 4 has been finalised by National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and submitted to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Update: These were delivered to schools in January 2022.

Subsequently, with the NECT in September this year (2022), we launched the 1 Million Story Books Campaign in Kwa-Mhlanga, in Mpumalanga.

The One Million, Story Books project addresses the shortage of reading resources for pleasure in indigenous languages.

We want to provide access to reading resources and maximise reach to all 9000 Primary Schools in 50% of circuits identified for support by the National Reading Coalition (NRC).

This pioneering initiative addresses the challenges of insufficient, good-quality readers in African Languages available in the Foundation Phase.

The new books we launched in September will go a long way in addressing learning deficits in reading created by the Covid-19 pandemic, amongst others.

These resources (Story Books) will improve access to reading materials in schools by providing additional reading resources to Foundation Phase learners in primary schools to encourage reading-for-pleasure initiatives.

The resources are accompanied by School Management Team, teachers, and parent Guides to provide guidance on how to encourage and support reading at home.

One million copies of the 189 Foundation Phase Stories were printed and distributed to a whopping 8882 Primary Schools in 444 NRC circuits.

This initiative will go a long way in closing the gap between home and school while simultaneously inculcating a culture of reading in the home languages.

Furthermore, it allows learners to enjoy and improve their reading; it provides training and guidance to teachers and parents on supporting reading and engagement with the stories.

In short, the overall mantra of One Million Story Books is to:

- Provide additional reading resources in indigenous languages.
- Provide reading resources that enable children in the Foundation to read for pleasure and understanding.
- Maximise the reach of reading resources across nine provinces through a technology mix.
- Extend reading resources in homes to allow parents to read to their children.
- Respond to the President's call to get 10-year-olds to read with understanding by 2030.
- Closing the reading gaps between school and home.

In addition, a whopping 25 198 Reading Champions were placed in schools, with a further 13 417 trained in a 2-day Reading Champion training programme.

Read to Lead promotional posts have been promoted across Basic Education social media pages and Twitter, with various vital messages amplifying the Read to Lead message about the importance of reading.

As part of activating communities, Read to Lead partnered with the Ethiopian Church of South Africa to launch the Read to Reach your Dreams campaign, where a library was opened, and an ECD centre was revamped.

Programme director, one of our Outcomes is to ensure that the youths are better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9.

We conceptualised the Second Chance Matric Programme (SCMP) to achieve this.

I am happy to announce that we have 249 145 youths registered to rewrite matric exams.

Of these 249 145 learners, more than 80 000 adult learners attended the face-to-face classes in two phases.

The Second Chance Matric Programme hired and paid 224 centre managers and 2 240 teachers to teach after hours and over weekends.

The Programme supported more than 63 995 learners by providing study guide materials, digital content and broadcasting lessons.

More online study guides were distributed to learners and partners, including 700 public libraries, 141 teacher centres and 43 University of South Africa (UNISA) Centres.

Five (5) ministerial roadshows were held in Gauteng, Free State, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces.

Meanwhile, we created job opportunities for unemployed youth hiring 672 screeners and cleaners to administer the COVID-19 safety protocols before, during and after classes at the centres.

Furthermore, we monitored the Second Chance Programme in more than five (5) centres.

Programme director, linked to improved learner outcomes, is getting education right in rural areas.

A Framework, Towards A Rural Education Policy, is ready for publication after extensive research.

Towards a Rural Education Policy is a scholarly, evidence-based policy framework that will guide the political leadership from now on.

If we get rural education right, half of our teaching and learning issues will be solved in one go.

Research showed (2015) found that the country has 11 252 schools in rural areas across the country, and of these, 3 060 were secondary schools, and 8 192 were primary schools.

Most of these schools are in the predominantly rural provinces of Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

At the last count, the country had 5 153 multi-grade schools in rural areas.

Meanwhile, on the Rural Education Assistants Project (REAP): we have completed the research report, which included the findings, recommendations and some preliminary thoughts.

All form part of the Framework for the Effective Deployment of Education Assistants in South Africa's (rural) schools. \

In conclusion, we are on course to meet our developmental goals by 2030.

The National Development Plan (NDP) is unequivocal that by 2030, South Africans should have the highest quality access to education and training, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes.

The performance of South African learners in international standardised tests should be comparable to that of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access, if not better.

Let's work without ceasing to improve learning outcomes in our lifetime.

As you reflect on this congress on the state of basic education, remember the core business of schools is learning and teaching; the rest is peripherals.

I thank you.