



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the NATU's National Elective Conference held at Olive Convention Centre, Durban**

**9 September 2022**

Programme Director

NATU President

General Secretary

NATU's Vice Presidents

Leadership Collective of NATU and Members

Fraternal organisations present

Fellow South Africans

It is indeed a pleasure to address NATU's National Elective Conference.

I do not take the privilege to speak to you on such an auspicious occasion as an elective national conference for granted.

The theme of the conference is about teacher well-being, deracialization of the workplace and schools safety; these are indeed matters of national importance.

We know that teachers' health and well-being frequently compete with contentious remuneration issues.

I have repeatedly appealed to education mandarins and union leaders to focus their deliberations about basic education on the core issues, not the periphery.

I have harangued the Basic Education branch responsible for extra-curricular activities to consider themselves part of the main course, not just dessert.

As educationalists we know that even sport is part of the core and can aid in improving learner outcomes.

You know the story, healthy minds: healthy bodies.

As we know from literature, teacher well-being is a positive emotional state that combines the personal needs and expectations of both learners and their teachers.

Teacher well-being and job satisfaction strongly influence teacher behaviour and are positively related to school and classroom climate and pupil achievement.

Thus, I declare again that teacher well-being is our core business.

It is core to the sold plans to improve the overall standard and performance of the basic education sector and reach the developmental milestones as set in the National Development Plans (NDP) by 2030.

The issue of teacher well-being cannot be divorced from a relentless pursuit of improved learner outcomes.

We must understand that the improved standard of basic education and better learner outcomes are a by-product of a motivated and emotional stable teacher with appropriate qualifications and assured of her safety at school.

Both teacher effectiveness and learner performance are intrinsic to the stable emotional state that allows each (teacher or learner) to reach their potential unimpeded by stress and depression caused by environmental factors.

As a matter of urgency, not by 2030, we must address the occupational hazards occasioned in part by the growing learner ill-discipline and rising incidents of crime and corruption in our schools.

I am looking forward to the ideas you shared earlier at this conference.

This matter is urgent for me because of the ongoing battle with the invisible enemy, Covid-19.

Teachers, as we know, bear the brunt of grief resulting from Covid-19 and other incidents as learners increasingly come face-to-face with death.

Not to mention deaths of teacher colleagues and bereavement in their own families.

Our teachers have acted as lay counsellors to our learners, safety officers, and even midwives for many years.

Yet, they receive no adequate training for these roles, let alone compensation.

We can have endless philosophical debates about whether these roles performed by our teachers in local contexts daily are the core or periphery of the main task of teaching.

In my address to the teacher well-being seminar last year, I said in theorising about teacher well-being, we must move from the premise that teachers are also emotional beings.

In other words, teachers are community members before becoming teachers.

At any rate, the social ills that bedevil our society also affect our teachers.

Researchers conclude that at the core of any teaching philosophy is resilience and mental health, which provide a critical foundation for effective learning and academic success.

Resilience is recognised as the ability of individuals, in this case, teachers, to manage and cope with life's challenges, bounce back from adversity, and maintain equilibrium.

It underscores my earlier point: Teacher well-being is the core, not the periphery.

It is not the side chick of curriculum implementation and stuff like that.

I am in awe of the resilience and tenacity of our teachers.

As we know, any stab wound to a learner by another on school premises or outside affects the teachers significantly.

I shudder to think about how teachers cope when their star pupils succumb to illness or becomes a victim of a violent crime.

To address the teacher's well-being, we collaborate with the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), Teacher Unions and our international friends.

For instance, on 23 July 2021, we convened a seminar on teacher well-being to explore various orthodox and unorthodox ways to address the psychosocial needs of our teachers.

At the said seminar, we agreed that the teacher well-being portfolio should be treated as a standing item on the agenda of all Provincial Education Labour Relations Councils (PELRCs).

Reports thus far show that teacher well-being is one of the performance indicators of the ELRC.

Therefore, the PELRCs must provide quarterly reports to prove that teacher well-being programmes are being implemented in all provinces.

We urge all teachers to participate in the teacher well-being programmes, including debriefing after traumatic school incidents and bereavement.

Programme director, our country is slowly emerging from the devastating era of State Capture, which marked a high point of corruption and malfeasance.

And more recently, the violence and looting during a failed insurrection in KwaZulu-Natal and parts of Gauteng and the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Sadly, in its recent new report, the Corruption Watch reveals the persistent graft and corruption in certain areas of the education sector in South Africa.

This is despite the numerous policies and legislation intended to provide unimpeded access to decent basic education.

Titled *Sound the Alarm*, the report highlights 3 667 reports of education-related corruption received between 2012 and 2021, representing 10% of the total reports received over that period.

Corruption Watch concludes that these point to widespread misappropriation of resources, including acts of bribery, sextortion, abuse of authority, and blatant flouting of employment and procurement processes.

The report is disturbing, to say the least.

But one must say it is a whistleblowers' account, not a forensic probe, a cold comfort, nonetheless.

However, we must recommit our sector to clean governance, economical and effective use of resources, and providing services in an impartial, fair and equitable way.

As we rebuild and ignite renewed hope, we will look to public servants, especially school management teams, to lead the way and walk the talk as it were.

The services we deliver, such as daily education to our people and schooling communities, are crucial to changing lives.

We must never underestimate the power of basic education because it plays a key role in faster economic growth, strengthening democracy and achieving better health outcomes.

The massive rebuilding efforts of our economy will require a myriad of services provided by the public service, of which our basic education infrastructure build programme is our humble contribution.

We call on all public servants, especially teachers, trade unionists, department heads, cleaners, food handlers, principals, and parents, to go the extra mile to ensure that we can build back better and stronger.

Our country depends on us for enlightenment and intellectual contribution.

We are the repository of knowledge, and our work powers the dreams of young minds to greater heights.

We are duty-bound to ensure that President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2022 SONA theme of 'leaving no one behind' becomes a reality in rebuilding our economy while strengthening the education system.



Basic education must be at the centre, not the periphery, of implementing the *Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* in words and deeds.

In conclusion, we applaud the courage and resilience of all our teachers and teacher unions, such as NATU, who continuously go the call of duty even during the crisis times of Covid-19.

As a sector, we are working to ensure an efficient and effective basic education ecosystem.

Our country deserves no less.

Programme director, your theme also touched on deracialization in our schools.

I pulled out the race statistics and will not decipher them due to time constraints.

At leisure, leadership and members may look into it.

The following statistics provide a picture of what the system looks like:

**Number of educators employed in schools by race per province**

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>AFRICAN</b>	<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>COLOURED</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
EASTERN CAPE	44 570	186	3 493	2 969	51 218
FREE STATE	19 201	8	421	3 154	22 784
GAUTENG	53 956	1 940	2 086	13 374	71 356
KWAZULU/NATAL	81 410	7 826	711	2 199	92 146

LIMPOPO PROVINCE	50 234	19	16	955	51 224
MPUMALANGA	30 993	175	74	2 632	33 874
NORTH WEST	24 612	78	218	2 496	27 404
NORTHERN CAPE	4 756	12	4 421	1 105	10 294
WESTERN CAPE	8 469	137	17 765	6 102	32 473
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>318 201</b>	<b>10 381</b>	<b>29 205</b>	<b>34 986</b>	<b>392 773</b>

**Percentage of educators by race per province**

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>AFRICAN</b>	<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>COLOURED</b>	<b>WHITE</b>
EASTERN CAPE	87%	0%	7%	6%
FREE STATE	84%	0%	2%	14%
GAUTENG	76%	3%	3%	19%
KWAZULU/NATAL	88%	8%	1%	2%
LIMPOPO PROVINCE	98%	0%	0%	2%
MPUMALANGA	91%	1%	0%	8%
NORTH WEST	90%	0%	1%	9%
NORTHERN CAPE	46%	0%	43%	11%
WESTERN CAPE	26%	0%	55%	19%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>

Let's seize this moment of post-Covid-19 to be faithful servants of our people.

I thank NATU for the excellent stewardship of our basic education system seized with only one aim: to improve learner outcomes in our lifetime.

I thank you.