

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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EMBARGO: NONE

### TEACHERS DESERVE A YEAR INSTEAD OF A DAY

The SAOU, like other education entities, celebrated World Teachers' Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2025. However, taking the current education landscape into consideration, the SAOU decided to dedicate the whole of October to celebrate South African teachers. In the current circumstances, where teachers are experiencing emotional exhaustion and where the wellness of teachers can be measured by the number of good teachers leaving the education system, the time has come to provide more focussed acknowledgement to our teachers.

International organisations such as UNESCO and Education International Indicate that there is a growing shortage of teachers worldwide. According to research there is currently a worldwide shortage of 44 million teachers who can perform the basic education functions.

In South Africa the same problem is being experienced. The proposed Early Retirement Programme where teachers between 55 and 59 will be able to exit the education system, escalates the problem. In South Africa the current predictions are that within the next 15 years large scale shortages of teachers will occur.

UNESCO in their Fact Sheet for 2025 indicates that the number of qualified primary school teachers decreased from 85% to 69% and Secondary School teachers from 79% to 59% in Sub-Saharan Africa in the past 25 years.

There are various factors which should be considered which contribute to the teacher shortage. The numbers of children in Africa are growing, which increases the pressure on schools, classes and therefore on teachers.

Africa has introduced new programmes on early childhood development since 2000 with an additional need of 6 million preschool teachers worldwide (UNESCO, 2025).

Also contributing to the teacher provision challenges, are teachers who leave the profession, emigrate or prefer to teach in other countries. Therefore specifically in South Africa the focus should be on maintaining a satisfied, healthy and experienced teaching corps.

Another factor which is listed by UNESCO, is that teachers experience a lack of support as well as professional isolation. It is therefore important to emphasise that teaching is a profession in which relationships play a central role. Teachers can only function optimally if good relationships

with the community, with parents, the school management team, governing body and learners exist. Teachers were not created to function in isolation, but to provide a service to the community and to be embraced within the community.

Teaching is a work of heart and teachers are at the heart of education.

The Grade 12 National Senior Certificate examination has commenced. Close to a million learners will participate in these exams and will move out of the system. But the teachers who taught this cohort from Grade R will remain in the system.

The SAOU therefore appeals to the community to support teachers and embrace them; to recognise those teachers who perform well by acknowledging and encouraging them, in an effort to improve the working conditions of teachers. It is important to create these opportunities of collaboration to cherish and value our teachers.