

SAOU

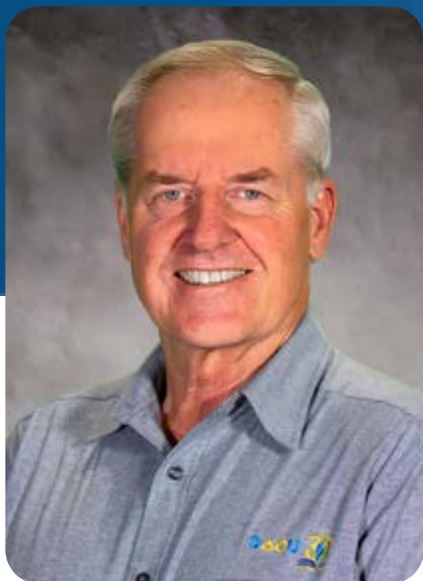


KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision

SAOU TRIENNIAL CONGRESS REPORT
SAOU DRIEJAARLIKSE KONGRESVERSLAG

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr Louis Swanepoel

The SAOU congress is undoubtedly one of the highlights in every three-year cycle of our organisation. In this special year, in which the SAOU celebrates its 30th anniversary, the theme “30 years with one vision” shapes our discussions. The report presented at this congress not only offers

an overview of the activities of the past three years, but also serves as a valuable source document capturing the growth, challenges and achievements of the SAOU.

The opening year of this reporting period, namely 2024, stood as a watershed year in South Africa’s history. For the first time since 1994, the governing party lost its parliamentary majority, which led to the establishment of a Government of National Unity. This development also introduced a new dynamic in the education sector, with the Seventh Administration of the Department of Basic Education under the leadership of a DA minister.

At the same time, increasing socio-economic challenges placed new pressure on schools and school leaders. The implementation of an austerity budget resulted in a decline in the appointment of office personnel, as well as educators.

Against this background, research conducted by the SAOU confirmed that both environmental and school-specific factors are increasingly having a negative impact on the wellbeing of educators. These findings were further confirmed by the international TALIS report of 2025. In response, the SAOU, in collaboration with external partners, implemented targeted, sustainable programmes in 2025 to support and promote the wellbeing of educators.

In the field of education legislation, the promulgation of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act in December 2024 ushered in a new phase. The practical implementation of this legislation is expected to receive further attention, particularly during 2026, and may possibly be tested in the courts. In this regard, the SAOU played an active role by providing input and offering continued support to members with a view to effective implementation.

Over the past three years, the SAOU has also deliberately assumed a more activist role at both provincial and national level. Our pursuit remains to ensure that the voice of our members – a voice that often represents an alternative perspective – is heard clearly and authoritatively within the highest decision-making structures of our country.

Despite the challenges confronting the education sector, SAOU members – principals, management teams and educators – have once again demonstrated their dedication and resilience. Through their continued contributions, stability has been maintained and positive results have still been achieved across various areas. For this, we express our highest appreciation and sincere gratitude.

This year the SAOU celebrates its 30th anniversary – a remarkable milestone. Since the organisation took its place in the trade union landscape in 1996, it has developed into an authoritative and respected role player in the education sector. With gratitude, we acknowledge every individual who, over these three decades, has made a valuable contribution towards building and strengthening the SAOU as a powerful role player.

This congress is also significant as the first for our newly appointed Executive Officer. Over the past three years, through his unique management style, he has contributed to the further strategic positioning of the SAOU, with a strong focus on data-driven decision-making and the sustainable development of the organisation.

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The continued success of the SAOU rests on the passionate contribution of staff, elected leadership and members. It is therefore a privilege for me to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to every role player for their dedication, focused attention and meaningful contribution over the past three years.

My wish is that this report will serve not only as a record of our activities, but also as a source of inspiration for the road ahead. May it encourage every reader to approach the next phase with renewed energy, positivity and purposefulness.

My closing message to you is simple, yet powerful: Continue making a difference – in your school, in your community and ultimately in South Africa.

For that, our highest thanks and appreciation.

L Swanepoel

President





MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Paul Sauer

In 2026, the SAOU celebrates a special milestone – 30 years of existence, as captured in the theme: “Three Decades with One Vision”. The milestone bears testimony to an organisation that has remained steadfast over three decades in its calling,

values and strategic direction, and that continues to function relevantly and influentially within a dynamic education environment.

The reporting period from 2023 to 2026 was marked by meaningful changes within the education landscape. The appointment of a new Minister of Basic Education within the context of a Government of National Unity, as well as the proclamation of the amended Schools Act in December 2024, further highlighted the complexity of policy contexts and stakeholder management. Within this context, the SAOU carried out its mandate with sound judgement and strategic insight in order to protect the interests of members and the integrity of the public education system.

At the same time, the organisation experienced an important internal transition with new leadership and structures. This phase required purposeful relationship-building within the Department of Basic Education, FEDUSA, SACE and the broader education environment. It is encouraging that these relationships have not only been maintained, but strengthened, with the SAOU’s voice continuing to be heard with credibility and authority.

The SAOU also affirmed its role internationally through participation in the Education International Congress during 2023, where the organisation took a strong position in support of public education and early childhood development, which includes Grade R, as strategic priorities. This involvement strengthens the SAOU’s positioning as a modern, principled trade union with a global perspective.

Strategic repositioning formed a core focus of this period. This included the strengthening of collective bargaining and media functions, the establishment of internal legal services, the restructuring of service delivery and the expansion of provincial capacity. In addition, technological progress was embraced through, among other things, the integration of artificial intelligence as part of a future-oriented, dynamic perspective for the SAOU.

At member level, the value proposition was further expanded through the introduction of new benefits and support mechanisms, including the death benefit (Continuum), the wellbeing programme (SAOU-Help) and improved communication platforms (SAOU app). These initiatives affirm the SAOU’s commitment to excellent service delivery and holistic support for its members.

The SAOU’s continued success remains grounded in its people – dedicated leadership, knowledgeable staff and a membership base characterised by professionalism and a sense of calling. The organisation’s ability to remain resilient over three decades and, at the same time, to innovate, confirms the strength of a shared vision and value system.

As we look back on three decades of one vision, we look ahead with confidence. The SAOU remains committed to its core mandate and, through principled leadership and strategic partnerships, will continue to play a meaningful role as a driver of change in education.

Executive Officer

The SAOU at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

3rd largest teacher's
union in South Africa

3 973 WPRs

18 fleet
cars

95 staff members

Membership



38 201

PERSAL: 31 227

SGB: 7 599

Independent Schools: 1 332



3 969

Primary Schools: 2 119

High Schools: 960

Private Schools: 557



37 351

Members reached through
520 training events since July
2023 until June 2026



86%
Afrikaans

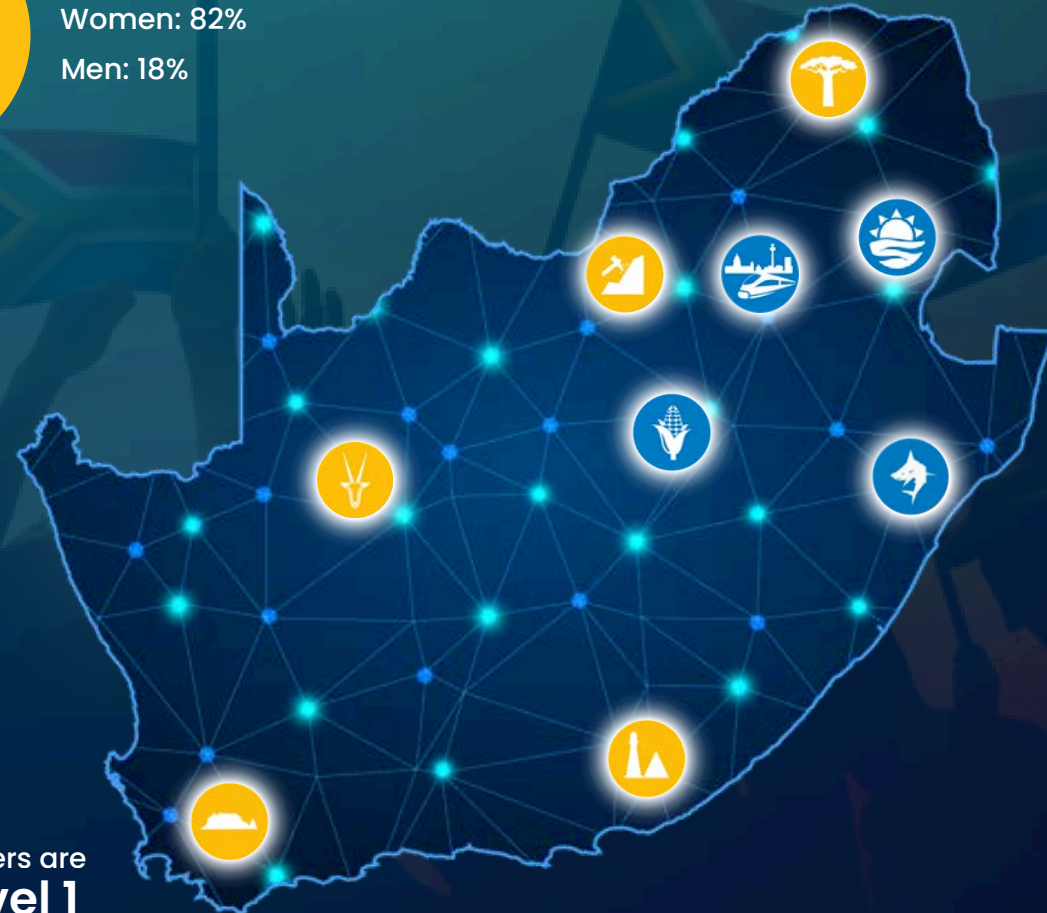
14%
English



Combined Schools: 157
LSEN Schools: 176

43 jaar average age
of members

74.2% of all members are
Post Level 1



NATIONAL OFFICE



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Structure and Functioning of the SAOU

The effective functioning of the SAOU rests on a well-established structure of elected leadership, governing bodies, advisory committees and executive capacity. These structures ensure that the organisation is managed in an accountable, representative and strategic manner, with clear channels for decision-making, mandates, coordination and implementation.

During the reporting period, the SAOU's national and provincial structures continued to play a central role in advancing members' interests, safeguarding good governance and implementing strategic priorities. The functioning of the Presidents-in-Council, the National Executive Council, the National Standing Committee, advisory committees and management committees therefore forms an important part of the organisation's ability to respond purposefully to the needs of members and the dynamics of the education environment.

Presidents in Council (PiC)

The election of the provincial and national structures of the SAOU, which took place during the second half of 2025, culminated in the constitution of the National Executive Council (NEC) on 29 October 2025. During this occasion, the National Standing Committee (NSC) was confirmed and the Presidents in Council were elected to their offices.



Left to right: Sas du Plessis (Adjunk-President); Anne-Marie Klink (Vise-President)
en Louis Swanepoel (President)

National Executive Council (NEC)

The elected members of the National Executive Council are appointed from the nine Provincial Executive Councils during a triennial national election process. It should also be noted that the Executive Officer and the nine Provincial Secretaries serve ex officio (without voting rights) on the National Executive Council.

According to the provisions of Article 10.1 of the SAOU Constitution, the management of Union affairs rests with the National Executive Council (NEC), which is the highest authority between the triennial National Congresses.

Articles 10.2.1 to 10.2.3 provide that the President, Deputy President and Vice-President serve in addition to the provincial representatives on the NEC.

The SAOU Constitution provides in Article 10.2.4 as follows regarding the appointment of provincial representatives to the NEC:

10.2.4 Representatives of each province on the National Executive Council shall be elected and/or appointed on the following basis:

- (a) Two representatives appointed by each province in which the Union has fewer than 4,799 members; or
- (b) Three representatives appointed by each province in which the Union has more than 4,800 members.

10.2.5 The Provincial Secretaries as delegates, ex officio and without voting rights; and

10.2.6 The Executive Officer and the Deputy Executive Officer, ex officio and without voting rights.

The NEC meets twice a year at the Executive Centre in Pretoria.



First row f.l.t.r: Liesl Rehbock (PS, Gauteng); Cynthia Farrell (PS, Vrystaat); Sas du Plessis (Adjunk-President, Voorsitter Wes-Kaap); Louis Swanepoel (President); Paul Sauer (Uitvoerende Beamppte, SAOU); Anne-Marie Klink (Vise-President, Voorsitter, Vrystaat); Karin Potgieter (Voorsitter, Noordwes m.i.v. Mei 2026); Liesel Giliomee (Voorsitter, Noord-Kaap m.i.v. Jun. 2026)

Second row f.l.t.r: Cathy de la Harpe (PS, Limpopo), Linda Scholtz (Voorsitter, KwaZulu-Natal); Willie van der Merwe (Ondervoorsitter, Mpumalanga); Gideon Pelzer (Ondervoorsitter, Limpopo), Faffa Coetzee (NUR-lid, Wes-Kaap), Kobus Hartman (NUR-lid, Gauteng); Danie Heese (Voorsitter, Mpumalanga)

Third row f.l.t.r: Jean-Pierre du Preez (Ondervoorsitter, Oos-Kaap), Tommie Doubell (Ondervoorsitter, Vrystaat), Willemien Strydom (PS, Noordwes), Debbie Harvey (PS, Oos-Kaap), Rozanne Herbst (PS, Mpumalanga), Martin Bensch (Ondervoorsitter, Gauteng); Magnus Steyn (Voorsitter, Limpopo); Charles Liversage (NUR-lid, Vrystaat)

Fourth row f.l.t.r: Morné Janson (PS, Wes-Kaap), Llewellyn Gray (Ondervoorsitter, KwaZulu-Natal), André Matthee (Voorsitter, Oos-Kaap), Werner van Huyssteen (NUR-lid, Wes-Kaap), Willie de Villiers (vorige Voorsitter, Noordwes, afgetree Apr. 2026), Henk Brand (PS, Noord-Kaap); Innes Kritzing (PS, KwaZulu-Natal)

Absent: Erna Joubert (Ondervoorsitter, Wes-Kaap); Pieter le Roux (vorige Voorsitter, Noord-Kaap, afgetree Mei 2026); Adele van der Merwe (Voorsitter, Gauteng), Morné Smit (Ondervoorsitter, Noordwes miv Mei 2026) Etienne Venter (Ondervoorsitter, Noord-Kaap m.i.v. Jun. 2026), Dries Pretorius (NUR-lid, Vrystaat)

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC)

President	Louis Swanepoel	
Deputy President	Sas du Plessis	Laerskool George Suid
Vice-President	Anne-Mari Klink	C & N Sekondêre Meisieskool Oranje
Executive Officer	Paul Sauer	SAOU

GAUTENG

Chairperson	Adele van der Merwe	Hoërskool Drie Riviere
Vice-Chairperson	Martin Bensch	Laerskool Louw Geldenhuys
NEC member	Kobus Hartman	Menlopark Hoërskool
Provincial Secretary	Liesl Rehbock	SAOU Gauteng

KWAZULU-NATAL

Chairperson	Linda Scholtz	Danville Park Girls' High School
Vice-Chairperson	Llewellyn Gray	Huttenpark Primary School
Provincial Secretary	Innes Kritzing	SAOU KwaZulu-Natal

LIMPOPO

Chairperson	Magnus Steyn	Merensky Hoërskool
Vice-Chairperson	Gideon Pelzer	Pietersburg-Oos Laerskool
Provincial Secretary	Cathy de la Harpe	SAOU Limpopo

MPUMALANGA

Chairperson	Danie Heese	Kruinpark Laerskool
Vice-Chairperson	Willie van der Merwe	Nelspruit Hoërskool
Provincial Secretary	Rozanne Herbst	SAOU Mpumalanga

NORTHERN CAPE

Chairperson	*Liesel Giliomee	Upington Hoërskool
Vice-Chairperson	*Etienne Venter	Eureka Laerskool
Provincial Secretary	Henk Brand	SAOU Northern Cape

* Liesel Giliomee was elected Chairperson of the Northern Cape, and Etienne Venter Vice-Chairperson, with effect from 1 June 2026 following the retirement of Pieter le Roux on 31 May 2026.

NORTH WEST		
Chairperson	*Karin Potgieter	Bergsig Akademie
Vice-Chairperson	*Morné Smit	Hoërskool Ferdinand Postma
Provincial Secretary	Willemien Strydom	SAOU North West
EASTERN CAPE		
Chairperson	André Matthee	Voorpos Primary School
Vice-Chairperson	Jean-Pierre du Preez	DF Malherbe Hoërskool
Provincial Secretary	Debbie Harvey	SAOU Eastern Cape
FREE STATE		
Chairperson	Anne-Marie Klink	C & N Sekondêre Meisieskool Oranje
Vice-Chairperson	Tommie Doubell	Naudeville Primêre Skool
NEC member	Charles Liversage	Sentraal Hoërskool
NEC member	Dries Pretorius	Bethlehem Voortrekker Hoërskool
Provincial Secretary	Cynthia Farrell	SAOU Free State
WESTERN CAPE		
Chairperson	Sas du Plessis	George-Suid Laerskool
Vice-Chairperson	Erna Joubert	President Hoërskool
NEC member	Faffa Coetzee	Brackenfell Laerskool
NEC member	Werner van Huyssteen	Hartenbos Laerskool
Provincial Secretary	Morné Janson	SAOU Western Cape

* Karin Potgieter was elected Chairperson of North West, and Morné Smit Vice-Chairperson, with effect from 1 May 2026 following the retirement of Willie de Villiers on 30 April 2026.

The National Standing Committee meets eight times a year, of which four are face-to-face meetings at the Executive Centre in Pretoria and four are virtual meetings (Article 12.3 of the SAOU Constitution). Several extraordinary meetings have also taken place to address urgent matters in the interim.



Front row f.l.t.r: Linda Scholtz (KwaZulu-Natal); Sas du Plessis (Deputy President, Western Cape); Louis Swanepoel (President); Paul Sauer (Executive Officer); Anne-Marie Klink (Vice-President, Free State)
Back row f.l.t.r: Danie Heese (Mpumalanga); André Matthee (Eastern Cape); Willie de Villiers (North West); Magnus Steyn (Limpopo)

Note: Liesel Giliomee (Northern Cape) elected following the retirement of Pieter le Roux. Karin Potgieter (North West) elected following the retirement of Willie de Villiers.

National Standing Committee

The National Standing Committee is elected from among the members of the nine Provincial Executive Councils. Although the SAOU Constitution does not prescribe that Chairpersons automatically serve on the National Standing Committee, it has become convention that the Chairpersons represent the provinces on the National Standing Committee. It is the responsibility of each elected Chairperson to represent the interests of his/her province during these sittings and to obtain the necessary mandates from members should a matter be put to a vote.

Financial Advisory Committee

The Financial Advisory Committee of the SAOU consists of two members appointed from the National Standing Committee, two co-opted suitably qualified accountants, and the Executive Officer (Article 13 of the SAOU Constitution).

Louis Swanepoel, Voorsitter	President
Sas du Plessis	Deputy President
Anne-Marie Klink	Vice-President
Paul Sauer	Executive Officer, SAOU
Ilse Brett	Executive Officer, SAEF / Accountant
Chanté Swanepoel	Accountant

The responsibilities of the Financial Advisory Committee are as follows:

- Overall management of the finances of the Union;
- Preparation of the Union's annual budget;
- Ongoing management of the budget;
- Broad corporate control and management of funds received and spent by the Union;
- Allocation of agency fee funds received; and
- Any other financial functions that may be added by the National Standing Committee or the National Executive Council.

The Financial Advisory Committee must provide recommendations to the National Standing Committee. This committee meets at least quarterly and makes formal recommendations of a financial nature to the National Standing Committee.

Other Advisory Committees

Various advisory committees are appointed by the National Executive Council and the National Standing Committee to ensure the effective control and management of the Union.

Professional Committee (Profcom)

The Profcom consists of two representatives per province from among the NEC members, one primary school representative and one secondary school representative from each province. The Profcom is assisted by SAOU employees working in the Professional Services Department. The committee meets twice a year and aims to provide advice to the NEC regarding curriculum, educational and pedagogical matters.

Strategic Committee (Stratcom)

The Stratkom meets as required and aims to examine matters of a strategic nature and prepare recommendations for either the Standing Committee or the NEC. Its composition is as follows:

- Presidents-in-Council;
- Executive Officer, SAOU; and
- Ad hoc members as required, e.g. an external legal adviser.

Advisory Committee on Ethics and Social Justice (AESG)

Die AESG het ten doel om advies aan hetsy die Dagbestuur of die NUR voor te berei insake verskeie aspekte wat verband hou met etiek en die etiese bestuur van die Unie ooreenkomstig die beginsels van King V, asook om sensitiewe onderwyssake teen die agtergrond van billikheid en sosiale geregtigheid te beoordeel. Die lede van die komitee word soos volg uit die Dagbestuur aangewys: Senior vroulike lid, senior manlike lid, die Uitvoerende Beampptes van SAOU en SAEF, en afdelingshoofde van die nasionale afdelings. Hierdie komitee vergader na behoefte en na gelang van sake waarvoor die Dagbestuur kundige en ingeligte advies verlang.

Human Resources Committee (HRC)

The HRC meets quarterly under the chairpersonship of the President. It is the committee's responsibility to consider human resource matters relating to SAOU staff. The HRC reports back to the National Standing Committee. Its composition is as follows:

- President;
- Executive Officer, SAOU;
- Executive Officer, SAEF;
- Human Resources Officer; and
- Independent member.

Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC)

The IARC meets quarterly under the chairpersonship of an independent Chairperson with proven financial expertise. This committee continuously considers all aspects of the SAOU's finances with a view to providing comprehensive feedback to the FAC. The committee also considers the various risks affecting the SAOU, which are captured in a risk register. Its composition is as follows:

- Independent Chairperson;
- President of the SAOU / Chairperson of the SAEF Standing Committee;
- Executive Officer, SAOU;
- Executive Officer, SAEF;
- Senior Accountant;
- Other staff from the Finance Division (SAEF) where appropriate or necessary; and
- Other independent external persons as may be required.

Investment Committee

The Investment Committee is an advisory committee of the FAC that continuously considers the liquid assets of the SAOU in consultation with external portfolio managers. The objective is to obtain ongoing objective external advice regarding the optimal investment of funds, balanced against the risks of market forces. Its composition is as follows:

- President of the SAOU / Chairperson of the SAEF Standing Committee;
- Executive Officers of the SAOU and SAEF;
- Senior Accountant (SAEF);
- Other staff from the Finance Division (SAEF) where appropriate or necessary;
- External auditors where appropriate or necessary; and
- External fund managers where appropriate or necessary.

Tender and Procurement Committee

The policy of the SAOU stipulates that the purchase or procurement of goods and/or services shall take place through an objective consideration and approval process. It is understood that this process will at all times be conducted in a transparent and objective manner.

Members of the Procurement Committee are also required at all times to declare any conflicts of interest, and such expenditure must fall within the framework of the budget. Its composition is as follows:

- Executive Officer, SAOU;
- Executive Officer, SAEF;
- Senior Accountant; and
- Other staff involved in the specific transaction who make a submission.

Management and Planning Committee (MPC)

The Provincial Secretaries of the nine provinces function as executive officers of their respective provinces. The Executive Officer of SAOU delegates authority to the relevant Provincial Secretaries. It is essential that close coordination by and between provinces, taking provincial requirements into account, takes place continuously. The MPC consists of:

- Executive Officer of SAOU;
- Nine Provincial Secretaries;
- By invitation:
 - Executive Officer, SAEF;
 - Human Resources Officer;
 - Heads of the national departments to provide advice on specific agenda items; and
 - Assistant Provincial Secretaries.

The Executive Centre houses the following staff

The Executive Centre houses staff from the following departments, provinces and entities:

- Office of the Executive Officer, SAOU;
- Office of the Executive Officer, SAEF;
- Finance and Administration Division;
- Marketing and Communication;
- Service Centre;
- Artificial Intelligence Officer;
- Human Resources Officer;
- National Training Institute (NTI);
- Professional Services;
- Legal Services;
- The four northern provincial offices, namely Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West;
- South African Education Foundation (SAEF); and
- South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).



Front row f.l.t.r: Cynthia Farrell (PS, Free State); Liesl Rehbock (PS, Gauteng); Ilse Brett (Executive Officer, SAEF); Paul Sauer (Executive Officer, SAOU); Cathy de la Harpe (PS, Limpopo); Maryna Besseling (Media and Collective Bargaining)
Middle row f.l.t.r: Adel Jacobs (Professional Services); Rozanne Herbst (PS, Mpumalanga); Innes Kritzingner (PS, KwaZulu-Natal); Willemien Strydom (PS, North West); Liana Nel (Head of Division, Marketing and Communication)
Back row f.l.t.r: Debbie Harvey (PS, Eastern Cape); Morné Janson (PS, Western Cape); Henk Brand (PS, Northern Cape); Dems Nel (Head of Division, Legal Services)

Against this organisational background, the SAOU also gave deliberate attention during the reporting period to its strategic positioning for the future. The formulation of strategic objectives, the needs assessment among members and other role-players, as well as the focus on team development and a shared team code, contributed to further strengthening the organisation's internal alignment and external value proposition.

This strategic alignment forms the bridge between the SAOU's governance framework and the practical initiatives through which members are supported at a professional, personal and organisational level. In this regard, SAOU Online, Continuum and the Wellness Project, with SAOU Help as a core component, deserve particular mention.

SAOU Online

The platform, previously known as MSM Online, was repositioned and renamed SAOU Online in 2023 in response to the significant expansion of the platform's content and functionality. While the platform originally focused mainly on the Manual for School Management, it has over time developed into a comprehensive digital resource hub that includes various content streams.

This expansion includes, among others:

- Manual for School Management;
- Manual for Classroom Management;
- Webinars;
- TVET content;
- Independent Schools;
- e-Learning;
- Teaching posts; and
- Publications (latest addition).

The renaming to SAOU Online was intended to better reflect this broader scope, while ensuring that the platform remains clearly associated with the SAOU brand. At the same time, a distinct visual identity was developed, including a unique logo and brand style, positioning the platform as a separate but integrated component of the SAOU's digital ecosystem.

SAOU Online represents a unique value proposition for the organisation, as access is limited exclusively to active SAOU members. This exclusivity not only strengthens the value of membership, but also positions the platform as a central source of reliable, curated and practical support for educators.

As part of the broader renewal of the SAOU's brand identity in 2026, an updated visual style was implemented for SAOU Online. This new look and feel brings the platform closer to the organisation's overarching brand, while still retaining its own recognisable identity.

Going forward, SAOU Online will fall under the responsibility of Professional Services, as the nature and focus of the platform are more strongly aligned with the empowerment and professional development of members. The platform not only provides access to curriculum and policy information, but also hosts Professional Services' online learning programmes and other development initiatives.

This shift ensures greater coherence between content, training and support, and strengthens the role of SAOU Online as a core instrument in the professional empowerment of members.

SAOU Online has developed into the organisation's primary digital platform for professional support and resources. The platform, formerly known as MSM Online, was repositioned in 2024 and further refined to create an integrated and accessible digital environment for educators.

SAOU Online provides access to a wide range of content, including curriculum-related information, policy updates, training material, as well as lesson plans and learning material for various subjects and phases. The platform further houses key resources such as the Manual for Classroom Management (MCM), material for TVET colleges and independent schools, e-learning content, teaching-post vacancies, e-publications and webinar recordings.

Ongoing development and expansion of the platform remain a priority, with specific focus on the further optimisation of content and functionality to support members effectively in their professional practice.



Continuum

The SAOU death benefit, Continuum, was launched in November 2025 in response to ongoing requests from members and non-members for a more comprehensive value proposition that also includes support beyond the professional working environment. This initiative forms part of the organisation's broader strategic focus on sustainable and meaningful member value.

Continuum offers a cash payout of R20 000, payable to the member's nominated beneficiary or, in the absence of such a nomination, to the member's estate. This benefit positions the SAOU's service offering within a broader context of care and support that extends beyond the workplace.

The concept of Continuum was deliberately developed to attach emotional meaning and symbolic value to the benefit. The name reflects continuity – support that continues even after a member's passing – and contributes to strengthening the organisation's values-driven approach, as embodied in the principle #BecauseWeCare.

The launch of Continuum was supported by a focused marketing and communication campaign that included a variety of social media content, videos and digital material. In addition, a dedicated webpage was developed as a central information point to promote accessibility and understanding of the benefit.

By 6 April 2026, a total of 1 729 beneficiary nomination forms had been received, indicating meaningful uptake and engagement from members.

The implementation of Continuum represents a strategic shift towards a more comprehensive and long-term value proposition, and contributes to deepening the SAOU's relevance in members' professional and personal lives.



Wellbeing Project and SAOU Help

The SAOU recognises that the emotional wellbeing and mental health of educators remain a critical challenge within the education profession. In response to the increasing pressure experienced by educators, and supported by national and international research, wellbeing has deliberately been positioned as a strategic priority, not as a peripheral matter.

Following a needs assessment conducted in 2024 in collaboration with the North-West University (NWU), the Wellness Project was officially launched in 2025, with financial support from AON. This project represents a structured and targeted response to the wellbeing challenges faced by educators.

The Wellbeing Project rests on two core pillars:

i. Support

This pillar focuses on direct support to educators and includes, among other things:

- SAOU Help (emotional support line); and
- Self-help resources and tools.

ii. Research

Research is used to:

- Develop relevant resources;
- Better prepare student educators already at university level; and
- Strengthen emotional resilience within the profession.

This integrated approach ensures that the project is not only reactive, but also preventive and development-oriented.

SAOU-help, growth and impact

SAOU Help forms a core component of the support pillar and is available to all personnel in the education environment, not only SAOU members.

The service is:

- Available 24/7;
- Free;
- Fully confidential and anonymous; and
- Bilingual.

The crisis line is staffed by industrial psychology practitioners in training, and managed by senior psychologists at the NWU, which ensures the credibility and ethical integrity of the service.

Statistics indicate growing awareness and increasing trust in the service. During 2025, 94 calls were recorded. In the first three months of 2026, more than 130 calls had already been received, indicating a significant increase in use.

Common reasons for contact include:

- Stress and anxiety;
- Low mood and symptoms of depression;
- Work-related challenges;
- Trauma; and
- Interpersonal conflict.

These insights form the basis for the development of targeted resources and communication.

Despite the growth in use, the stigma surrounding the search for emotional and mental health support remains an important factor that limits full use of the service. This reality is deliberately taken into account in both the design of the service and the communication approach, with a strong focus on confidentiality, credibility and the normalisation of seeking help.

Key statistics and trends

The following statistics provide insight into the growth, use and impact of the SAOU's wellbeing initiatives:

Use of SAOU Help

- 2025: 94 calls; and
- 2026 (January – March): 130+ calls,

indicating a significant increase in use, as well as growing trust in the service.

Type of interventions

- Emotional support;
- Psycho-educational guidance and tools; and
- Short-term counselling and check-in sessions.

Access and reach

- Service available 24/7;
- Free, anonymous and confidential;
- Available to all education personnel (not only members);
- WhatsApp access point added (September 2025) to improve accessibility; and
- A small number of calls relate to general labour and legal matters, which are referred to appropriate SAOU personnel.

Capacity expansion

- 2025: 2 practitioners; and
- 2026: 3 practitioners.

Increased capacity to provide support and develop resources.

Communication impact

- Clear increase in service use following a shift in the communication approach; and
- Focus on practical, applicable content on social media contributes to increased engagement and awareness.

Expansion of access points

As part of a broader accessibility strategy, SAOU Help was expanded in September 2025 by making the service available via WhatsApp. Although it is not a chat service, it makes it easier for users to initiate the service, after which telephonic support follows.

Furthermore, 30-minute online Wellness check-ins were introduced. These structured sessions offer a safe space for support, even when a person is not necessarily in crisis, thereby strengthening a prevention-oriented approach.

This multi-platform approach ensures that support is available at different levels of need and accessibility.

Strategic shift in communication approach

From a Marketing and Communication perspective, a deliberate shift was made: from mere awareness-raising to the provision of practical, applicable support, directly on social media.

This shift recognises that:

- Educators increasingly consume wellbeing-related content on digital platforms;
- There is a need for accessible, immediately usable support; and
- Communication must add real value, not only awareness.

Consequently, content now focuses on:

- Practical coping mechanisms;
- Psycho-educational insights; and
- Daily applicable tools.

This approach strengthens engagement and the perceived value of the SAOU's support.

Development of resources and content

Insights generated from SAOU Help are systematically translated into practical resources, including:

- Digital pamphlets;
- Infographics;
- Webinars and podcasts; and
- Social media content.

The aim is to equip educators to compile their own mental-health toolkits – a personal set of strategies to manage and strengthen their emotional wellbeing deliberately.

Printed material also forms part of this integrated strategy. Posters have already been developed and are currently being distributed to provinces, with further printed material planned.

Capacity and credibility

The service is supported by trained interns who function under professional supervision and regulatory frameworks. In 2026, capacity was expanded from two to three interns, which contributes to:

- Greater support reach;
- Improved responsiveness; and
- Expanded content development.

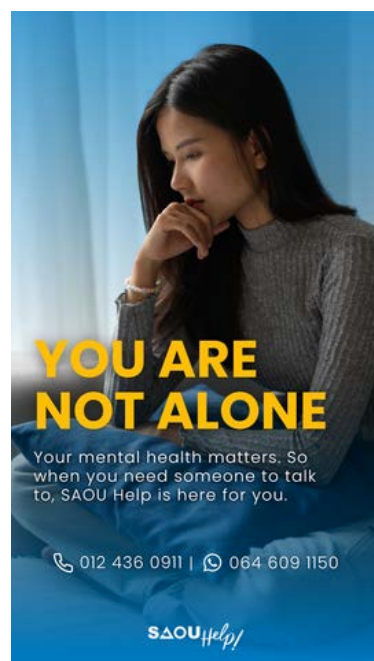
Communication about the service is managed strategically to build trust and reduce stigma, with a strong focus on professionalism, confidentiality and credibility.

Strategic outlook

The Wellness Project is currently entering its second year of implementation and is therefore still in a development and growth phase. Nevertheless, early trends indicate increasing engagement, growing trust and meaningful impact.

This phase offers significant potential for further expansion, refinement and deepening of the project's reach and effectiveness. The long-term objective is to move from a reactive support model to the establishment of a sustainable culture of care within the education environment.

The SAOU remains committed to the further expansion and strengthening of this initiative, with a view to tangible, long-term impact on educators' wellbeing.



The development of SAOU Online, Continuum and the Wellness Project points to a clear broadening of the SAOU's service and support offering. These initiatives do not, however, stand apart from the organisation's broader future-oriented planning, but form part of a wider process through which the SAOU deliberately reconsidered and strengthened its role, focus and value proposition.

Against this background, particular attention was also given during the reporting period to the strategic positioning of the SAOU, including strategic objectives, a comprehensive needs assessment, team development and the establishment of a team code.

Strategic positioning of the SAOU

During 2024, the Executive Officer of the SAOU identified the need for key role-players to work more closely together and to be dynamically involved in determining the strategic direction of the SAOU. It was therefore decided to adjust the structure and approach of the annual MPC strategic planning summit, with a greater focus on collective team input.

In developing the strategic alignment of the SAOU, the following core focus areas were formulated:

1. Strategic objectives were developed by management and elected leadership;
2. Team development to expand the skills of staff; and
3. A team code to bring SAOU staff together as a team and strengthen team functioning.

Strategic objectives

The SAOU's newly elected leadership identified specific focus areas and strategic objectives for the organisation. These objectives were considered and refined in collaboration with the MPC, taking into account trends in the trade union sector and the changing needs of members.

Needs assessment research project

In order to implement these objectives in practice, an intensive needs assessment was undertaken among SAOU members, opinion-formers outside the SAOU, and through focus group sessions with SAOU elected members. This process was facilitated by consultants from Blue Horizon.

The purpose of this process was to obtain a comprehensive and strategic understanding of:

- The actual needs of the SAOU's current and potential members across different categories, age groups and geographical areas.
- Members' expectations and perceptions regarding the role of the SAOU in a changing education context.
- The shifting values and drivers that influence members' loyalty, involvement and trust.
- The future value proposition that the SAOU must clearly communicate and live out in order to remain relevant.

A comprehensive report on the outcome of the research was provided to the SAOU. The report's findings are currently shared with the Congress.

In this regard, the SAOU wishes to sincerely thank every person who participated in the project. The outcome of this project enables the SAOU to offer its members a member-centred value proposition that motivates growth and loyalty.



Team development

The purpose of the team development process is to bring staff together as a team and strengthen team functioning through the following actions:

- Building team relationships;
- Identifying areas for development;
- Completing brain profile questionnaires to examine the overall team profile and individual team roles in order to understand the dynamics and contributions of each staff member; and
- Developing a team code to which everyone has committed.

Team code

A team code was formulated as a guideline for team functioning and as a basis for achieving the team's strategic objectives. The core elements of the team code are the following:

- Open communication and the avoidance of silos;
- Appreciation of and space for diversity and new thinking;
- Transparency and trust;
- The celebration of successes; and
- A continuous pursuit of effectiveness and accountability.

In conclusion, the reporting period confirms that the SAOU's established structures, management processes and executive capacity form an essential foundation for accountable decision-making, effective implementation and sustainable organisational growth. Through these structures, the organisation was able to continue giving coordinated effect to its mandate, advancing members' interests and strengthening practical support within a changing education environment.

Initiatives such as SAOU Online, Continuum and the Wellness Project show how this governance framework is translated into concrete, member-focused value. This emphasises the SAOU's commitment to ensuring that support is not limited to traditional trade union services, but is extended to professional empowerment, personal support and emotional wellbeing.

The focus on strategic positioning, needs assessment, team development and a shared team code further confirms that the SAOU is deliberately strengthening its internal alignment and external value proposition. In this way, the organisation remains relevant, adaptable and value-driven in service of its members.

FINANCE



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Financial Overview Report

A MODERN APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Strategic financial management of the SAOU

The SAOU's financial management operates within an integrated management framework that focuses on accountability, transparency, and sustainable growth. Financial processes are managed under the leadership of the Executive Officers of SAOU and SAEF, supported by a professional financial team.

Continuous monitoring and regular reporting ensure that financial decisions are made timeously, responsibly in line with the organisation's strategic objectives. Weekly summary reporting to the Management and Advisory Committee, monthly reporting to the Financial Advisory Committee, and monthly reporting to the Executive Committee ensure that adequate control is exercised over the implementation of financial policy.

The Financial Advisory Committee of the SAOU

The Financial Advisory Committee performs a strategic advisory function in relation to the SAOU's financial sustainability and long-term planning. The committee consists of the President, Deputy President, Vice President, and the Executive Officers of SAOU and SAEF, supported by the Senior Accountant and the Committee Secretary.

Die fokus van die komitee is om

- Evaluate financial trends and risks;
- Formulate recommendations on budgets and investments; and
- Promote sound financial management and compliance.

This committee is authorised only to make financial recommendations, which are then considered by the Executive Committee for approval or rejection.

Financial oversight by the National Standing Committee

The National Standing Committee consists of the President, the Chairpersons of each province, and the Executive Officer of the SAOU, supported by a committee secretary. This committee has delegated authority to approve or reject financial recommendations.

The National Standing Committee monitors:

- Budget performance;
- Major financial commitments; and
- Cash flow and reserves.

This approach supports sound corporate governance and strengthens organisational stability.

Banking and financial systems

The SAOU makes use of modern electronic banking and payment systems to ensure secure and efficient financial transactions. Financial administration is centrally coordinated, with supporting accounts for provincial structures and training entities. The SAOU's principal banking partner is ABSA.

The SAOU maintains strict internal control measures, including:

- Segregated payment approvals;
- Digital record-keeping;
- Reconciliations; and
- Restricted access controls.

Investment and reserve management

The SAOU holds investments in order to generate the best possible return on its funds. Efforts are also directed toward implementing the Congress's principal resolution of maintaining six months of operational costs in liquid investments. Investments are managed in consultation with multiple financial consultants to ensure access to expert advice in this field. During the 2025/2026 financial year, an Income Stabilisation Reserve Fund was established to provide protection against challenging market conditions. Utilisation of this fund is strictly regulated by the PIC.

Investment decisions are made:

- In consultation with independent financial advisors;
- With consideration of market conditions; and
- Within approved risk frameworks.

Sources of income

Income is primarily generated through membership fees (80%), derived from both departmental employees, governing body employees, and independent school members. A further significant source of income is the provision of training and empowerment opportunities provided by the SAOU through its Professional Services. This approach reduces financial risk and supports long-term sustainability.

Income Profile	
Source	Focus
Membership fees	Core financial base
Professional Services	Training and development
Empowerment Initiatives	Value addition for members
Strategic projects	Sustainable growth

Financial performance during the reporting period

The figures represent the financial results of the past three years, as derived from the audited financial statements.

SAOU

Summary of Financial Position for Financial years 2024 to 2026

	2026/25 R'000	2025/24 R'000	2024/23 R'000
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	13,476	15,454	17,145
Intangible assets	1	2	3
Other financial assets	7,952	5,480	5,537
	21,429	20,935	22,685
Current Assets			
Inventories	21	15	-
Trade and other receivables	2,635	2,125	2,384
Cash and cash equivalents	44,230	40,627	35,498
	46,886	42,767	37,882
TOTAL ASSETS	68,315	63,702	60,567
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
CAPITAL AND RESERVES			
Accumulated surplus	42,326	44,075	41,597
Income Stabilisation Serve Fund	2,700	-	-
	45,026	44,075	41,597
LIABILITIES			
Non-Current liabilities			
Retirement benefit liability	7,952	5,479	5,537
	7,952	5,479	5,537
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	2,133	1,677	1,812
Retirement benefit liability	623	486	389
Accounts payable - provisions	12,581	11,985	11,232
	15,337	14,148	13,433
Total liabilities	23,289	19,627	18,970
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	68,315	63,702	60,567

Summary of Financial Performance for the Financial years 2024 to 2026

	2026/25 R'000	2025/24 R'000	2024/23 R'000
Revenue	58,792	54,802	51,026
Other income	15,441	14,977	13,386
Expenses	- 75,694	- 70,769	- 69,608
(Deficit)/Surplus from operating activities	- 1,461	- 990	- 5,196
Investment income	1,034	1,012	1,144
Other gains and (losses)	1,378	2,617	3,498
Interest Paid	-	-	19
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	951	2,639	573

Summary of cash flow for the financial years 2024 to 2026

	2026/25 R'000	2025/24 R'000	2024/23 R'000
Net cash flows from operations	6,924	4,605	- 1,360
Cash flows used in investing activities	- 10,085	- 403	2,054
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	- 3,161	4,202	694
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	10,456	6,254	5,560
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	7,295	10,456	6,254

The financial statements of the PSCBC and the SAOU are submitted annually to the Registrar of Labour Relations (Department of Employment and Labour), as prescribed.

PSCBC Agency Fees

Financial Performance for the Financial years 2024 to 2026

	2026/25 R'000	2025/24 R'000	2024/23 R'000
Income	5,525	5,907	6,679
Expenses	- 5,521	- 5,905	- 6,676
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	4	2	3

An extract from the independent auditors' opinion issued by AIM Incorporated:



Independent Auditor's Report

To the National Standing Committee of Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie set out on pages 10 to 33, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 28 February 2026, and the statement of comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie as at 28 February 2026, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the IFRS for SMEs Accounting Standard as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board and the requirements of the Union's Constitution and the Labour Relations Act.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Union in accordance with the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors' Code of Professional Conduct for Registered Auditors (IRBA Code) and other independence requirements applicable to performing audits of financial statements in South Africa. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the IRBA Code and in accordance with other ethical requirements applicable to performing audits in South Africa. The IRBA Code is consistent with the corresponding sections of the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards). We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

SAOU Death benefit – Continuum

On 5 January 2026, the SAOU introduced a death benefit for its members aged 65 years and younger. By 28 February 2026, an amount of R1,157 803 had already been allocated to a ring-fenced fund to provide for this obligation. This benefit is yet another example of how the SAOU continues to enhance its members' value proposition by providing meaningful support and financial protection when it is needed most.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

SAOU



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Collective Bargaining

Collective Bargaining Forums

In terms of section 96(7)(a) of the Labour Relations Act (LRA), 1999 (Act No. 66 of 1999), the SAOU is registered as a trade union with the Registrar of Labour Relations in South Africa, situated within the Department of Employment and Labour, and has been admitted to the relevant bargaining councils. This provides the SAOU with the mandate to negotiate on behalf of its members in collective bargaining forums. One of the key objectives of the SAOU is to protect and advance the rights of its members, which can only be achieved through the necessary representation in the two primary sectoral councils. The two councils referred to in this report are the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) as well as the bargaining council for the broader public service, namely the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC).

The LRA is the primary South African legislation regulating labour relations, protecting collective rights, and establishing mechanisms such as the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) for dispute resolution. It promotes fair labour practices, regulates trade unions, and gives effect to constitutional rights to fair labour practices and collective bargaining.

Education International (EI)

The SAOU (together with education unions such as SADTU, NAPTOSA, NATU and PEU) belongs to the international trade union organisation Education International. This provides the SAOU with the advantage that the needs of the education union can also be heard at an international level. It enables the SAOU to remain informed of international developments in the field of labour relations and the challenges faced by educators.

The SAOU actively participates in the activities of EI and attends EI events both physically and virtually. In 2024, the SAOU was in the privileged position of sending a delegation of elected members to Argentina, where the SAOU formed part of the delegation representing Africa at an international level.

The continued existence of trade unions is under pressure internationally, as a growing portion of the population does not recognise the value of organised labour structures. The SAOU is part of Education International (EI), the international forum for unions. A theme that has increasingly emerged during the reporting period is the threat to democracy and autonomy in schools as a result of budgetary constraints.

Public Sector Bargaining Council (PSCBC)

The focus of the PSCBC is the collective negotiation of salaries and conditions of service for the broader public service. Following the fiasco surrounding the collective bargaining process of 2021, during which the state failed to honour the multi-term agreement, this failure resulted in a number of legal actions. This matter was also referred to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Trade unions were therefore very reluctant to conclude another multi-term agreement with the state.

The 2024-25 bargaining period nevertheless resulted in the conclusion of a multi-term agreement linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). During the first year, public service salaries were increased by 5.5%, together with an agreed increase for 2026 and 2027 of between 4% and 6%, depending on the CPI. Further improvements to conditions of service included increases in the medical subsidy and the housing allowance.

The collective agreement also included non-substantive matters raised by the trade unions, and the PSCBC established various task teams and investigations to give consideration to these issues.

The issue that came particularly to the fore during the period under review was PSCBC Collective Agreement 1 of 2006, which binds public servants to the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS). The reason for this is that public servants receive a subsidy for this medical scheme. Since 2024, GEMS has implemented excessive increases in member contributions. These increases were unilateral, as no consultation with trade unions took place. This led to increasing labour action regarding the lack of accountability of the scheme. These actions were undertaken to protect members' employment benefits.

Federation of Unions South Africa (FEDUSA)

The SAOU forms part of the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA). The rising cost of living during the 2025-2026 period highlighted the extent to which the cost of medical schemes places pressure on workers. FEDUSA submitted an application to NEDLAC regarding this socio-economic threat. Although the NEDLAC application was unsuccessful, the additional pressure compelled GEMS to reduce member contribution increases from 9.8% to 7.5%. FEDUSA, as the second-largest trade union federation, exerted pressure on the Board of Trustees for the first time in twenty years in order to demand transparent governance of this medical scheme.

In this process, FEDUSA and COSATU were supported by the Ministers of the DPSA, Health and Finance. During a speech, the Minister of Health, Minister Motsoaledi, referred to the leading role played by FEDUSA.

As part of the PSCBC, the SAOU is also afforded the opportunity to attend conferences of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA), where staff members gain exposure to international trends and best practices.

SAOU staff serve on FEDUSA subcommittees, including Adel Jacobs (Training and Education Subcommittee) and Stephan van den Berg (Social Justice Subcommittee).

Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC)

The ELRC, as a sectoral bargaining council, demonstrated during the reporting period that it operates under stable and transparent governance and that accountability is continuously applied in the management of the council.

Issues that emerged during the period included the improvement of qualifications of unqualified and underqualified Grade R practitioners, as well as a physical audit of all personnel in education in order to identify individuals who remain on the establishment but are no longer employed in the public service. This led to the conclusion of Collective Agreement 2 of 2025, which empowers Grade R practitioners to become a fully integrated part of the education system.

The ELRC operates through various substructures, of which the college sector remains one of the greatest challenges. After a period of three years, there is still no resolution regarding the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) for college personnel.

During the period under review, the reduced budgets of the respective provincial education departments compelled the ELRC to participate more actively in the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) process. The ELRC facilitates two engagements per year to provide guidance to provinces, while also ensuring compliance with the legal requirements governing these processes.

Recommendations to the ELRC include, among others, the review of the post provisioning model to ensure that the allocation of posts to schools is better aligned with actual needs and requirements.

The ELRC focuses particularly on training relating to legal matters with the aim of reducing disputes within the education sector.

Within the ELRC, the SAOU operates together with NATU, PEU and NAPOSA as the Combined Trade Unions - Autonomous Teachers' Unions (CTU-ATU). Cooperation within the CTU-ATU at both national and provincial level provides the opportunity to engage collectively in labour-related negotiations.

The following Collective Agreements were concluded between 2024 and 2026:

- Collective Agreement 1 of 2024, which determines the weighting values of trade unions within the ELRC.
- Collective Agreement 2 of 2024, which determines the guidelines and processes for the appointment and conversion of qualified temporary educators to permanent posts.
- Collective Agreement 3 of 2024, which determines the Quality Management System for school-based therapists in education.
- Collective Agreement 2 of 2025, which determines the improvement of qualifications for Grade R practitioners.

SAOU membership numbers have grown to such an extent since 2023 that an additional full time shop steward position could be provided in the Western Cape, while Limpopo also received an additional position in 2026.

The CTU-ATU appoints a corresponding party responsible for handling correspondence between the four unions at national level. The SAOU served as the national corresponding party during the periods 2023-2024 and again during 2024-2025.

The various bargaining councils continuously strive for transparency and accountability in order to safeguard the rights of workers.

Essential Services Committee (ESC)

Services Committee (ESC). The functioning of the ESC is based on the principle that certain sectors are prevented from engaging in industrial action. In 2026, the ESC attempted to declare ECD as a so-called essential service. The implication of this would be that the service would not be permitted to participate in any strikes. However, the ESC does not adequately take the safety of learners under these circumstances into account. With the support of all the trade unions in the PSCBC, this recommendation was nevertheless opposed.



Maryna Besseling



Paul Sauer

LEGAL SERVICES



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Legal Services

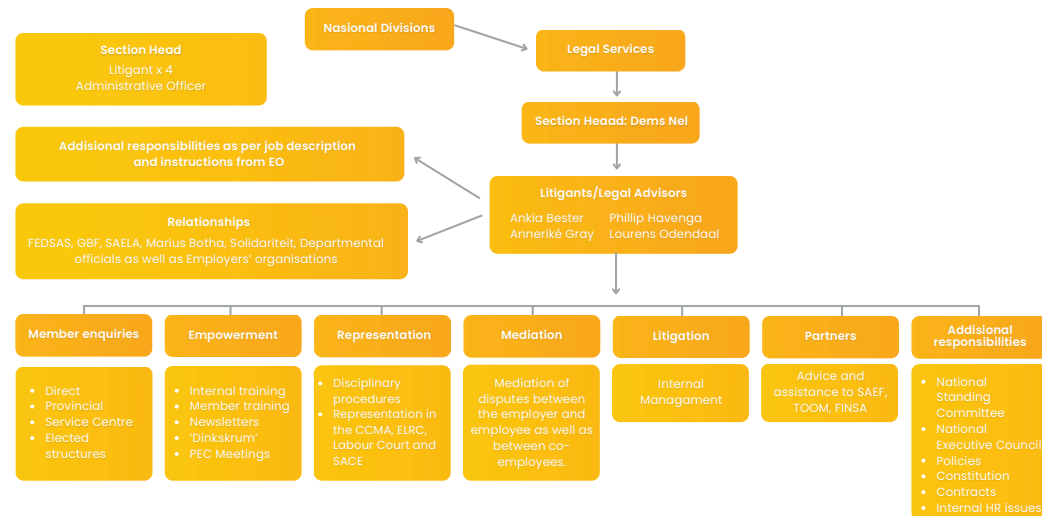
Introduction

The SAOU's legal services has officially existed since 2010. Over the years, Legal Services has grown in capacity and expertise. Since Legal Services did not function as a division on its own, but formed part of various other divisions within the SAOU as an organisation, there was a constant shuffle of personnel to and from Legal Services. However, since 2023, Legal Services has gone through a phase of renewal and change that has expanded and improved the functioning of Legal Services.

Legal Services is aware that the SAOU's survival is mainly dependent on its membership. Therefore, proactive action must be taken throughout to put strategies in place that will consequently ensure the growth of the SAOU's membership. Member recruitment is a priority for all divisions within the SAOU and the decline in service delivery in some of the provincial education departments is a harsh reality. This forces the SAOU to litigate more frequently to ensure that the members' interests are protected.

The SAOU is currently undergoing a new phase of strategic planning, development and alignment. The management and elected members engaged intensive strategic planning for the organisation during separate sessions. Legal Services plays a crucial role in the service delivery model that the SAOU offers, and for that reason, Legal Services is at the heart of the SAOU. The primary role of a union is to manage relationships between employers and employees and to make sure that employees' rights are protected.

Legal Services handles the majority of the serious cases that affect members' employment relationship and conditions.



From left to right: Lourens Odendaal, Anneriké Gray, Dems Nel, Stephanie Pretorius, Phillip Havenga en Ankia Bester

The core business of SAOU Legal Services involves

- Advice to members on a daily basis;
- Advice to colleagues on a daily basis, which includes, but is not limited to, assisting and guiding members in the representation of members in disciplinary processes as well as mediation, conciliation and arbitration (alternative dispute resolution);
- Representation of members as referred from the various SAOU provincial offices which includes:
 - Disciplinary action by the employer against members;
 - Investigations and disciplinary action by the South African Council of Educators (SACE);
 - Where applicable, investigations by the Human Rights Commission;
- Referring disputes to the appropriate forums if the actions of the employer violate the rights or interests of members. The referral may arise from a disciplinary process or a new referral from the various SAOU provincial offices;
- Matters are referred to the Labour Court in the following cases, among others:
 - If necessary to protect members' rights and interests;
 - If it is in the ultimate collective interest of members;
 - If it involves disregarding arbitration awards in favour of members;
 - Where the arbitration awards meet the requirements for review and there is a high probability of a favourable award.

Forward-looking deepening and expansion of SAOU Legal Services

Legal-related member enquiries

Member recruitment is largely an additional responsibility of provincial offices, as the employees in these offices are actively employed and present in their provinces. Full-time Shop Stewards (FTSSs) and Professional Officers (POs) are based in provincial offices and one of their most important duties is to be visible at schools in order for members to be recruited. Due to the challenges experienced by SAOU offices, Shop Stewards must assist Provincial Secretaries (PSSs) as well as Assistant Provincial Secretaries (APSs) to perform their tasks. In doing so, there simply aren't enough hours in the day for school visits as a form of member recruitment. Legal Services have therefore initiated and welcomed the increase in legal-related member enquiries so that it can ease the workload on provincial offices.

The number of members has shown consistent positive growth and therefore the structure has had to adapt to ensure that Legal Services is able to service the additional members and that the SAOU is not placed in a position where members are recruited but cannot be served.

Representation of members

There is a need for the cases to be handled by someone with legal expertise and/or a legal background in order to ensure that members receive the best possible service. The provinces' focus should be on maintaining and strengthening relationships in the workplace and with the employer, along with recruitment. It is therefore much more effective if the sensitive and complex cases (factually and relationship-wise) are handed over to Legal Services in good time to be dealt with independently of the province.

It is crucial to note that many of these cases must be managed in a certain way from the first contact, which requires the representative to have the necessary legal expertise. The provinces' need for Legal Services with proven experience and expertise in this field is clear.

Profile of Legal Services

It is important that Legal Services' profile is raised for the benefit of SAOU as a whole. The nature of the work makes it possible for the SAOU to gain a lot of media miles from Legal Services' work. Furthermore, it is important that there is visibility in the provinces and the PEC meetings, as well as to attend other events in the provinces to build relationships and give the members the opportunity to connect with Legal Services. It is much easier for a member to talk to Legal Services if they have already met. It also helps to resolve disputes without litigating if the role-players are already familiar with each other. Strong ties and relationships with other external role players are therefore considered very valuable, especially in labour law disputes with the respective employers. The Head of Legal Services was also recently elected as the Vice-Chairperson of both the Sanlam Umbrella Pension Fund: Edupen and the Edupen Umbrella Pension Fund. The election also plays a major role in raising the profile of Legal Services.

Partners

Legal Services took control of the policies for the South African Education Foundation (SAEF), TO Onderlinge Maatskappy (TOOM), Financial Services of South Africa (FINSA) and the SAOU and compiled a series of policies and protocols that need to be managed and developed on an ongoing basis. Various legal aspects for SAEF, TOOM, FINSA and the SAOU are also dealt with. The services include disciplinary actions, employment law advice and assistance, contractual advice and assistance, as well as general legal advice and assistance. The recent handling of internal disciplinary actions has made a major contribution to limiting the risk of the SAOU and promoting professional action.

Relationships

Relationships are of utmost importance in our industry and therefore we make an effort to build relationships with other role players in the education sector, such as the Afrikaanse Onderwys Netwerk (AON), Akademie Reformatoriese Opleiding en Studie (Aros), Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South Africa (FEDSAS), Governing Body Foundation (GBF), South African Education Law Association (SAELA), Marius Botha Consultants, Solidarity and the Department of Education. Also, the internal relations with the various provinces and the other departments within the SAOU.

External representation

For many years, the SAOU has instructed private law firms to handle all the work of the Labour Court and some of the more sensitive, complex and high-profile cases. These firms were also used to raise legal opinions as and when needed. During 2023, Legal Services dealt with about 15 files internally and 19 files were handled by external attorneys. There are currently 14 cases dealt with by external attorneys and about 60 files internally, including 10 cases that would have been handled by external attorneys in the past. We plan to further reduce the work that is dealt with externally in order to have more control over the affairs, as well as to further cut costs. In the event that the external attorney will no longer be available, proactive action must be taken in this regard.

As far as possible, Legal Services endeavour to deal with cases internally, which leads to a lower legal cost account. The costs associated with the use of an external legal advisor were as follows for the financial years below:

2021/'22	2022/'23	2023/'24	2024/'25	2025/'26
R 3 171 760,50	R 2 019 954,69	R 2 900 917,86	R 1 450 471,25	R 1 833 576,62

The expenditure in this regard has been curtailed drastically and huge amounts have been saved over the last two (2) financial years. This is as a direct result of the fact that Legal Services handles many of the cases itself and that it is not necessary to compensate external attorneys to handle the work.

Notable cases

The following matters and outcomes during the reporting period are noteworthy:

- Despite serious complaints against members, including allegations of racism, incidents in which learners were injured or even died, as well as cases where statements were made to the media that could potentially have been detrimental to a member's case, Legal Services succeeded in protecting members' continued employment. In several matters that received significant media exposure, members remained employed.
- In serious cases where provincial departments of education failed to pay outstanding monies owed to members, the assets of these departments were attached. In certain cases, such assets were sold at auction in order to enforce the necessary payment.
- Legal Services intervened in a matter where a member was threatened by a community at a local school, and where there had also been an attempt to poison the member. The member was assisted and was ultimately transferred to another school for safety reasons.
- In a harassment matter where a parent harassed an educator, the member was assisted by Legal Services up to the Supreme Court of Appeal. The court ultimately ruled in favour of the member.
- Legal Services assisted members and participated with them in the strike regarding the GEMS increases.
- Legal Services does not hesitate to take matters on review where necessary and justified. In several cases, the employer subsequently approached the SAOU, after which settlement agreements were reached.
- Where employers failed to pay over service benefits, matters were instituted in the Labour Court without hesitation. Several cases were successfully decided in favour of the SAOU, after which the relevant payments had to be made immediately.

Legal Services and the SAOU's strategic objectives

Over the past two years, the SAOU has undergone an intensive process of strategic development. The strategic objectives as set by the management are as follows:

1. SAOU value proposition.
2. Optimisation of structures, processes and communication.
3. Strengthening brand and values.
4. Development of sustainable alliances and networks.
5. Development of strategic and innovative thinking.
6. Human resource development and management.

Legal Services established a strategy to achieve each goal.

Value proposition for members and colleagues

The tasks performed by Legal Services form the core of the SAOU's value proposition. For Legal Services to remain effective and build on the positive actions and image radiated to the outside world, it is crucial to expand.

Pro-active action

Legal Services seek to identify trends in order to act proactively to empower their members not to become victims of the trends. They identified the following trends:

- Educators who have inappropriate relationships with children through social media and pressure children to escalate the inappropriate actions.
- Bullying behaviour by principals, parents, school management and SGBs.
- Failure of the department to discharge their duties.
- Harassment.

Furthermore, Legal Services seeks to act proactively by focusing specifically on the following:

- Creating manuals;
- Training opportunities;
- Workshops;
- Flash visits;
- Newsletters;
- Attending circuit meetings.

It is important that the above fits into the rhythm of the school programme and that relevant and important themes are dealt with in relevant times.

Training

Legal Services has set a goal to be more visible in the provinces and to establish a larger footprint. They would like the members to know who they are and take the liberty of connecting with them. Legal Services consistently offers training nationwide and has offered more than 125 training opportunities in the last two years. They believe that the training sessions make a great contribution and bring them closer to the realisation of their goal.

The planning is also to participate in a mediation course that can be utilized as a good marketing tool. It can be used for the benefit of members as well as to limit litigation and expenses.

Legal Services are involved in:

- Internal empowerment sessions for colleagues;
- Principal's Symposium;
- Women's Leadership Seminar;
- Provincial Empowerment Opportunities;
- A think tank session that takes place every two weeks;
- Empowerment of members by means of distributing newsletters and by means of empowerment events;
- Media inquiries;
- Leadership training;
- Attending PEC meetings; and
- Drafting and Publishing Legal Principles in the Education Manual.

ELRC training

Since 2023, Legal Services has offered training, funded by the ELRC, for the FTSSs, PBs, APSs and PSs. During the training, they also published a book that addresses various legal concepts. They intend to publish even more volumes in the future. The feedback regarding the training has been overwhelmingly positive and they are currently planning for the training that will be offered in 2026/2027. Legal Services plan to provide more hands-on training in line with the moot court session they hosted in 2025/2026. This will equip the staff with the necessary skills to provide more effective service to their members.

Optimisation of structures, processes and communication

There are already good processes in place and all the provinces and departments are aware of how Legal Services operate. Specifically, reference is made here to systems such as SharePoint as well as their sign-up forms. Electronic aids are already utilised extremely effectively and they will be able to be refined even further in the future. However, Legal Services are already able to perform their duties from anywhere with internet.

Legal Services aims to send out two newsletters per quarter and is currently working on ways in which their newsletters, as well as webinars, can be more visible on SAOU Online.

Strengthening the brand and values

Legal Services build the brand of the SAOU verbally. Their way of working and professionalism, good service and competent representation enable members to promote the SAOU on their behalf.

A large media footprint over the past two years was established and intend on building it further.

Legal Services are also assisting their partners such as FINSA, SAEF, TOOM and various departments and provinces. Furthermore, the SAOU also assists the other departments by assisting with legal concepts as and when necessary.

Developing sustainable alliances and networks

The above is fundamental for Legal Services to be able to carry out their tasks effectively. For Legal Services to function effectively, relationships and alliances with the other divisions and specifically the provinces are essential.

While internal relationships and alliances are essential, Legal Services will also need to expand their focus externally. They will have to focus more on stronger alliances with other role-players such as the GBF, Marius Botha Consultants, Solidarity, Skole Ondersteuningsentrum (SOS), Aros, SA Academy of Science and Arts, South African Council of Educators (SACE), the Department of Education and other role-players. The relationship with FEDSAS is strong and it will need to be maintained and expanded.

Legal Services are in regular contact with provinces and involved in the provinces. Tours, training, PEC and circuit meetings are good ways they use to establish and build relationships in the provinces.

At least three of the above events must be attended per year. Legal Services will focus on the Free State, Mpumalanga, North West and Western Cape in 2026.

The success of the initiative can be measured by observing the general relationship between Legal Services and the provinces and more specifically it can be seen whether three events were attended or not.

Development of strategic and innovative thinking

Just because Legal Services is in a good place right now doesn't mean they can rest on their laurels. If they don't think strategically and innovatively throughout, they will become obsolete and irrelevant. In the past year, Legal Services have introduced, among other things, bi-weekly information sessions which are very beneficial to the SAOU. The information sessions are known as "Think Tank" and all staff of the SAOU who work with members are encouraged to engage and discuss, share and brainstorm solutions to questions, awkward situations and difficult concepts. The nature of the work that Legal Services are involved with and the challenges associated with the work, ongoing emotional and professional support is fundamental. The sessions contribute significantly to continuous professional development while also providing a platform for reporting and accountability.

A few rules apply to the sessions to ensure that the sessions achieve their goal. The two most important rules are that Legal Services should always be supportive, respectful and courteous with each other. Furthermore, the cameras of participants must be switched on at all times so that colleagues can see each other. Sight is a fundamental part of human interaction and it is frequently left behind in today's work environment with the use of platforms such as MS Teams, Zoom, and even emails.

BELA and the resulting regulations

Everyone is aware of the BELA legislation and the strongly polarising opinions that have come with it. The SAOU Executive Officer and Legal Services deemed it necessary to conduct a series of flash visits across the country. They discussed the proposed amendments and their effect on schools and educators in detail with members and the school community as a whole. FEDSAS also attended the visits and they reached thousands of members with the campaign. Legal Services are of the opinion that the SAOU has made a huge contribution here in raising awareness of the consequences of the amendments and how they should be managed by schools.

There are further regulations that arise from the new legislation and Legal Services currently serves on the task teams that compile the regulations. They also provide input throughout and these inputs are generally accepted and included in the regulations. However, the process is very slow and all the regulations have not yet been published.

Human resource development and management

Legal Services is involved in the development of SAOU staff by continuously providing training and empowerment sessions. They have hosted several training sessions over the past year on concepts that expand their staff's knowledge and skills, also ensuring that advice and representation in all provinces are of the same high standard.

The department is also consistently involved in personnel management and they have taken responsibility of the policies. All the current policies are kept by Legal Services as electronic and hard copies. It is also constantly updated and expanded to be able to deal with the necessary issues. Internal training sessions were conducted where all the policies were discussed with SAOU staff. Legal Services reviewed and, in some cases, rewritten all applicable policies.

Amendment of the SAOU Constitution

The National Executive Council (NEC), in terms of its delegated power which stems from the SAOU Constitution, considered urgent and/or necessary amendments to the SAOU Constitution in 2026. The NEC resolved to amend the constitution and Legal Services drafted the proposed amendments. It has been provided to the Registrar of Trade Unions (Department of Labour) for preliminary consideration to ensure that the amendments are in compliance with labour legislation. The proposed amendments have been provisionally approved by the NEC and National Standing Committee (NSC), but the proposed amendments must be ratified by the Congress, after which a formal application for amendment of the constitution will be provided to the Registrar of Trade Unions.

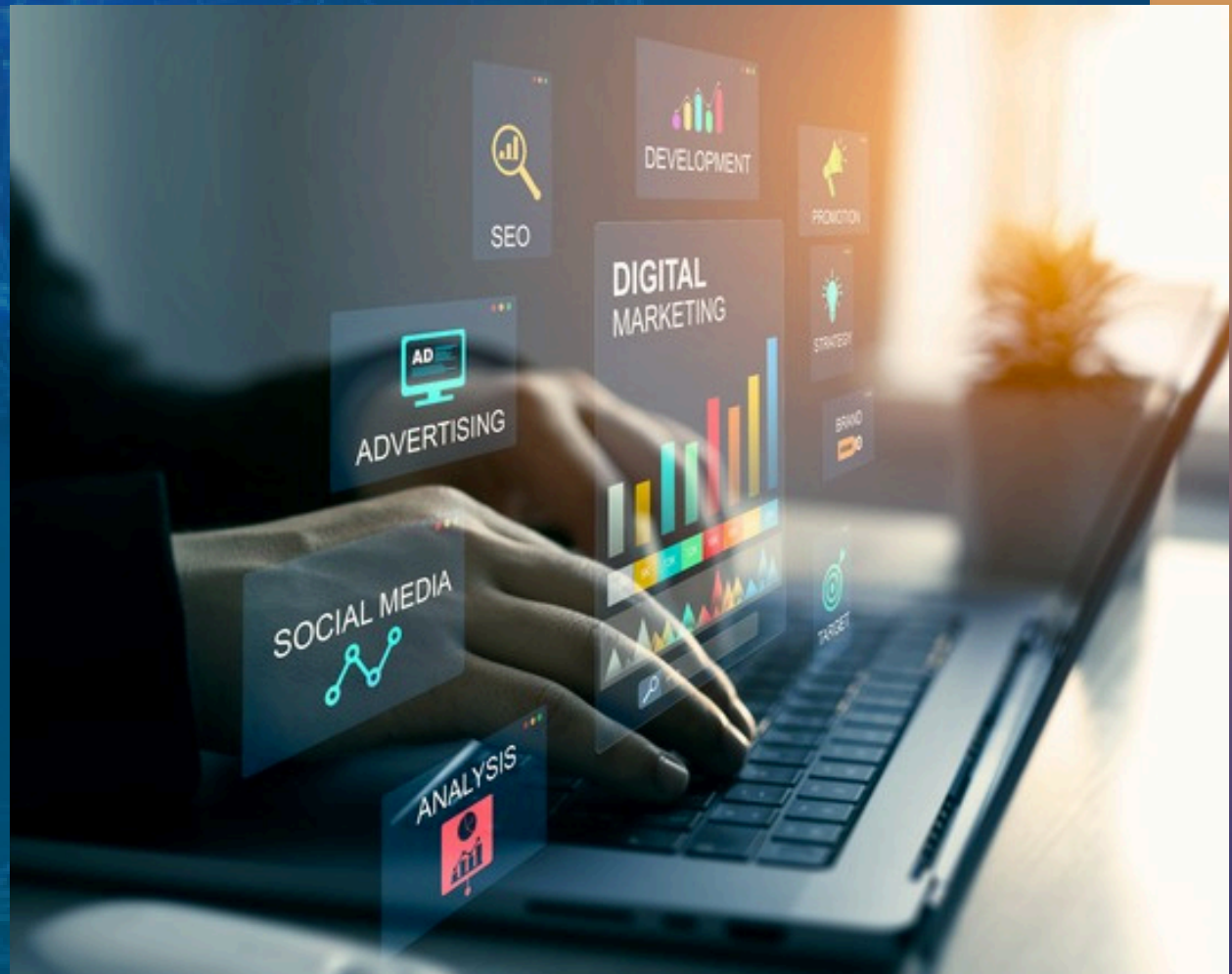
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

SAOU



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Marketing and Communication

This report reflects the continued work and development within the SAOU's Marketing and Communication Division and builds on the foundation laid during the previous congress period. Marketing and Communication developed further during this period from a support function into a strategic driver of member value, engagement and organisational positioning.

Where the 2021–2023 report emphasised the establishment of the division and the development of core communication structures, the current reporting period is characterised by consolidation, expansion and strategic refinement. The focus deliberately shifted from the establishment of channels to the optimisation of impact, member engagement and value-driven communication. Against the background of a rapidly changing digital and education environment, the division focused on the integration of platforms, the strengthening of the SAOU's brand and the development of content that not only informs, but also provides practical support to members.

The report is structured according to the SAOU's six strategic objectives and illustrates how marketing and communication, as an integrated function, contribute to the organisation's broader strategic positioning, service delivery and member value.

SAOU Value Proposition for Members

The Marketing and Communication Division plays a key role in strengthening and making visible the SAOU's value proposition for members through the development and use of integrated digital platforms and targeted communication.

SAOU app

The launch of the SAOU app in December 2025 represents an important milestone in the organisation's digital transformation and member communication strategy. The platform was deliberately positioned as a member-exclusive digital space that provides direct access to relevant content, resources and timely communication.

This initiative aligns with the organisation's broader strategic focus on deepening member engagement, modernising communication channels, and visibly strengthening the value of SAOU membership.

Growth and adoption rates

Initial download figures after launch were gradual, but since the beginning of February 2026 a clear acceleration point in growth has been observed.

The week of 19 January 2026: 5 260 downloads;

2–6 February 2026: 1 380 new downloads; and

Growth from 6 627 to 8 009 downloads over four days.

This noticeable increase within a short period coincided with focused communication about the app and indicates increased visibility, acceptance and momentum.



After this initial peak, growth continued more gradually, but remains positive – an indication of sustainable adoption.

National distribution

The current distribution of downloads (total: 7 901) confirms that the app has already established a strong national footprint across all nine provinces. Gauteng and the Western Cape emerge as frontrunners, with meaningful contributions also from other provinces. This distribution confirms that the app is not only locally concentrated, but has already been established organisation-wide.

In support of further growth, provinces were provided with printed pamphlets containing QR codes for direct download of the app. This material serves a dual purpose: it not only promotes app adoption, but at the same time strengthens the value proposition of membership.

In addition to download figures, the broader platform data shows the scope of the SAOU's digital reach within the d6 School Communicator ecosystem. **There are currently 26 159 users (members) who are subscribed to the SAOU community** and have an active installation of School Communicator. This figure represents users who already have access to the platform's content and communication.

It is important to mention that there may be a degree of overlap between this figure and the SAOU's own white-label app, as some users may possibly have both applications installed. Nevertheless, this data confirms that the SAOU already has an established digital user base, which provides a strong foundation for the further growth and adoption of the SAOU app as a primary communication channel.

Engagement and use

Early engagement data shows extremely positive read and open rates for national messages distributed via the app.

Examples of read rates (6 February 2026):

- Curriculum message: 15 261;
- National newsletter – GEMS: 14 050; and
- National newsletter – Strategic positioning: 15 288.

These figures indicate:

- Trust in the application as a primary source of information;
- Effective distribution of critical messages; and
- Increased visibility of organisational content.

The application is consequently developing into a core platform for direct, reliable and measurable communication with members.

Provincial communication: Focus area

Although national messages perform strongly, data shows that provincial newsletters currently have lower read and open rates.

This trend highlights the need to:

- Refine provincial communication approaches;
- Make content more targeted and contextually relevant; and
- Deliberately strengthen provincial engagement.

This process will be developed further in collaboration with provincial structures.

Structured communication and internal alignment

An important development is the integration of Workplace Representatives (WPRs) into a structured app group. This integration creates a direct and reliable communication channel, strengthens organisational coordination, supports the rapid distribution of critical information and improves internal alignment.

Die toep dien dus nie slegs as eksterne kommunikasieplatform nie, maar ook as 'n instrument vir interne organisatoriese doeltreffendheid.

Strategic value

The SAOU app forms a core pillar of the organisation's digital communication strategy and contributes directly to the further deepening of member engagement, the strengthening of the value proposition of membership, greater accessibility to resources and content, and more direct, timely and measurable communication.

The current growth and engagement data confirms that the app is already making a meaningful contribution to the organisation's strategic objectives.

Strategic outlook

The focus for the next phase is to strengthen the current growth momentum sustainably, increase provincial engagement, and further refine content and communication approaches.

The SAOU app is establishing itself as the organisation's primary digital communication channel, with clear potential to play a central role over time in member engagement, service delivery and strategic communication.

Strategic outlook

The Wellness Project is currently entering its second year of implementation and is therefore still in a development and growth phase. Nevertheless, early trends indicate increasing engagement, growing trust and meaningful impact.

This phase offers significant potential for further expansion, refinement and deepening of the project's reach and effectiveness. The long-term objective is to move from a reactive support model to the establishment of a sustainable culture of care within the education environment.

The SAOU remains committed to the further expansion and strengthening of this initiative, with a view to tangible, long-term impact on educators' wellbeing.

Corporate Gifts

Since 2021, the SAOU has made a deliberate shift in its approach to corporate gifts by offering members a choice, rather than the traditional, uniform diary that was previously distributed. This approach contributed to improved cost-effectiveness, increased relevance and a more flexible, member-centred value offering.

In the lead-up to the 2025/2026 financial year, a further strategic shift was made in pursuit of sustainable and meaningful member value. As part of this reprioritisation, a portion of the budget for corporate gifts was redirected to new value initiatives, which led to reduced funding for this component. This decision reflects a deliberate shift from once-off, tangible items to more sustainable and continuous member value.

The remaining funding for corporate gifts will henceforth be handled by provincial SAOU offices, with room for adaptation according to provincial needs and preferences. This approach enables greater flexibility and context-driven implementation.

The Marketing and Communication Division continues to fulfil a key support role, especially in respect of design, standardisation and procurement, to ensure that the SAOU's brand identity is applied consistently and professionally.

Teaching Posts (Facebook groups and Webpage)

The Teaching Posts platform forms part of the SAOU's digital service offering and contributes directly to the organisation's value proposition for members by making employment opportunities within the education sector accessible.

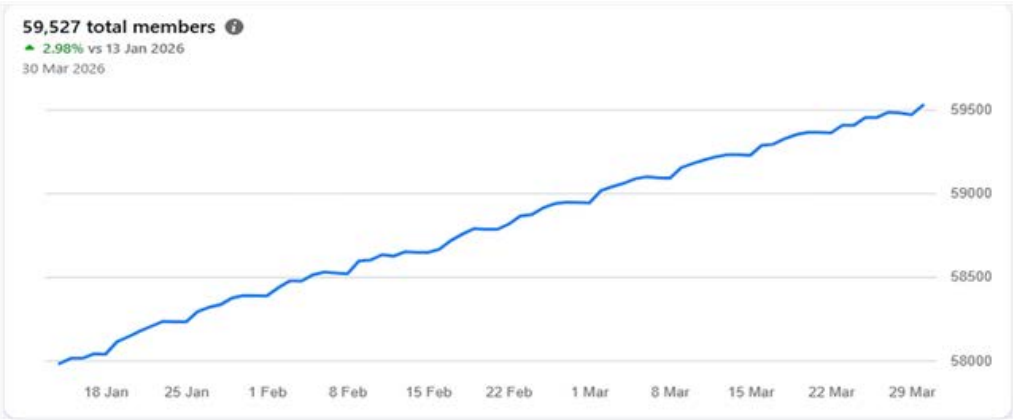
The platform facilitates the linking of employers and potential candidates and offers a centralised space where posts can be advertised and obtained. Data indicates steady growth in the number of registered candidates and employers, as well as an increase in the total number of posts advertised over time.

Development and use of the Teaching Posts webpage (March 2024 – July 2025)

	Employers	Candidates	Posts advertised (total)	Active advertisements
2024/03/14	185	501	276	8
2024/04/12	201	538	313	14
2024/05/09	208	511	316	8
2024/06/03	208	521	324	9
2024/07/09	208	533	333	6
2024/08/04	219	616	340	11
2024/09/10	233	649	374	21
Nuwe Blad*	Domain migration - SAOU Online			
2024/10/14	188	670	392	7
2024/11/03	191	676	395	2
2025/02/07	199	708	389	0
2025/03/03	201	710	391	1
2025/02/07	199	708	389	0
2025/03/03	201	710	391	1
2025/04/08	204	722	396	4*
2025/05/08	204	728	398	2
2025/07/18	210	735	405	6

SAOU Teaching Posts Facebook Page

Growth in followers (January – March 2026):



The data shows steady and sustained growth in the number of followers during the first quarter of 2026, with a total membership of 59 527 by the end of March and growth of 2.98%, indicating increasing visibility and interest in the platform.

Optimisation Of Structures, Processes and Communication

The Marketing and Communication division plays a central role in optimising communication structures, refining processes and establishing integrated communication channels within the organisation.

A core focus during the reporting period was the strengthening of digital communication channels to ensure timely, direct and measurable communication with members. In this regard, the implementation and growth of the SAOU app made a meaningful contribution to the streamlining of national communication and the improvement of access to information.

The integration of WPRs and other key role-players into structured communication groups within the app contributed to improved internal alignment and more effective distribution of critical information. This development supports greater organisational coherence and ensures that communication takes place more consistently and purposefully.

Although national communication channels perform strongly, data shows that provincial communication requires further attention. This trend highlights the need to refine provincial communication approaches, make content more contextually relevant and deliberately strengthen engagement at provincial level.

The division continuously supports provinces with standardised marketing material, graphics and communication guidelines to ensure a consistent corporate image. This support contributes to strengthening the SAOU's brand identity and promotes coherent communication across all platforms.

Furthermore, there is a deliberate focus on optimising internal processes related to content creation, distribution and platform management. These processes are continuously evaluated and refined to improve responsiveness, efficiency and the quality of communication.

Strengthening Of Brand and Values

The Marketing and Communication division plays a key role in strengthening the SAOU's brand and developing a clear value-driven identity within the education environment. This process is supported by integrated campaigns, targeted content and consistent visual and message alignment across all platforms.

An important focus during the reporting period was the development and implementation of strategic campaigns that not only increase visibility, but also strengthen emotional connection with members and the broader education community.

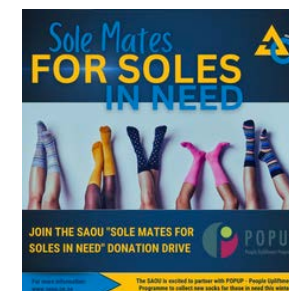
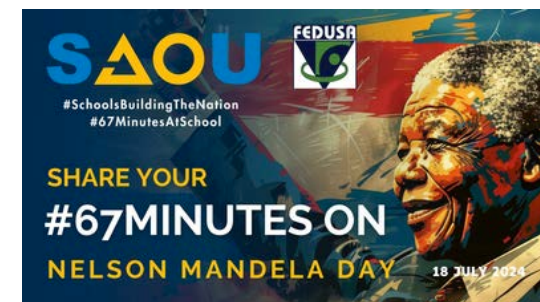
"Omgeemaand" – July

Caring Month forms an established part of the SAOU's annual campaign calendar and focuses on community-oriented engagement and tangible support to groups in need.

In 2025, the campaign, "We're Stepping up This July", focused on collecting school shoes for learners in need through direct donations or a monetary contribution of R35 per pair. All donations were handed over to The Potato Foundation.

The campaign enjoyed strong participation, with collections yielding a total amount of R5 365 and making the provision of 160 pairs of new school shoes possible. Digital engagement was also meaningful, with the launch post on Facebook achieving 17 928 views and a reach of 14 917.

Caring Month contributes strategically to strengthening the SAOU's social responsibility profile, creating meaningful engagement beyond traditional trade-union activities, and positioning the organisation as an active role-player within communities.



Teacher's Month – October

Teachers' Month serves as a core campaign with a specific focus on recognition, appreciation and strengthening teachers' professional identity.

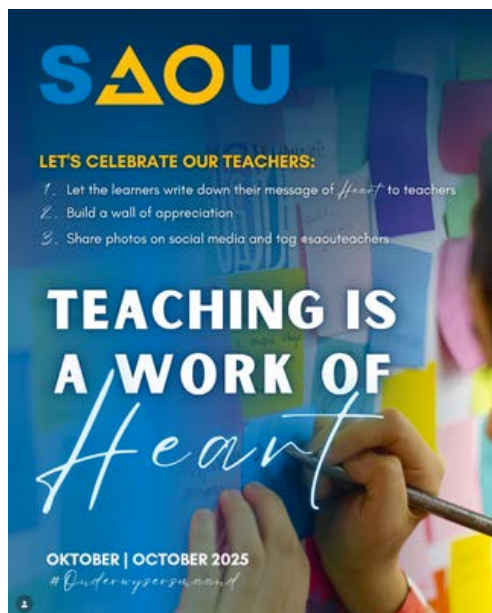
The 2025 campaign, with the theme "Teaching is a Work of Heart", followed an integrated approach that included both digital and grassroots activations. Learners, parents and communities were involved in sharing thank-you messages to teachers, which were visually displayed through so-called "Walls of Appreciation" at schools.

This approach not only offered recognition to teachers, but also stimulated broader community engagement and strengthened the emotional impact of the campaign. Further strengthening was achieved through media exposure and national and provincial activations.

Corporate Image and Consistency

Maintaining a uniform and professional corporate image remains a core priority. The division supports provinces and internal role-players with standardised graphics, marketing material and guidelines to ensure that all communication is aligned with the SAOU's brand identity.

This consistency contributes to strengthening brand recognition, credibility and professional presentation across all platforms and in all communication.



Brand Identity Manual and Brand Development

The SAOU's brand identity manual serves as a core instrument for managing and consistently applying the organisation's brand identity. It provides clear guidelines and standards for the visual and content-related representation of the SAOU across all platforms and communication touchpoints.

Compliance with these guidelines not only ensures consistency, but also strengthens brand recognition and contributes to communicating a coherent and professional image of the organisation.

The year 2026 represents an important milestone for the SAOU's brand, with the introduction of a 30-year commemorative logo that symbolises three decades of growth and development. This milestone was used as an opportunity to further refine and modernise the organisation's visual identity.

As part of this process, a refreshed graphic package was developed, with the strategic integration of turquoise as an additional core colour. This addition brings a fresh, dynamic visual element to the brand and supports the SAOU's positioning within a competitive and increasingly digital environment.

The updating of the brand identity manual ensures that these new visual elements are applied consistently and purposefully, while preserving the organisation's established identity and legacy. This balance between continuity and renewal contributes to a brand that is at once recognisable, relevant and future-oriented.

Sustainable Alliances and Networks

The Marketing and Communication division contributes to the establishment and strengthening of sustainable alliances and networks through strategic collaboration, shared initiatives and the expansion of the SAOU's visibility within the broader education and professional environment.

An important example of this is the collaboration with the North-West University (NWU) in the development and implementation of the Wellness Project and the SAOU Help service. This partnership not only ensures professional credibility, but also makes it possible to provide ethically grounded and expert support to educators.

Furthermore, the Wellbeing Project was supported by collaboration with AON, which contributes to the sustainability and expansion of the initiative. These types of partnerships enable the SAOU to strengthen its service offering and, at the same time, unlock new value for members.

Collaboration with external organisations and platforms also plays a role in expanding the SAOU's reach and influence. Through strategic liaison, content collaboration and shared projects, the organisation's visibility is strengthened and the SAOU is positioned as a relevant and involved role-player within the education environment

Digital platforms increasingly serve as a point of connection for these networks, where collaboration is facilitated not only physically, but also virtually. This approach supports the development of dynamic, accessible and sustainable networks that extend across geographical and organisational boundaries.

Strategic and Innovative Thinking

The Marketing and Communication division functions within a dynamic environment where adaptability, forward thinking and innovation are essential. During the reporting period, deliberate focus was placed on the development of strategies that not only address current needs, but also make provision for future trends within the education and digital landscape.

An important strategic shift was the movement from traditional awareness communication to the provision of practical, value-driven content. This approach recognises that members increasingly expect content that is immediately applicable and makes a direct contribution to their professional and personal wellbeing

In this regard, social media and digital platforms were purposefully used as channels for the distribution of psycho-educational content, practical tools and short, accessible inputs that can easily be applied in the daily working environment. This strategy contributed to increased engagement and a stronger perception of value among members.

The use of data and insights, especially from platforms such as the SAOU app and SAOU Help, plays an increasingly important role in refining communication approaches. This data-driven approach makes it possible to develop content in a more targeted way and to align more closely with the real needs of members.

Furthermore, focus was placed on the integration of different communication channels and platforms to create a coherent and user-friendly experience. This integrated approach not only supports better access to information, but also strengthens the overall impact of communication.

The division remains committed to the continuous exploration of new approaches, technologies and content formats to ensure that the SAOU remains relevant, responsive and future-oriented.

Social Media and Digital Engagement

The SAOU uses various social media platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, as part of an integrated digital communication strategy.

Social media functions as a multifunctional hub that contributes to strengthening brand awareness, promoting relationships with members and non-members, as well as supporting member recruitment. These platforms further serve as a valuable source of insight into member behaviour and preferences, and support the deliberate positioning of the SAOU's brand within an increasingly digital environment.

Facebook

Facebook remains the primary social media platform for the SAOU, with daily, focused posts that are strategically planned and scheduled to ensure maximum reach and engagement. The platform is continuously monitored to ensure timely response and effective management of interaction.

The largest percentage of followers (34%) falls within the 25–34 age group. The number of followers grew from 28 105 in 2023 to 32 833 in 2026, indicating steady growth and increased visibility.

Instagram

The Instagram platform is used mainly for visual communication, including photos, carousel posts, short videos ("reels") and motivational content. This platform supports the strengthening of the SAOU's brand through visually accessible and relevant content.

The number of followers increased from 1 281 in 2023 to 3 255 in 2026, indicating meaningful growth in engagement.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is used to strengthen the professional image of the SAOU by sharing current education matters, staff involvement in the sector and professional successes. The platform also serves as a channel for advertising vacancies to obtain greater visibility.

Followers grew from 29 in 2023 to 299 in 2026, indicating an increasing professional presence.

WhatsApp

The national WhatsApp channel was established in July 2024 as part of a strategy to strengthen direct and timely communication with members. The channel is used effectively for the distribution of core information, including newsletters, media statements, national training, focus group communication and relevant education-related events.

Provincial WhatsApp groups function additionally by facilitating region-specific communication and support.

Monitoring and Management of Platforms

The SAOU's social media platforms are deliberately managed to communicate positive, relevant and professional content. These platforms serve as supplementary communication channels that are in many cases more direct and accessible than traditional channels such as email.

Interaction on platforms is continuously monitored to identify and manage unacceptable behaviour or content. A balanced approach to content and engagement is maintained to ensure that the SAOU's brand is consistently associated with quality, reliability and professional integrity.

YouTube and Video Content

The use of video-based content began to play an increasingly important role during the reporting period as part of the SAOU's broader digital communication strategy. The YouTube platform serves as an additional channel through which content is made available to members in a more visual and accessible manner.

Statistics for the period 2024 to March 2026 indicate a gradual expansion in the use of the platform, with the increasing availability of video content related to training opportunities, communication inputs and other relevant themes.

The broader development of video content supports a strategic shift towards multimodal communication, where content is not only text-based, but is also presented by means of video and other digital formats to accommodate different preferences and learning styles of members.

The continued development and use of the YouTube platform offer further opportunities to increase reach, extend the lifespan of content and improve the accessibility of SAOU information.

Development and Management of Human Resources

The effective functioning of the Marketing and Communication division rests on the expertise, creativity and professional dedication of its personnel. During the reporting period, further work was built on an established team that provides a national service to the organisation.

The nature of the division's work requires a combination of technical skills, strategic insight and creative ability. Team members are responsible for a wide spectrum of functions, including content creation, graphic design, digital platform management, media handling and the support of provincial and national initiatives.

There is a continuous focus on collaboration within the division, as well as with other SAOU divisions and provincial structures. This collaboration ensures that communication takes place in an integrated, consistent manner and in line with the organisation's strategic objectives.

The division also plays a supportive role in the capacity-building of internal role-players by offering guidance in respect of communication practices, the use of digital platforms and the application of corporate brand standards.

Continuous development and adaptation remain essential within a rapidly changing digital environment. The division therefore remains focused on strengthening internal capacity and developing skills to meet new communication requirements.

During the reporting period, important personnel changes took place within the division. Maréa Viljoen, Divisional Head: Marketing and Communication, left the service of the SAOU on 31 August 2025.

After her departure, Adel Jacobs, Divisional Head: Professional Services, provided leadership to the division in an acting capacity until a permanent appointment was made.

With effect from 1 April 2026, Liana Nel was appointed as Divisional Head: Marketing and Communication, ensuring stability and continued strategic leadership for the division.



From left to right: Danolien van den Berg, Liezl Henrich, Liana Nel, Josie Venter, Stephan van den Berg

MEDIA



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Media

Media coverage

In 2024, the SAOU appointed a dedicated media liaison officer to increase the visibility of the SAOU in the mainstream media.

The SAOU previously mainly relied on newsletters and social media announcements. However, the National Standing Committee decided that it was imperative for the SAOU also to become a leading voice in the mainstream media to ensure that accurate and considered opinions regarding education could be expressed.

The media coverage focused particularly on radio and television news to relay the message of the SAOU as widely as possible. During this period, several interviews and inserts were broadcast on RSG, SABC, EWN, GROOT TV and kykNET

Radio coverage expanded from mainly national channels to local radio stations such as Pretoria FM, Radio Riverside, Jacaranda FM, OFM, Radio Rosestad and others. The SAOU has a monthly insert on Pretoria FM where education matters are discussed.

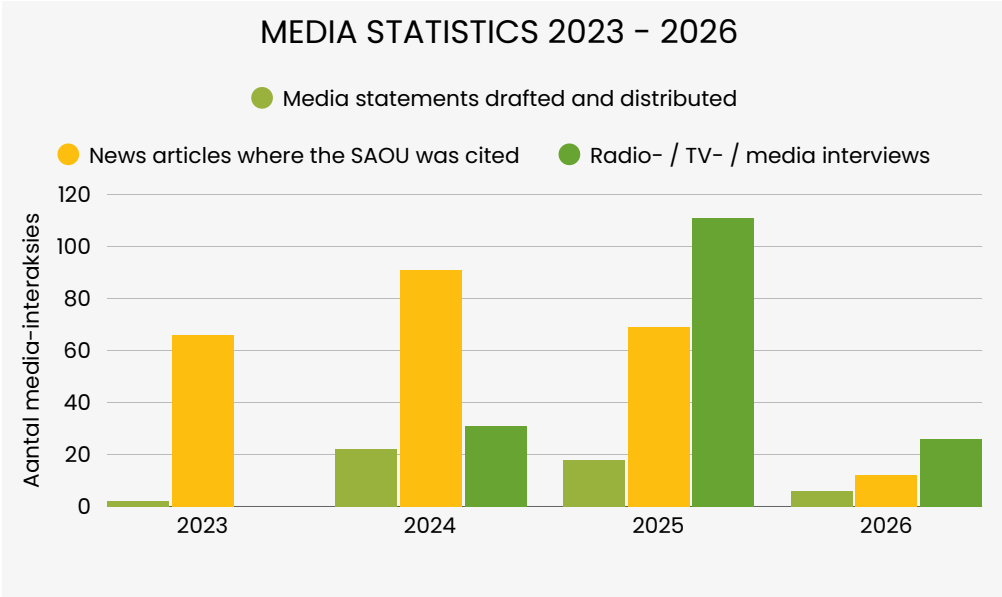
News coverage increased during the reporting period through coverage on digital news platforms such as News24, Netwerk24, Maroela Media and TimesLIVE, as well as news publications such as Daily Maverick, Die Burger, Beeld, Rapport, The Citizen and Sowetan. The SAOU is frequently quoted in new articles.

Since 2025, the approach has also shifted to include coverage in local newspapers, particularly where it enhances members' visibility within their communities.

A project for 2026 is the publication of opinion pieces by SAOU staff in particular, to ensure that the SAOU's point of view on the education sector is known to our members, and to increase national visibility.

Statistics

	Press releases drafted and sent out	News reports citing SAOU	Radio/TV/media interviews
2023	2	66	0
2024	22	91	31
2025	18	69	111
2026	6	11	20



Maryna Besseling

NATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

SAOU



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National Training Institute

The National Training Institute (NTI) made a meaningful contribution to professional development within the education sector during the period 2023–2025. The Teacher Union Collaboration (TUC) training initiative grew from 1 095 participants in 2023 to 1 940 in 2024 and 1 700 in 2025. This growth reflects an increasing scope, improved geographical reach and a more focused approach to key priorities, including Assessment for Learning (AfL). The collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) remains a key driving force behind these initiatives.

Introduction and name change

The NTI is the successor to the South African Foundation for Education and Training (SAFET), which was originally established as a clearing house for education research and opinion-forming within the Afrikaans education community

Since its establishment, SAFET has undergone various transformations and was ultimately established, under the auspices of the South African Education Foundation (SAEF), as a training institution. In this capacity, SAFET primarily provided training services to other teachers' unions and the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

In certain contexts, it was not always strategically desirable for the SAOU to act directly as a provider of training. SAFET was consequently utilised successfully as an alternative vehicle for training. From 2012 onwards, SAFET in particular provided training services to the DBE, with a specific focus on senior officials in provincial education departments.

These activities were discontinued with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, SAFET became dormant and was amalgamated with SAEF as a separate legal entity, with a view to possible future training opportunities.

The NTI does not currently function as a separate legal entity, but rather as a flexible structure within SAEF. This model enables the Institute to operate adaptably and to assume various functional and operational forms, depending on need. The Institute builds on more than 18 years of experience, with a clear focus on needs-driven initiatives.

Functioning of the Institute

The Institute focuses on the training of role players in the education sector, including educators and departmental officials.

The NTI is able to provide training at the request of the DBE. In cases where the DBE requires joint (multi-union) training, the Institute is well positioned to fulfil this role.

The current operational model entails the DBE directing a request to education unions to facilitate training, on condition that the training must be multi-union in nature. This implies that members of all unions have access to the training.

For SAOU members, this model holds particular value, as training is often presented largely, or even exclusively, in Afrikaans.

Funding for such training is provided by the DBE, subject to applicable Treasury regulations and other requirements.

This training:

- takes place within the policy and financial frameworks of the DBE and the Treasury;
- is accessible to members of different education unions; and
- serves as supplementary support to the existing training initiatives of the SAOU, without overlap.

The training provided by the Institute should therefore be regarded as supplementary to the SAOU's existing training programmes and does not detract from them.

Governance and management framework

The NTI functions under the oversight of the SAEF Management Committee, to which it is accountable. Operational management is handled by an operational committee with a flexible composition that is adapted according to specific projects and training initiatives.

Composition of the operational committee during the reporting period

Rol/Function	Initial appointmen	Susequent appointments
Convener/Chairperson	Chris Kloppe	Paul Sauer
SAEF-representative and finance	Janie Williams	Ilse Brett en Aletta de Villiers
SAOU-representative in DBE-structures	Marietjie Behr	Adel Jacobs
Professionele Services (SAOU)	Marietjie Behr	Adel Jacobs
Nasional coordinator (contract)	Cornelius Oosthuizen	Koos van der Walt
Administrative support	Phillicity Fouché	Alida van Staden, Suné van Zyl (Met ondersteuning deur Ansa Theron)

This composition reflects the integrated involvement of strategic, financial, content-related and administrative expertise, enabling the effective planning and implementation of training initiatives.

Representation in DBE structures

The NTI and its affiliated role players are actively represented in relevant DBE structures that oversee training programmes.

During the reporting period, the following representation applied:

- Steering Committee: Johann Güldenpfennig
- Operational Committee (DBE structure): Adel Jacobs

This involvement contributes to:

- improved coordination of training programmes;
- direct input during planning and implementation; and
- strengthened cooperation between unions and the DBE.

TUC training for 2023

The training initiatives presented during 2023 functioned within the framework of the TUC project entitled “Skills for a Changing World”. This project formed part of a three-year agreement between the DBE and education unions, covering the period from 2022 to 2024.

The programmes for 2023 were aimed at strengthening professional teaching skills in response to a dynamic and changing education environment, with specific emphasis on technology integration, innovative teaching approaches and the development of skills relevant to a changing world.

The table reflects focused presentations with relatively high attendance per session across various provinces.

Multi-level and multi-grade teaching

No.	Date	Province	Town	Attendees
1	27/09/2023	GAU	Pretoria	94
2	11/10/2023	NK	Uppington	40
3	12/10/2023	NK	Springbok	27
4	17/10/2023	WK	Beaufort-Wes	60
5	23/10/2023	GAU	Vereeniging	69
6	25/10/2023	MPU	Bethal	34
7	26/10/2023	MPU	Mbombela	24
8	07/11/2023	LIM	Nylstroom	32
9	05/12/2023	GAU	Pretoria	49
10	07/12/2023	GAU	Pretoria	43
Totaal				472

The table reflects a larger number of presentations with a wider geographical spread and varying attendance.

Mathematics & Coding

No.	Date	Province	Town	Attendees
1	18/09/2023	NW	Potchefstroom	30
2	18/09/2023	WK	Eversdal	27
3	18/09/2023	GAU	Pretoria	41
4	18/09/2023	LIM	Makanye	43
5	18/09/2023	OK	Humansdorp	22
6	19/09/2023	OK	Oos-Londen	24
7	19/09/2023	GAU	Pretoria	33
8	19/09/2023	NW	Klerksdorp	20
9	19/09/2023	WK	Saldanhaabaai	12
10	19/09/2023	LIM	Manthwding	20

No.	Date	Province	Town	Attendees
11	20/09/2023	GAU	Pretoria	31
12	20/09/2023	OK	Gqeberha	16
13	21/09/2023	NW	Rustenburg	19
14	26/09/2023	OK	Burgersdorp	52
15	26/09/2023	GAU	Vanderbijlpark	31
16	26/09/2023	GAU	Roodepoort	27
17	27/09/2023	GAU	Randburg	34
18	28/09/2023	GAU	Randfontein	19
19	28/09/2023	GAU	Krugersdorp	22
20	28/09/2023	OK	Despatch	23
21	16/10/2023	OK	Hummerwood	27
22	04/12/2023	NW	Hartbeespoort	50

In 2023, the TUC training initiative reached a total of 1 095 participants through a combination of training in multi-level and multi-grade teaching (472 participants across 10 presentations) and training in Mathematics and Coding (623 participants across 22 presentations). While the training in multi-level and multi-grade teaching was characterised by relatively higher attendance per session and focused implementation in selected provinces, the Mathematics and Coding component ensured a wider geographical spread and greater accessibility through a larger number of presentations. Collectively, the data reflects a balanced approach in which both the depth of engagement (through larger groups) and the broadening of reach (through more presentations) were successfully addressed.

TUC training for 2024

The training initiatives for 2024 built on the established TUC framework and focused on deepening and broadening the impact of training within the education sector. During this phase, emphasis was placed on the practical application of skills, the expansion of geographical reach and the support of teachers in diverse teaching contexts.

The training programmes for 2024 focused specifically on the integration of technology in teaching, the strengthening of assessment practices, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the effective management of multi-level and multi-grade classrooms. This approach aimed to further equip teachers with appropriate strategies to meet the demands of a dynamic and changing education environment.

The following training programmes were presented:

- Mathematics and (unplugged) coding
This programme focused on the integration of coding within the existing Mathematics curriculum, with the aim of equipping teachers with practical strategies to develop computational thinking among learners.
- Foundation Phase baseline assessment through coding
This programme introduced an alternative approach to baseline assessment through the use of block coding, with a view to more interactive, effective and learner-centred assessment practices.
- Entrepreneurship (in collaboration with the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation)
The focus of this training was to support teachers in facilitating entrepreneurship education, with the aim of developing learners' entrepreneurial skills and economic thinking.
- Multi-level and multi-grade teaching
This programme focused on the application of differentiated teaching and assessment strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs within the classroom effectively, in alignment with relevant policy frameworks.

All programmes were presented free of charge, included SACE points and were accessible to teachers regardless of union affiliation. Training materials and logistical support were provided during the sessions. Onderstaande tabelle dui die onderwerp, provinsie, datum van aanbieding, dorp, venue en getal persone wat dit bygewoon het, aan. Die DBO stel belang in die distrikte waar opleiding plaasvind – hul rekordhouding van data vereis die besonderhede soos hieronder aangedui:

The table reflects a limited, yet strategic trainer development initiative.

Trainers (Lead Teacher Training)

No.	Province	District	Date	Town	Attendees
1	GAU	Tshwane South	29/06/2024	Pretoria	3

Mathematics and (unplugged) coding

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	LIM	Sekhukhune East	20 Julie 2024	Modimolle	L/s Eenheid	44
2	LIM	Capricorn South	22 Julie 2024	Polokwane	Makanye P/S	38
3	KZN	Pinetown	06 Augustus 2024	Pinetown	P/S Pitlochry	54
4	VS	Fezile Dabi	16 Augustus 2024	Sasolburg	L/s Noordskool	37
5	VS	Olien	22 Augustus 2024	Bloemfontein	Onzerust P/S	81
6	MPU	Gert Sibande	29 Augustus 2024	Secunda	L/s Kruinpark	138
7	KZN	Umlazi	30 Augustus 2024	Durban	Avoca P/S	78
8	OK	Buffalo City	06 September 2024	Grahamstad	H/s PJ Olivier	63
9	NW	Bonjanala	09 September 2024	Rustenburg	L/s David Brink	21
10	OK	Buffalo City	07 September 2024	Oos-Londen	L/s Voorpos	16
11	LIM	Mopani West	10 September 2024	Letsitele	L/s Dr Annecke	102
12	WK	Metro North	10 September 2024	Kaapstad	L/s Durbanville	30
13	WK	Cape winelands	11 September 2024	Kaapstad	L/s Wynland	30
14	GAU	Gauteng West	18 September 2024	Johannesburg	L/s Krugersdorp-Noord	29
15	GAU	Tshwane South	19 September 2024	Pretoria	L/s Constantia Park	35
16	LIM	Capricorn South	30 September 2024	Polokwane	Pietersburg-Suid	27
17	GAU	JHB North	22 Oktober 2024	Johannesburg	L/s Louw Geldenhuys	14
Totaal						837

The table reflects a more focused implementation with smaller, yet purpose-driven training groups.

Foundation Phase baseline assessment through coding

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	LIM	Capricorn South	23 Julie 2024	Polokwane	Makanye P/S	46
2	KZN	Pinetown	06 Augustus 2024	Pinetown	Pitlochry P/S	50
3	OK	Chris Hani West	12 Augustus 2024	Gqeberha	Victoria Park Grey P/s	33
4	GAU	Tshwane South	28 Augustus 2024	Pretoria	SAOU	79

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
5	OK	Buffalo City	20 Julie 2024	Modimolle	L/s Eenheid	4
6	NW	Dr Kenneth Kaunda	14 September 2024	Potchefstroom	Hoër Volksskool Potchefstroom	12
7	OK	Graaff-Reinet	18 Oktober 2024	Pretoria	Constantia P/S	23
8	WK	Metro North	22 Oktober 2024	Kaapstad	L/s Durbanville	79
Totaal						326

The table reflects a limited, yet targeted intervention within the broader training programme.

Entrepreneurship

No.	Province	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	LIM	Capricorn South	23 Julie 2024	Polokwane	Makanye P/S	3

The table reflects a high frequency of presentations with significant participation, particularly in specific districts.

Multi-level and multi-grade teaching

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	NK	ZF Mgcawu (ZFM)	19 Augustus 2024	Upington	H/s Upington	39
2	NK	ZF Mgcawu (ZFM)	20 Augustus 2024	Upington	H/s Upington	40
3	KZN	Umlazi	26 Augustus 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	40
4	KZN	Umlazi	27 Augustus 2024	Durban	Durban Primary (Berea)	35
5	KZN	Umlazi	28 Augustus 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	48
6	KZN	Umlazi	29 Augustus 2024	Amamzimtoti	Amamzimtoti Primary	48
7	KZN	Umlazi	30 Augustus 2024	Durban	Chatsworth Teacher Centre	41
8	KZN	Umlazi	02 September 2024	Durban	Durban Primary or Berea	26
9	KZN	Umlazi	03 September 2024	Durban	Northlands Primary	42

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
10	KZN	Umlazi	04 September 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	43
11	KZN	Umlazi	05 September 2024	Durban	Celubuhle Primary	28
12	KZN	Umlazi	06 September 2024	Durban	Amanzimtoti Primary	56
13	KZN	Umlazi	09 September 2024	Durban	Chatsworth Teachers Centre	43
14	KZN	Umlazi	10 September 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	38
15	KZN	Umlazi	11 September 2024	Durban	Addington Primary	35
16	KZN	Umlazi	12 September 2024	Durban	Chatsworth Teachers Centre	45
17	KZN	Umlazi	13 September 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	45
18	KZN	Umlazi	14 September 2024	Durban	Lamontville Education Centre	28
19	LIM	Capricorn South	12 Oktober 2024	Pietersburg	Pietersburg – Noord	27
Totaal						1 940

The table indicates an unequal but strategic distribution of training across provinces, with certain provinces showing higher concentrations.

Summary of training by province

PROVINCE	TRAINERS	EDUCATORS	TOTAL
Oos-Kaap	0	116	116
Vrystaat	1	118	119
Gauteng	1	180	181
KwaZulu-Natal	1	823	824
Limpopo	0	311	311
Mpumalanga	0	138	139
Noord-Kaap	0	79	79
Noordwes	0	33	33
Wes-Kaap	0	139	139
TOTAL	3	1 937	1 940

In 2024, the TUC training initiative showed a significant expansion in scope and reach, with a total of 1 940 participants across 46 training opportunities. The largest component was multi-level and multi-grade teaching, which alone reached 747 participants and was characterised by a high concentration of presentations, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. The Mathematics and (unplugged) coding training reached 837 participants across various provinces, with several high attendance figures indicating strong demand. The Foundation Phase baseline assessment through coding component involved a further 326 participants, while a limited entrepreneurship offering was also implemented. Collectively, the data reflects a deliberate strategy to broaden both the scale of participation and the geographical distribution of training, with a specific focus on practical skills and phase-focused support within the education sector.

TUC training for 2025

A new Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for a further three-year period was concluded in 2025 between the DBE and the five education unions. This agreement forms the basis for the continuation of the TUC training initiatives.

The implementation of the 2025 training programmes took place within this framework. As a result of a delayed start on the part of the DBE, the training programmes only commenced in the third quarter. This placed significant pressure on implementation, as training had to be presented during both the third and fourth quarters. Traditionally, training is not presented during the fourth quarter due to the shortened nature of the quarter, as well as the heavy workload of educators related to examinations, assessment and marking.

Despite these challenges, the following training programmes were presented:

- **Assessment for Learning (AfL)** (SAOU presenters; Grade R-12 educators)
This programme focused on the use of continuous assessment and feedback to support and improve learning. The approach emphasises the learning process rather than merely the end result and equips teachers to identify learning barriers, clarify objectives and adapt teaching strategies.

Key elements of the programme included the following:
 - clear learning objectives and success criteria;
 - effective questioning;
 - feedback that promotes learning;
 - peer and self-assessment; and
 - adapting teaching based on evidence of learning.
- **Entrepreneurship** (in collaboration with the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation; Grade 8–12 educators)
This programme built on the 2024 initiative and further supported teachers in facilitating entrepreneurship education. The focus was on the development of practical skills and the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset among learners, with the aim of equipping them as future job creators and economic role players.

The table reflects a high number of presentations with strong participation and a clear concentration in specific provinces.

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	GAU	Tshwane South	21/07/2025 & 22/07/2025	Pretoria	SAOU	9
2	NW	Dr Kenneth Kaunda	19/08/2025	Potchefstroom	L/s Mooirivier	22
3	LIM	Capricorn South	19/08/2025	Polokwane	Makanye Primary	40
4	KZN	Pinetown	03/09/2025	Pinetown	Pitlochry Primary	37
5	KZN	Phoenix Central	04/09/2025	Phoenix	Whetstone Primary	42
6	GAU	Gauteng West	09/09/2025	Johannesburg	L/s Kruijnpark	6
7	GAU	Tshwane South	10/09/2025	Pretoria	SAOU	14
8	KZN	Pinetown	10/09/2025	Durban	Pitlochry PS, Westville	42
9	LIM	Waterberg 2	13/09/2025	Modimolle	L/s Eenheid	44
10	KZN	Pinetown	15/09/2025	Pinetown	Pitlochry PS - Staff	42
11	KZN	Phoenix Central 2	17/09/2025	Phoenix	Whetstone Primary	51
12	VS	Mangaung Metro Education	19/09/2025	Bloemfontein	Onze Rust Primary	51
13	MPU	Bohlabela	22/09/2025	Lydenburg	L/s Lydenburg	34
14	MPU	Gert Sibande	23/09/2025	Secunda	L/s Oranjegloed	38
15	KZN	Pinetown	25/09/2025	Durban	Pitlochry Primary	39
16	LIM	Waterberg 2	27/09/2025	Lephalale	L/s Bosveld	35
17	KZN	Umlazi	29/09/2025	Durban	Paul Sykes Primary	55
18	LIM	Vhembe	30/09/2025	Polokwane	L/s Ivypark	40
19	KZN	Ilembe	02/10/2025	Durban	Luthuli Museum	15
20	LIM	Capricorn South	14/10/2025	Polokwane	Makanye Primary	11
21	KZN	Pinetown	15/10/2025	Pinetown	Lyndhurst P/S	65
22	KZN	Waterberg 2	18/10/2025	Mookgophong	L/s Eugene Marais	29
23	KZN	Pinetown	20/10/2025	Pinetown	Ashley P/S	64
24	KZN	Pinetown	21/10/2025	Phoenix	Greenheights Ps	53
25	KZN	Pinetown	24/10/2025	Woodview	Woodview Ps	49
26	KZN	Pinetown	27/10/2025	Reservoir Hills	Reservoir Hills P/S	70

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
27	KZN	Pinetown	29/10/2025	Durban	VN Naik School	69
28	NW	Bojanala	29/10/2025	Rustenburg	Bergsig Akademie	15
29	KZN	Pinetown	03/11/2026	Durban	Tholamandla P/S	50
30	KZN	Pinetown	05/11/2025	Durban	KwaMashu Teachers Centre	72
31	KZN	Pinetown	10/11/2025	Pinetown	Benjamin Pine P/S	64
32	KZN	Pinetown	18/11/2025	Pinetown	New Germany P/S	72
33	KZN	Pinetown	20/11/2025	Pinetown	Pinetown Senior Primary	132
34	KZN	Umlazi	24/11/2025	Durban	North Crest P/S	119
35	NW	Madibeng	08/12/2025	Brits	L/s Olienpark	34
Totaal						1 624

The table reflects a smaller, yet geographically dispersed training offering.

Entrepreneurship

No.	Prov	District	Date	Town	Venue	Attendees
1	NW	Madibeng	14/08/2025	Brits	H/s Wagpos	11
2	GAU	Tshwane South	20/08/2025	Pretoria	SAOU	11
3	LIM	Capricorn South	12/08/2025	Polokwane	Megoring P/S	15
4	VS	Mangaung	28/08/2025	Kroonstad	Kroonstad Trio Primër	5
5	NK	Frances Baard	28/08/2025	Kimberley	Elizabeth Conradie	34
Totaal						76

In 2025, the TUC training initiative showed a further significant expansion, with a total of 1 700 participants reached primarily through Assessment for Learning (AfL) training (1 624 participants) and a smaller entrepreneurship component (76 participants). The AfL training was presented across a large number of sessions and provinces, with a clear concentration in KwaZulu-Natal, where a high frequency of sessions and strong attendance figures were recorded, including several large groups that significantly increased the overall reach. Attendance varied from small, focused groups to high-impact sessions, reflecting a flexible implementation approach.

The entrepreneurship training was presented on a more limited basis, but still maintained a geographically distributed footprint. Collectively, the data reflects a well-established and purpose-driven training approach, with specific emphasis on the improvement of assessment practices.

TUC training for 2026 (Outlook)

The TUC 2026/2027 project has officially commenced, with the following programmes identified for implementation during the current cycle: Assessment for Learning (AfL), Foundation Phase Literacy, and mother tongue-based bilingual education. Training across the provinces is scheduled to commence during Term 3.

These programmes continue the TUC initiative's focus on strengthening professional teaching practice, supporting curriculum delivery and promoting inclusive, context-responsive approaches to learning and language development within the education sector.

Sustainability of TUC training initiatives

As indicated in the previous report, the funding of TUC training initiatives is dependent on external grants secured by the DBE, often in competition with other government departments for available funding from international donors.

Historically, this funding model has meant that the long-term continuation of the project was not necessarily guaranteed, but rather functioned on a cyclical or phase-based basis.

The conclusion of a new Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for the period from 2025 onwards does, however, point to a more structured continuation of the TUC initiative, although implementation remains dependent on available funding and priorities as determined by the DBE.

The current structure and operational model of the National Training Institute (NTI) are designed in such a way that this type of project-based initiative can be accommodated effectively. The SAEF Management Committee therefore retains the discretion to decide continuously, within the prevailing circumstances, on the nature and extent of further involvement.

Training over the period

Over the period from 2023 to 2025, the TUC training initiative shows a clear increase in scope and reach.

The initiative grew from 1 095 participants in 2023 to 1 940 in 2024 and 1 700 in 2025. This trend reflects a developing and adaptable training approach that has expanded and been refined over time.

During the reporting period, the TUC training initiative made a meaningful contribution to professional development within the education sector.

Sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to all role players.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Professional Services (PD)

The PD division remains a core component of the SAOU's service delivery, with a focus on empowering and supporting members within a dynamic and continuously changing education environment. This report provides feedback on the development and expansion of the division since May 2023 and builds on the foundation established during the previous congress period.

During the reporting period, the division developed further in response to changing needs within the education sector, with an increasing focus on structured support, relevant training offerings and purposeful involvement on national and external platforms. This development reflects a deliberate shift towards greater coherence between curriculum support, professional development and the strategic representation of members' interests.

The division's work includes, among other things, the provision of curriculum-related advice, the development and facilitation of training opportunities, the presentation of national flagship initiatives, as well as representation on national education forums and collaboration with role players such as the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and the Education, Training and Development Practices-Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA). This integrated approach contributes to strengthening the SAOU's role as a professional partner in the education environment.

The report is structured according to the SAOU's six strategic objectives and illustrates how the PD division contributes to the organisation's broader strategic priorities, service delivery and member value.



Back row f.l.t.r.: Ansa Theron, Johann Güldenpfennig, Nita Pieterse, Ronica Thompson
Front row f.l.t.r.: Mariska Steenkamp, Adel Jacobs, Maryna Besseling

SAOU Value Proposition for Members

Bully Awareness series

The Bully Awareness Series, presented from 16-19 February 2026, originated from a congress motion adopted at the SAOU Congress 2023. This initiative is therefore a direct outcome of members' input and the organisation's commitment to addressing current, relevant challenges in the education environment.

The presentation of the series was highly successful, with a total of 1 057 participants over the four days. The high attendance and active engagement confirm the relevance of the themes and the need for structured support and conversations about bullying behaviour.

The strong participation and positive feedback indicate that the series plays a meaningful role in promoting awareness and providing practical support to educators and other role players.

The series was accessible to a wide audience and will in future be presented on a quarterly basis, with the aim of ensuring sustainable impact and further building on the existing momentum.



Development of learning material

In order to further strengthen the value proposition for members, PD has deliberately focused over the past two years on the development and provision of learning material as additional support to educators.

During 2025, lesson plans and accompanying learning material for Afrikaans Home Language (AHL) and First Additional Language (FAL) for grades 4 to 7, as well as for Economic and Management Sciences, were introduced to members. In 2026, the existing Afrikaans material was further expanded and refined, while the offering was simultaneously developed to also include Geography for grades 4 to 7.

The learning material was made available on SAOU Online and is free for all SAOU members. It contributes to improved support in the classroom and the promotion of quality teaching.

Empowerment opportunities

March 2023 – April 2026

See page 51 for statistics.

Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) symposium

The LSEN symposium, presented on 20–21 March 2026, confirmed a clear need for focused professional support within the LSEN environment and further strengthened the SAOU's role as facilitator of meaningful development opportunities.

Despite facilities that provided for at most 110 participants, the symposium ultimately attracted 115 participants. This exceeding of capacity serves as a strong indication of the significant interest in, and need for, structured support and professional dialogue within this specialist field.

The content of the programme was positively received throughout and succeeded in offering a balanced combination of theoretical perspectives and practical application. The themes were relevant and applicable, and contributed to an enriching learning experience for participants. The audience resonated deeply with Gillian Arendse's insightful and inspiring message.

A further highlight of the symposium was the opportunity for networking, which participants highlighted as extremely valuable. Parallel sessions made differentiation possible and created space for greater engagement and focused participation.

Participants' feedback shows great satisfaction with the organisation, content and practical value of the symposium. The need was also expressed for similar opportunities to be presented in other provinces, which points to further opportunities for expansion and a greater national impact.

There is a firm intention to establish this initiative as an annual institution that will grow from strength to strength and make a sustainable contribution to professional development within the LSEN environment.



Teacher Union Collaboration (TUC) training

TUC refers to a joint training initiative between teacher unions and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), with the aim of promoting professional development in a broader, inclusive and collaborative manner.

In 2023, a total of 1 095 participants were trained, after which the number increased significantly in 2024 to 1 940 participants. In 2025, 1 700 participants were reached, despite challenges with the implementation timeline.

These figures indicate a consistent and sustainable contribution to professional development within the education sector, with a broader geographical reach and increasing participation over time.

Further details and a more comprehensive outline of the training initiatives are available in the National Training Institute (NTI) report.

Women's Leadership Seminar

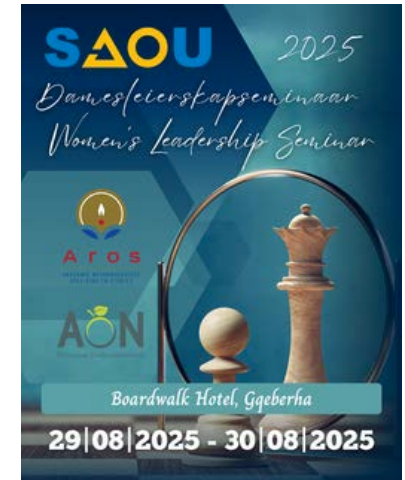
The Women's Leadership Seminar, established in 2023, developed within a short time into a recognised and valued development platform for female leadership within the organisation. The sustained growth and interest in the initiative confirm its relevance and the need for purposeful leadership development for women in the education environment.

From 2026, the seminar falls under PD, after previously being vested in the Marketing and Communication division. This shift supports a more integrated approach to professional development and ensures better alignment with other development initiatives offered to members.

The seminar takes place on 28-29 August 2026 and remains an established highlight on the organisation's development calendar. Planning is progressing according to schedule and all speakers have already been confirmed.

Registration opened on 8 April 2026, together with the reopening of schools. The event was initially marketed exclusively via the SAOU app, after which it was introduced more broadly on social media platforms later the same day.

The response was particularly positive and registration closed on 29 May with 302 entries. This strong early interest emphasises the established nature of the seminar and the sustained value it offers members.



TRAINING STATISTICS 2023 – 2026

	SINCE APRIL 2023		2024		2025		UNTIL APRIL 2026	
	Events	Attended	Events	Attended	Events	Attended	Events	Attended
Webinars	132	14 614	99	14 689	79	13 880	33	5 157
Bully Awareness-week							4	1 157
Virtual Simposiums	3	296	4	462				
Gr R & GSF-Simposium					3	173		
ECD-Simposium (0-4yrs)								
LSEN-Simposium			4	863	6	506	4	2095
Wellbeing Simposium			4	418	8	404	4	395
Total	135	14 910	111	16 432	96	14 963	45	8 804
Moodle (e-learning)								
Assessment-accommodation		456		270		129		95
Bridging Barriers to Accessing the Curriculum						13		5
Total		456		270		142		100
IN-PERSON TRAINING								
AON								
Flambojante Wiskunde			25	824				
Flambojante Skoolleiermentorskap			1	34	1	37		
Flambojante VKO-Simposium			1	72	1	56		
TAO								
Graad R	14	756	2	124				
Reading	9	468	13	448				
Assessment in the Foundation Phase			1	16				
LSEN & Inclusive Education					15	643	1	21
LSEN Simposium							1	100
VatVlam Mini-summit					1	39		
ECD(0-4yrs)					12	459		
Total in-person training events	23	1 224	43	1 518	30	1 234	2	121
GRAND TOTAL	158	16 590	154	18 22	126	16 339	47	9 025

Curriculum

Strengthening of the curriculum

The strengthening of the curriculum remains a strategic focus area within the education environment, with the aim of better preparing learners for the demands of further study and the labour market. This process, initiated by the Department of Basic Education, began to gain momentum from 2023 through national consultations and the establishment of a working group in which the SAOU is represented.

PD actively participated in this process and provided extensive input on behalf of members. An important component of this was the collection of member feedback through national surveys, which highlighted various key challenges. Issues include, among other things, an overcrowded curriculum, insufficient time for consolidation, an imbalance in assessment practices, as well as a need for a stronger focus on basic skills. These inputs emphasised the need for realistic curriculum design and better alignment between teaching, learning and assessment.

Furthermore, the SAOU's involvement included participation in writing sessions for vocationally oriented subjects, as well as ongoing input on assessment practices and their alignment with national policy. It was consistently emphasised that any curriculum change must be accompanied by sufficient training for educators, as well as the availability of quality learning and teaching support material. Specific inputs were also provided in respect of the Technical Occupational Curriculum (TOC) and the Vocational Curriculum (VOC), with a focus on content alignment, feasibility and standardisation.

Despite the initial momentum, progress with the review process has slowed during the past period. Meetings of the relevant working groups have decreased and certain key initiatives, such as the development of a terminology manual and the articulation of the three-stream model, show limited progress. It is currently clear that the finalisation and implementation of the strengthened curriculum will not take place within the initially envisaged timeframe.

Nevertheless, the SAOU remains committed to continued involvement in the process. PD is already in the process of strengthening internal capacity, among other things through the identification and mobilisation of subject specialists, in order to be ready for future development and implementation phases.

The organisation will continue to play a constructive and critical role, with the focus on a curriculum that is pedagogically accountable and feasible, and that supports quality teaching.

Coding and Robotics

The implementation of Robotics and Coding remains an important, but complex, focus area within the curriculum landscape. Although the policy framework has already been put in place through the promulgation of the CAPS document, practice is still characterised by uncertainty and uneven implementation.

Various policy and practical challenges have been identified, including the lack of coherence between policy documents, uncertainty regarding teaching time and content, as well as the pressure that the addition of a new subject places on the existing subject load. In the foundation phase, teaching time for Robotics and Coding is currently taken from Life Skills, without the content of that subject having been adjusted accordingly. In the senior phase, the already overcrowded curriculum creates further challenges, while certain implementation models force schools to make choices between streams of study.

Against this background, it is clear that a cautious and realistic approach to implementation is essential. The current guideline that schools may implement Coding and Robotics on a voluntary basis is supported, with the emphasis that no unnecessary pressure should be placed on schools to be ready prematurely.

The SAOU remains actively involved in national discussions and structures to address the policy and implementation challenges. Specific attention is given to the rationalisation of content and teaching time, the handling of subject load, as well as the broader implications of implementation models for schools.

At the same time, PD continues with the development and presentation of support and training initiatives for schools that do choose to implement Coding and Robotics, in order to equip educators and promote sustainable implementation.

The SAOU will continue to take a position at national level and to act constructively, but firmly, in order to ensure that implementation takes place in a pedagogically accountable and feasible manner and in the best interests of educators and learners.

General Education Certificate (GEC)

The implementation of the GEC forms part of a broader effort to formally recognise learners at the end of the General Education and Training Phase and to support alternative learning and career pathways.

Although the principle of the GEC is widely supported, the current implementation shows significant challenges. A core problem remains the absence of a nationally recognised and standardised certification system. Despite the piloting process, no formal certificates have to date been issued to learners, which undermines the credibility and purpose of the qualification.

Furthermore, implementation is characterised by a lack of national coherence. Provinces and schools in many cases develop their own programmes and assessments, leading to inequalities in standards and content. This fragmented approach complicates quality control and creates uncertainty about the value and transferability of the qualification.

Specifically within skills schools, serious concern remains about the suitability and standard of the current GEC offerings. The qualification does not meet the requirements associated with grade 9, and shows limited alignment with existing frameworks such as those of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). In addition, learners' technical and practical skills are not sufficiently reflected in assessment practices, which further undermines the value of the qualification.

Operational challenges, such as insufficient support, administrative pressure, poor-quality assessments and the lack of funding for implementation, place further pressure on schools and educators. In many cases, schools are expected to manage the process without sufficient guidelines, resources or training.

Against this background, it remains essential that the GEC process be reconsidered and strengthened. A clear national framework, standardised assessments, credible certification and stronger cooperation with role players are critical to the success of the initiative.

The SAOU will continue to provide input at national level and apply pressure to ensure that the GEC develops into a credible, fair and workable qualification that is truly in the interests of learners.

Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)

MTbBE focuses on strengthening learning in the early phases by allowing learners first to understand concepts in their mother tongue before additional languages are acquired. This approach emphasises the role of language in cognitive development, academic performance and language acquisition, and positions language as a bridge to learning rather than a barrier.

Implementation in various provinces is already under way, despite challenges such as limited resources and diverse language contexts. Key elements include teacher training, curriculum alignment and community involvement. There is also a focus on developing African languages for academic use and on using digital tools to support access to learning material.

MTbBE represents a policy approach aimed at promoting multilingualism and strengthening language and knowledge systems within the South African education context.

Support with provincial challenges

During 2025 and the beginning of 2026, PD was actively involved in supporting schools and members in dealing with various provincial challenges.

One of the matters that received ongoing attention was the pressure on schools to participate in common papers, despite policy determining that this practice is compulsory only for underperforming schools.

Other matters addressed during the reporting period include the accelerated completion of annual teaching plans (ATPs), the loss of teaching time as a result of meetings taking place during school hours, as well as the expectation that reports be handed out on the last day of the term.

PD further provided support with challenges relating to the implementation of mock exams, concessions and accommodations, subject changes, as well as other administrative and operational matters that have a direct impact on the functioning of schools.

In all these cases, PD acted on behalf of members and schools to promote policy compliance, oppose unfair practices and help find workable solutions in the interests of quality education.

LSEN and Inclusive Education

Strengthening of the Technical Occupational Curriculum (TOC) and Vocational Curriculum (VOC)

At the end of February 2026, the DBE presented a week-long rewriting session to strengthen the TOC and the VOC. The SAOU was actively involved in this process and provided writers who worked together with other role players on the review

The focus was on developing a more responsive, inclusive and practically feasible curriculum, with particular attention to supporting learners and empowering educators. This process points to a more collaborative and context-bound approach to curriculum development.

Reintegration and placement of learners outside the school system

The task team focuses on the reintegration and effective placement of learners who are currently outside the school system or who receive insufficient support. The proposed plan is aimed at making the education system more inclusive, accessible and accountable, with specific emphasis on improved monitoring and tracking of learners to ensure sustainable access and retention.

An important focus is the strengthening of mainstream and full-service schools to promote inclusive practices, rather than relying exclusively on special schools. In addition, the improvement of resource management, policy implementation and capacity building is emphasised, including the review of funding and post provisioning models to ensure greater equity and support.

The plan further proposes a structured implementation framework, with long-term planning, cooperation between role players and data-driven monitoring as core principles, in order to promote a sustainable and inclusive education system.

Review of White Paper 6

The review of White Paper 6 is not currently visible as a single, formally published process, but there are clear indications that a systemic reconsideration of the policy is taking place within the DBE and the broader education sector. Since its publication in 2001, sustained implementation challenges have clearly highlighted the need for policy renewal. This includes, among other things, limited capacity in mainstream schools, insufficient support structures and poor monitoring of learner placement and progress.

Current initiatives, such as task team workshops, the review of funding and post provisioning models, as well as the integration of approaches such as the Child Functioning Model, point to a shift towards more practical and implementable solutions. The process takes the form of a phased and integrated approach, where implementation itself serves as a driving force for policy change.

There is a clear focus on strengthening inclusive education within mainstream and full-service schools, with greater emphasis on accountability, data-driven decision-making and interdepartmental cooperation. These developments probably lay the foundation for a future, more formally revised version of White Paper 6, which is better aligned with the realities of the education system and the pursuit of sustainable, inclusive education for all learners.

Restructuring of special schools

The DBE intends to reposition special schools as resource centres or support nodes for mainstream and full-service schools. In this model, special schools will play a greater role in providing specialised support, while the majority of learners with disabilities and barriers to learning are increasingly accommodated within ordinary public schools. Only learners with the highest support needs are expected to remain placed in special schools.

The proposed approach places emphasis on greater inclusivity by using mainstream schools as primary learning environments, with special schools functioning as centres of expertise, therapeutic services and support. This model aims to improve access to resources, strengthen cooperation between schools and build capacity within mainstream schools in a purposeful manner.

The success of this restructuring is, however, dependent on sufficient funding, appropriate infrastructure and the availability of trained personnel. Without these conditions, there is a risk that both mainstream and specialised support may be placed under pressure, which could harm the achievement of inclusive education objectives.

Practical trends already indicate that learners with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, as well as certain learners with severe disabilities who require less intensive support, are increasingly being placed in mainstream schools, with support from special schools as resource centres. Only learners with high support needs remain in special schools. This development represents a potential flashpoint that must be monitored continuously and addressed at national level in order to protect the interests of both learners and educators.

Review of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the School-Based Support Team (SBST) and the District-Based Support Team (DBST)

Towards the end of December 2025, the DBE, in collaboration with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), undertook a structured review of the newly developed SOPs for the SBST and the DBST.

The purpose of the review was to further refine the functioning of support teams at school and district level, with a view to more coordinated, clear and effective implementation of inclusive education. The focus fell on reviewing existing guidelines regarding the composition, functions, monitoring and evaluation of SBST and DBST activities, taking into account practical experience and policy requirements.

The proposed revised SOP documents confirm the key roles of the SBST in identifying and coordinating internal support for learners with learning needs, as well as the role of the DBST in monitoring, capacity building and facilitating feedback between districts and schools.

This review process forms part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education and to ensure greater consistency in practice nationally. The proposed documents have, however, not yet been finally submitted or approved.

National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination

Shortage of NSC markers

The substantial shortage of markers for the Grade 12 NSC examination continues, with specific challenges in language subjects and History. The National Examinations and Assessment Committee (NEAC) confirmed that all provinces are currently experiencing a shortage of markers, with particular pressure on the availability of markers for indigenous languages and Afrikaans.

A survey distributed in 2025 via an SAOU newsletter provided valuable insight into the reasons for the decline in available markers. Respondents especially highlighted administrative challenges, including remuneration that does not justify the workload and inconvenience, as well as late payments and delays with appointment letters.

Challenges at marking centres, such as insufficient accommodation, remote locations and unacceptable facilities, were also mentioned. Operational issues were further highlighted, including limited support and training, administrative red tape and inconsistent work ethic among markers.

General factors such as high stress levels, strict deadlines and physical and emotional pressure further contribute to the decline in participation.

The SAOU has continuously raised and addressed the issues that emerged from the survey with the DBE, in an effort to promote participation in the marking process and motivate more markers to become involved. The organisation further supports the DBE by distributing provincial applications for markers on its platforms and encouraging members to act as markers, in order to relieve pressure on the system.

Monitoring and handling of examination and marking complaints

In 2024, the SAOU made an online reporting tool available, in the form of a Google form that was also accessible via a QR code, to enable members to report complaints during the examination and marking process. The aim of this initiative was to create a structured platform for the timely identification and handling of challenges experienced in practice.

Where complaints came to the SAOU's attention, action was taken, as far as possible, to raise and address them immediately with the relevant role players. The process was repeated in 2025, with a noticeable decrease in the number of complaints received.

It remains essential, however, that provincial offices and representatives are continuously involved in the monitoring of marking centres. The SAOU's visibility at grassroots level is of great importance to members and enables the organisation to raise and address challenges immediately with the relevant provincial head of examinations.

Involvement in DBE structures

(Task teams in which PD is involved)

NASIONAL STRUCTURES		
ABBREVIATION	NAME OF COMMITTEE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
ETDP -SETA	Schooling and ECD Chamber	Adel Jacobs
ETDP -SETA	HEI Chamber	Johann Güldenpfennig
SARO	Suid Afrikaanse Raad vir Onderwysers	Adel Jacobs
Fedusa	Training & Education Commission (TEC)	Adel Jacobs

Towards the end of December 2025, the DBE, in collaboration with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), undertook a structured review of the newly developed SOPs for the SBST and the DBST.

NASIONAL TASKTEAMS		
ABBREVIATION	NAME OF COMMITTEE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
NCATT	National Curriculum & Assessment Task Team	Adel Jacobs
	Placement of out of School Children with Disabilities	Ronica Thompson
	Review of SOP for SBST and DBST	Ronica Thompson
	Inclusive Education & Conditional Grant for Severe to Profound intellectual Disability Learners	Ronica Thompson
	Independent Schools	Adel Jacobs
	LTSM development for Autistic Learners in Mainstream Schools	Ronica Thompson
	Three Stream Model	Johann Güldenpfennig Ronica Thompson
	Curriculum Strengthening Vocational & Occupational	Ronica Thompson

HEDCOM SUB-COMMITTEES 2026		
ABBREVIATION	NAME OF COMMITTEE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
S Calendars	School Calendar	Johann Güldenpfennig
DCMS	District Coordination, Monitoring and Support Hedcom Sub-Committee	Johann Güldenpfennig Maryna Besseling
ECD	Early Childhood Development	
E-Ed	Education Information Systems SASAMS, EMIS, DDD	Johann Güldenpfennig Adel Jacobs
FIN	Finance	Johann Güldenpfennig
INC	Inclusive Education	Ronica Thompson
NEAC	National Examination and Assessment Committee	Johann Güldenpfennig
NEIC	National Examination Irregularities Committee	Johann Güldenpfennig
QASD	Quality Assurance and Skills Development QMS, EMS: PMDS, Skills, WSE	Johann Güldenpfennig
TDCM	Teacher Development and Curriculum Management	Adel Jacobs, Johann Güldenpfennig, Ronica Thompson
NTAs	National Teaching Awards	Johann Güldenpfennig

Optimisation Of Structures, Processes And Communication

SAOU Online

The platform, previously known as MSM Online, was repositioned and renamed SAOU Online in 2023 in response to the significant expansion of the platform's content and functionality. While the platform originally focused mainly on the Manual for School Management, it has over time developed into a comprehensive digital resource hub that includes various content streams.



This expansion includes, among others:

- Manual for School Management;
- Manual for Classroom Management;
- Webinars;
- TVET content;
- Independent Schools;
- e-Learning;
- Teaching posts; and
- Publications (latest addition).

The renaming to SAOU Online was intended to better reflect this broader scope, while ensuring that the platform remains clearly associated with the SAOU brand. At the same time, a distinct visual identity was developed, including a unique logo and brand style, positioning the platform as a separate but integrated component of the SAOU's digital ecosystem.

SAOU Online represents a unique value proposition for the organisation, as access is limited exclusively to active SAOU members. This exclusivity not only strengthens the value of membership, but also positions the platform as a central source of reliable, curated and practical support for educators.

As part of the broader renewal of the SAOU's brand identity in 2026, an updated visual style was implemented for SAOU Online. This new look and feel brings the platform closer to the organisation's overarching brand, while still retaining its own recognisable identity.

Going forward, SAOU Online will fall under the responsibility of Professional Services, as the nature and focus of the platform are more strongly aligned with the empowerment and professional development of members. The platform not only provides access to curriculum and policy information, but also hosts Professional Services' online learning programmes and other development initiatives.

This shift ensures greater coherence between content, training and support, and strengthens the role of SAOU Online as a core instrument in the professional empowerment of members.

SAOU Online has developed into the organisation's primary digital platform for professional support and resources. The platform, formerly known as MSM Online, was repositioned in 2024 and further refined to create an integrated and accessible digital environment for educators.

SAOU Online provides access to a wide range of content, including curriculum-related information, policy updates, training material, as well as lesson plans and learning material for various subjects and phases. The platform further houses key resources such as the Manual for Classroom Management (MCM), material for TVET colleges and independent schools, e-learning content, teaching-post vacancies, e-publications and webinar recordings.

Ongoing development and expansion of the platform remain a priority, with specific focus on the further optimisation of content and functionality to support members effectively in their professional practice.



Strengthening of the Brand and Values

Media

The establishment of the SAOU as an influential opinion leader in the education discourse remains a core strategic objective. As part of this focus, PD has maintained a purposeful and visible media presence over the past three years through regular participation in radio interviews, as well as the publication of opinion articles (“op-eds”) on relevant and current education issues.

These contributions focused on themes such as curriculum development, assessment, learner well-being, education policy and the practical realities of the classroom. Through these platforms, the professional voice of educators is strengthened and informed public debate on education matters is promoted.

The strategy is aimed not only at creating awareness, but also at strengthening the SAOU’s credibility as an expert and reliable role player in the education environment. Deliberate efforts are made to respond timeously to current issues and to communicate the organisation’s positions clearly and in a balanced manner.

Continued media involvement remains a core priority, with the aim of further building the SAOU’s profile, promoting professional input and protecting and representing the interests of members in the broader public domain.

Education Awards 2026

In 2025, purposeful adjustments were made to the Education Awards in preparation for the 2026 congress. An important change was the phasing out of the school categories, since schools do not function as members of the SAOU. In the past, this resulted in winners in certain categories not necessarily being SAOU members.

The focus was consequently shifted to giving recognition exclusively to individual members. This approach is in line with the organisation’s mandate to promote the interests of its members and to recognise and celebrate their professional contributions.

The Education Awards provide an important platform to make the dedication, expertise and impact of educators visible. In a profession where excellence is often taken for granted, it is of cardinal importance that members are deliberately recognised and appreciated for the role they play in shaping learners and the broader society.

Recognition contributes not only to individual motivation and professional pride, but also strengthens the status of the teaching profession as a whole. It creates a culture of excellence and inspires other members to give their best.

The revised approach ensures that the Education Awards remain a meaningful and relevant occasion that reflects the SAOU’s core focus – namely to support and empower its members and to celebrate their contributions in an appropriate manner



Sustainable Alliances and Networks

Provincial Executive Council (PEC) involvement – 2025 and 2026

Since 2025, the divisional head of PD, Adel Jacobs, has attended the PUR meetings of provinces. This involvement creates a valuable opportunity for PD to gain first-hand knowledge of provincial challenges, needs and trends, while at the same time strengthening the visibility of the division and its services at grassroots level.

This direct liaison promotes better alignment between national priorities and provincial realities, and enables PD to provide more targeted and responsive support to members. It strengthens relationships, improves communication and promotes cooperation between the structures within the organisation.

The value of this practice further lies in the fact that it channels the professional voice of members at provincial level more directly to the national sphere, contributing to more informed decision-making and strategic planning.

There is a firm intention to continue and further expand this involvement, as it plays an important role in the effective support of members and the strengthening of the SAOU's service delivery across all levels.

Aros

The SAOU's involvement with Aros as a tertiary institution for education students is extremely valuable. Over the past three years, the relationship between the SAOU and Aros has strengthened noticeably and developed into a meaningful and mutually beneficial partnership.

An important advantage of this cooperation is Aros's willingness to make its campus and facilities available to the SAOU free of charge for various events. In addition, Aros acts as main sponsor of the Women's Leadership Seminar and is also involved in various other projects and initiatives.

Aros annually invites the SAOU to key student events, including first-year camps, academic openings and prize-givings. This involvement creates valuable exposure and engagement with future educators and contributes to establishing the SAOU's presence within the training environment.

The SAOU expresses its sincere appreciation to Aros for its continued cooperation, hospitality and support, and looks forward to further developing this partnership in the years ahead.

AFRIKAANS EDUCATION NETWORK (AON)

The collaborative relationship between the AON and the SAOU has over time developed into a strong and mutually beneficial partnership that is valued with great appreciation. This cooperation extends beyond leadership development in schools and has also expanded into the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD), where close cooperation takes place in a structured manner.

Quarterly initiatives are presented in cooperation with the AON, contributing to sustainable development and support for members in this important phase of education. The partnership enables the SAOU to present relevant and targeted programmes that respond to the needs of educators.

The SAOU expresses its sincere thanks to the AON for its continued support and financial contributions to these initiatives, which have a meaningful impact on members' professional development.

Akademia

During March 2026, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was concluded between Akademia and the SAOU. The purpose of this agreement is to establish a structured framework for cooperation to promote Afrikaans education through academic and professional liaison.

The agreement provides for various cooperation initiatives, including the mutual invitation of staff as speakers, cooperation around sponsorships, as well as the SAOU's involvement in Akademia's student activities. This partnership creates further opportunities to reach future educators and to establish the value of professional organisational involvement already during training.

The SAOU welcomes this cooperation as an important step in strengthening Afrikaans education and looks forward to building a sustainable and meaningful partnership.

Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS)

In order to establish and further expand the SAOU's footprint within the independent schools environment, a mini-summit for independent schools was presented in cooperation with FEDSAS on 21-22 May 2026. This initiative aimed to promote greater involvement, visibility and support for members within this sector.

Cooperation between the SAOU and FEDSAS is of strategic importance, as both organisations share a focus on promoting quality education, good school governance and the support of educators. FEDSAS has established networks and expertise within the independent and governing body environment, which creates valuable opportunities to cooperate and share knowledge.

Through this partnership, the SAOU can strengthen its support to members in independent schools, gain better insight into the unique challenges of this sector and deliver more targeted professional services. It also provides a platform for joint input on policy matters and the promotion of best practice within the broader education environment.

This mini-summit was attended by 80 participants. The feedback received testifies to a good programme, speakers and organisation.

The SAOU is of the view that the further development of this cooperation will be to mutual benefit and will make a meaningful contribution to supporting members and promoting quality education within the independent school sector.

Education, Training and Development Practices–Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP–SETA) structures

The SAOU maintains active representation on various structures of the ETDP–SETA to provide input on training, qualifications and development within the education sector.

Adel Jacobs represents the SAOU on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Schooling Chambers, while Johann Güldenpfennig represents the organisation on the Higher Education and Research Chamber. Maryna Besseling has been nominated to represent the SAOU on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Chambers.

This representation ensures that the SAOU has a voice in strategic decisions that affect the development of educators and the broader education and training landscape, and contributes to promoting members' interests at national level.

Publication: 100 Stories from Education

In the spirit of the Afrikaans 100 celebrations, the SAOU, in cooperation with AON, released the publication 100 Stories from Education. The purpose of the publication is to emphasise the value of the teaching profession and to remind educators of the meaningful roles they play daily in shaping learners and society.

The publication was made available in both printed and electronic format, with AON providing partial funding for the printing process. A total of 300 copies were printed, which are used, among other things, as corporate gifts. Each contributor also received a copy in recognition of their participation.

The book was launched on 19–20 February 2026 on Pretoria FM and GROOTfm as part of the celebration of International Mother Language Day. Paul Sauer and Daan Potgieter, as representatives of the SAOU and AON respectively, introduced the project.

The SAOU expresses its sincere thanks to AON for its support and contribution to the project, as well as to Lig in Duisternis Publishers for the professional handling of the publication and printing process.



Strategic and Innovative Thinking

Expansion of the e-learning platform

During the congress period, the SAOU has already introduced two online programmes to members via Moodle. The AA course, which gives course participants the opportunity to qualify as reader-and-scribe providers, is very successful and is repeatedly fully subscribed for the available period. The model works because it is affordable and focuses on self-directed learning that course participants can complete in their own time.

Over the past two years, the SAOU has directed its energy towards the presentation of reading training in Afrikaans. Despite this, there remains a clear need for similar support for educators who use English as the language of learning and teaching. To address this gap, PD is currently developing a structured online reading programme for English.

The new programme, The Science of Reading, is not presented as a once-off training session, but as an ongoing development opportunity. This approach was deliberately chosen to provide sustainable support and to deepen educators' knowledge and skills over time.

Through the online presentation model, the SAOU can reach a wider audience and empower more educators, especially those who have limited time or financial means to participate in further training.

It is planned to launch the programme in the third quarter and it forms part of the SAOU's broader strategy to further expand and strengthen its online training offering.



Webinars and membership

From 2026, a registration fee of R50 per webinar will be introduced for non-members. This decision arose from feedback from members who questioned the value of membership if non-members have free access to webinars. Similar sentiment was also expressed on social media, including Facebook, where remarks were made that membership is not essential, since webinars are freely available.

As a result of these inputs, the existing model, where webinars were offered free of charge to all educators regardless of membership status, was reconsidered. The implementation of the registration fee has already had a positive effect, with a noticeable increase in new membership sign-ups.

Despite this success, the current administrative process still presents challenges. Non-members currently have to be contacted individually for each of the four weekly webinars, payments must be followed up and access links are distributed manually. This method places a significant administrative burden on the administrative officer of Professional Services (PD).

It is therefore planned to automate the process in order to improve efficiency and relieve the administrative burden. Discussions with possible service providers are already under way to identify the most suitable solution.

Development and Management of Human Resources

Staff matters

Over the past three years, Professional Services (PD) has undergone several staff changes. The 2023 congress report fell under the leadership of Marietjie Behr (née Le Roux), who served as divisional head at the time. With effect from 1 January 2024, Adel Jacobs took over the role of divisional head of PD.

Since then, the team has gradually expanded in order to better meet the increasing demand for professional development opportunities and the growing scope of the division's work. This expansion aims to strengthen capacity, broaden specialist knowledge within the team and further improve the effective planning, presentation and support of training initiatives.

The strengthening of the team enables PD to respond more purposefully and responsively to members' needs, as well as to ensure the quality and sustainability of training programmes.

Challenges

The DBE's inability to provide clear direction through well-formulated policies and appropriate guidance remains a substantial challenge. The gap between policy and practice remains wide and places increasing pressure on schools and teachers.

The increasing use of circulars to provide direction, rather than the development and implementation of clear, practical policies that follow the prescribed processes, creates uncertainty and complicates the management of schools.

In addition, the actions of some provincial departments, which often function outside the framework of existing policy, further contribute to these challenges. Where policy is applied inconsistently or exceeded, members and schools are regularly exposed to unnecessary pressure, making it necessary for the SAOU to intervene continuously to protect their rights and interests.

Conclusion and outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

A particular highlight for PD was the establishment of the LSEN symposium, as well as the mini-summit for independent schools presented in cooperation with FEDSAS. Both events were presented with great success and have already shown that they have the potential to become established annual gatherings.

The expansion of PD's learning material and e-learning offering was likewise an important milestone. These initiatives strengthen the support offered to members and contribute to accessible and sustainable professional development.

The establishment of professional networks within different focus areas in the provinces further contributed to greater cooperation and knowledge sharing. The success of these platforms rests on the involvement of numerous individuals who voluntarily share their expertise and experience, for which PD is sincerely grateful.

Focus for the next congress term

During the next congress term, PD intends to further expand the e-learning programmes and the offering of supporting learning material in order to strengthen members' professional development.

Strengthening relationships with provincial education departments and officials also remains a priority. Closer cooperation should contribute to challenges being identified earlier and addressed more effectively.

PD's training model, in cooperation with the provincial offices, is increasingly developing away from predetermined themes presented in provinces towards a more needs-driven approach. This model focuses on visits to schools where support and empowerment take place according to specific needs. Although this approach has certain cost implications, it offers the opportunity to deliver greater value to schools, to address individual challenges more purposefully and to increase the SAOU's visibility among non-members.

The expansion of strategic partnerships and cooperation opportunities beyond the existing network of collaborators will also receive attention.

Closing message from the divisional head

PD is a small but dynamic division that continuously strives to promote members' interests and create meaningful opportunities for professional growth.

PD expresses its sincere thanks to all members for their dedication, perseverance and willingness, often under challenging circumstances, still to deliver the best in education. The support of webinars and other development opportunities is sincerely appreciated.

The division also wishes to express its appreciation to the provinces for their continued cooperation, support and involvement. These partnerships contribute greatly to the success of various initiatives.

A special word of thanks goes to all the collaborators and sponsors. Their trust, support and willingness to work with PD make numerous projects and development opportunities possible. The value of these contributions cannot be overstated.

Thank you to the members of the Professional Committee (Profcom) for their guidance, support and valuable input. Their expertise, involvement and willingness to share knowledge and experience make a meaningful contribution to the direction and success of the division's work.

Appreciation is further expressed to Paul Sauer and Ilse Brett for their guidance, support and confidence in the division's work.

PD is particularly privileged to have a team of colleagues who fulfil their responsibilities with enthusiasm, professionalism and a strong service-oriented mindset. Their willingness to take on new challenges and find solutions forms the foundation of the division's continued success.

All honour and glory to the Creator and Redeemer for His grace and blessing. It is through His faithfulness that the union can continue its work and face the future with confidence.

SERVICE CENTRE

SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Service Centre

The Service Centre fulfils a core role in service delivery to members and is already delivering tangible results. The prompt and accurate handling of general enquiries remains an ongoing priority. The further development of collaboration with partners in the education sector is actively being pursued, as it has the potential to reduce the administrative burden on members. These initiatives provide valuable opportunities for improved service delivery.

As a central service point, the Service Centre contributes to the consistent and uniform application of processes and communication with members.

Staff of the Service Centre

Wilma Henn (Service Centre Manager): general enquiries, Continuum- and SACE-related enquiries

Delna van der Westhuizen: cancellations and new membership applications

Willie Vorster: telephonic and WhatsApp enquiries, as well as pension estimates

Wendy Mohajane: reception and switchboard services, including the handling of visitors and the efficient referral of calls to the appropriate persons



From left to right: Willie Vorster, Delna van der Westhuizen, Wilma Henn, Wendy Mohajane

Continuum

With the introduction of the Continuum (death benefit) for all paying members under the age of 65, the SAOU's – and specifically the Service Centre's – service offering and footprint within the education sector expanded noticeably.

The Service Centre plays a central role in the administration of this benefit, including the receipt and processing of beneficiary nominations. The benefit is also available to SAOU employees, which further strengthens its value as an organisation-wide service.

Optimisation of structures, processes and communication

The Service Centre serves as the central contact point for SAOU members. Calls, WhatsApp messages and emails handled by the Service Centre create the opportunity to ensure uniform and structured service delivery and feedback to members.

Weekly awareness initiatives take place by means of short information snippets on service benefits and conditions of service, presented as news flashes or short videos.



012 023 1333
076 127 1921
saou@saou.co.za

YOUTH DAY AND A PUBLIC HOLIDAY

The 16th of June 2026 (Tuesday) is Youth Day and a public holiday. Please note that the 15th of June 2026 (Monday) is a special school holiday.

Non-educator members should familiarise themselves with their responsibilities in terms of leave for special school holidays.

Contact the SAOU Service Centre if you require clarification.



DIENSSENTRUM
SERVICE CENTRE
WHAT YOU Must KNOW!



012 023 1333
076 127 1921
saou@saou.co.za

GEMS WITHDRAWS 9.5% INCREASE IN CONTRIBUTIONS

SAOU members are hereby informed that GEMS will replace the excessive 9.5% increase in member contributions with a reduced percentage.

It is expected that this will reduce to 7.5% from 1 July 2026. Reduction in contributions is not retroactive.

This is still subject to the approval of the Council for Medical Schemes.



DIENSSENTRUM
SERVICE CENTRE
WHAT YOU Must KNOW!

Development of sustainable alliances and networks

In collaboration with the Gauteng province, the Service Centre facilitates monthly opportunities where representatives of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) are available to discuss and handle member matters relating to pensions.

This service provides significant value to members in Gauteng, as well as to members in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West. There are plans to develop a similar collaboration model with SACE.

Development and management of human resources

The staff of the Service Centre can be utilised optimally as mentors for colleagues who are newly appointed to the service of the SAOU. The team possesses extensive experience and knowledge that should be transferred purposefully.

This process should take place continuously and in a structured manner. It is important that staff keep themselves continuously informed of the latest developments relating to service benefits and conditions of service.

Administrative processes

Although the Service Centre is the recipient of online membership applications, these applications are sorted and verified before being referred to the relevant role players and provinces for further processing.

Statistics

The statistics reflect a consistent level of service delivery, with a strong focus on email communication and an increasing demand for pension-related support.

The recorded statistics of the Service Centre for the period April 2023 to March 2026 are set out below.

	From April 2023	2024	2025	Until March 2026
Emails (received and sent)	9 751	16 594	15 795	5 254
Calls handled	2 518	2 332	2 416	452
Recruitment: calls	313	2 586	615	75
Pension estimates and visits	620	917	968	113
SACE enquiries	243	625	654	30
WhatsApp: incoming general enquiries		150	300	70
Grade R-applications (online and traditional)	79	114	117	29
Total	13 524	35 900	20 865	25 817
Grand total				96 106

Conclusion

The Service Centre continues to make a meaningful contribution to the effective support of members and the promotion of service delivery within the organisation.

In conclusion, the Service Centre expresses its sincere appreciation to colleagues in all the provinces for their continued support and valuable contributions.

The management of the SAOU is likewise thanked for providing a stable, secure and professional working environment that enables effective service delivery.

EASTERN CAPE



SΔOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Eastern Cape at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

13.9% of South Africa's
total landmass

4 Circuits further subdivided
into several regions

42 years average age
of members

64% of all members are
Post Level 1



644 km

The furthest point from the SAOU
provincial office in Gqeberha
is Lusikisiki.

Membership

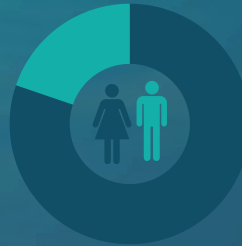


3 232

PERSAL: 2 445

SGB: 711

Independent Schools: 76



Women: 79%

Men: 21%



319

Primary Schools: 240

High Schools: 138

Private Schools: 41

Combined Schools: 5

LSEN Schools: 5

169 580 km²



2 677

members reached through 55
training events since July
2023 until June 2026



76%
Afrikaans

24%
English

Demographic Information

The Eastern Cape is one of South Africa’s largest and most diverse provinces, stretching from the coastal areas along the Indian Ocean to deep inland rural regions. The province is characterised by a wide variety of geographical landscapes, including coastal plains, mountain ranges and vast rural areas.

SAOU Eastern Cape serves both urban and rural educational institutions, with significant concentrations of members in urban centres such as Gqeberha, East London and Mthatha, as well as in remote rural communities. This distribution requires a differentiated approach to service delivery and support.

Unique geographical and logistical challenges in the province include vast distances between towns and schools, limited infrastructure in rural areas and diverse socio-economic conditions. Despite these challenges, the SAOU strives to ensure effective support and representation for all members in the Eastern Cape through strategic organisational structuring and targeted communication channels.

Circuit and Regional Division

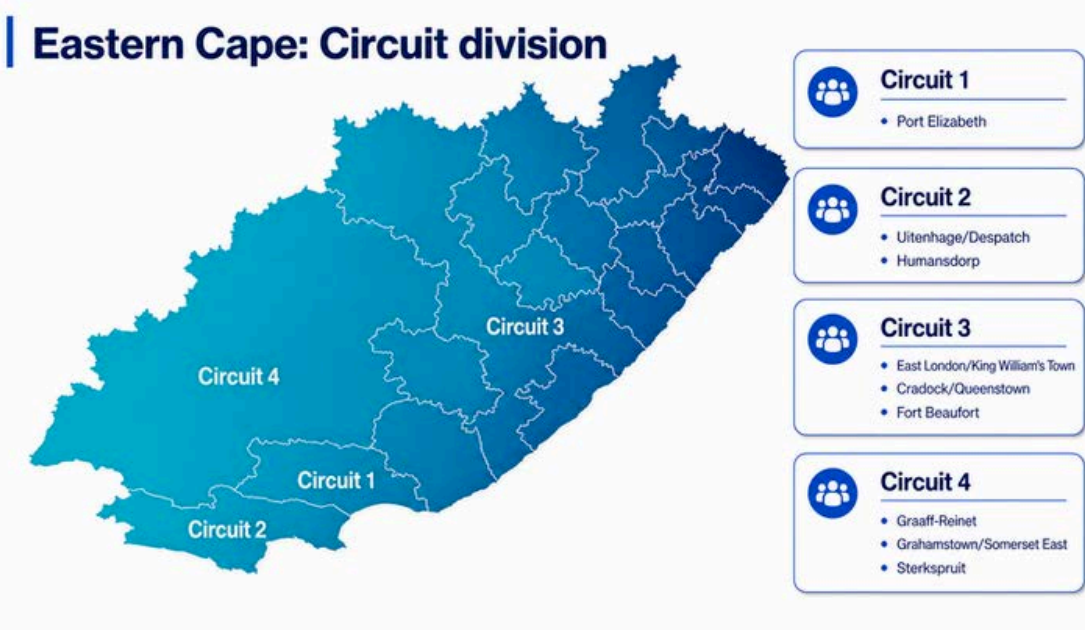
For administrative and management purposes, the Eastern Cape province is divided into four circuits, of which circuits 2 to 4 are further subdivided, since towns and schools are situated far apart.

Circuit 1
Circuit 1 is the largest circuit in the province, measured by both membership numbers and number of schools. The circuit mainly covers the metropolitan and urban areas, with a high concentration of schools.

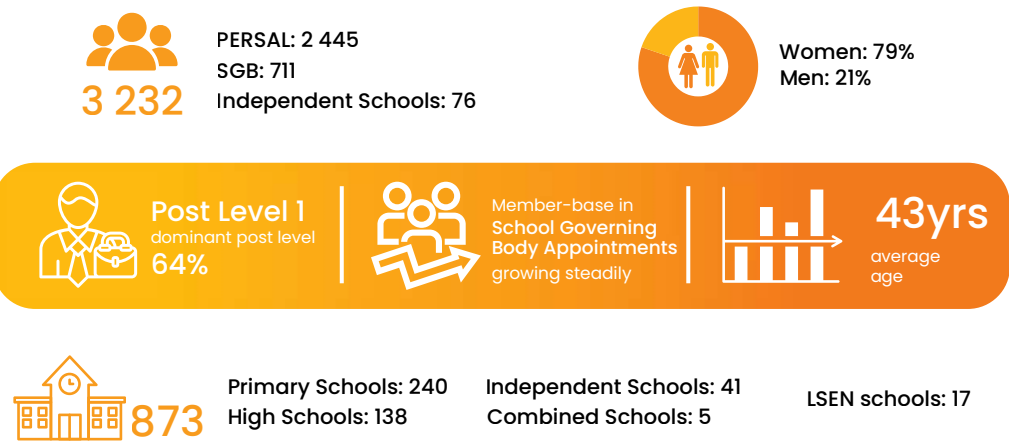
Circuit 2
Circuit 2 consists mainly of semi-urban and coastal areas, with a balanced distribution of schools.

Circuit 3
Circuit 3 mainly covers rural areas, with schools spread across a wide geographical area.

Circuit 4
Circuit 4 mainly includes rural and border areas.



Membership



Membership trends since the previous three congresses



The decline in membership numbers can be attributed to several important factors that have had a significant impact over time. One of the main reasons is the increasing number of teachers retiring without sufficient new and sustainable entrants to the profession to compensate for these losses.

Furthermore, emigration plays a major role, as experienced and qualified teachers leave the country in search of better working conditions, safety and remuneration abroad. This trend impoverishes the local education system and contributes to a decline in active members.

Another important factor is young teachers entering the profession with unrealistic expectations. Many initially believe that teachers’ working hours are limited to between 08:00 and 14:00, but soon become aware of the real workload, which includes preparation, assessment, administration and extracurricular activities. The high workload and emotional demands result in some being unable to cope with the pressures of the profession and leaving education.

Lastly, violence in schools, as well as poor management and maladministration at certain institutions, contribute to teachers not feeling valued and feeling unsafe. This negative working environment causes many teachers to resign and consider alternative career options.

POST DESCRIPTION	MEMBERS
Educators	2 522
Heads of Department	373
Principals	175
Deputy Principals	117
School Management	80
Administrative staff	48
Office-based members	24
Therapists	14
Students	622

From the above, it is clear that post level 1 teachers make up the largest portion of the membership statistics in the Eastern Cape. With a total of 2,522 persons, this group is significantly larger than any other post level.

Management positions such as heads of department, principals and deputy principals together make up a much smaller percentage of the total membership. Support and specialist posts, including administrative personnel, office-based personnel and occupational therapists, represent the smallest groups.

The current number of registered students stands at 622. Although this figure represents significant potential for future full membership, the conversion of students into full members remains a challenge.

The limited conversion can mainly be attributed to two reasons. Firstly, many students are not aware that they need to convert to full membership in order to gain access to all the benefits and services. Secondly, some students prefer other unions after completing their studies, but join the SAOU temporarily as students because the SAOU provides practical services, such as assistance with SACE applications.

These factors indicate a need for better communication and targeted awareness regarding the value and benefits of full membership in order to improve the conversion of students.

Servicing Schools

The servicing of schools is complicated by various factors. Some district offices offer minimal support and, in certain cases, contact numbers are unusable or telephones go unanswered, as well as financial mismanagement. Some districts go for months without electricity; with the result that administration and the execution of duties are hampered. Furthermore, many schools and towns are situated far apart, making it difficult to reach all schools effectively and conduct regular visits.

The rollout of the needs assessment provides a valuable opportunity for improved planning. It will provide a clear indication of which schools and areas should receive priority for school visits. Furthermore, it will provide guidance regarding the type of training teachers require, which can increase the relevance and impact of support and training initiatives.

Despite the existing challenges, the needs assessment creates an opportunity to plan and carry out the servicing of schools in a more focused and effective manner.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

The PSC, together with the Provincial Secretary (PS), consists of the following persons as elected from the Provincial Executive Council (PEC):

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028				
CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
	André Matthee	Chairperson (Principal)	LS Voorpos	East London
	Jean-Pierre du Preez	Deputy Chair (Deputy Principal)	HS DF Malherbe	Gqeberha
1	Helena Fyver	Post Level 1	HS DF Malherbe	Gqeberha
2	Herman Vogel	Principal	LS Jeffreysbaai	JeffreysbaY
3	Henko Serfontein	Principal	LS Hangklip	Komani
4	Joubert Retief	Principal	HS PJ Olivier	Makhanda

Functioning and focus

The PSC has the mandate to represent the province in national decision-making structures in order to ensure that provincial interests are heard, as discussed during PEC meetings.



From left to right: Herman Vogel; Joubert Retief; Debbie Harvey; André Matthee; Jean-Pierre du Preez; Helena Fyver; Henko Serfontein

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026				
CIRCUIT	NAME	FOCUS GROUP	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
Chair	André Matthee	Primary Schools	LS Voorpos	East London
Deputy Chair	Jean-Pierre du Preez	High Schools	HS DF Malherbe	Gqeberha
1	Helena Fyver	Examinations	HS DF Malherbe	Gqeberha
1	Erica Maritz	LSEN	HS Kaap Recife	Gqeberha
1	Sanet Ainslie		HS Cillié	Gqeberha
1	Lecia van der Merwe	Therapists	HS Kaap Recife	Gqeberha
1	Kelvin Knowles	TVET	TVET PE College	Gqeberha
2	Herman Vogel		LS Jeffreysbaai	Jeffreysbay
2	Chantelle van Niekerk	Office-based members	OKOD Kariega	Kariega
2	Cornelius Coetzer		LS Stulting	Humansdorp
2	Andene Torlage	ECD	Sunshine Spesiale Skool	Kariega
3	Henko Serfontein		LS Hangklip	Komani
3	Phil-Henry Barnard		HS Ooskus Gimnasium	East London
3	Kerry Kleine Punte		LS Fort Beaufort	Fort Beaufort
3	Werner Oosthuizen	Technical Schools	Baysville Spesiale Skool	Oos-Londen
4	Joubert Retief		HS PJ Olivier	Makhanda
4	Deidré Jaftha	Admin	LS Reyneveld	Graaff-Reinet
4	Ronel Bester		LS Aliwal-Noord	Aliwal North

Functioning and focus (strategic role)

The Provincial Executive Council (PEC) plays an important role in guiding and supporting members in the province. The PEC consists of elected leaders who represent the interests of SAOU members and help provide direction to the union. They manage the structures of the SAOU in the province, such as circuits and branches, according to the number of members. Furthermore, the PEC ensures that the SAOU’s national policy and objectives are implemented at provincial level, especially with regard to professionalism and the protection of educators’ working conditions. The PEC also serves as a link between the provincial office and members at schools by communicating important information about labour matters, salaries and pensions.



Back f.l.t.r.: Erica Maritz; Lecia van der Merwe; Andene Torlage; Werner Oosthuizen; Phil-Henry Barnard; Kelvin Knowles; Sanet Ainslie; Kerry Kleine Punte; Deidré Jaftha; Cornelius Coetzer
Front f.l.t.r.: Herman Vogel; Joubert Retief; Debbie Harvey; André Matthee; Jean-Pierre du Preez; Helena Fyver; Henko Serfontein

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Newsletters

SAOU Eastern Cape has a total of 4,142 subscribers on the newsletter platform, MailBlaze. The statistics for the reporting period indicate the following:

- Newsletters opened: 3 570
- Newsletters not opened: 556

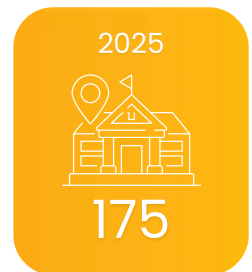


WhatsApp groups

SAOU Eastern Cape uses various WhatsApp groups to ensure effective communication with members, including groups for high schools, primary schools, principals, deputy principals, WPRs, administrative personnel, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). WhatsApp is effective, as members are more likely to read messages there than via email. It is also easier and faster for members to communicate via WhatsApp.

In 2024, the Eastern Cape's WhatsApp number was compromised and the new number was initially not saved by all members, which hindered communication. Early in 2026, a once-off bulk SMS was sent to all members with the new number. They will continue to monitor the reach of WhatsApp messages.

School visits



During 2023, a shortage of staff had a negative impact on the execution of school visits, which resulted in only a limited number of schools being visited.

In 2024, additional staff were appointed, which significantly improved the Eastern Cape's capacity to conduct school visits. This created the possibility of reaching more schools and planning and carrying out visits more effectively.

By 2025, it was identified that there was a greater need to reach out to more schools, especially schools situated far away geographically and which had indicated that they required support. Through improved planning and the effective utilisation of available resources, school visits could be expanded to meet this need.

School visits play an important role in promoting effective communication between the organisation and its members. The personal nature of these visits enables members to meet directly with the people with whom they communicate, which promotes trust and better relationships. During school visits, members also feel more comfortable asking questions and discussing issues. Furthermore, these visits provide a valuable opportunity for the marketing and introduction of new projects within the organisation, such as SAOU Help (helpline and wellness programme), Continuum (death benefit) and the SAOU app (d6).

Improvements and innovation

The Eastern Cape office is exploring the possibility of strategically utilising social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok with the aim of reaching, engaging and thereby recruiting new teachers, especially those from the younger generation.

These platforms are primarily visually driven and provide an effective channel for conveying information in a creative, dynamic and accessible way. Through the use of short videos, graphic content and interactive features, the Eastern Cape office can enjoy greater visibility and build a stronger connection with the target audience.

The implementation of this strategy can contribute to improved communication with young teachers and a more relevant and modern image. Furthermore, it enables the Eastern Cape office to adapt to current digital trends and effectively utilise the preferred communication channels of the target group.

Handling member enquiries

Teachers in the Eastern Cape experience various work-related disputes and grievances for which they often require the assistance of the union. These grievances mainly relate to conditions of service, working conditions, professional rights and safety.

Nature of enquiries

 Observer allowances

 Pension matters

 Salary matters

 Workload and burnout

 Leave

 Disciplinary hearings

 Safety and security

 Temporary appointments

 Conversions

 Grievances and disputes

 Emotional support

 Transfers

Response and processes

- Expertise regarding policy- and legal-related matters is extremely important.
- Experience in labour matters contributes to support for members.
- Professional support regarding matters such as curriculum.
- Expertise regarding the procedures of ELRC and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) processes.
- Good professional relationships with district officials serving in key positions such as finance, human resources and legal services.

- Where necessary, certain matters are referred to SAOU Legal Services for further handling of specific issues.
- In certain cases, grievances must be handled internally at school level and therefore these types of grievances are referred to the principal and/or school management for handling in collaboration with the union.
- If the grievance cannot be resolved internally at the school, the grievance is referred to the SAOU legal advisers in the districts.
- The Eastern Cape office handles all grievances, disputes and disciplinary hearings and refers matters to SAOU Legal Services only when deemed necessary.
- Ongoing training of Eastern Cape staff working with labour matters is of cardinal importance to enable the union to act at all times in the best interests of members.

General challenges and solutions

- Refer certain matters by means of written submissions to the provincial HOD and arrange bilateral meetings to report serious matters.
- Use ELRC task teams to drive members' mandates.
- Good relationships with district officials, district directors, Legal Services and the HOD's office in order to place members' matters/mandates on the table for attention.

Training, Empowerment and Professional Development

Perceived value for members

The feedback contained in the evaluation forms indicates that the training opportunities were experienced by members as meaningful, relevant and informative.

Additional needs identified

According to statistics, post level 1 teachers make up the largest portion of the Eastern Cape's membership. Consequently, there will be a focus on presenting more empowerment opportunities for this group with the assistance of SAOU Professional Services.



Office Functioning

Personnel

Debbie Harvey – Provincial Secretary (PS)

Venita van Wyk – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS)

Leandro Baartman – Full-time Shop Steward

Charné Willemse; Amelia Myburgh; Nadia van der Watt – Provincial Administrative Officers

General functioning

Debbie Harvey

Union services

Provides an effective union service to SAOU members in the Eastern Cape, including the handling of mediations, arbitrations and disciplinary hearings, as well as participation in collective bargaining.

Curriculum services

Promotes professional learning communities, serves on departmental committees and identifies curriculum and professional development needs.

Administrative services

Maintains sound working relationships with SAOU structures, provides administrative support to the Eastern Cape office and coordinates meetings where necessary.

Logistical support

Ensures effective communication and coordination with SAOU members in the ECP and manages the provincial office.

External liaison

Promotes cooperation with employers, other unions, the media and the provincial education department and supports marketing and recruitment initiatives. Works with the Executive Officer (EO) on marketing and recruitment initiatives.

Venita van Wyk

Union services

Provides an effective union service to SAOU members in the Eastern Cape, including the handling of mediations, arbitrations and disciplinary hearings, as well as participation in collective bargaining.

Curriculum services

Promotes professional learning communities, serves on departmental committees and identifies curriculum and professional development needs.

Administrative services

Maintains good working relationships with SAOU structures, supports the provincial office administratively and coordinates meetings where necessary.

Logistical support

Ensures effective communication and coordination with SAOU members in the Eastern Cape and manages the provincial office.

External liaison

Works with the EO on marketing and recruitment initiatives, promotes cooperation with employers, unions and the media and liaises with the provincial education department regarding members' conditions of service matters.

Leandro Baartman

- Acts on behalf of members in disciplinary hearings, grievances and dispute resolution processes.
- Monitors the employer's compliance with applicable labour legislation and collective agreements and handles members' enquiries and conditions of service matters.
- Participates in education programmes, workshops and consultations with the department and represents the SAOU at relevant meetings and processes.
- Carries out administrative tasks, takes minutes during consultations and ensures effective communication with schools, districts and the department.
- Promotes liaison with other SAOU provincial offices, recruits new members and maintains interaction with educational institutions, including FET colleges.

Charné Willemse

- The Provincial Executive Committee of the provincial office, including general administration, computer work, filing, mail and banking handling, office and stationery purchases, as well as support to the provincial secretary.
- Arranges and coordinates meetings and teleconferences, prepares agendas and documentation, takes minutes and makes logistical arrangements such as venues and refreshments.
- Handles payments, bank statements, credit card administration, claim forms and budget comparisons, as well as the filing of financial documentation.
- Distributes newsletters, news flashes and notices, manages email groups and prepares documents, presentations and online forms as requested.
- Handles member enquiries, coordinates communication with staff and provinces and supports administrative processes such as certificates, tickets and member-related communication.
- Arranges travel and accommodation for staff and PUR members, supports office logistics and oversees the administrative tasks of support personnel.

Amelia Myburgh

- Handles telephonic and written member enquiries, refers matters where necessary and keeps the membership database up to date.
- Also supports the follow-up of debit orders, error reports and general administrative processes.
- Provides administrative support to the PS, APS, FTSS and principal symposium organiser, including the purchase and management of goodwill gifts, as well as support with CTU-ATU processes.
- Takes minutes at staff and project meetings and prepares relevant documentation and mandate submissions. Manages registrations, communication with participants, exhibitors and suppliers and handles logistical and administrative arrangements before, during and after the Principals' Symposium.
- Processes financial transactions and reconciliations for the Principals' Symposium (cashbook, debtors, creditors and ledger), monitors budget expenditure, supports VAT calculations and provides documentation to auditors.
- Distributes communication from the Executive Centre to symposium participants, manages WhatsApp groups and compiles registration and participation reports, including the issuing of attendance certificates.

Nadia van der Watt

- Staffing reception and telephones, handling membership applications, welcomes and cancellations, as well as updating and maintaining the membership database and filing membership records.
- Handles and follows up member enquiries via email, WhatsApp and telephone, liaises with departmental officials and refers enquiries to relevant staff where necessary.
- Supports the follow-up of error reports, debit orders and electronic payments, as well as administration relating to fleet vehicles, office supplies and general office expenses.
- Supports the maintenance of office and facilities, manages corporate gifts and provides administrative support to the PS and other officials.

- Supports provincial training opportunities and the Principals' Symposium, manages WhatsApp groups and communication with members and ensures consistent use of the style guide and digital platforms.
- Supports processes such as student conversion, CTU-ATU shortlists and interviews, as well as the administration of school visits and other organisational activities.



Back f.l.t.r.: Nadia van der Watt; Leandro Baartman; Charné Willemse
Front f.l.t.r.: Amelia Myburgh; Debbie Harvey; Venita van Wyk

Strategic relationships



Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE)

- Meetings with Member of the Executive Council (MEC), CTU-ATU.
- MEC Advisory Committee.
- Meeting with Secretary-General (SG) – by invitation.
- Visits to district offices.
- Serves on task teams at provincial and district level.



Liaison with media

- Appointments and liaison with media and members of the media.
- Commentary to newspapers: Daily Dispatch, The Herald, Die Burger and local community newspapers.
- Advertisements in newspapers.
- Subscription to newspapers by means of electronic subscriptions: The Herald and Daily Dispatch.
- Referring education-related matters to the Executive Centre.

Important interactions

- **Meetings:** Bilateral meetings with the HOD and various district directors are opportunities that enable us to place members' interests at the forefront and negotiate possible solutions.
- **Negotiations:** Good cooperation between unions and governing body organisations during the post provisioning process has, over the past term, benefited schools and been in the best interests of educators. The number of posts made available to schools in the province remained unchanged through a multi-term collective agreement together with a post distribution model favourable to various needy schools in the province.
- **Joint initiatives:** The CTU-ATU alliance functions optimally in the province and cooperation between offices and staff is positive in nature.

Successes and challenges

- **Examples of positive cooperation:** PPN processes, training, SACE, and cases where money was collected on behalf of members.
- **Challenges requiring further attention:** the functioning of districts and the appointment of EDOs/CMCs; pressure on principals; and a lack of support.
- There has been an increase in sexual harassment cases, financial mismanagement, and challenges relating to appointment processes.
- A decline in membership numbers remains a concern.

Conclusion and Outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

- PPN multi-term agreement.
- Cases where money was successfully recovered for members.
- Cases where appointment disputes were successfully finalised.
- SACE project with student recruitment.

2023

- Hot topics breakfast events presented to members.
- SACE project.
- Cooperation with universities regarding the recruitment of student members.
- Women in leadership programme presented.

2024

- During March 2024, the highest membership total was reached at 3,469, of which 798 were SGB posts.
- Two outreach opportunities to office-based educators (OBEs) and other personnel.
- Great success achieved in the Sarah Baartman and Nelson Mandela districts in terms of relationship-building with departmental officials.

2025

- 188 schools reached through school visits.
- Active involvement of the PEC in training.
- Therapist dispute successfully finalised without following the dispute route.
- Many students assisted with SACE registrations.

2026

- The success achieved with the multi-term post provisioning in the Eastern Cape contributed to stability in our schools.
- The negotiation and provision of Grade R posts to Eastern Cape schools contributed to a good foundation for learners in schools. A representative Provincial Executive Council and their cooperation with the Eastern Cape staff and office contributed to good networking with our schools and members.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Challenges during the reporting period

2023

- Membership numbers decline.
- Staff shortages at the SAOU Eastern Cape office.
- School visits hampered.
- Recruitment of English-speaking members and members at independent schools hampered.
- Need for bilingual newsletters.
- Regular power interruptions.

2024

- Language of presentation during presentations.
- Costs and attendance of training opportunities.
- WPRs' lack of knowledge and/or interest in recruitment.

2025

- Lack of an established media footprint.
- Retention of members in favour of other unions.
- Marketing of SAOU Instagram and Facebook not yet established. This affects connection with members on social media.

Focus for the next congress term

Priorities

- School visits.
- Recruitment and retention of members.
- Best-quality service delivery.
- Continuous training of staff.

Strategic direction or focus areas

- Building new networks and alliances in order to serve members better.
- Serving on ELRC task teams in order to place members' mandates on the agenda.
- PEC involvement in circuits.

FREE STATE



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Free State at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

10.6% of South Africa's
total landmass

5 Circuits further subdivided
into several regions



463 km

The furthest point from the SAOU
provincial office in Bloemfontein
is Memel.

46 years average age
of members

71% of all members are
Post Level 1

Membership

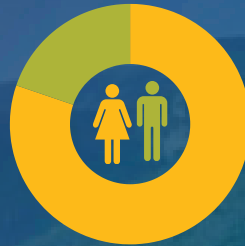


5 128

PERSAL: 4 261

SGB: 792

Independent Schools: 75



Women: 78%

Men: 22%



676

Primary Schools: 310

High Schools: 150

Combined Schools: 47

LSEN Schools: 17

Agricultural Schools: 8

Technical Schools: 5

130 095 km²



4 397

members reached through
62 training events from
July 2023 to June 2026



78%
Afrikaans

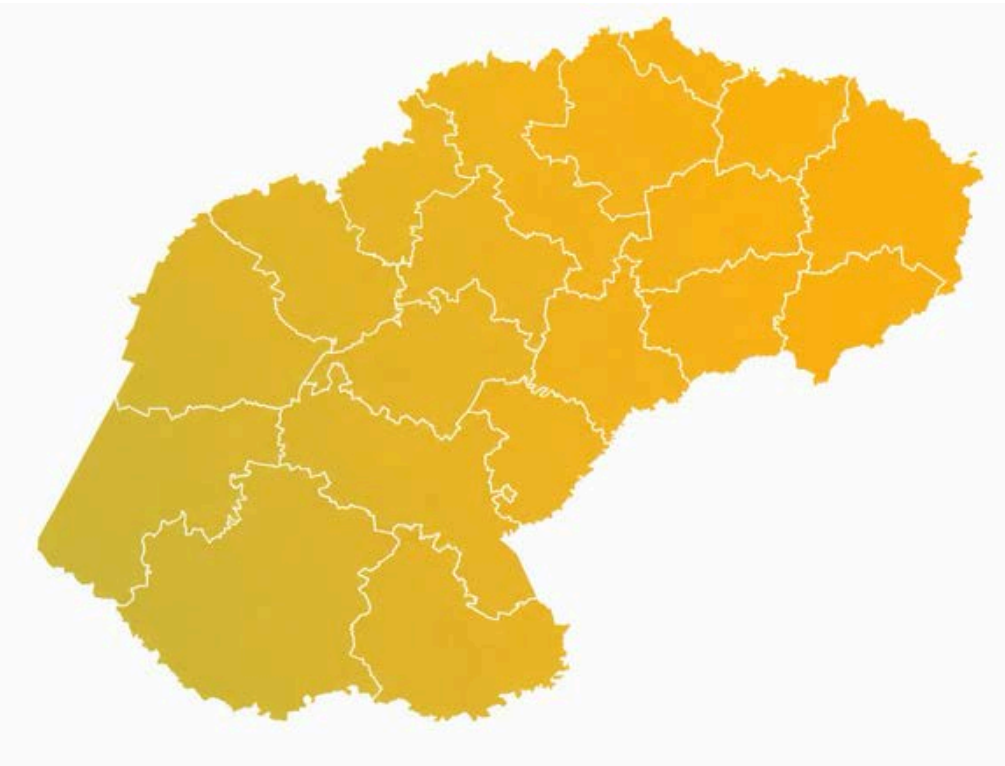
22%
English

Demographic Information

The geographical area of the Free State extends over 130,095 km² and is divided into five districts: the Mangaung Metropolitan District and the more rural districts of Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana and Xhariep. The Mangaung and Thabo Mofutsanyana districts border Lesotho, which results in schools in the surrounding towns often being obligated to accommodate learners from Lesotho. This places pressure on the province’s budget, which does not take those learners into account.

The rural schools are often inaccessible due to poor maintenance of roads and infrastructure, which results in schools frequently being closed during the rainy season when roads are washed away. Water and electricity supply in these areas also play a major role in the pressure placed on educators to complete the prescribed curriculum. The rural district offices often struggle with electricity and water shortages, with the result that service delivery is neglected.

Circuit and regional division



SAOU Free State is divided into five circuits, as determined by the SAOU constitution and approved by the Provincial Executive Council (PEC), namely the Kroonvaal, Goud, Drakensberg, Olien and Kiepersol circuits.

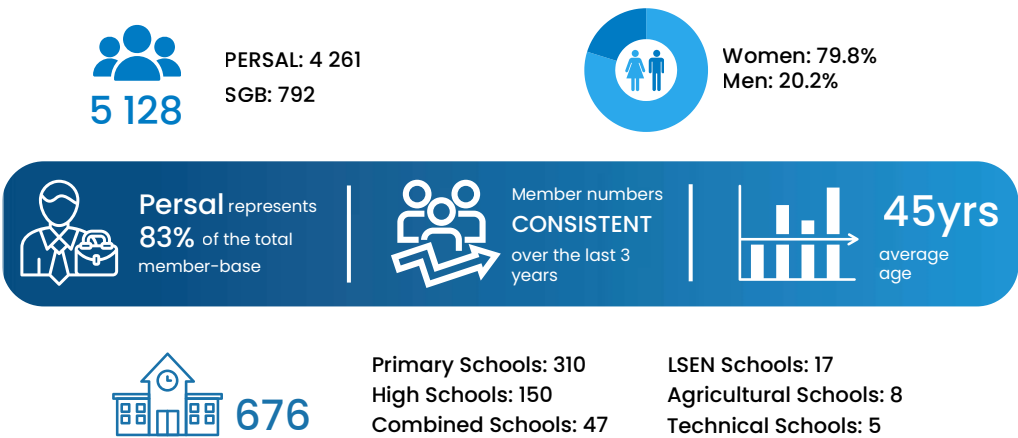
The SAOU Free State office is situated in Bloemfontein in close proximity to the head office of the Free State Department of Education. Due to the location of the Free State office, it is possible for SAOU Free State staff to follow up and deal personally, on a daily basis, with members’ enquiries and problems with officials at the Free State Department of Education (FSDoE) head office. The FSDoE consists of five district offices:

- Mangaung-metropolitaanse distrik – Bloemfontein
- Lejweleputswa-onderwysdistrik – Welkom
- Xhariep-onderwysdistrik – Bloemfontein
- Thabo Mofutsanyana-onderwysdistrik – Bethlehem en Qwa-Qwa
- Fezile Dabi-onderwysdistrik – Sasolburg

SAOU Free State provides services to members at each of the offices, including public service officials and office-based educators.

Membership

The members of SAOU Free State consist of educators (school- and office-based) and public service officials employed by the FSDoE, as well as members employed by school governing bodies (SGBs), FET colleges, teaching students and private schools.



Trends since the previous congress

Over the past three years, SAOU Free State has begun focusing on the inclusion of less traditional members, with the focus particularly on training opportunities presented in English, in order to expand the union’s service delivery and footprint in the province. The change in the language of presentation has resulted in the membership profile expanding to educators in low-income areas and smaller settlements, as well as a more inclusive membership in terms of non-traditional Afrikaans-speaking members.

A matter of concern in the province is the large number of younger members leaving the education sector. A significant number of these members emigrate or leave the education sector entirely. The number of members applying for early retirement before the age of 60 is also increasing as the education department places a greater administrative burden on educators. Members suffering from chronic medical conditions, many of which are stress-related, are taking medical retirement earlier and earlier.

Persons appointed to promotion posts are also younger, with the result that principals, in particular, who are appointed at a young age reach the maximum salary scale up to 20 years before retirement, and no further professional growth takes place.

Learner discipline is a major concern, where educators, despite the implementation of disciplinary policies, are still exposed to bullying behaviour from learners; assaults on educators are also increasing. Along with this, the number of sexual misconduct complaints being reported is on the rise.

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The FSDoE’s inadequate financial position has resulted in numerous vacant posts in district offices and schools not being filled, as preference has been given to filling educator posts at schools. Post-provisioning has shown no improvement in the growth of posts at schools. The enforced inclusion of Grade R in primary schools has not been taken into account in post provisioning, and schools have been compelled either to place those educators against their post provisioning or appoint them in SGB posts. This places severe financial pressure on school budgets.

Membership profile

SAOU Free State’s membership is dominated by post-level 1 educators, numbering more than 3,800 members, while administrative and support personnel at schools average 590 members. Management members, including principals, deputy principals and heads of department, represent an average of 900 members.

The steady increase in student members holds promise for a younger generation with the passion to build on the continued existence of quality education. SAOU Free State currently has a student membership of 314. The majority of student members are studying in the Intermediate Phase.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS SERVED	
Type of School	
Departmental divisions and FET institutions	67
Primary Schools	310
High Schools	150
Combined Schools	47
Preschools	37
Independents Schools	35
LSEN Schools	17

Many of the Free State schools are in rural areas where roads become impassable during the rainy season. Infrastructure and road maintenance are often neglected and theft at schools with inadequate security is only one of the challenges these schools face daily.

Many of the schools where there are no SAOU members are unwilling to allow other unions to visit educators. In such cases, WPRs at schools are requested to approach their colleagues at non-SAOU schools in order to afford SAOU the opportunity to visit those schools.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028		
OFFICE	NAME	SCHOOL
Chairperson	Anne-Marie Klink	Oranje Sekondêre Meisieskool
Deputy Chairperson	Tommie Doubell	Naudeville Primêre Skool
Drakensberg Circuit	Dries Pretorius	Bethlehem Voortrekker Hoërskool
Goud Circuit	Lizandé Blom	Naudeville Primêre Skool
Kiepersol Circuit	Charles Liversage	Sentraal Hoërskool
Kroonvaal Circuit	Wouter Wessels	Sasolburg Hoërskool
Olien Circuit	Louis Smith	President Brand Primêre Skool

Functioning and focus

The PSC of the Free State plays a major role in the training opportunities that take place in circuits and in attending screening and interview processes and meetings. During meetings, the PSC also provides feedback on the problems and trends in the respective circuits. The PSC mostly assists the Free State office in carrying out duties and logistical arrangements in terms of representation and training opportunities. Members are comfortable conveying the problems they experience to the PSC, where the members of the PSC act in an advisory capacity. During bilateral discussions with district management teams and the Head of Department (HOD) in the Free State, members of the PSC accompany SAOU staff.

The representatives of the Free State’s National Executive Council (NEC), as well as the Professional Committee (Profcom), were elected by the PEC from within the PSC.



Back f.l.t.r.: Mnr Wouter Wessels (Kroonvaalkring); Mnr Dries Pretorius (Drakensbergkring); Mnr Charles Liversage (Kiepersolkring); Mnr Louis Smith (Olienkring)
Front f.l.t.r.: Mev Cynthia Farrell (Provinsiale Sekretaris); Mev Anne-Marie Klink (Voorsitter); Mnr Tommie Doubell (Ondervoorsitter); Me Winay Els (Assistent Provinsiale Sekretaris); Me Lizandé Blom (Goudkring)

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026			
CIRCUIT	NAME	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
Chairperson	Anne-Marie Klink	Oranje Sekondêre Meisieskool	Bloemfontein
Deputy Chair	Tommie Doubell	Naudeville Primêre Skool	Welkom
Drakensberg Circuit	Dries Pretorius	Bethlehem Voortrekker Hoërskool	Bethlehem
Drakensberg Circuit	Wessel de Bruin	Graanveld Primêre Skool	Bethlehem
Drakensberg Circuit	Stefan Bester	Jordania Primêre Skool	Bethlehem
Goud Circuit	Lizandé Blom	Naudeville Primêre Skool	Welkom
Goud Circuit	Donovan Pieterse	St Helena Primêre Skool	Welkom
Goud Circuit	Johan van der Westhuizen	Hentie Cilliers Hoërskool	Virginia
Kiepersol Circuit	Charles Liversage	Sentraal Hoërskool	Bloemfontein
Kiepersol Circuit	San-Mari van der Merwe	Oranje Sekondêre Meisieskool	Bloemfontein
Kiepersol Circuit	Tim Taylor	Brandwag Primêre Skool	Bloemfontein
Kroonvaal Circuit	Wouter Wessels	Sasolburg Hoërskool	Sasolburg
Kroonvaal Circuit	Ryno Mouton	Noord Primêre Skool	Sasolburg
Kroonvaal Circuit	Tjaart du Plessis	Trio Hoërskool	Kroonstand
Olien Circuit	Louis Smith	President Brand Primêre Skool	Bloemfontein
Olien Circuit	Henro van der Westhuizen	Trompsburg Primêre skool	Trompsburg
Olien Circuit	Jacques Redelinhuis	Martie du Plessis Skool	Bloemfontein
LSEN representative Co-opted	Marilise Fourie	Lettie Fouché Skool	Bloemfontein

Strategic role

The Provincial Executive Council (PEC) is structured in such a way that it is possible to cover large parts of the province serviced by SAOU.

The division into circuits facilitates the role the PEC plays in representation. PEC members are responsible for identifying representatives for screening and interview processes, as well as attending district meetings and identifying current issues and communicating them to the Free State office and the circuit representatives on the PDB. The PEC supports the office during bilateral discussions with the HOD and district directors and in this way conveys employees’ viewpoints and concerns from school level to the employer.

Empowering members and acting as speakers during training opportunities is one of the PEC’s unique characteristics. The PEC consists of SAOU members with years of experience and knowledge in various areas of the education sector. Members’ needs regarding service delivery and training offered in the province are identified by the PEC. Members of the PEC are the voice of SAOU members in the province and do not hesitate to assist the staff of the Free State office. Logistical arrangements, including arranging speakers for events and meetings, are handled by the PEC.

SAOU Free State is privileged to have elected members who are directly involved in the activities of the office and assist members with enquiries.



Back v.l.t.r.: Mnr Ryno Mouton; Mnr Henro vd Westhuizen; Mnr Donovan Pieterse; Mnr Charles Liversage; Mnr Stefan Bester; Mnr Wessel de Bruin; Mnr Louis Smith; Mnr Tjaart du Plessis; Mnr Tim Taylor; Mnr Johan vd Walt; Mev Marilise Fourie
Front f.l.t.r.: Mnr Dries Pretorius; Mnr Wouter Wessels; Mev Cynthia Farrell (Provinsiale Sekretaris); Mev Anne-Marie Klink (Voorsitter); Mnr Tommie Doubell (Ondervoorsitter); Me Winay Els (Assistent Provinsiale Sekretaris); Mev Lizandé Blom
Add-in f.l.t.r.: Mev San-Mari vd Merwe; Dr Jacques Redelinghuys

Service Delivery

Communication with members

The greatest challenges regarding communication with members are motivating members to read newsletters and to update their contact details and membership information. Members prefer shorter pieces of information, and reading comprehensive newsletters is time-consuming and sometimes contains information that members feel does not necessarily all apply to them. They then lose interest in reading newsletters.

SAOU Free State has moved towards the use of WhatsApp communities, since more members can be placed on a community. Especially where members' contact details change, members then do not receive communication placed only on groups. The broadcast groups on the platform limit the number of members who can be on one group, which means communication has to be sent repeatedly. At present, the broadcast groups have been incorporated under the communities, and it is still possible to distribute communication intended for a particular group of members only to that group. WhatsApp messages are structured in such a way as to spark members' interest so that they will then want to read the newsletters.

WhatsApp communication is also sent by the PEC to principals and schools in their circuits. This contributes to the marketing of training opportunities and the dissemination of important information.

Improvement and innovation

The creation of short videos about planned training opportunities and conditions and benefits of service is also being considered by the office; members of the younger generation are more visually orientated.

Training opportunities offered by SAOU Free State are mostly recorded or sessions are presented in hybrid format, since towns where presentations take place are generally far apart, thereby eliminating travel time for members wishing to participate.

Handling member enquiries

Arbeidsaangeleenthede en suksesse bereik word toegeskryf aan die samewerking van die personeel in die uitvoerende kantoor en gedeelde kennis en hantering. Die Vrystaat kantoor hanteer meestal Arbeidsprosesse en dissiplinêre aangeleenthede self. Soos nodig word bystand versoek van die Nasionale afdelings. Die PUR-lede staan die kantoor ook by met die hantering van griewe vergaderings en mediasies en met uitsondering tydens dissiplinêre aangeleenthede.

Gedurende 2024 en 2025 het die Vrystaat kantoor meer as R 7 222 660.17 ingewin vir lede in verskeie dispuut prosesse, meer as 264 skole in die provinsie is besoek, 393 griewe is verklaar, 25 dissiplinêre prosesse is hanteer.

Die SAOU het in 2025, die Hof genader in verband met die wanbetaling van GEMS gelde deur die Vrystaatse Onderwysdepartement, 'n kwessie wat opslae gemaak het in die media en sukses behaal het vir die lede in die provinsie.

Nature of enquiries



Observer allowances



Salary matters



Conversions



Promotional posts



Temporary appointments



Grievances and disputes



Transfers



Service benefits

Response and processes

SAOU Free State places great value on service delivery to members, with assistance rendered at a high level of expertise and professional handling of matters related to service benefits and conditions of service. The volume of enquiries received bears witness to the quality of service delivered to members.

Communication to members regarding enquiries and ongoing issues takes place regularly, and information provided to members is substantiated with correct references to source documents and legislation.

The enquiries received testify to the extra effort staff make to assist members. This support includes, among other things, workplace problems and grievances, salaries, pensions, leave, medical matters, taxation and the handling of discipline in the classroom.

The staff of the SAOU Free State office are extremely well-equipped to assist members with the full spectrum of problems experienced. Our successes are exceptional.

The office works closely with district officials to resolve enquiries and problems. The value of the relationships built with officials cannot be underestimated. By maintaining these relationships, many serious issues are resolved before dispute and/or disciplinary processes need to be followed.

General challenges and solutions

The office is becoming increasingly aware of conflict situations in the workplace between management teams and staff at schools and institutions. Staff do not necessarily follow the grievance processes established by the employer, and many members make use of protection orders before internal dispute processes are followed.

Members often mention that if they and the school management belong to the same union, they do not wish to make use of the SAOU. The office therefore relies on the PEC to provide assistance to one of the parties in order to avoid possible conflicts of interest. Members who terminate their SAOU membership for such reasons return almost immediately when they do not receive the same quality of service from an alternative union.

Salary issues that are successfully resolved contribute to member recruitment. The service offered to members through salary audits is one of SAOU Free State's unique selling points during school visits, and members communicate the successes achieved to colleagues. Towards the end of the financial year, the employer tends to stop the payment of allowances and then retrospectively repay outstanding amounts to members from the new financial year's budget.

The increase in cases of misconduct, especially assault, sexual harassment and sexual assault of learners and colleagues at schools, is of great concern in the province. The office therefore offers regular training during school visits on misconduct in the workplace. Changes in legislation are regularly emphasised when schools are visited.

In some districts, interference by school governing bodies in personnel employed by the FSDoE is increasingly being reported. School governing bodies often exceed their powers.

With the implementation of the electronic leave system for departmental employees, numerous errors crept in. The office took the initiative to list the problems and communicate them to the department, which resolved system problems. Numerous members report weekly problems they experience with the electronic distribution of their salary slips. Through direct contact with the FSDoE's IT division, such problems are easily resolved.

Training, Empowerment and Professional Development

The Drakensberg circuit has traditionally held an empowerment event in Bethlehem on the first day of the new school year. The number of members as well as non-members attending annually increases every year. In 2026, a total of 243 people attended the event. The event is also sponsored by the community in order to keep costs for members to a minimum.

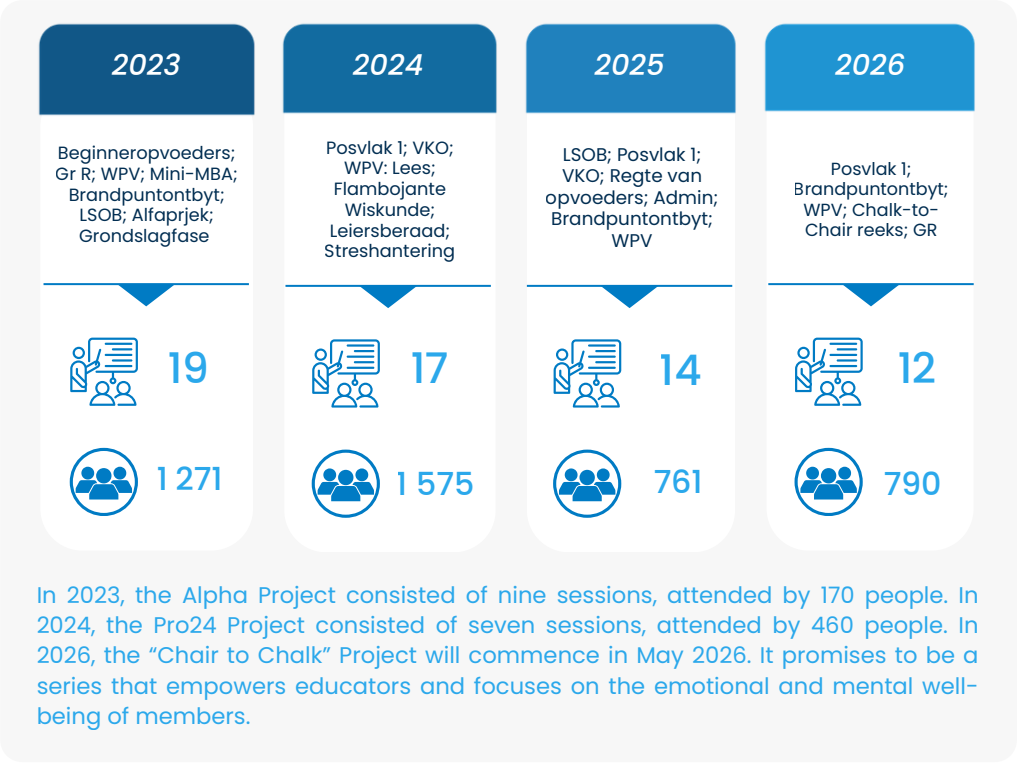
Each circuit also presents a post-level 1 educator event during the first quarter, largely attended by new entrants to the teaching profession. The presenters for these events also come from the respective circuits and are school staff with whom the members are familiar.

SAOU Free State also annually selects a specific focus group for which at least one virtual training opportunity is then presented every month. The final session of such a series is then an in-person event where all members registered for the project are given the opportunity to meet the presenters and one another. The event concludes with a motivational speaker.

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Impak
Members benefit from regular opportunities directed at a specific group. The value of continuous empowerment on relevant issues cannot be underestimated. It also gives members the opportunity to reflect on the previous presentation and to apply the implementation of what was learnt before the next session.

The need for practically applicable tips during presentations has been identified by many of the members attending the opportunities. This simplifies the themes identified for the next session.

Office Functioning

- Staff structure**
 Cynthia Farrell – Provincial Secretary (PS)
 Winay Els – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS)
 Stefan Smith – Full-Time Shop Steward
 Evett Coetzee – Full-Time Shop Steward
 Mina Dillon and Angelique Stols – Provincial Administrative Officers

General functioning
 Cynthia Farrell
 The PS represents the province at national management level. The PS is also responsible for the management of the Free State office and staff, liaison with the PSC and PEC, handling complex legal matters, work allocation and monitoring of Free State office staff, presenting training to members at training opportunities, identifying themes for training and liaison with national divisions at the Executive Centre in Pretoria.

The PS is also the chief negotiator of the Combined Trade Union–Autonomous Teachers’ Unions (CTU-ATU) Free State, liaison with the HOD and district directors, as well as the TVET sector negotiator.

Winay Els
 Handling disciplinary hearings, arbitration processes and dispute prevention committees. Attendance at and feedback during meetings of the PSC and PEC regarding legal matters in the province. Presenting training to members at training opportunities. The APS acts in the absence of the PS.

The APS also acts as a negotiator in various task teams, as designated by the PS. Attendance at meetings and communication to the management of the respective district offices are handled by the APS at the request of the PS.

Stefan Smit and Evette Coetzee

Handling general enquiries in terms of conditions and benefits of service, assistance to members during grievance meetings, mediation processes, representation of the CTU-ATU during screening and interview processes, school visits and member recruitment. Training regarding service benefits and conditions of service during school visits and scheduled training opportunities, attendance at task team and committee meetings, handling grievances at district level and liaison with district officials.

Mina Dillon and Angelique Stols

The administrative officers of the Free State office are truly the heartbeat of the office. Their duties include, among other things, maintenance of the membership database, reception and switchboard services, handling payments by the Free State office, updating financial statements and communication with the financial office at the Executive Centre in Pretoria. Also stock control, logistical arrangements for meetings, training opportunities and travel and accommodation arrangements for staff and PEC members, arrangements for school visits and representation during screening and interview processes and meetings, compilation of agendas and minute-taking during meetings, diary management for office staff, procurement of service providers and products, distribution of communication to members, general administrative tasks as requested by the PS, maintenance management of fleet vehicles, office grounds and buildings, as well as human resources administration of staff.



Back f.l.t.r.: Mina Dillon; Angelique Stols
Front f.l.t.r.: Winay Els, Cynthia Farrell; Stefan Smit
Add-in: Evette Coetzee

Strategic Relationships



Provincial Department of Education / ELRC

The staff of SAOU Free State serve on all task teams and also represent the CTU-ATU as negotiators during ELRC sittings. The SAOU is the majority party in the Free State, which results in the SAOU being represented on all platforms and at all meetings.

FSDoE officials also ensure that all communication is sent directly to the SAOU office, which ensures representation by the office. The office of the HOD also welcomes regular visits from the SAOU, and relationships have been established, particularly with the labour relations office.



Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS)

SAOU Free State works closely with organisations such as FEDSAS and CTU-ATU partners and maintains a professional relationship with the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU).

Cooperation with Motheo TVET College to provide training to staff at the college was also established in 2026, opening doors to the TVET colleges in the province. Relationships with other role players in the education sector who act as sponsors during training and empowerment opportunities are maintained through regular cooperation and mutual marketing.



Liaison with the media

Media liaison takes place according to circumstances. Good relationships are maintained with the media.



Sponsors

Through the relationships many PEC members maintain with established sponsors, the office often relies on the PEC to act as intermediaries in securing sponsorships. The Free State's communities are eager to support the education sector, and this facilitates relationships with stakeholders in the province and sector.



Ander organisasies

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Relationships with other stakeholders in the education sector who serve as sponsors for training and empowerment events are maintained through regular collaboration and mutual marketing.

Important interactions

Two of the five district offices have established human resources meetings that facilitate the follow-up of progress with enquiries. The human resources (HR) directors also ensure that officials in the districts regularly provide feedback to the office. Three of the district offices are in rural environments and are visited less frequently, but through relationship-building the SAOU has ensured that communication with officials is also addressed through the HR directors. The office visits the three districts quarterly unless a need arises for more frequent visits.

The FSDoE head office receives weekly visits from the SAOU and welcomes the contribution of office staff in handling enquiries. It is therefore easier for office staff, among other things, to obtain salary and service records and also resolve problems relating to service benefits.

The SAOU is also specifically invited to act as part of meeting panels in order to lend an objective perspective and balance to decision-making.

Successes and challenges

The repeated invitations to form part of dispute committees and not merely as representatives of organised labour speak to the value the SAOU adds to such committees. The SAOU is also the only CTU-ATU partner that forms part of all curriculum-related committees.

The SAOU is also regularly invited to attend meetings with staff at schools initiated by district management. The SAOU representative is then also given the opportunity to address school staff during such meetings. Circuit managers also make use of the SAOU's input for training presented by circuit managers at schools.

One of the greatest challenges at present is the appointment of public service personnel (PS personnel) at schools. Since 2023, a moratorium has been placed on appointments, and these may only be approved by Treasury. This complicates the appointment of office and general assistants at schools and places enormous pressure on school budgets to create SGB posts to relieve the burden.

The removal of the district director of the Thabo Mofutsanyana district has also resulted in regular changes in the district leadership negatively affecting service delivery. Many of the district management are also appointed only in an acting capacity, with some officials responsible for the duties of two posts. The Lejweleputswa district's acting HR Director has also been replaced three times over the past three years with another official due to poor performance. The previous acting HR Director also held the position of labour relations officer, which resulted in disciplinary matters being neglected and grievances not being resolved.

There are currently large numbers of district officials occupying only acting posts, which results in officials neglecting their duties to ensure service delivery. The permanent appointment of critical personnel in district offices is a major cause for concern and is also receiving attention at ELRC level.

Conclusion and outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

Since 2023, several changes have been made to the Free State office's staff complement.

In 2024, 2025 and 2026, each year began with a new VVV. In 2026, a new PS and APS were appointed from within the office, and the office looks forward to the next term with great excitement.

Together with the SAOU's 30-year celebrations, the Free State office is also celebrating its 11th year in the current building. The office building has also been given new life, where staff input and creative thinking played a major role.

The success of the Free State office is attributed to the professional work ethic of staff and the selfless support from the PEC. The staff of the Free State office are receptive to professional growth, and restructuring has resulted in staff approaching their tasks with renewed enthusiasm.

Challenges and lessons learnt

For a long time, staff duties remained unchanged. The SAOU Free State team, however, decided to make changes to duties in order to bring about professional development and create new opportunities for staff. This practice also ensures uninterrupted service delivery to members.

Focus for the next congress term

The Free State's priority remains unchanged: quality service delivery to members and retention of existing members, as well as the recruitment of new members, are of the utmost importance. The focus is also placed on recruiting non-traditional SAOU members and presenting inclusive training opportunities. The goal is to be represented at every school in the province, regardless of the size and demographics of the school. Expanding the SAOU footprint remains the ultimate prize.

Closing message from the PS

It is an absolute privilege to thank the Free State PEC for their continued support of the office and SAOU members. The Free State office has overcome numerous challenges over the past three years with the selfless assistance of the PEC.

To our loyal members, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for the trust placed in us to assist you in times of crisis and to empower and motivate you for the enormous task resting upon you. You are living out a calling for which few are willing; the future of our children has been entrusted to you, and therefore, SAOU Free State will continue to strengthen your hands.

The Free State office also thanks the staff who have left its service for the legacy that speaks of quality service delivery to our members and will uphold that legacy.

The staff of the SAOU Free State office is unquestionably the office's greatest asset. Their loyalty towards their employer and the members of the SAOU is remarkable. Trust and respect are the most important qualities ensuring the success of the Free State team. This flows through into all aspects of the office's service delivery to our members and support for one another.

SAOU Free State stands in humility before the Creator, and all honour belongs to Him for the blessings SAOU Free State receives in abundance from His hand.

GAUTENG



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades. Een Visie
Three Decades. One Vision



Gauteng at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

1.5% of South Africa's
total landmass

10 Circuits further subdivided in
several regions



43 years average age
of members

73.2% of all members are
Post Level 1

28% of the SAOU's total
member-base works
in Gauteng

Membership



10 689

PERSAL: 8 042

SGB: 2 166

Independent Schools: 499



Women: 82%

Men: 18%



945

Primary Schools: 397

High Schools: 194

Private Schools: 225

Combined Schools: 8

LESN Schools: 73

Preschools: 48

18 170 km²



5 690

members reached through
82 training events since
July 2023 to June 2026



90%
Afrikaans

10%
English

Demographic Information

Gauteng is the smallest province in the country, with an area of 18 170km². In contrast, approximately 28% of the SAOU membership is employed in Gauteng. In addition, Gauteng has the highest population figure in the country, with approximately 2,6 to 2,7 million learners. Gauteng is primarily an urban province that is densely populated, with large metropolitan areas such as Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni. Because of Gauteng's dense population, there is considerable pressure on school capacity and service delivery in the province. The financial pressure under which the country finds itself is also experienced in Gauteng. Urbanisation is still taking place, and the failure of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to build new schools contributes to overcrowding in schools, which often leads to protests and unrest because there are not enough schools in the large cities. Safety at schools and learner transport are major challenges.

Challenges are experienced because of diverse demographics, as well as the variety of languages spoken as a result of the inflow from neighbouring countries and provinces. There is a wide variety of socio-economic areas: from affluent suburbs to very large informal settlements. SAOU Gauteng has members spread across all areas, but most SAOU members are employed in the urban areas.

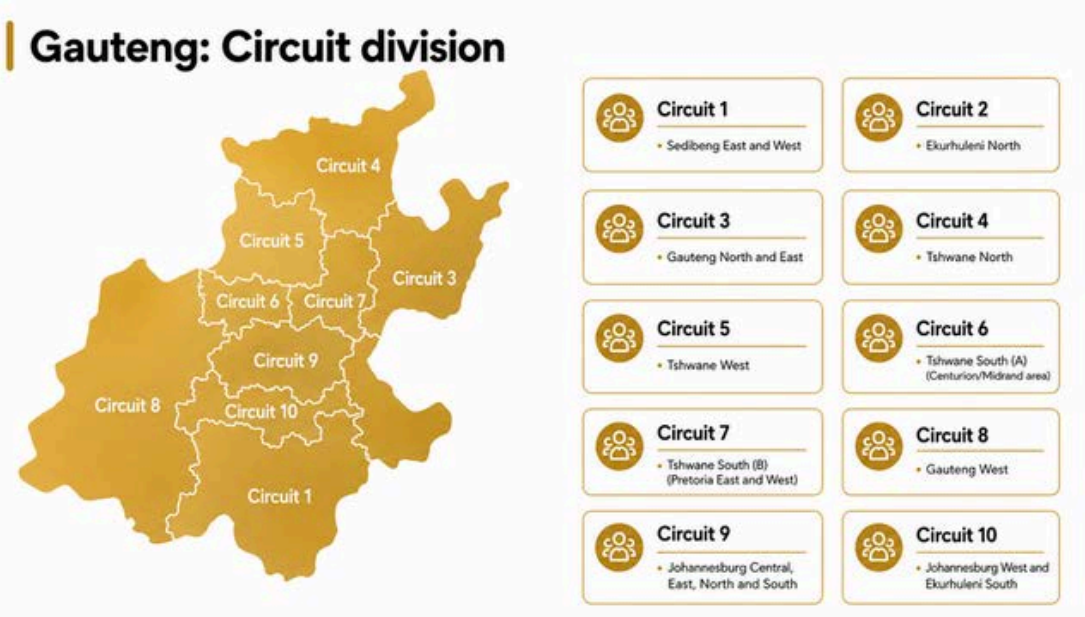
Circuit and regional demarcation

There are currently 945 schools being served, and the province is divided into 10 circuits:

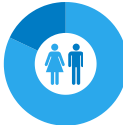
- Circuit 1: Sedibeng East and West
- Circuit 2: Ekurhuleni North
- Circuit 3: Gauteng North and East
- Circuit 4: Tshwane North
- Circuit 5: Tshwane West
- Circuit 6: Tshwane South (A) (Centurion/Midrand area)
- Circuit 7: Tshwane South (B) (Pretoria East and West)
- Circuit 8: Gauteng West
- Circuit 9: Johannesburg Central, East, North and South
- Circuit 10: Johannesburg West and Ekurhuleni South

Membership

SAOU Gauteng currently has 10 689 members, of whom 8 042 are Persal members, 2 166 are school governing body members and 499 are private-school members (April 2026).



PERSAL: 8 042
SGB: 2 166
Independent Schools: 499



Persal represents
76.18%
of Gauteng's member-base



More
STUDENTS
are joining



43yrs
average
age



945

Primary Schools: 397
High Schools: 194
Private Schools: 225

Preschools: 48
LSEN Schools: 73
Combined Schools: 8

MEMBER PROFILE

Students	1 185
Post Level 1	7 956
Post Level 2	1 306
Post Level 3	425
Post Level 4	363
Office-based	109
Administrative	571
Algemene werkers	19

Dominant post levels: Post Level 1 and Students

Emerging member groups

More students are joining the SAOU, especially final-year students at schools. Owing to the close cooperation with the 'Akademie Reformatoriese Opleiding en Studies' (Aros) as an alliance, many Aros students are recruited.

Trends since 2023

Gauteng's membership continues to grow every year despite large numbers of retirements and resignations from education. Many young educators leave education because of difficult working conditions caused by the GDE's inability to adapt infrastructure and post provisioning to the growth of the province.

The SAOU Gauteng team works very hard to recruit new members so that the membership does not decline. Over the past few years, there has been a strong focus on recruiting and retaining students and private-school members in order to make provision for the gaps that arise because of retirements.

SAOU Gauteng's private-school members have also increased from 380 to 466 because many members leave the public sector and see private schools as a possible alternative.

Challenges

Some schools are in remote areas that are often unsafe. Overcrowded classrooms and difficult socio-economic circumstances cause many challenges within schools, especially around the handling of discipline and the collection of school fees.

Access to private-school members is considerably more difficult because it is not obtained automatically through legislation. Attempts are, however, made to win the support of the directors/management of private schools through training, as well as through the presentation of the SAOU's unique selling points, such as SAOU Online, the death benefit (Continuum) and SAOU Help, so that members are encouraged to belong to the SAOU.

Opportunities

Members in remote areas and at private schools need the SAOU's assistance precisely because they do not have access to training and expert advice, and this creates opportunities for SAOU Gauteng to make a difference.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028

CIRCUIT	NAME	AMP	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
	Adele van der Merwe	Voorsitter (Skoolhoof)	HS Drie Riviere	Vereeniging
	Martin Bensch	Ondervoorsitter (Skoolhoof)	LS Louw Geldenhuys	Randburg
1	Pieter de Bruin	Skoolhoof	LS Vryheidsmonument	Vereeniging
2	Vivian Botha	Skoolhoof	LS van Riebeeckpark	Kempton Park
3	Nico Jordaan	Skoolhoof	LS Pam Brink	Springs
4	Lu Kruger	Skoolhoof	LS Wonderboom	Pretoria
5	Marlene Moorcroft	Adjunkhoof	HS Tuine	Pretoria
6	Dr Dewald Strydom	Skoolhoof	HS Zwartkop	Pretoria
7	Kobus Hartman	Skoolhoof	HS Menlopark	Pretoria
8	Charles Miller	Skoolhoof	LS Krugersdorp-Noord	Krugersdorp
9	Anthony Louw	Skoolhoof	LS Esperanza	Randburg
10	Hennie Theron	Skoolhoof	Martin Primary School	Boksburg

Functioning and focus

The role of the Provincial Standing Committee is mainly to take decisions regarding the province's strategies and to provide support to members at grassroots level as well as to office staff. Support is provided particularly in arranging and attending interview processes for promotion posts. The PSC's input is requested where inputs must be provided to task teams of the Provincial Council on Labour Relations in Education (RAVO). The PSC also takes decisions regarding the use of funds within the province and oversees the management of funds.



Agter v.l.n.r.: Dr Dewald Strydom, Anthony Louw, Martin Bensch (O/V),
Charles Miller, Pieter de Bruin

Middel v.l.n.r.: Lu Kruger, Adele van der Merwe (V), Vivian Botha

Voor v.l.n.r.: Nico Jordaan, Hennie Theron, Liesl Rehbock (PS),
Marlene Moorcroft, Kobus Hartman

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

Functioning and focus

The PEC considers and ratifies recommendations from the PSC to ensure that SAOU Gauteng functions within the team code and provincial strategy. Reports are continuously made to the PEC from the Gauteng office on collective bargaining and task teams and, where necessary, the PEC will provide input on challenges experienced at grassroots level, which can then be brought to the GDE's attention. The management of finances within the province also takes place with the approval of the PEC. The PEC further plays a supportive role by providing information to SAOU staff from their circuits and assists in identifying problems at schools and bringing them to the staff's attention. Where necessary, the relevant PEC member will be approached to assist in resolving a problem or providing assistance to a member.

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2025 – 2028

CIRCUIT	NAME	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
	Adele van der Merwe	Hoërskool Drie Riviere	Vereeniging
	Martin Bensch	Laerskool Louw Geldenhuys	Randburg
1	Sias Botha	Hoër Volkskool Heidelberg	Heidelberg
1	Monica Dirks	Hoërskool Driehoek	Vanderbijlpark
1	Pieter de Bruin	Laerskool Vryheidsmonument	Vereeniging
2	Carmen Govender	Hoërskool Birchleigh	Kempton Park
2	Vivian Botha	Laerskool van Riebeeckpark	Kempton Park
2	Willem Jacobs	Laerskool Impala	Kempton Park
3	Nico Jordaan	Laerskool Pam Brink	Springs
3	Francois Benade	Protea Skool	Springs
3	Hans van Zyl	Hoërskool Stoffberg	Brakpan
4	Marius Lezar	Hoërskool Montana	Pretoria
4	Lu Kruger	Laerskool Wonderboom	Pretoria
4	Johan van Rooyen	Laerskool Stephanus Roos	Pretoria
5	Estie Naude	Hoërskool Gerrit Maritz	Pretoria
5	Marlene Moorcroft	Hoërskool Tuine	Pretoria
5	Hettie Smith	Laerskool Danie Malan	Pretoria
6	Tania Meyer	Laerskool Hennospark	Pretoria
6	Waldo Prinsloo	Laerskool Wierdapark	Pretoria
6	Dewald Strydom	Hoërskool Zwartkop	Pretoria
7	Kobus Hartman	Hoërskool Menlopark	Pretoria
7	Chrisalda Saayman	Hoërskool Willowridge	Pretoria
7	Nolene Rademan	Transvalia Skool	Pretoria
8	Gerhard Myburgh	Hoërskool Riebeeckrand	Randfontein
8	Wouter Immelman	Laerskool Kenmare	Krugersdorp
8	Charles Miller	Laerskool Krugersdorp-Noord	Krugersdorp
9	Louwrens Pretorius	Die Fakkell High	Forest Hill
9	Cornel Esterhuizen	Boskop Primary	Randburg
9	Anthony Louw	Laerskool Esperanza	Randburg
10	Lizelle de Bruin	Alberton High School	Alberton
10	Mark van Rooyen	Laerskool Orion	Alberton
10	Hennie Theron	Martin Primary School	Boksburg
Gekoöpteer	Jannie Olivier	KGL	
Gekoöpteer	Wouter Rothmann	Privaat	



Agter v.l.n.r.: Waldo Prinsloo, Louwrens Pretorius, Anthony Louw, Wouter Rothmann, Tania Meyer, Pieter de Bruin
 Tweede v.l.n.r.: Dr Dewald Strydom, Nico Jordaan, Sias Botha, Hans van Zyl, Estie Naude, Marius Lezar, Charles Miller
 Derde v.l.n.r.: Martin Bensch (O/V), Hennie Theron, Adele van der Merwe (V), Lu Kruger, Gerhard Myburgh, Vivian Botha
 Voor v.l.n.r.: Johan van Rooyen, Carmen Govender, Kobus Hartman, Marlene Moorcroft, Liesl Rehbock (PS), Nolene Rademan, Hettie Smith, Monica Dirks



Mark van Rooyen



Cornel Esterhuizen



Willem Jacobs



Jannie Olivier



Francois Benade



Lizelle de Bruin



Chrisalda Saayman

2025 PEC Election

- On 1 February 2025, preparation for the election process began in the Gauteng office when the circuits were finalised.
- On 4 June 2025, the last meeting of the previous PEC took place.
- On 31 July 2025, SAOU members were informed that an election would take place.
- During August 2025, nominations took place electronically.
- Closing date: 4 September 2025.
- From 10 to 17 September 2025, members in the province were able to vote.
- From 23 to 25 September 2025, the meeting was held with the auditors to verify and accept the elected members.
- On 30 September 2025, SAOU members were informed of the elected members.
- The constituting meeting took place on 21 October 2025. At the meeting, the chairperson, deputy chairperson and circuit organisers were elected. The members who serve on the National Executive Council (NEC) and Professional Committee (Profcom) were also elected.

NEC: Adele van der Merwe, Martin Bensch and Kobus Hartman.

Profcom: Kobus Hartman (high schools) and Monica Dirks (primary schools).

- The election was declared free and fair by the auditors.

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Communication remains a challenge for SAOU Gauteng because members often do not read the newsletters and also do not always update their contact details. Conveying information to members correctly and effectively remains a challenge.

The following methods are used to convey information to members:

- **WhatsApp messages:** Broadcast groups via WhatsApp are used to bring important news to members' attention. Members' cell phone numbers are continuously checked to ensure that all members receive the information. The SAOU also has a national WhatsApp channel that is actively marketed during school visits for all members to follow and thereby also view national news directly.
- **Newsletters:** SAOU Gauteng communicates by means of a newsletter specifically for Gauteng members. This newsletter mainly contains news about provincial matters. Members are continuously encouraged to provide the SAOU with their personal email addresses. Personal information is also verified during empowerment opportunities.
- There is also an active national Facebook page on which information is posted.
- SAOU Gauteng supports the national initiative to get all members onto the SAOU app and thereby place communication directly on the app for each member. This then removes the need for workplace representatives (WPRs) to send the communication to members at their school.
- Members' information is checked during school visits, but updating remains a challenge.

Best practices

- Distribution of WhatsApp communication on provincial WPR groups.
- Close and open contact with the WPRs at each school and the SAOU Gauteng office staff, which makes it easier to handle individual enquiries and also makes members aware of the SAOU's assistance and service delivery.
- Ongoing school visits that are prioritised and promote the visibility of SAOU Gauteng. This leads to better member recruitment, active member service and awareness among members and non-members of SAOU products and services.
- Members are also encouraged during information meetings to visit the SAOU website. In this way they are exposed to important information from the SAOU. SAOU Online is also continuously marketed at all visibility sessions and school visits. During school visits, members are requested to download and subscribe to the D6 app.

Improvement and innovation

SAOU Gauteng has, since January 2026, implemented the SAOU (d6) app. The challenge is that each member must register on it personally, and the process is slow.

The Digiman (digital manual) for WPRs was developed by Lee-Ann Lowe and, with the assistance of all provinces, the manual is now available for national use by WPRs. Complete information that WPRs need is now available electronically and has been placed on the SAOU app since February 2026, with exclusive access for WPRs. Digiman is also updated by Lee-Ann with the assistance of the marketing team to ensure that all information is available and relevant.

SAOU Help, in cooperation with North-West University, offers members professional, emotional support. Although SAOU Gauteng also offers emotional support to members, this makes complex situations easier where members need additional support that falls outside the labour framework and mandate of the SAOU.

Involvement in the first-year camps of Aros gives SAOU Gauteng direct access to an emerging workforce and the recruitment of new members from the start of their education careers. These student members are actively followed up and membership is converted once they obtain their qualifications. During the camp, the SAOU also offers training on education as a professional career that already begins in first-year studies, as well as on the role and duties of an education student within the school environment.

Handling of enquiries

Member enquiries are normally received in the following ways:

- Telephonically
- Via email
- From the Service Centre
- During school visits/empowerment opportunities
- Meetings
- Service delivery form on the SAOU website
- Service delivery form sent to schools as well as school representatives



Response and process

Timeliness and quality of feedback are non-negotiable for SAOU Gauteng. The Gauteng team members ensure that all information is conveyed correctly and that all enquiries are answered or referred within 24 hours.

Where enquiries must be answered by Legal Services or Professional Services, they are referred and followed up further where necessary. Close cooperation takes place between all the divisions.

There is also close cooperation with colleagues from other provinces where necessary, for example where assistance is provided with transfers and requests for service records.

SAOU Gauteng staff prioritise good cooperation with district officials in order to resolve member enquiries and problems effectively.

General challenges and solutions

The biggest problem and most enquiries relate to salary notches, recognition of previous service, including school governing body experience, and reappointment after an interruption in service. Along with salary problems, the payment of cash bonuses for acquired qualifications is a further sticking point. A major reason for this problem is uninformed district officials and the implementation thereof, which cannot be carried out by GDE departments and officials. After the publication of the revised Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), all district officials were trained and there should be a better understanding among officials. Over the past three years, an amount of R1 848 029,27 has been paid to members for salary corrections and qualification bonuses.

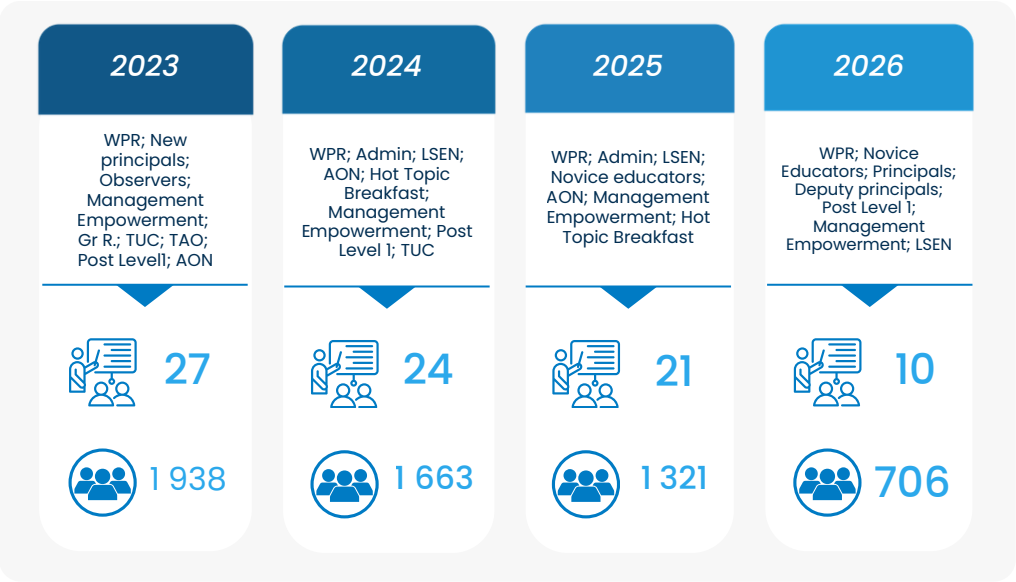
The payment of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), as well as grade progression of therapists and psychologists, is problematic, as is the payment of the increased stipend to Grade R practitioners and the absorption of Grade R practitioners who improve their qualifications. The GDE is in the process of absorbing Grade R teachers into permanent posts. Practitioners who are not yet qualified must now study further. The Grade R posts were not yet part of post provisioning at the end of 2025.

Enquiries are followed up on a weekly basis and districts are visited as often as possible. Problem districts (e.g. Gauteng West, Tshwane South and West, Johannesburg East and South) are visited more regularly. After the enquiries have been followed up with districts, members are informed of progress by email or telephonically.

The handling of temporary incapacity leave is also a major problem. In few, if any, cases do members receive feedback from the GDE within 30 days. The GDE does, however, have a process to accommodate members.

One of the most important methods of assisting and recruiting members is a school visit. As many schools as possible are visited. This ensures that members receive information and that the SAOU is visible in the province. School visits have increased considerably over the past two years.

Training, empowerment and professional development



Impact

The impact of all training is measured by means of evaluation questionnaires after the event.

Members’ feedback on the management empowerment is particularly good every year. They find it informative and motivating. An attempt is made to cover a variety of themes and also to include enough motivation for members also to promote the wellbeing of educators.

Members indicated that educators’ wellbeing should receive more attention, and this is kept in mind when empowerment is planned.

SAOU Gauteng hosted the first Men’s Day in 2025, which was very well received. The four northern provinces plan to join forces in 2026 to present a two-day event for male educators.

SAOU Gauteng focuses on offering as many training opportunities as possible for all post levels that are relevant and useful to that niche group and their specific training needs. This includes training for new principals and deputy principals, training opportunities for departmental heads, and the like. It is not only valuable for each course attendee, but also equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge and resources to perform their task at school level effectively and efficiently, to the overall improvement of working conditions and learner education.

Office Functioning

Staff structure

SAOU Gauteng has 10 staff members who are remunerated full-time by the SAOU, namely:

- Liesl Rehbock – Provincial Secretary (PS)
- Wilma Henn – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS) (until 31 January 2026)
- Gwendy Behr – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS)
- Dean Stander – Professional Officer (PO)
- Lee-Ann Lowe – Professional Officer (PO)
- Liza Basson – Professional Officer (PO)
- Larisa Knott – Full-Time Shopsteward (Shopsteward)
- Leana Cronjé – Full-Time Shopsteward (Shopsteward)
- Mariëtte van Biljon – Provincial Administrative Officer
- Rena van Wyk – Provincial Administrative Officer

General functioning

Liesl Rehbock was appointed as PS of Gauteng from 1 January 2024.

Wilma Henn was appointed as APS from 1 July 2022. Gwendy Behr was appointed as APS from 1 July 2024.

Two Shopstewards have been assigned to SAOU Gauteng. Leana Cronjé was appointed from 1 August 2022. Larisa Knott was seconded to SAOU as Shopstewards from 1 January 2025.

Lee-Ann Lowe was appointed as PO on 1 November 2024 and Dean Stander was appointed as PO on 1 July 2025. Thanks to the growth in membership in Gauteng, a third PO was added to Gauteng’s staff establishment, and Liza Basson was appointed to the post on 1 September 2025.

Disciplinary matters as well as mediation and arbitrations are handled by all staff members, with the exception of Mariëtte van Biljon and Rena van Wyk. Serious misconduct is mainly handled by Liesl Rehbock, Wilma Henn, Gwendy Behr, Lee-Ann Lowe and Legal Services.

Disciplinary matters as well as mediation and arbitrations are handled by all staff members, with the exception of Mariëtte van Biljon and Rena van Wyk. Serious misconduct is mainly handled by Liesl Rehbock, Wilma Henn, Gwendy Behr, Lee-Ann Lowe and Legal Services.

	OFFICE	DISTRICT
Liesl Rehbock	Provincial Secretary	
Wilma Henn	Assistant Provincial Secretary	
Gwendy Behr	Assistant Provincial Secretary	
Dean Stander	Professional Officer	D2: Gauteng West, D7: Sedibeng East, D8: Sedibeng West
Lee-Ann Lowe	Professional Officer	D17: Ekurhuleni North, D18: Ekurhuleni South
Liza Basson	Professional Officer	D9: JHB East, D10: JHB North, D11: JHB South, D12: JHB West, D14: JHB Central
Leana Cronjé	Full-Time Shopsteward	D4: Tshwane South
Larisa Knott	Full-Time Shopsteward	D1: Gauteng North, D3: Tshwane North, D15: Tshwane West D16: Gauteng East

The PS and the two APSs also handle enquiries from members as requested from the circuits. During 2025, there was a sharp increase in grievances, disciplinary cases at schools, arbitrations and disciplinary steps by the GDE. This is attributed, among other things, to the lack of support by the department, post provisioning and overcrowded classes, as well as socio-economic circumstances that are deteriorating in many districts and lead to poor learner discipline.

SAOU Gauteng works closely with the national divisions listed below:

Marketing and Communication

This division supports the provision of marketing material and the application of the style guide to ensure that the SAOU’s image is marketed consistently. Social media is also handled by this division.

Legal Services

The SAOU team have all received legal training, but from time to time there are legal matters that are very technical, and these matters are then referred to Legal Services for handling. The Gauteng team is also regularly assisted by the Legal division to present training and help with legal advice where necessary.

Professional Services

SAOU Gauteng works very closely with Professional Services to present training and also to market this training. It was also decided to present beginner training (Ignite) together with Professional Services and other provinces. In this way, funds and manpower can be used more effectively and more members can also be reached. Enquiries received from the province relating to Professional Services are referred to this division where necessary. SAOU Gauteng also receives important information from Professional Services when they attend meetings at the GDE.

Media and Collective Bargaining

Cooperation with this division ensures exposure in the media and feedback to members on collective bargaining. Feedback on collective bargaining is provided regularly to the Provincial Standing Committee and the PEC, who in turn convey the information to members.

Service Centre

The Service Centre assists with the handling of enquiries and also the follow-up of membership. Enquiries that require more follow-up work are referred to Gauteng staff.

The heads of the above-mentioned divisions are invited to make in-person presentations during the PEC and PSC meetings; alternatively, reports from the national divisions are presented during these meetings.



Agter v.l.n.r.: Rena van Wyk; Liza Basson; Dean Stander; Lee-Ann Lowe; Larisa Knott; Mariëtte van Biljon
 Voor v.l.n.r.: Leana Cronjé; Liesl Rehbock; Gwendy Behr

PROVINCIAL TASKTEAMS

PELRC Chamber	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
QLTC	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Curriculum & Assessment	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Task Team	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Dispute Prevention	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Vetting of employees	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
ICT	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Labour Management Partnership	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Educator Resourcing	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
PILIR	Leana Cronjé
Provincial Skills Development Committee	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
GDE Policies	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Grade 12 Marking	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
QMS/PMDS	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
LSN	Larisa Knott
Realignment	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Safety in Schools	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr
Employee Wellness	Liesl Rehbock; Wilma Henn; Gwendy Behr

Strategic relationships



Relationship with GDE/ELRC

It has already been mentioned that the GDE operates from the head office with 15 district offices. Key staff have been identified in strategic places in the offices. The various districts are visited as often as possible. Good cooperation with the GDE is of cardinal importance, especially in handling member enquiries.

Within task teams and the RAVO chamber, there are also many strategic relationships with officials of the department. Officials are also often invited to act as speakers at SAOU training opportunities.

Apart from the head office in Johannesburg, the GDE also has 15 district offices. Staff duties are divided according to the district offices for school visits and follow-up of member enquiries.

SAOU Gauteng's activities are extremely frustrating, since Gauteng's provincial departments make use of a centralised service centre for the administration and capturing of transactions on the Persal system. The Gauteng Department of Finance (GDF) is responsible for all payments on Persal (eGov). All pension payments are also sent via the GDF to the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) / Government Pensions Administration Agency (GPAA).

SAOU Gauteng has been the corresponding party for the Combined Trade Union-Autonomous Teachers' Unions (CTU-ATU) since 1 July 2025.



Liaison with the media

Liaison with local newspapers in the various circuits can still be developed further. Good liaison does, however, exist with KykNet, GROOTfm and Pretoria FM. Cooperation with Maryna Besseling in the media division was of great help here in building relationships with local newspapers.

Important interactions

- **Meetings:** SAOU Gauteng uses meetings with district officials to address and resolve problems that educators experience at grassroots level. Feedback from the GDE is passed on to members at schools.
- **Negotiations:** Challenges experienced by educators and principals are discussed at task teams, and decisions are then ratified in the RAVO chamber to make them enforceable.

Joint initiatives

GEPF: Visits by officials from the GEPF and GPAA have been a regular arrangement since 2024, and members of the Service Centre and other provinces get the opportunity here to discuss pressing issues and challenges directly with these officials. This often leads to the successful resolution of pension enquiries, as well as training for staff and SAOU members by way of webinars.

CTU-ATU: SAOU Gauteng was elected as the corresponding party of the CTU-ATU from 1 July. This places a large administrative burden on the administrative staff in particular, but gives the SAOU the inside track to interview processes and grievance meetings.

Successes and challenges

Examples of positive cooperation:

- SAOU Gauteng's good working relationship with the various district officials, GEPF/GPAA, South African Council for Educators (SACE) and Aros has a significant positive impact on the overall performance of the province and also on its ability to handle member enquiries and/or recruit new entrants to education.
- The close cooperation with workplace representatives and the focus on making their role and duties easier offers SAOU Gauteng the opportunity to get to schools more quickly and also to assist schools with problems. Open communication from WPRs to the SAOU regarding challenges in the workplace also helps us to address and/or handle labour issues before they end in a grievance or dispute process.
- The cooperation between the SAOU Gauteng office and SAOU Gauteng's elected members has a positive impact on determining and meeting members' needs, hotspots and also the visibility of the SAOU at events. This cooperation promotes the image and activities of SAOU Gauteng.
- Internal cooperation among office staff also ensures that any gaps are filled where experience and knowledge is lacking. Office staff are very supportive of one another, and collective empowerment also takes place through this.

Challenges requiring further attention

- Despite good working relationships with district officials, there are still some districts that are not functioning and/or do not have the necessary expertise to handle member enquiries timeously and effectively. This causes frustration among members because of the long period it takes for matters to be finalised.
- School safety remains an increasing concern. Equipment and learning material are regularly stolen from schools, gang activity at schools affects learner and educator safety, and infrastructure that is not maintained leads to numerous injuries on duty.
- Financial constraints on the fiscus spill over into the GDE's budget. Consequently, service benefits such as recognition of years of service, relocation benefits, qualification bonuses, etc. are not paid out. Although SAOU Gauteng continuously follows up and puts pressure on the department, funds are still not paid to members because of the shortage of funds. The SAOU must then declare disputes to protect members' rights, which takes even more time to finalise.

- The incorporation of inclusive education, where learners with mild intellectual disabilities and moderate intellectual disabilities are accommodated in mainstream schools, presents numerous challenges for educators who have not received training to accommodate these learners within a mainstream school. The department places the onus on educators to empower themselves, but members often receive little to no support from the GDE to manage these challenges effectively.
- Because of the long time it also takes the GDE to resolve service-condition enquiries, the member's right to declare disputes within the specific timeframe set in legislation is restricted. The result is that the SAOU office must apply for condonation, which, depending on how late the dispute is, is not always successful.
- School governing bodies: In certain schools, the governing body is inactive and/or over-involved in the management and functioning of the school, which is not provided for in the school governing body regulations. This places pressure on the internal relationships between educators at the school, the handling of school governing body matters and also the finalisation of policies and budgets for the school. Although the GDE offers workshops on and interview procedures for school governing bodies, there are still increasing grievances raised against the process, which also delays the appointment processes.

Conclusion and outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

- Highest membership ever.
- A record number of school visits, with 421 schools visited during 2025. The target for 2026 is 470, which would then mean that only a few schools have not been visited in the past two years.
- Visibility and service delivery of the highest quality

Challenges and lessons learned

- Attendance of screening and interview procedures as observers.
- Although the SAOU Gauteng office has more staff members, it is still sometimes challenging to be involved and present everywhere.
- Members' expectations versus the mandate of the SAOU. Although the SAOU clearly communicates the mandate to our members, there is still a particular expectation among our members that assistance and/or help should be provided in areas that fall outside the mandate of a trade union. Consequently, this causes dissatisfaction among members.

Key lessons for the future

- It is important that members' mandates are always obtained and that members are informed about the role of the trade union and the proposed ways of handling each situation.
- Member enquiries must be handled thoroughly and with speed.
- Communication between divisions and to elected structures is important.
- A paper trail and records of member interactions on the SAOU interface (database) must be kept for future reference.

Focus for the next congress term

- The team code and the province's strategic objectives were shared with the PUR, and they are excited to work together to give effect to our strategic objectives.
- Strategic direction or focus area.
- Objectives for the next three years: School visits and building the capacity of the Gauteng team, taking succession planning into account.
- Even greater cooperation with other provinces and national divisions, for example Men's Day and the Vat Vlam Summit.
- Identification of and cooperation with new alliances to the benefit of the member and the implementation of the SAOU's strategic objectives

SAOU Gauteng is excited to roll out the strategic objectives after completion of the research project that was launched at the beginning of 2026.

Closing message from the PS

SAOU Gauteng is particularly grateful for the good relationship that currently exists within the CTU-ATU with other trade unions. The relationship with the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), also known as SADO, within the ELRC is also very good. Regular liaison also takes place with the Federation for School Governing Body Associations (FEDSAS) and the Governing Body Foundation (GBF).

SAOU Gauteng would like to thank the following persons and institutions:

- Provincial secretaries and other SAOU staff who act in the best interests of members every day.
- Each member for his/her support and loyalty.
- The PEC in Gauteng.
- Staff of the Executive Centre in Pretoria.
- Executive Officer, Paul Sauer, and other senior staff.
- Elected leaders at national level.
- Colleagues from other trade unions.
- The GDE, on which we depend for the handling of member matters.
- Our Heavenly Father, who is always a safe fortress for us.

KWAZULU-NATAL



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



KwaZulu-Natal at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

7.7% of South Africa's
total landmass

3 Circuits further subdivided
in several regions



454km

The furthest point from the SAOU
provincial office in Amanzimtoti is
the Kosi Baai area.

45 years average age
of members

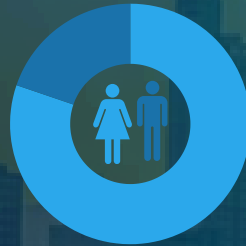
73,3% of all members are
Post Level 1

Membership



1 340

Persal: 934
SGB: 355
Independent Schools: 51



Women: 81.41%
Men: 18.58%



410

Primary Schools: 99
High Schools: 49
Private Schools: 37

Combined Schools: 16
LSEN Schools: 9

94 361 km²



3 142

members reached through
19 training events since
July 2023 to June 2026



78%
Afrikaans

22%
English

Demographic Information

KwaZulu-Natal is the second most densely populated province in South Africa, with a population of approximately 12.4 million according to the 2022 census. The province covers an area of 94 361 km². The province shares international borders with Eswatini, Mozambique and Lesotho. According to the 2022 census, the ethnic composition was as follows: Zulu-speaking people 84.8%, Indians 9.3%, Whites 4.1%, Coloureds 1.5% and others 0.2%. The most widely spoken language is isiZulu (80.0%), followed by English (13.4%) and Afrikaans (1.5%).

Most schools in KwaZulu-Natal are concentrated in densely populated districts such as the Umlazi district (which includes Durban and surrounding areas) and the Pinetown district. These areas have a high density of learners and educational institutions, followed by other districts such as King Cetshwayo and uMgungundlovu.

Important areas with high school concentrations:

- Umlazi district: Includes parts of Durban and surrounding areas.
- Pinetown district: Includes Pinetown, Hillcrest and surrounding areas.
- King Cetshwayo district: Includes the Richards Bay/Empangeni area.
- uMgungundlovu district: Includes Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas.

Circuit and regional division

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal is divided into three circuits under which various area managers operate.

KwaZulu-Natal consists of one metropolitan municipality (eThekweni) and 10 districts, varying in size from approximately 3 269 km² to 14 799 km². Most of the districts are rural areas and schools are situated far apart, which makes school visits and training sessions challenging. The largest district is Zululand and the smallest is iLembe. The eThekweni metro is the most densely populated area, while uMkhanyakude and Zululand are among the largest geographical areas.

Size of districts in KwaZulu-Natal

Circuit 1

eThekweni Metro (Urban) 2 556km²
This is the only urban area, but schools are also spread far apart. The area includes Amanzimtoti, Durban up to Zinkwazi, and Pinetown up to Hillcrest.

uMkhanyakude District (Rural) 13 855km²

King Cetshwayo District (Mostly rural) 8 213km²

iLembe District (Rural) 3 269km²

The grouping of these three districts together creates an extensive geographical area. Large distances between schools significantly complicate training, school visits and service delivery. This area stretches from Mandini to Jozini, a distance of 255 km.

Circuit 2

Zululand District (Rural) 14 799km²
This district covers an extensive area from Vryheid and Ulundi, Paulpietersburg to Pongola.

uMzinyathi District (Rural) 8 562km²
This area is a rural region that mostly includes Dundee and Glencoe.

Amajuba District (Rural) 7 102km²
The district is geographically widespread. The area includes Dannhauser, Newcastle and Utrecht.

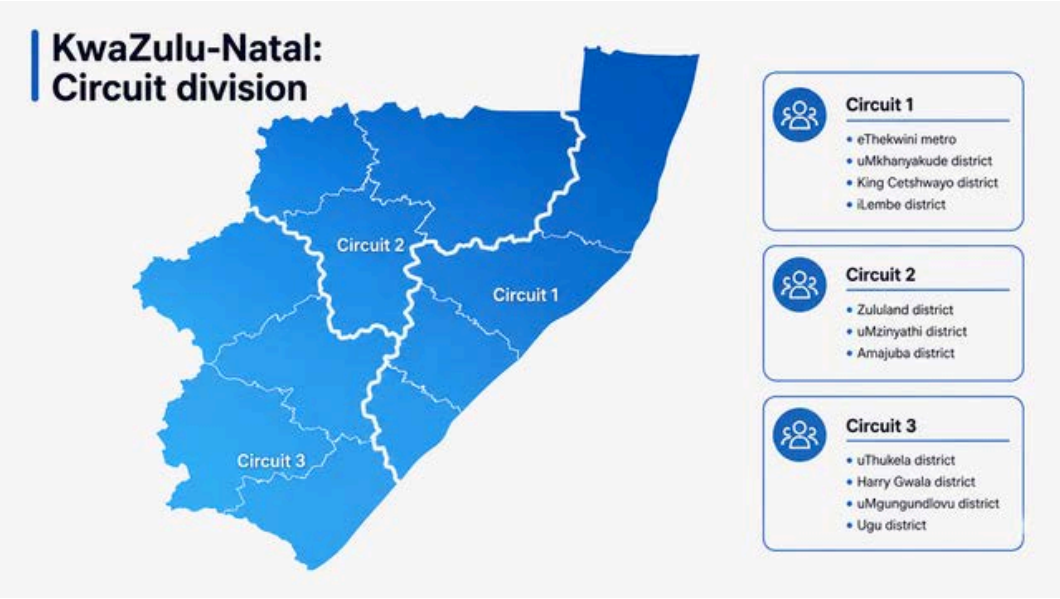
Circuit 3

Uthukela District (Rural) 11 134km²
The predominantly rural nature of the district results in schools being spread across large distances. This area includes Ladysmith, Bergville and Winterton.

Harry Gwala District (Rural) 10 386km²

uMgungundlovu District (Mostly rural) 7 102km²
Within SAOU KwaZulu-Natal, this area is commonly known as the Midlands area. Schools are spread across large distances and the area stretches from Pietermaritzburg and Eston to Richmond, Greytown and Mooirivier.

Ugu District (Rural) 4 791km²
Distances in this area are also considerable. The area includes Scottburgh, Port Shepstone and Port Edward. East Griqualand is also included here.



Membership



Persal: 934
SGB: 355
Independent Schools: 51



Women: 81.41%
Men: 18.58%



Post Level 1
 dominant post level
82.24%



Member-base in
STUDENTS
 steadily growing



45yrs
 average age



410

Primary Schools: 99
Highschools: 49

Independent Schools: 37
Combined Schools: 16

LSEN Schools: 9

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028

CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
1	Linda Scholtz	Chairperson (Principal)	Danville Park Girls' High	Durban
	Llewellyn Gray	Deputy Chairperson (Principal)	Huttenpark Primêre Skool	Newcastle
	Innes Kritzinger	Provincial Secretary	SAOU (KZN)	Durban
2	Charmaine Verrall	Deputy Principal	Amanzimtoti High School	Durban
3	Pieter Aucamp	Principal	Lucas Meyer Skool	Vryheid
	Jakkie Herbst	Principal	Suid-Natal Hoërskool	Port Shepstone

Functioning and focus

The purpose of the PSC is to provide strategic direction, ensure union relevance and provide for members' future needs in a rapidly changing education sector. This involves the implementation of policies and actions to position the union as an active role-player.

Important aspects of the PSC's function within the SAOU

- Strategic positioning: The PSC approves research projects (such as with Blue Horizon in 2026) to keep the union relevant.
- Member needs: The PSC focuses on qualitative and quantitative analyses to ensure that the union meets the needs of its members.
- Management of relationships: Manages relationships between employees and employers in education.
- Support and development: Ensures in-service training and further training for educators.
- Alliances: The formation of alliances with national and international organisations that share the same values.

The PSC therefore plays a critical role in the effective functioning and strategic direction of the SAOU as a professional union.



Back row f.l.t.r.: Jakkie Herbst, Charmaine Verrall, Pieter Aucamp
 Front row f.l.t.r.: Innes Kritzinger, Linda Scholtz, Llewellyn Gray

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026			
CIRCUIT	NAME	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
Chairperson	Linda Scholtz	Danville Park Girls' High School	Durban
Deputy Chairperson	Llewellyn Gray	Huttenpark Primêre Skool	Newcastle
1	C Verrall	Amanzimtoti High School	Amanzimtoti
1	MM Graaff	Arboretum Primary	Richardsbaai
1	MJK Prinsloo	Kuswag Skool	Amanzimtoti
2	R Swanepoel	Dundee Juniorskool	Dundee
2	PJ Aucamp	Lucas Meyer Skool	Vryheid
2	PJ Venter	Lucas Meyer Skool	Vryheid
3	GL Coetzee	Howick Preparatory School	Howick
3	E van Schalkwyk	Egerton Primêr	Ladysmith
3	JJ Herbst	Suid-Natal Hoërskool	Port Shepstone

Strategic role

The PEC functions as the provincial leadership team responsible for the implementation of the union's policies, the representation of members' interests at provincial level and the management of branch activities within the province, in accordance with the SAOU constitution.

Value of the PEC in provincial governance

- Strategic leadership: Determine the strategic direction of the SAOU within the specific province.
- Implementation: Gives effect to decisions of the National Executive Council (NEC) at provincial level.
- Support: Provide structural support to WPRs in their areas.
- Representation: Represents educators' interests with provincial education departments and other stakeholders.

The PEC ensures that the union's goals are achieved at grassroots level and that members' interests are effectively represented.



Back row f.l.t.r.: Jakkie Herbst, Renier Swanepoel, Pieter Aucamp, Charmaine Verrall, Esme van Schalkwyk, Pieter Venter, Gerrit Coetzee and Martin Prinsloo
Front row f.l.t.r.: Innes Kritzinger, Linda Scholtz and Llewellyn Gray
Absent: Marina Graaff

Service Delivery

Communication with members

New members receive an electronic welcome letter containing the contact details of the office as well as the Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) member for their area. The primary communication channel with members is WhatsApp groups coordinated by area managers. The most important communication medium with members is WhatsApp groups managed by the area managers. The KwaZulu-Natal office, as well as the national office, remains in close contact with members through newsletters and WhatsApp messages. These messages are distributed to the WhatsApp groups for members.

The use of WhatsApp as a communication platform is particularly effective in the province. If information must be brought to members' attention quickly, the WhatsApp groups are utilised. All principals and workplace representatives (WPRs) who are members of the SAOU then receive the messages. Workplace representatives (WPRs) further distribute the information among members at their respective schools. The PEC members, who have been identified as area managers, have also established WhatsApp groups to convey important information.

Members are requested via email to update their personal details as well as those of the school representative. At the beginning of each term, every school receives a list of members and their contact details for verification. Those who do not return their lists are followed up by email and, where necessary, a telephone call.

Regular school visits are undertaken to handle enquiries, assist members and facilitate staff empowerment.

Improvements and innovation

- Better utilisation of the SAOU app.
- Messages through short video recordings/messages.

Handling member enquiries

Member enquiries are mainly received via email and WhatsApp, with a smaller number of enquiries handled telephonically. Enquiries are also regularly referred to the provincial office from the Service Centre. The use of WhatsApp as a communication channel has increased noticeably over the past few years.

Communication with district offices takes place mainly via email, telephone and personal visits. In certain cases, direct WhatsApp communication with officials yields better results. Telephone calls are often used to follow up on email communication, although contact with districts remains challenging due to unanswered calls and the limited availability of officials.

Enquiries are handled by the Full-Time Shopsteward or the Provincial Secretary (PS), depending on the nature of the enquiry. The majority of enquiries relate to pensions, conditions of service, service benefits, salary enquiries, bullying and victimisation.

Over the past few years there has been an increase in pension-related enquiries. The introduction of the Early Retirement Programme (ERP) has further contributed significantly to the increase in pension enquiries.

If conflict arises between management and the governing body, the school governing body organisations Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) and Governing Body Foundation (GBF) are approached. SAOU KwaZulu-Natal has a very good working relationship with FEDSAS and the GBF.

The provincial office represents members in disciplinary matters instituted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE), the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and school governing bodies. Enquiries relating to conditions of service and service benefits are, where possible, handled on the day they are received. Matters referred to the district are followed up by the Shopsteward, PS or relevant PEC member. Where necessary, district offices are visited personally to expedite matters.

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal strives to act strictly within the timeframes of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) and the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC). Grievances are therefore submitted timeously and, where necessary, followed up through disputes.

Members are continually encouraged to retain proof of document submissions, as documents are regularly misplaced at districts. This situation often causes unnecessary delays in the finalisation of matters.

A further challenge in the province is the regular closure of departmental offices, which complicates follow-up work and administrative processes.

The PS and FTSS consider complex matters carefully in order to determine the most appropriate course of action. Where necessary, the SAOU’s Legal Services are consulted to provide further support to members. Continuous focus is placed on professional and effective service delivery to members.

Nature of enquiries

 Pension matters

 Salary matters

 Workload and burnout

 Grievances and disputes

 Disciplinary hearings

 Service benefits

Response and processes

The timely and professional handling of member enquiries enjoys high priority within the provincial office. They strive not only to provide prompt feedback, but also to send acknowledgement of receipt if a full response will take longer. This approach ensures that members are continually kept informed of the progress of their matters.

Quality feedback remains a core aspect of effective member service. Various structures and support networks, including the KZN DoE, the SAOU’s Legal Division and other relevant organisations, are utilised to ensure accurate and comprehensive support to members.

This collaboration contributes to the dissemination of authoritative information and strengthens the support provided to members in education- and legal-related matters. The approach promotes trust, strengthens relationships with members and supports the maintenance of a high standard of member service within the province.

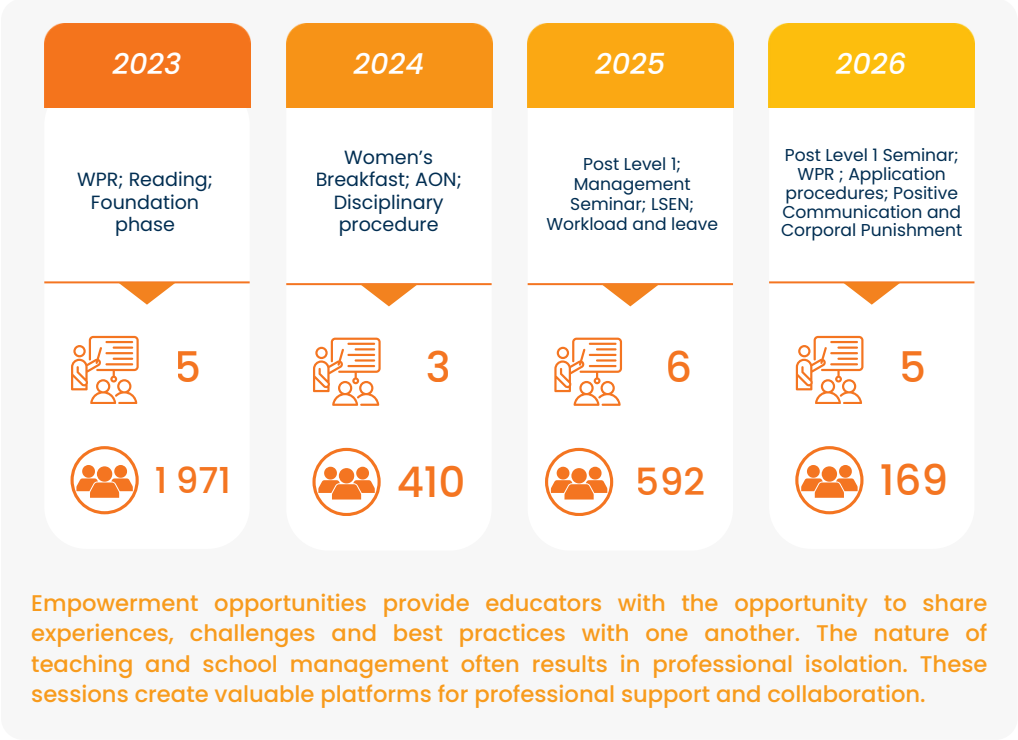
General challenges and solutions

Effective communication with members remains an ongoing challenge in the province. Email communication that was previously distributed through the MailBlaze platform was in many cases returned undelivered, which complicated the dissemination of information. In response, a WhatsApp communication system was implemented through which information is distributed to members via PEC members or WPRs.

Although the system has enabled improved communication, feedback is still received from members who do not receive all information. A further initiative involves the establishment of a joint WhatsApp group for all members in the province.

The availability of members during school hours also remains a challenge, as many members are unable to answer calls during teaching time. Consequently, WhatsApp is increasingly being used to support communication and follow-up work.

Training, empowerment and professional development



Impact

After each training session, its impact is assessed by sending an evaluation questionnaire to participants. These statistics are then used to ensure that gaps are addressed and areas for improvement highlighted.

At the end of each year, needs assessments are also conducted by the SAOU KwaZulu-Natal office and the PEC. The office bases these assessments on many of the enquiries received during the year. The PEC is also given the opportunity to return to their respective areas to gather possible training topics. This is consolidated during the annual strategic planning session, and the training for the new year is planned accordingly.

Office Functioning

Staff structure

The provincial office has undergone several staff changes over the past three years. Errol Hiepner and Mercia Kilian retired after years of dedicated service to the union. Ella Pretorius was appointed as administrative officer in 2024, while Tiaan Beukes was appointed as Shopsteward in 2025. The staff transition was managed successfully and the office continues to function efficiently.

- The office staff is as follows:
- Innes Kritzinger – Provincial Secretary (PS)
 - Tiaan Beukes – Full-Time Shop Steward
 - Ella Pretorius en Christa Human – Provincial Administrative Officers
 - Martha Gcaba – Office Assistant
 - Oscar Cebekhulu – Garden Assistant

General functioning

The SAOU KwaZulu-Natal office is situated in Amanzimtoti. The PS and FTSS travel regularly throughout the province to support members and visit schools. Members in different circuits are reached through school visits and training opportunities, ensuring a visible presence of the organisation within the province.

The PS and FTSS are responsible for handling disciplinary matters, follow-up work at district offices, visiting schools and attending provincial meetings relating to current educational matters.

The administrative staff are also well equipped to respond to day-to-day enquiries from the office and to provide emotional support to members, especially when the PS and FTSS are out of the office attending to provincial matters.

Good relationships with the other provincial SAOU offices are maintained in order to foster sound interprovincial cooperation. Cooperation with the national divisions at the Executive Centre in Pretoria is also very good, and together the SAOU's name can be upheld in the province.



Back f.l.t.r.: Tiaan Beukes, Martha Gcaba and Oscar Cebekhulu
Front f.l.t.r.: Christa Human, Innes Kritzing and Ella Pretorius

Strategic relationships



KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Education (KZN DoE)

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal maintains a healthy and professional working relationship with the KZN DoE. On various occasions, officials have expressed appreciation for the professional and purposeful manner in which the SAOU handles matters.

Communication with the KZN DoE takes place mainly via WhatsApp, email, telephone and personal visits to district offices. SAOU KwaZulu-Natal is consistent and persistent in follow-up work to ensure that members' matters and enquiries receive attention and are finalised. It has, however, become clear that district offices do not always function uniformly and consistently. Different districts sometimes impose varying requirements, particularly regarding the recognition of previous service, which may create challenges for members.

The KZN DoE prefers that members first raise their matters directly with the relevant district before involving the union. If no satisfactory feedback follows, SAOU KwaZulu-Natal immediately intervenes on behalf of the member to provide support.

It is regularly reported that some officials behave unprofessionally or rudely towards members when they make enquiries themselves. In such cases, SAOU KwaZulu-Natal addresses the matter with the relevant parties. In more serious matters, formal correspondence is directed to the head of department, which often yields positive results. A good working relationship has been established with the current head of department.

KwaZulu-Natal has also succeeded in identifying key officials in each district who regularly provide support with enquiries. Ongoing efforts are made to arrange strategic meetings between district directors, the PS, FTSS and PEC members. Joint efforts are also made to facilitate meetings with the MEC for Education and the head of department, which have already resulted in successful cooperation.



Relationship with the ELRC

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal has a well-functioning provincial ELRC that meets at least quarterly. A positive working relationship exists between the various unions and the KZN DoE.

The provincial structure holds observer status within the provincial ELRC. A strong working relationship exists with the National Teacher's Union (NATU), which on occasion enables participation in provincial ELRC meetings. Cooperation with the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) strengthens a united front within the province. The relationship with certain officials of the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), however, remains challenging.

Representation on various task teams enables the provincial structure to provide input on matters affecting educators. The continuous strengthening of relationships within the provincial ELRC contributes to matters being dealt with more effectively.

In 2025, the PS officially obtained observer status within the personnel affairs meeting of the provincial ELRC. This development strengthens the organisation's involvement and promotes more effective support to members.

Important interactions

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal maintains a good and constructive working relationship with the school governing body organisations Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) and Governing Body Foundation (GBF) in the province. This cooperation is important in ensuring a balanced and effective approach to education management and professional matters within schools.

Regular communication and contact between the organisations ensures that matters affecting both professional services and school management are handled in a coordinated and collaborative manner.

When issues overlap between the interests of educators and those of school governing bodies, these are deliberately addressed in consultation with the relevant school governing body organisation. This approach promotes mutual understanding and helps to find solutions that are in the best interests of schools, educators and learners.

Furthermore, the school governing body organisations maintain open channels of communication, particularly during negotiations and when important educational matters are discussed. By continually keeping one another informed of positions and developments within the education sector, the organisations are able to support one another and strengthen their collective impact within various task teams and structures.

The cooperation also extends to practical levels, where joint initiatives are regularly launched. This includes, among other things, mutual invitations to training sessions, seminars and other relevant meetings. By sharing these platforms, knowledge, expertise and perspectives are exchanged, ultimately contributing to better support for schools and educators within the province.

The cooperation between the provincial structure and SACE provides meaningful support to educators in the province. This relationship makes it possible to address matters relating to registration, professional development and administrative processes effectively.

Joint SACE roadshows have already been successfully presented in the province. These initiatives provide direct support to educators with registration processes and professional requirements, while simultaneously serving as valuable marketing opportunities for the organisation.

The cooperation between the two organisations expands annually and contributes to improved support for educators and the promotion of professionalism within the education sector.

As a result of the close cooperation, SAOU KwaZulu-Natal and SACE have in many respects become almost synonymous with one another in the province regarding support to educators and the handling of professional matters. This relationship contributes significantly to the effective service of SAOU members and to the promotion of professionalism within education in KwaZulu-Natal.

Successes and challenges

Over time, SAOU KwaZulu-Natal has succeeded in establishing a strong and respected presence within the provincial education environment. An important factor contributing to this success is the organisation's collaborative and purposeful approach.

This approach has opened many doors for SAOU KwaZulu-Natal, particularly within the KZN DoE. In many cases, there are officials within the department who are willing to support SAOU members and readily provide assistance when enquiries or problems are directed to them. This professional working relationship contributes to matters often being addressed and resolved more quickly.

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal also enjoys esteem within various meetings and task teams in the province. In many cases, role-players express their appreciation for the SAOU's presence, as the organisation brings a balanced, purposeful and professional perspective to discussions. This reputation strengthens the SAOU's influence and credibility within the education sector.

This approach, however, also brings certain challenges. Because the SAOU does not necessarily adopt a militant or confrontational stance, it sometimes happens that other unions, such as SADTU, place more direct pressure on the department and in certain cases achieve quicker results. In addition, the influence and power position of other unions sometimes causes processes within the province to be unnecessarily delayed, which may complicate the implementation of solutions.

Despite these challenges, SAOU KwaZulu-Natal remains committed to a professional and collaborative approach. This strategy strengthens long-term relationships, builds trust with role-players and ultimately contributes to the effective support of SAOU members and the promotion of quality education in KwaZulu-Natal.

Conclusion and Outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

The provincial leadership summit, post level 1 seminar and Women's Day are very important events where constructive ideas and best practices are shared. Expert and motivational speakers provide input during these events, which contributes to member empowerment and professional development.

The SAOU Continuum death benefit has been received very positively within the province and numerous beneficiary forms have already reached the office. Members are regularly followed up with to submit the necessary forms.

Member recruitment remains a significant challenge, but the office is doing everything in its power to keep membership numbers stable, with the hope that they will continue to grow.

Empowerment sessions at individual schools are also very well received. Members and non-members are empowered during these sessions, which serves as a good marketing strategy for the SAOU and also improves interpersonal relationships among staff. These sessions contribute positively to staff relations and wellbeing.

An extremely positive working relationship exists between SAOU KwaZulu-Natal and certain departmental officials, other unions, especially NATU and SADTU, as well as the school governing body organisations.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Experience within the province has confirmed that member enquiries must be handled sensitively and with care. Written communication is sometimes interpreted incorrectly and telephone follow-up discussions are therefore often used to convey the context and intention of feedback clearly.

In cases where members react emotionally, follow-up communication is deliberately postponed until discussions can be conducted more constructively. This approach contributes to the more effective handling of enquiries and disputes.

Large geographical distances between schools and the provincial office nevertheless remain a challenge. Urgent interventions often require extensive travel and logistical planning. Limited transport capacity in some cases complicates the swift support of members and sometimes leads to additional expenses and delays in processes.

Focus for the next congress term

Priorities

Member recruitment remains an important focus area in KwaZulu-Natal. New staff are not being appointed and members are taking early retirement. Younger members are resigning from the teaching profession and relocating to teach overseas. A deliberate effort is therefore being made to motivate members, especially those from other unions, to join the SAOU instead. New initiatives to recruit members are devised annually.

SAOU KwaZulu-Natal has a good relationship with the provincial SACE office. The SAOU/SACE roadshows will be utilised to visit districts and assist teachers in obtaining SACE certificates.

Objectives for the next reporting period

- Growth or stabilisation of membership numbers;
- More effective school visits; and
- Greater visibility within the province through strengthening strategic cooperation with other organisations.

This report does not address all aspects of SAOU KwaZulu-Natal's activities. The aim of this report was to provide a broad overview of the activities of SAOU KwaZulu-Natal.

LIMPOPO



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades. Een Visie
Three Decades. One Vision

Limpopo at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

10.3% of South Africa's
total landmass

3 Circuits further subdivided
in several regions

35 jaar average age
of members

77,8% of all members are
Post Level 1



470 km

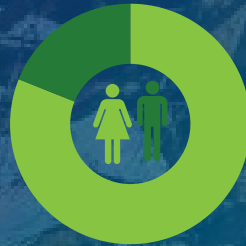
The furthest point from the SAOU
Head Office in Pretoria is Musina.

Membership



1 372

PERSAL: 892
SGB: 408
Independent Schools: 72



Women: 82%
Men: 18%



157

Primary Schools: 69
High School: 29
Private Schools: 25

Combined Schools: 7
LSEN Schools: 4



2 036

members reached
through 53 training
events since July 2023
to June 2026



76%
Afrikaans

24%
English



125 755 km²

Demographic Information

Limpopo is the northernmost province of South Africa and covers 125,755 km². It is known for its agricultural wealth, nature reserves, cultural diversity and border positions with three countries. It is named after the Limpopo River, the second-largest river in South Africa, which forms the province's western and northern boundary. The word Limpopo means "strong flowing waterfalls". Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg) is the capital city of the province. The province assumed its current form in 1994 (previously known as the Northern Province) and today serves as a strategic gateway to southern Africa.

Limpopo borders three other South African provinces to the south: North West, Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Its other borders are shared with neighbouring African countries such as Botswana in the west, Zimbabwe in the north and Mozambique in the east. Limpopo is home to the world's largest and oldest baobab tree. Limpopo is also regarded as South Africa's poorest province.

Important geographical features:

- Limpopo River (northern border)
- Drakensberg/Wolkberg areas
- Extensive bushveld and subtropical regions
- Kruger National Park: Large sections situated in Limpopo
- Hoedspruit Wildlife Management Centre
- Waterberg: Well-known mountain range
- Tzaneen – one of South Africa's largest agricultural areas (avocados, citrus, macadamia nuts and subtropical crops)

The schools in Limpopo where members are based are highly diverse and geographically widespread. There are schools in larger towns such as Polokwane, Tzaneen, Modimolle, Bela-Bela and Phalaborwa, but also in rural areas such as Marken, Nelsonskop, Toitskraal, Levubu, Drakensig, Mariepskop and Tuinplaas. Distances and gravel roads are sometimes a major challenge, especially for school visits and providing good service to all members.

Circuit and regional divisions

SAOU Limpopo is divided into the following five regions with 10 district offices:

Circuit 1: Southern circuit

Waterberg

Bela-Bela (formerly Warmbad), Modimolle (formerly Nylstroom), Tuinplaas, Settlers, Vaalwater, Lephalale (formerly Ellisras), Marken, Nelsonskop, Van Wykskraal, Swartwater, Northam, Platina, Amandelbult, Thabazimbi, Mookgopong (formerly Naboomspruit), Mokopane (formerly Potgietersrus) and Bysonderheid.

Sekhukhune

Groblersdal, Laersdrif, Marble Hall, Toitskraal, Steelpoort, Burgersfort, Ohrigstad and Roosenekal.

Circuit 2: Southern circuit

Capricorn

Dendron, Kuschke, Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg).

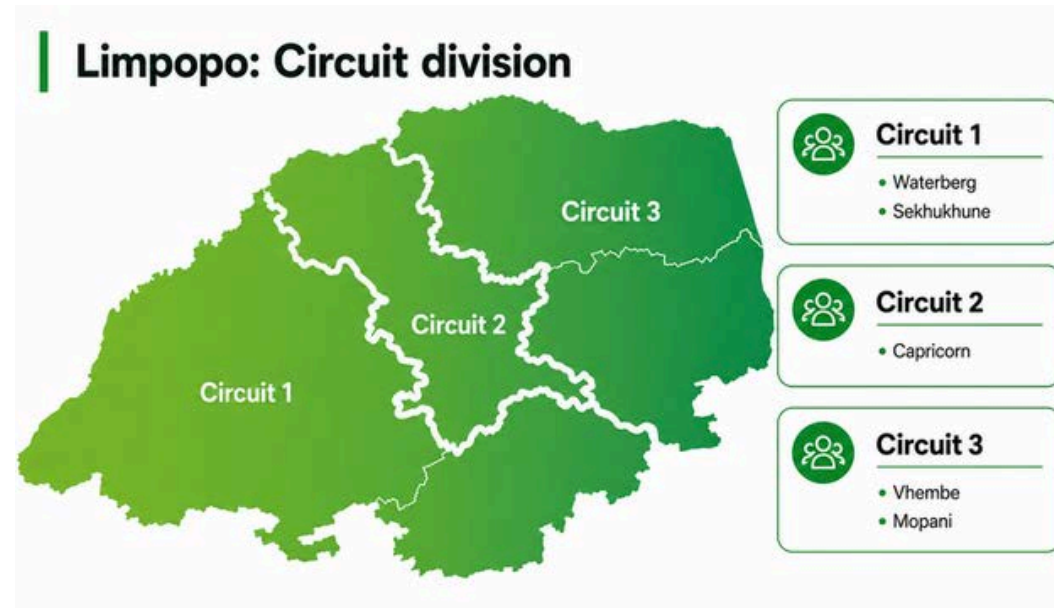
Circuit 3: Northern circuit

Vhembe

Musina (formerly Messina), Louis Trichardt, Braambos and Levubu.

Mopani (east and west)

Tzaneen, Modjadjiskloof (formerly Duiwelskloof), Gravelotte, Haenertsburg, Letsitele, Schiettocht, Phalaborwa, Hoedspruit, Drakensig and Mariepskop.



Membership



PERSAL: 892
SGB: 408
Independent Schools: 72



Women: 82%
Men: 18%



Post Level 1
 dominant post level
77,8%



Member numbers
STUDENTS
 growing steadily



43yrs
 average age



157

Primary Schools: 69
High Schools: 29

Independent Schools: 25
Combined Schools: 7

LSEN Schools: 4
Agricultural: 3

POST DESCRIPTION

MEMBERS

Educators
 Heads of Department
 Schools Principals
 Deputy Principals

1 068
 112
 115
 45

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

MEMBERS

Primary School
 High Schools
 Extra-ordinary/Other/Preschool
 LSEN/Private Schools
 Department

753
 345
 113
 107
 5

Since the previous congress, there has been a slight decrease in Persal members, with an increase in governing body (GB) members. As databases were cleaned up, GB members who had since been appointed departmentally were identified. Their status was changed, resulting in a decrease in GB numbers and an increase in Persal members.

With this increase in Persal members, Limpopo qualified to appoint a Full-Time Shop Steward, for which they are extremely grateful. With students qualifying annually and mostly being appointed in GB posts, it is expected that member numbers will increase further in the future. Continued school visits and good service delivery have undoubtedly contributed to the total membership in Limpopo growing by 113 since the last congress. Independent school membership increased by 28.

Although there is still a large group of members between the ages of 50 and 60 in Limpopo, student membership has also increased by 156. Although many members retire, many schools appoint student teachers internally, who are later appointed to GB posts. There is definitely a growing trend of younger educators in staff rooms, while older members increasingly indicate that they wish to retire earlier. With new distance-learning institutions, there is also a greater number of students completing their studies remotely while employed at schools. Post-level 1 educators remain the dominant post level. Students are encouraged, where possible, to become members, as this leads to future paying members.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

Limpopo's members are divided into three circuits: the southern circuit (circuit 1), which includes schools in Waterberg and Sekhukhune; the central circuit (circuit 2), which includes schools in Mogalakwena and Capricorn; and the northern circuit (circuit 3), which includes schools in the Vhembe and Mopani districts. Three members are initially elected from each circuit by members of that region. At the first sitting of the elected members, an election takes place to appoint the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the provincial council. After this election, additional members are co-opted to address specific gaps and needs.

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE

CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
	Magnus Steyn	Chair (Principal)	Merensky Landbou Akademie	Tzaneen
	Gideon Pelzer	Co-Chair (Principal)	L/S Pietersburg-Oos	Polokwane
1	Amoré Badenhorst	Principal	Modimolle Primary	Modimolle
2	Werner Christou	Principal	L/S Piet Hugo Primary	Polokwane
3	Theo Muller	Principal	H/S Louis Trichardt	Louis Trichardt

Functioning and focus

Members of the Provincial Standing Committee (PSC), who function as circuit chairpersons, monitor their respective circuits and regularly provide feedback at meetings of the Provincial Executive Council (PEC). They play an important role in identifying pressure points within the circuits at an early stage. Ensuring that the PEC functions effectively within its portfolios is a priority. The PSC also serves as mentors within their circuits due to their experience as educational leaders. To date, the PSC has been supportive and of immense value to the success of the SAOU in Limpopo.



Back f.l.t.r: Theo Muller, Magnus Steyn, Gideon Pelzer
Front v.l.n.r: Cathy de la Harpe, Amoré Badenhorst (Dr)

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026				
CIRCUIT	NAME	PORTFOLIO	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
Chair	Magnus Steyn		Merensky Landbou Akademie	Tzaneen
Co-Chair	Gideon Pelzer		Laerskool Pietersburg-Oos	Polokwane
1	Amoré Badenhorst	ECD & Gr R development, National Teaching Awards	Modimolle Primary	Modimolle
1	Anton du Plessis	Residences	HS Nylstroom	Modimolle
1	Gerda Pringle	Human Resources & Wellbeing	LS Eenheid	Modimolle
2	Werner Christou	Human Resources & Wellbeing	LS Piet Hugo Primary	Polokwane
2	Adolf Ellis	Extra-curricular	HS Pietersburg	Polokwane
2	Rudi Fick	Extra-curricular	Pietersburg Comprehensive School	Polokwane
3	Theo Muller	High school curriculum	HS Louis Trichardt	Louis Trichardt
3	Irene Adendorff	Primary school curriculum	LS Louis Trichardt	Louis Trichardt
3	Lucinda Vorster	Internship & recruitment	LS Messina	Musina
Co-opted	Vanessa Kachelhoffer	Technical Schools	HTS Tom Naudé	Polokwane
Co-opted	Danie du Toit	Office-based members	Waterberg Examinations	Polokwane

Strategic role

PEC members are active in the province within their circuits and close to pressure points. They are therefore able to assist in identifying and resolving crises at grassroots level within schools in their circuits, which provides major support to provincial management. They can also assist with empowerment in the province by identifying topics and speakers and by participating in the programme itself. Limpopo has four highly effective principals' circuits where PEC members can provide feedback on SAOU activities within their circuits. This increases their visibility by making them part of training opportunities. A new initiative the union may consider is allowing PEC members speaking opportunities at training events to introduce the PEC's role and activities within the province. This should increase their visibility at grassroots level.



Back f.l.t.r: Theo Muller, Adolf Ellis, Anton du Plessis, Rudi Fick, Magnus Steyn, Gerda Pringle, Gideon Pelzer
Front v.l.t.r: Lucinda Vorster, Cathy de la Harpe, Irene Adendorff, Amoré Badenhorst, Vanessa Kachelhoffer



Danie du Toit



Werner Christou

Service Delivery

Communication with members

WhatsApp groups are the most effective way of reaching members in Limpopo. Each focus group has its own WhatsApp group so that key information can be distributed. Better feedback is received from members via WhatsApp than by email. It appears that members in Limpopo do not fully realise the importance of newsletters and that they are not widely read. Greater awareness of the newsletters and the importance of their content is emphasised during school visits.

Although WhatsApp groups are the union’s most effective form of communication, it is still found that members do not always read the information sent out. This requires sustained, regular communication from the union to ensure that members receive information and provide feedback. Members are also regularly followed up with through personal messages.

Improvements and innovation

With younger staff members, moving graphics can also be incorporated as part of communication and marketing. Important sections from newsletters will be extracted and sent as news flashes via WhatsApp.

SAOU app

The SAOU’s new mobile app is now the primary communication platform for member-exclusive content. The app offers SAOU members faster, simpler and more convenient access to news, updates and SAOU information – all in one central place on members’ mobile phones. This new platform ensures that members receive information directly and in a way that supports their daily work. It also offers the advantage that members can easily and quickly read previous newsletters at a time that suits them. It simplifies the process of searching for and rereading previous newsletters. This is modern communication that adapts, is more accessible and evolves with the membership community. The union encourages members, wherever possible, to download the SAOU app and join the WhatsApp channel. This will ensure improved communication.

Handling member enquiries

Labour matters

Most labour-related issues concern hostel allowances, the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) and the filling of posts. Enquiries regarding years of service, relocation costs and medical retention after retirement are also frequently received.

Professional support

The union provides extensive emotional support to members, as they have a need for support regarding workplace issues.

Policy and legal matters

SAOU Limpopo is in the fortunate position that policy and legal matters are not particularly common. Should they arise in a district, they are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Nature of enquiries



Observer allowances



Safety and security



Pension matters



Temporary appointments



Salary matters



Conversions



Workload and burnout



Grievances and disputes



Leave



Emotional support



Disciplinary hearings



Transfers

Response and processes

SAOU Limpopo genuinely strives to provide members with timely feedback. Since the service structure was expanded, service delivery could be divided more effectively among districts, enquiries could be handled far more efficiently and, in particular, timely feedback could be provided to members on a regular basis.

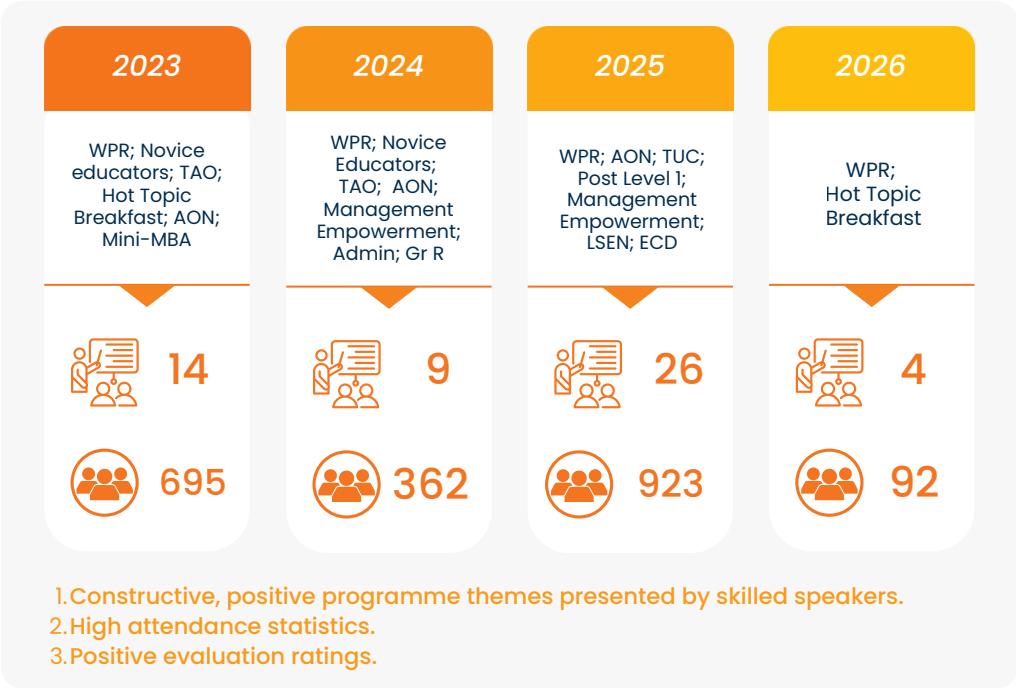
The provincial office works closely with the national divisions of the Executive Centre. Training is coordinated with Professional Services and their professional advisers regularly act as speakers.

SAOU Limpopo also works closely with Marketing and Communication and is extremely grateful for their support with marketing and communication in the province.

General challenges and solutions

It seldom happens that SAOU Limpopo experiences recurring issues, as they make a concerted effort to keep their finger on the pulse. There are, however, occasional issues such as outstanding hostel fees and bullying behaviour by departmental officials. SAOU Limpopo prioritises these matters and attempts to resolve them as quickly as possible. It has been found that communication by email is not always effective within Limpopo’s departmental offices; therefore, they prefer, where possible, to address problems in person at the offices. They also have an effective system in place that keeps a complete record of all member enquiries, with regular feedback provided to members. A major component of SAOU Limpopo’s success is that it is very important to them to maintain an emotional connection with their members, as well as with district officials. Members will forget what was done or said for them, but how SAOU Limpopo made them feel will remain.

Training, empowerment and professional development



Impact

Member evaluations after training opportunities are overwhelmingly positive. The only criticism is that some members are too far away to attend the training sessions, as Limpopo is geographically very large.

Office functioning

Staff structure

- Cathy de la Harpe – Provincial Secretary (PS)
- Roché Geldenhuys – Full-Time Shop Steward
- Willie Schoeman en Denise Harmse – Professional Officers (PO)
- Adriana de Necker – Provincial Administrative Officer (PAO)

The PS and PAO operate from the Executive Centre in Pretoria. They travel regularly to the province for meetings, training sessions and school visits. In the past, the wide geographical spread of the district offices and schools within the province posed a major challenge in terms of visits, and effective service delivery was difficult with only three staff members in the office.

With effect from January 2026, Roché Geldenhuys was seconded to SAOU Limpopo as Shop Steward, and Denise Harmse was appointed as PO to assist Limpopo’s current PO, Willie Schoeman. Willie Schoeman will be leaving the SAOU at the end of 2026, after which Denise Harmse will serve full-time as PO in Limpopo.

Willie Schoeman and Denise Harmse’s respective home offices are situated in Polokwane, from where they travel to district offices and schools in the districts listed below to handle member enquiries and various issues. They also deal with all matters at the head office of the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE):

- Waterberg – partially
- Capricorn North
- Capricorn South

Roché Geldenhuys also works from a home office in Modjadjiskloof. The following districts are serviced by her in collaboration with Willie Schoeman:

- Waterberg – partially
- Sekhukhune
- Mopani East
- Mopani West
- Vhembe

General functioning

Cathy de la Harpe and Adriana de Necker will primarily liaise with the national divisions of the Executive Centre in Pretoria. Cathy de la Harpe will also, where possible, assist staff in the province with school visits and other meetings. Legal Services and Professional Services are also invited to PEC meetings and to act as speakers at training opportunities.

An internal WhatsApp group is furthermore used for effective communication and workflow within the office.



Back f.l.t.r.: Roché Geldenhuys, Adriana de Necker, Denise Brink
Front f.l.t.r.: Cathy de la Harpe, Willie Schoeman

Strategic relationships

SAOU Limpopo functions very successfully within the Combined Trade Union–Autonomous Teachers’ Unions (CTU–ATU) and also serves as the corresponding party. The union, together with the Professional Educators Union (PEU), serves on the human resources task team, as well as the RAVO Standing Committee (STANCO) and the ELRC Chamber. One of SAOU Limpopo’s greatest successes is its good relationship with the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE). SAOU Limpopo would like to strengthen these ties even further, as they certainly contribute to the successful resolution of matters.

Important interactions

SAOU Limpopo forms part of the Provincial Teacher Education Development Committee (PTEDC), as well as the Wellness Advisory Committee (WAC). SAOU Limpopo is a member of the trade union federation Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), and where possible they participate in FEDUSA’s training opportunities. It is anticipated that SAOU Limpopo’s involvement will increase due to the additional staff members in the provincial office. The Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) attends the principals’ circuit meetings together with SAOU Limpopo and works well alongside them regarding issues in Limpopo.

Successes and challenges

The Brandpunt Ontbyt hosted by SAOU Limpopo together with FEDSAS for school principals and governing body (GB) chairpersons is a major success. The union has also achieved considerable success with SACE, GEMS and GEPP, but would like to become more involved in undertaking initiatives in the province together with them. It is also anticipated that Limpopo’s SACE alliance will be strengthened, as Limpopo will appoint a SACE convenor from the office. SAOU Limpopo would also like to work more closely with the Movement for Christian National Education (BCVO), as quite a number of members belong to it. There are many BCVO schools, smaller independent schools and nursery schools in Limpopo where members can be recruited. Part of SAOU Limpopo’s strategic objectives is also to reach these schools during school visits.

A further major success in Limpopo is the four established SAOU principals’ circuits, namely:

- Sandrivier principals’ circuit (Polokwane area)
- Vhembe principals’ circuit
- Mopani principals’ circuit
- Waterberg principals’ circuit

At these meetings, principals support one another and share best practices. SAOU and FEDSAS are also given an opportunity to provide feedback. This is a valuable opportunity for SAOU Limpopo to engage directly with principals once per quarter to determine how matters are progressing at their schools and where assistance can be offered regarding issues at grassroots level.

There are still several challenges in Limpopo:

- Administrative and operational challenges at certain departmental offices.
- Dysfunctional departmental offices and related challenges.

- Use of SASAMS.
- Delivery of textbooks.
- Meetings during school hours or arranged at short notice.
- Bullying behaviour by officials.
- Outstanding hostel fees.
- Departmental meetings that do not start punctually.
- Training that does not benefit members; for example, training is not presented in a language that members understand, although attendance is compulsory.
- Departmental tests not available in Afrikaans for all subjects, or contain numerous errors, while schools are still expected to write them.
- Political challenges: language and admissions. There is an ongoing struggle for the survival of Afrikaans.
- Remote schools with difficult roads.
- Debit orders: There is a major challenge with non-payment by members, resulting in unsuccessful debit order processing and eventual loss of members.
- Difficult working conditions and pressure within the teaching profession are causing educators to leave the profession.

Conclusion and outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

One of SAOU Limpopo’s greatest obstacles is getting members from remote schools to attend training sessions. Where possible, they will in future consider taking certain presentations to these schools, where there may also be specific needs.

The increase in membership is definitely due to greater visibility within the province. Increased school visits, quality training, effective communication with members, as well as good service delivery, have all contributed to the successes of the past three years.

Focus for the next congress term

SAOU Limpopo’s priorities for the next congress term are, firstly, to reach all existing members through effective communication, school visits and good service delivery. They wish to retain the loyal support of their existing members.

SAOU Limpopo’s greatest objective is to offer all current and future members a comprehensive value proposition that they will not receive from any other union, through personal and emotional support, constructive training opportunities, regular visibility and strategic representation. This will consist of strong visibility, excellent communication, quality training and outstanding service delivery.

Closing message from the PS

Limpopo is a beautiful province with its mountain ranges, game farms and baobab trees. Although the roads are challenging and the rural schools are remote, the magnificent scenery makes up for it. The rural atmosphere of even the so-called “large towns” contributes to schools supporting one another and standing together during difficult times.

SAOU Limpopo would like to thank all its members for their hard work and determination, sometimes under very difficult circumstances. The challenges of the province test educators’ passion to the utmost, but they handle it with grace.

All honour and glory to the Creator and Redeemer who pours out so many blessings over Limpopo and without whom the union cannot be taken to greater heights. He remains central to the functioning of SAOU Limpopo.

MPUMALANGA

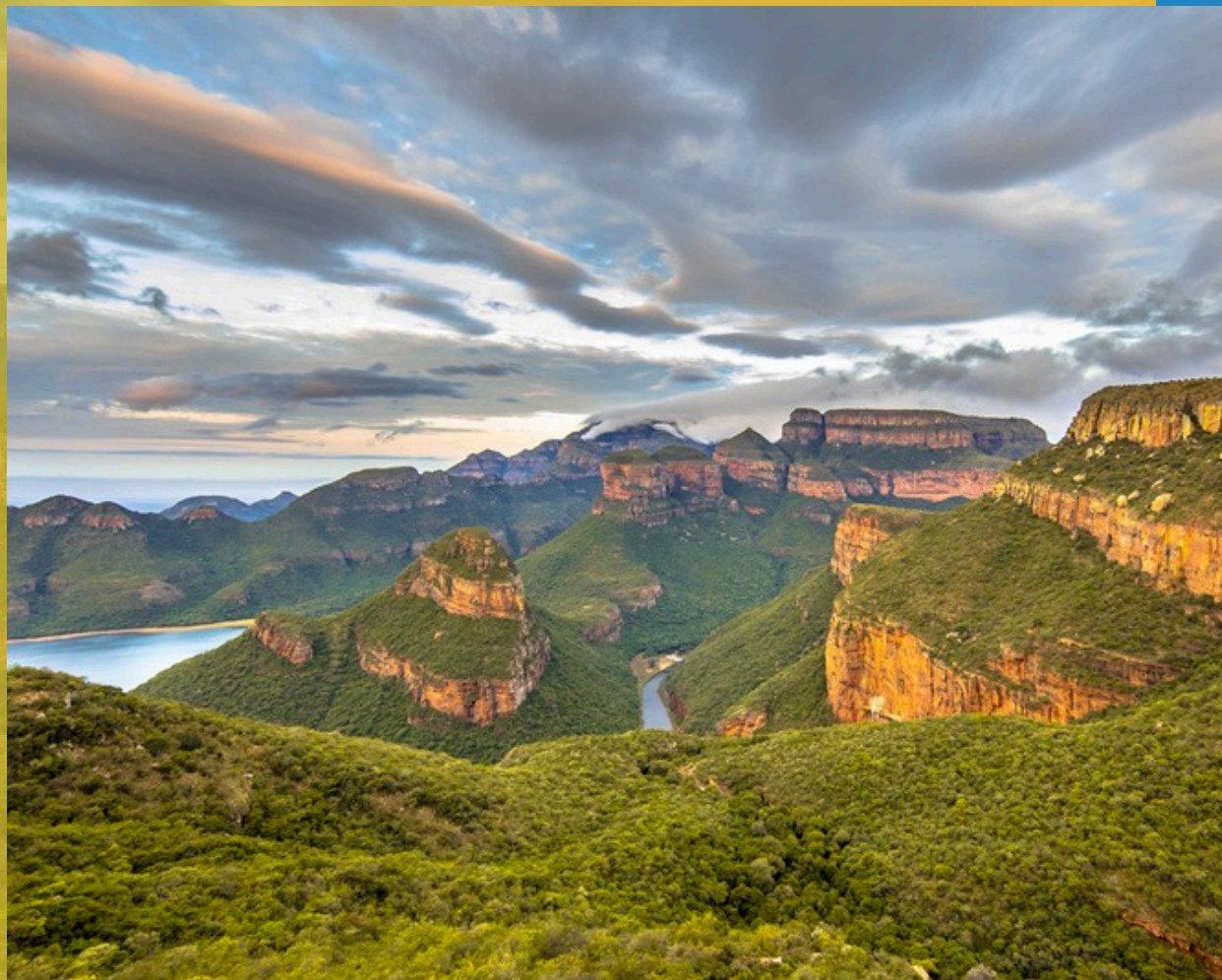


SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Mpumalanga at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

6.3%

of South Africa's
total landmass

4 Circuits

further subdivided in
multiple regions

43 years

average age of
members

81%

of all members are
Post Level 1



438km

The furthest point from the SAOU
Head Office in Pretoria is
Bushbuckridge.

Membership



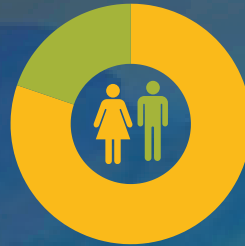
2 796

PERSAL: 2 084

SGB: 604

Studentes: 637

Independent Schools: 108



Women: 82.36%

Men: 17.63%



213

Primary School: 97

High School: 42

Independent Schools: 23

Combined Schools: 17
LSEN Schools: 8



2 917

Members reached through
56 training events from
July 2023 until June 2026



91.3%
Afrikaans

8.6%
English



76 500 km²

Demographic Information

Mpumalanga covers approximately 76,500 km² and is situated in the eastern part of South Africa, hence the name “Place of the Rising Sun”, with international borders adjoining Mozambique and the Kingdom of Eswatini. The province is characterised by significant geographical and ecological diversity. The area stretches from the Highveld, with its extensive agricultural and mining activities, to the Lowveld with a subtropical climate and prominent tourism and wildlife areas, including the Kruger National Park. The escarpment areas further form a unique topographical feature with mountainous terrain and forests. This geographical variation influences infrastructure development, economic activity and the nature of service delivery in different regions of the province.

The province has a mixed settlement pattern consisting of developed urban centres as well as extensive rural and semi-rural areas. Important urban centres include Mbombela, Emalahleni, Middelburg and Secunda. These areas function as economic and administrative hubs with relatively well-developed infrastructure and access to services. A significant portion of the province, however, consists of rural communities, especially in areas such as Bushbuckridge, Nkomazi and other former homeland regions. These areas are often characterised by greater socio-economic challenges, limited resources and greater distances between schools and support services.

The distribution of schools and educators across both urban and rural areas necessitates a differentiated approach to support and service delivery by the SAOU.

The geographical extent and diverse nature of Mpumalanga present specific logistical challenges. These include:

- Long distances between towns, schools and district offices, especially in rural regions.
- Unequal access to infrastructure, including adequate classrooms, sanitation, water and electricity supply.
- Large learner numbers per class in certain areas, which complicate teaching and individual support.
- Topographical challenges in mountainous areas.
- Socio-economic disparities between urban and rural communities.
- Linguistic and cultural diversity, especially in border and rural areas.
- Migration patterns.

These factors require strategic planning, effective communication channels and region-based support to ensure that SAOU members throughout Mpumalanga receive equal and effective service. The SAOU's role within the province is therefore not merely administrative in nature, but also strategic and supportive in promoting quality education and professional stability.

Circuit and regional division

There are currently 213 schools served by SAOU Mpumalanga and the province is divided into four circuits:

Circuit 1: Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela (Nelspruit area)

Circuit 2: Gert Sibande (Secunda area)

Circuit 3: Nkangala East (Middelburg area)

Circuit 4: Nkangala West (Witbank area)

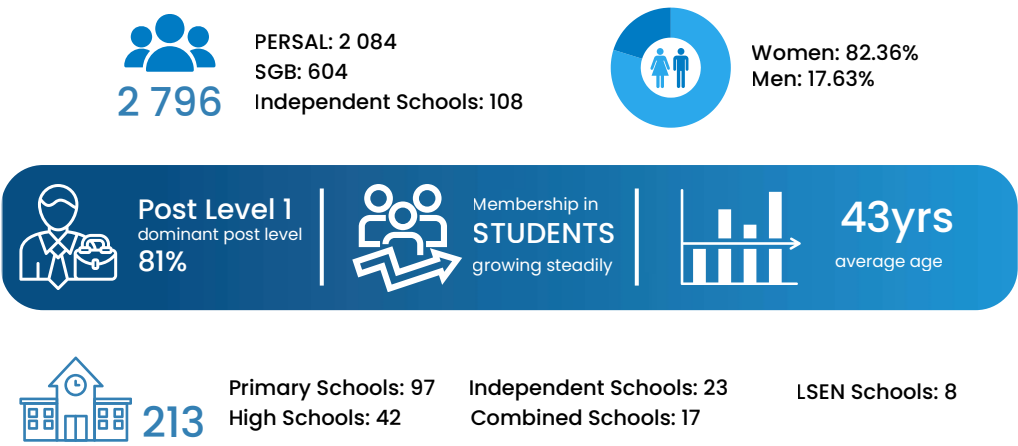
Mpumalanga: Circuit division



	Circuit 1 • Ehlanzeni • Bohlabela
	Circuit 2 • Gert Sibande
	Circuit 3 • Nkangala East
	Circuit 4 • Nkangala West

Membership

SAOU Mpumalanga currently has 2 796 members consisting of 2 084 Persal members, 604 governing body members, 108 private school members and 660 students.



Trends since 2023

Membership numbers for SAOU Mpumalanga since June 2023 show a fluctuating trend. In 2025 there was a clear growth phase until late in the year, followed by a more recent downward movement. Fluctuations can be attributed to various factors: changes in the leadership of the province, natural attrition, depopulation of rural areas and changes in member demographics. Many young educators are leaving the profession due to difficult working conditions caused by the Mpumalanga Department of Education's (MDoE) inability to adapt infrastructure and post provisioning to the growth of the province.

MEMBER COUNT BY POST LEVEL					
POST LEVEL	PRINCIPAL	DEPUTY PRINCIPAL	HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	PL1	STUDENT
	132	111	317	2 264	660

MEMBER COUNT BY INSTITUTION						
TYPE	PRIMARY SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	INDEPENDENT	COMBINED	LSEN	OTHER
	1 489	818	108	167	172	43

The majority of members are affiliated with primary schools, followed by high schools, which reflects the organisation's traditional support base. Combined and special schools make a meaningful contribution, while independent schools and other institutions form a smaller but stable component. The largest segment of members consists of post-level 1 educators, confirming that the organisation's core base is rooted in classroom practice. There is also strong representation from heads of department, while deputy principals and principals form a smaller but strategically important group. The significant number of student members indicates good recruitment among future educators and creates a positive growth outlook.

Challenges

Certain schools are situated in extremely remote areas, which complicates regular visits and support and sometimes presents safety challenges. In addition, overcrowded classrooms and challenging socio-economic conditions place additional pressure on educators and school management. These factors contribute to complex situations, particularly regarding discipline management and the collection of school fees.

Access to members in private schools remains a particular challenge, as recognition and access are not automatically granted by legislation. Nevertheless, deliberate efforts are made through targeted training and professional engagement to gain the trust and cooperation of boards and management teams at private schools and to leverage membership.

Opportunities

Members in remote areas and at private schools often have a particular need for support, as they do not always have ready access to training and expert advice. This reality creates a meaningful opportunity for SAOU Mpumalanga to provide targeted support, build capacity and make a tangible difference in members' professional working environment.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028				
CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
-	CAD Heese	Chairperson (Principal)	Kruinpark Laerskool	Secunda
-	FW van der Merwe	Deputy Chair (Principal)	Nelspruit Hoërskool	Nelspruit
1	C Aucamp	Circuit managers	Lydenburg Hoërskool	Lydenburg
2	SP Grobler		Ermelo Hoërskool	Ermelo
3	M Botma		Future Achievers Academy	Middelburg
4	PJ Burger		Panorama Laerskool	Witbank

Functioning and focus

The PSC members are the foundation upon which the entire structural composition of the SAOU's elected members rests, and they play a key role in the organisational structure of the SAOU in the province. The diligence and enthusiasm with which members perform their duties determine how successfully the SAOU will function within the province.

The role and responsibilities of the Provincial Standing Committee are as follows:

- Takes the lead in matters where the provincial SAOU is involved within the respective circuits.
- Serves as circuit organisers with all duties attached to the office:
 - Manages and organises the activities of the SAOU within the circuit.
 - Ensures that SAOU Workplace Representatives (WPRs) are elected or appointed at every school and institution where there are SAOU members.
 - Assists the provincial SAOU office in gathering information from schools within the circuit.
 - Provides guidance to SAOU members within the circuit.
 - Visits schools (where possible) for member recruitment.
 - Assists members in disputes/grievances.
 - Distributes important information.
 - Represents the SAOU at departmental meetings.
 - Acts as spokesperson for the SAOU within the given mandates.
- Attends meetings of the PSC and Provincial Executive Committee (PEC).
- Plans the activities of the SAOU (strategic planning at the beginning of the term of office).
- Assists the provincial office with the management of the province:
 - Provincial policy formulation.
 - Serves on committees.
 - Plans provincial activities. Exercises control over finances.
 - Decision-making regarding actions.
 - Assists the Provincial Secretary (PS) in the execution of her duties.
 - Represents the SAOU in departmental committees and meetings at provincial and district level.

Chairperson

- Represents the SAOU at public events.
- Arranges for a representative from management if personally unavailable.
- Provincial spokesperson for the SAOU.
- Issues media statements.
- Addresses the press.
- States the SAOU's position at public events.
- Interprets SAOU policy and positions within the province.
- Represents the SAOU on structures of SAOU National, for example the National Executive Council (NEC), National Standing Committee (NSC), Professional Committee (ProfCom) and other committees.
- Serves on national structures, for example the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

- Represents the SAOU on provincial structures.
- Visits schools and circuit offices.
- Negotiates with the provincial Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and head of department.
- Is available for SAOU activities within the province.

Deputy Chairperson

- Assists the Chairperson.
- Acts as seconder to the Chairperson.
- Represents the SAOU on structures of SAOU National, for example the National Executive Council (NEC) and other committees as designated by the PSC.



Danie Heese
(Chairperson))



FW van der Merwe



C Aucamp



SP Grobler



M Botma



PJ Burger

Key priorities of the PSC during the reporting period

Given the PSC's extensive responsibilities and the unique challenges within Mpumalanga's education landscape, Mpumalanga's PSC should focus on strong structures, visible leadership, effective member support and strategic negotiation, with the aim of professional stability and sustainable growth within a challenging, diverse education environment.

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026			
CIRCUIT	NAME	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
Chairperson	CAD Heese	Kruinpark Laerskool	Secunda
Deputy Chair	FW van der Merwe	Hoërskool Nelspruit	Nelspruit
1	C Aucamp	Lydenburg Hoërskool	Lydenburg
1	MH Matthee	Graskop Primary	Graskop
1	M Gilday	Nelspruit Primary	Nelspruit
2	SP Grobler	Ermelo Hoërskool	Ermelo
2	GJ Van Niekerk	Goedehoop Laerskool	Secunda
2	A Strauss	Oranjegloed Laerskool	Secunda
3	M Botma	Future Achievers Academy	Middelburg
3	G Smit	Staatspresident CR Swart Laerskool	Middelburg
3	MS van Heerden	Middelburg HTS	Middelburg
4	PJ Burger	Panorama Laerskool	Witbank
4	C Visser	Klipfontein Laerskool	Witbank
4	SP Jansen van Vuuren	Panorama Laerskool	Witbank
Co-opted members	M Kruger	Jim van Tonderskool	Bethal
	H Theron	MDE QA QMS	Nelspruit

Strategic role

Strategically, the PEC plays a core role as the link between policy and practice: They translate the SAOU’s national and provincial strategy into executable actions at grassroots level, ensure organisational cohesion and representation, protect and promote members’ interests through targeted negotiation and influence, and build the organisation’s visibility and credibility within the education environment. Through effective leadership, coordination and strategic decision-making, the PEC largely determines the impact, stability and growth of the SAOU within the province.



Top f.l.t.r.: Anandi Strauss, Chrismari Aucamp, Danie Heese (Chairperson), Carmi Visser, FW van der Merwe
Middle f.l.t.r.: GJ van Niekerk, M Botma, M Gilday, M van Heerden, Mark Matthee
Bottom f.l.t.r.: Paul Burger, SP Grobler, SP Janse van Vuuren

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Transferring information correctly and effectively to members remains one of SAOU Mpumalanga’s greatest challenges. The following methods are currently used within the province to communicate information to members.

WhatsApp groups

The dissemination of important information to members by means of WhatsApp messages has become Mpumalanga’s primary method of communication.

The following groups have been created:

- SAOU Mpumalanga (general member group)
- SAOU Independent Schools
- SAOU ECD
- SAOU Admin
- SAOU Students
- SAOU Principals
- SAOU WPR
- PEC
- Standing Committee

- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) members; and
- Principals' circuits

The SAOU also has a national WhatsApp channel that is actively promoted during school visits for all members to follow and thereby also view national news directly.

Newsletters

SAOU Mpumalanga also communicates with members through newsletters. Newsletters are distributed via email, WhatsApp groups and the SAOU app. These newsletters mainly contain news relating to provincial matters. Members are continually encouraged to provide the SAOU with their personal email addresses. During empowerment opportunities, personal information is also verified.

Facebook

Members are continuously reminded of the SAOU's national Facebook page, which also markets provincial matters. The platform is used to reach a larger number of SAOU members, as well as non-members. The following points serve as examples of the posts uploaded to this platform:

- National and provincial empowerment opportunities;
- Instant communication messages;
- SAOU surveys;
- Vacancy lists; and
- Other relevant topical matters of interest.

Other

- SAOU Mpumalanga supports the national initiative to get all members onto the SAOU app and thereby place communication directly on the app for every member. This eliminates the need for WPRs to forward communication to members at their schools.
- Members' information is checked during school visits with the assistance of membership lists, but updating remains a challenge.

Best practices

- Distribution of important provincial communication on all our niche WhatsApp groups.
- Close and open contact between the WPRs at each school and SAOU Mpumalanga office staff, which facilitates the handling of individual enquiries and also makes members aware of the SAOU's assistance and service delivery.
- Ongoing school visits, which are prioritised and promote the visibility of SAOU Mpumalanga. This leads to better member recruitment, active member service and awareness of SAOU products and services among members and non-members.
- Members are also encouraged during information meetings to visit the SAOU website. In this way they are exposed to important information from the SAOU. SAOU Online is also continually promoted at all in-person sessions and school visits.
- During school visits, members are requested to download and register on the SAOU app.

Improvements and innovation

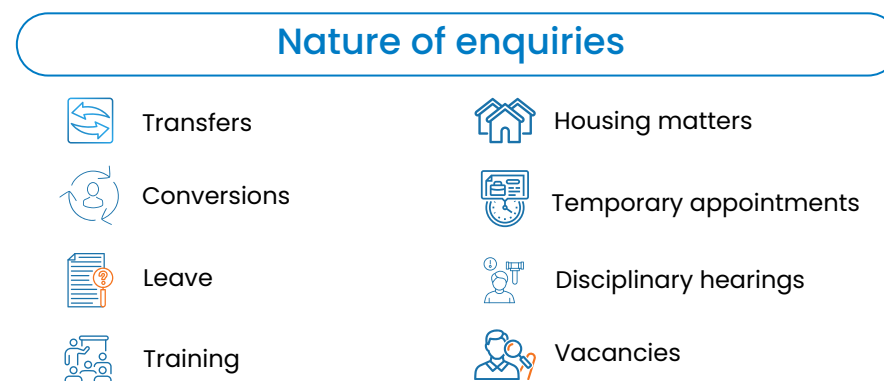
SAOU app: SAOU Mpumalanga implemented the SAOU application from January 2026. The challenge is that each member must register independently and the process is progressing slowly.

The **Digiman manual for Workplace Representatives (WPRs)** was developed by Lee-Ann Lowe and, with the assistance of all provinces, is now available nationally for use by WPRs. Complete information required by WPRs is now electronically available and has been placed on the SAOU app since February 2026 with exclusive access for WPRs. The Digiman manual is also updated by Lee-Ann with the assistance of Marketing and Communication to ensure that all information is available and relevant.

SAOU Help, in collaboration with the North-West University (NWU), provides members with professional emotional support. Although SAOU Mpumalanga also offers emotional support to members, this initiative facilitates complex situations where members require additional support that falls outside the labour framework and mandate of the SAOU.

Handling member enquiries

The SAOU's most important task is to assist members with enquiries and challenges within the working environment that affect their conditions of service and service benefits and threaten job security. The fact that the SAOU receives calls, WhatsApp messages and emails daily is proof that members trust the SAOU to handle their enquiries.



Some enquiries are resolved more easily than others. Most trends relate to salaries, especially the reappointment of educators after a break in service, as well as salary progressions that have not been paid to members.

From January 2022, SAOU Mpumalanga began recording every amount repaid to members and, to date, R6,300,798.63 has been successfully recovered for members. Sandra Lancaster (Shop Steward) and Francois Joubert (PO) in particular play an important and significant role in this regard.

SAOU Mpumalanga is also involved in the provincial ELRC, where the SAOU plays a leading role as the corresponding party of the Combined Trade Union-Autonomous Teachers' Unions (CTU-ATU) for the next three years. For SAOU Mpumalanga, it is of cardinal importance that good relationships with the Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE) are maintained and continuously strengthened. The good relationships currently established with the MDoE are of great assistance in handling member enquiries.

School visits remain a top priority for SAOU Mpumalanga. Every year SAOU Mpumalanga makes a point of completing 95% of school visits before the end of the year. During these school visits, the importance of personal interaction with members has once again been confirmed. Members prefer to discuss their enquiries face to face. Principals also get the opportunity to discuss topical matters with the SAOU, and this furthermore contributes to positive growth in the number of members recruited.

Response and processes

Timeliness and quality of feedback are non-negotiable for SAOU Mpumalanga. Members of the team ensure that all information is communicated correctly and that all enquiries are answered or referred within 48 hours.

Where enquiries need to be answered by Legal Services or Professional Services, these are referred and followed up where necessary. Close cooperation exists between all divisions. There is also close cooperation with colleagues from other provinces where necessary, for example where assistance is provided with transfers and requests for service records.

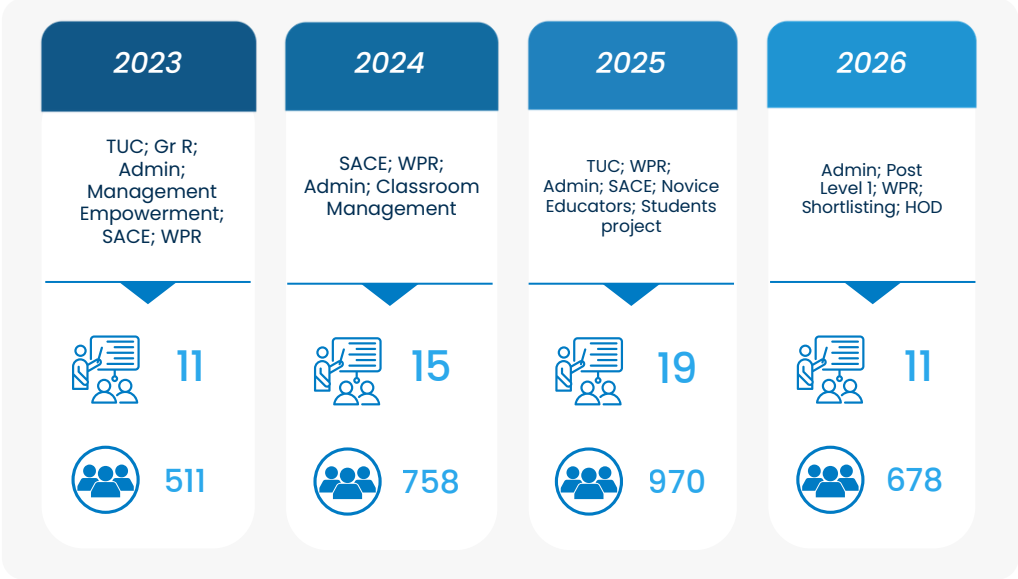
SAOU Mpumalanga staff prioritise good cooperation with district officials in order to facilitate the effective resolution of member enquiries and problems.

General challenges and solutions

The biggest problem and the majority of enquiries relate to salaries, especially the reappointment of educators after a break in service, as well as salary progressions not paid to members and transfers. A major reason for this problem is uninformed district officials and implementation that departments and officials of the Mpumalanga Department of Education are unable to carry out. Following the publication of the revised Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), all district officials were trained and there should be a better understanding among officials.

One of the most important methods of assisting members and recruiting members is a school visit. As many schools as possible are visited. Alongside this, good, sustainable relationships are built with district officials so that they can assist more quickly and effectively with challenges and/or enquiries.

Training, empowerment and professional development



Impact

The impact of all training initiatives is systematically measured through evaluation questionnaires completed by participants after each event. Feedback regarding the annual training opportunities has consistently been extremely positive; members describe them as informative, practical and motivating. Deliberate efforts are made to present a variety of relevant themes, with a strong focus on promoting educators' wellbeing. Members specifically indicated that wellbeing should receive greater priority, and this need is taken into account in the planning of future empowerment opportunities.

SAOU Mpumalanga's highlights are always spoiling the administrative staff, spending time with school management teams and, most importantly, motivating post level 1 educators. In 2026 the four northern provinces also intend hosting their first joint two-day event for male educators. SAOU Mpumalanga strives to offer as many relevant and targeted training opportunities as possible for all post levels, tailored to the specific needs of each niche group. This includes, amongst others, training for new principals and deputy principals, as well as development opportunities for heads of department. This training not only adds value for every participant, but also equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge and resources to perform their responsibilities at school level effectively and efficiently, ultimately contributing to improved working conditions and the promotion of quality education.

Office Functioning



Back f.l.t.r.: Francois Joubert, Rozanne Herbst;
Front f.l.t.r.: Sandra Lancaster, Marthie Bredenkamp

General functioning

SAOU Mpumalanga currently has three staff members who are employed full-time by the SAOU and one seconded member:

- Rozanne Herbst:** Provincial Secretary (PS)
- Francois Joubert:** Professional Officer (PO)
- Sandra Lancaster:** Full-Time Shop Steward
- Marthie Bredenkamp:** Provincial Administrative Officer

Algemene funksionering

Since the previous congress, Rozanne Herbst was appointed as PS of SAOU Mpumalanga with effect from 1 January 2024.

On 6 November 2024, Lee-Ann Lowe, former administrative officer of SAOU Mpumalanga, accepted another appointment within the organisation and handed over to Marthie Bredenkamp, who handles all administrative matters of SAOU Mpumalanga.

	OFFICE	DISTRICT
Rozanne Herbst	Provincial Secretary	Also handles enquiries from members as requested by the regions.
Francois Joubert	Professional Officer	Circuit 3: Nkangala East Circuit 4: Nkangala West
Sandra Lancaster	Fulltime Shop Steward	Circuit 1: Ehlanzeni & Bohlabela Circuit 2: Gert Sibande

Rozanne Herbst

- In consultation with the EB of the SAOU, provides a comprehensive support and union service to SAOU members and management structures of SAOU Mpumalanga.
- Handles mediations, arbitrations and disciplinary hearings in cooperation with Legal Services.
- Is directly involved in collective negotiations and task teams on behalf of SAOU Mpumalanga.
- Involved in the establishment of professional learning communities and similar professional structures.
- Serves on departmental committees regarding curriculum and related professional matters.
- Identifies and arranges curriculum and professional empowerment needs.
- Maintains healthy working relationships with elected leaders and structures within the province.
- Provides an effective administrative and support service to SAOU Mpumalanga. Strategically coordinates and leads meetings where applicable.
- Ensures on behalf of the SAOU that effective communication, liaison and coordination with SAOU members within the province are achieved.
- As office head, manages the SAOU Mpumalanga office and accepts responsibility for all related duties, including office infrastructure and vehicle fleet management, budget management and financial reporting.
- Works closely with the EB to launch effective marketing and recruitment initiatives among members and/or potential members within the province.
- Promotes liaison and cooperation with employers, other unions and the media.
- Liaises with the provincial education department.
- Handles members’ problems regarding conditions of service.

Sandra Lancaster and Francois Joubert

- Provide an effective union service to SAOU members in Mpumalanga.
- Handle members’ grievances and mediations as representatives.
- Involvement in collective negotiations on behalf of the union, as well as representation on task teams and committees of the provincial ELRC.
- Provide advice to members regarding their specific conditions of service and service benefits.
- Liaison and communication with members via telephone, letters, email, personal and school visits, as well as presentations at gatherings involving SAOU members.

- Handling member enquiries and liaising with the MDoE in order to resolve problems relating to members' conditions of service.
- Marketing the SAOU and recruiting members.
- Distribution and collection of information in order to address individual member enquiries regarding conditions of service and other labour matters. This includes regular formal visits to departmental and district offices.

Marthie Bredenkamp

- General office administration and correspondence (both internal and external).
- Immediate handling of and service delivery through personal and telephonic liaison with SAOU members.
- Committee secretary: Agendas, minutes and logistical arrangements for meetings.
- Planning and organisation of SAOU provincial events.
- Keeping statistics and reporting.
- Administration relating to the management of provincial assets, insurance and payment of corporate items.
- Drafting budgets and monitoring expenditure.
- Continuous updating of the membership database and all other relevant membership records.
- Liaison with schools: Logistical arrangements for all aspects of SAOU events.
- Assists the Provincial Secretary with the organisation of empowerment opportunities.
- Handling, referral and follow-up of member enquiries.
- Support to the PS as well as the FTSS and PO.
- Good liaison with members of other unions, especially CTU-ATU.

Cooperation with the national office

SAOU Mpumalanga works closely with the following national departments:

Marketing and Communication

This department assists with marketing material and the application of the style guide to ensure that the SAOU's image is marketed consistently. Social media and the SAOU app are also handled by this division.

Professional Services

SAOU Mpumalanga works very closely with Professional Services to present training and promote this training. Enquiries received from the province relating to Professional Services are referred to this division where necessary. SAOU Mpumalanga also receives important information from Professional Services when they attend meetings at the Department of Basic Education.

Legal Services

The SAOU team has all received legal training, but from time to time there are legal matters that are highly technical and are then referred to Legal Services for handling. The Mpumalanga team is also regularly assisted by the legal division in presenting training and helping with legal advice where necessary.

Media and Collective Bargaining

Cooperation with this division ensures media exposure and feedback to members regarding collective bargaining. Regular feedback regarding collective bargaining is given to the National Standing Committee and the PEC, who in turn communicate the information to members.

Service Centre

The Service Centre assists with the handling of enquiries and also with membership follow-up. Enquiries requiring more extensive follow-up are referred to Mpumalanga staff.

Strategic relationships



Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE)

It is of cardinal importance for SAOU Mpumalanga to establish good relationships with the MDoE wherever possible. At political level, the PS, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson maintain good relationships with the head of education and other senior officials of the department.

The Shop Steward and PO of Mpumalanga, Sandra Lancaster and Francois Joubert, deserve special mention for the good relationships they have established with officials in the respective district offices. Without these good relationships, the handling of member enquiries would have been nearly impossible. The dire conditions under which some of these departmental officials work certainly do not make their daily tasks easy, and it is therefore important for the union rather to be seen as the union that wishes to help make their daily tasks easier by playing a supportive role. Both Sandra Lancaster and Francois Joubert play an active role in attending district and circuit meetings where provincial pressure points and other challenges are discussed.

With regard to the admission of learners at schools that have already reached capacity, pressure continues to be exerted annually on schools by parents and political parties. The staff of SAOU Mpumalanga, as well as members of the PEC, assist schools where unrest has arisen.

TASKTEAMS

PELRC Chamber

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

STANCO

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

Dispute Prevention, Grievances and Behaviour Management,
Terminations and Employee Health & Wellness

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

Inclusive Education, MSTA, Curriculum GET & FET,
Examinations, Employment Equity, Curriculum Enrichments

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

PPN, Implementation of Collective Agreements, Filling of
Posts and Vetting

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

Teacher Development, SACE, Safety In Schools, Infrastructure,
Scholar Transport, ECD/I, and Grade R

Rozanne Herbst
Sandra Lancaster

PTEDC

Sandra Lancaster
Francois Joubert

Labour Management Partnership Programme (LMPP)

Sandra Lancaster

Important interactions

Meetings: SAOU Mpumalanga uses meetings with district officials to address and resolve problems experienced by educators at grassroots level. Feedback from the MDoE is communicated to members at schools.

Negotiations: Challenges experienced by educators and principals are discussed at the respective task teams and decisions are then ratified at the ELRC chamber in order to make them enforceable.

SAOU Mpumalanga has good, established relationships with the Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) within the province. This cooperative relationship ensures constructive engagement and harmony between principals and governing bodies.

Joint initiatives

SACE: The SAOU Mpumalanga office has good, established relationships with SACE within the province. The union strives annually to hold "SACE drives" (SACE registration opportunities) to assist members with general enquiries regarding their SACE registrations. The union is involved in a large number of training opportunities aimed at creating awareness of responsibilities and ethical conduct.

CTU-ATU: SAOU Mpumalanga was elected as the corresponding party of the CTU-ATU from 1 July 2025. This places a significant administrative burden on the administrative staff in particular, but gives the SAOU an inside track to interview processes and grievance meetings.

Successes

Examples of positive cooperation:

- The cooperation between SAOU Mpumalanga, the Executive Centre and the elected members contribute meaningfully to the identification and addressing of member needs and pressure points, as well as to increased visibility at relevant events. This integrated approach strengthens the image, influence and activities of SAOU Mpumalanga within the province.
- Effective internal cooperation between office staff ensures that gaps in knowledge and experience are addressed and that mutual support is provided. The strong team approach promotes collective empowerment, professional growth and an effective service delivery culture to the benefit of all members.
- SAOU Mpumalanga's good cooperative relationship with various district officials has a significantly positive influence on the province's overall functioning and performance. These partnerships strengthen the organisation's ability to handle member enquiries effectively, provide timely support and successfully recruit new entrants into the education profession.
- The close cooperation with WPRs, as well as the deliberate focus on supporting and simplifying their role and responsibilities, enables SAOU Mpumalanga to become involved at schools quickly and effectively. Open and continuous communication from WPRs regarding workplace challenges makes it possible to address and manage labour issues proactively before they develop into formal grievance or dispute processes.

Challenges

The lengthy time taken by the MDoE to finalise conditions of service enquiries often limits members' right to declare disputes within the legally prescribed timeframe.

In some schools, school governing bodies do not function effectively, or they become overly involved in the day-to-day management of the school beyond their mandate. This creates tension, delays policy and budget processes and leads to increasing grievances regarding screening and appointments, despite departmental workshops.

Although there is generally good cooperation with district officials, certain districts do not have sufficient capacity or expertise to handle member enquiries timeously, which causes frustration. School safety remains a growing challenge due to theft, gang activity and poor maintenance of infrastructure leading to injuries.

Financial constraints within the state treasury have a direct impact on the education budget, resulting in service benefits not being paid out. Despite ongoing follow-up by the SAOU, disputes often have to be declared in order to protect members' rights, which causes further delays.

In addition, vast geographical distances, unequal infrastructure, overcrowded classes, socio-economic disparities, linguistic and cultural diversity and migration patterns complicate the education environment. Although these challenges do not always have direct solutions, strong relationships and cooperation can help manage them effectively.

Conclusion and Outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

- Effective handling of grievances and labour matters, with timely support to members.
- Visible representation at departmental meetings and negotiation processes.
- Strategic planning and cooperation between the Provincial Standing Committee and provincial office to strengthen service delivery throughout the province.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Although SAOU Mpumalanga has a dedicated team of staff members, it remains a challenge at times to be physically present and involved simultaneously in all districts and at all matters. The extensive geographical area and diverse needs of members contribute to this.
- Despite the fact that SAOU Mpumalanga's mandate is communicated continuously and clearly to members, expectations sometimes arise that support will be provided in matters falling outside the formal mandate of a union. This difference between expectation and mandate can unfortunately lead to disappointment or dissatisfaction.
- Challenges within the department, including administrative and operational shortcomings, as well as financial constraints, affect the broader working environment within which support is rendered. These factors can impact service delivery and member satisfaction, despite sustained efforts to ensure professional and effective assistance.

Key lessons for the future

- Effective communication between divisions, as well as with elected structures, is of cardinal importance to ensure cohesion and uniform action.
- Member enquiries should be handled thoroughly, professionally and within a reasonable timeframe in order to promote trust and satisfaction.
- It is essential that members' mandates are obtained beforehand and that they are fully informed about the role and powers of the union, as well as the proposed handling methods in each specific situation.
- An accurate paper trail and the systematic recording of member interactions on the SAOU database (interface) are important to ensure accountability and facilitate future reference.
- Expansion and maintenance of relationships with key role-players within the education landscape.

Focus for the next congress term

Strategic focus areas

The coming term will focus on the promotion of quality education, improved service delivery to members and the strengthening of teamwork at all levels. This includes clear role delineation, effective communication, accountability and the sustainable support of educators within a challenging education environment.

Expanded cooperation

Even greater synergy with other provinces, national divisions and critical role-players in education will be pursued. These platforms provide opportunities for expanding knowledge and networks, uniform strategies and strengthened collegial support.

New alliances and strategic partnerships

The identification and establishment of meaningful alliances remain a priority, with the aim of promoting members' interests and supporting the implementation of the SAOU's strategic objectives. Cooperation with relevant role-players can contribute to improved service delivery, professional development and a more favourable working environment for educators.

Objectives of office staff

- Strengthening regular and purposeful school visits to increase visibility and accessibility.
- Deliberate capacity building of the Mpumalanga team, with specific attention to skills development, mentorship and succession planning.
- Promotion of professional support that empowers educators to provide quality education despite systemic and resource challenges.

The SAOU team code and the province's strategic objectives have already been shared with the PEC. SAOU Mpumalanga looks forward to close cooperation in jointly implementing these objectives, with a strong emphasis on professional integrity, unity and purposeful action. The rollout of the research project will additionally provide guiding insights to strengthen planning, prioritisation and implementation in order to ensure sustainable impact within the province.

Closing message from the Provincial Secretary

SAOU Mpumalanga would like to thank the following:

- Every member for his/her support of the SAOU;
- The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and other elected leaders on the PEC in Mpumalanga;
- All elected members at national level;
- The SAOU's Executive Officer, Paul Sauer, SAEF's Executive Officer, Ilse Brett, and other staff of the Executive Centre;
- Colleagues from other unions with whom good working relationships exist;
- Institutions such as GEPP, GEMS and SACE that support SAOU Mpumalanga on a daily basis;
- The MDoE with whom a shared journey is undertaken every day;
- Marthie, Sandra and Francois, for their hard work and dedication; as well as
- Our Heavenly Father who gives them strength to do everything to the glory of His Name.

NORTH WEST



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades. Een Visie
Three Decades. One Vision



North West at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

8.7% of South Africa's
total landmass

4 Circuits further subdivided
into several regions

43 years average age
of members

78% of all members are
Post Level 1



580km

The furthest point from the SAOU
Head Office in Pretoria is Tosca.

Membership



2 900

PERSAL: 2 227

SGB: 574

Independent Schools: 99

Students: 726



Women: 81%

Men: 19%



304

Primary Schools: 140

High Schools: 71

Independent Schools: 40

Combined Schools: 29

Special Schools: 14

Preschools: 10

104 882 km²



3 578

Members reached through 62
training events since July 2023
until June 2026



91%
Afrikaans

9%
English

Demographic Information

The North West Province, which covers approximately 104,882 to 118,797 km² along the Botswana border, is an important mining and agricultural centre with flat grasslands and the Magaliesberg mountain range. Key areas include Mahikeng (the capital), Rustenburg and Brits. SAOU North West serves schools throughout this region and focuses particularly on the needs of educators in rural, farming and mining communities. Key areas/Nodes: Major towns and economic centres include Mahikeng, Rustenburg, Brits, Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp.

The SAOU serves educational institutions throughout North West, including both urban centres such as Klerksdorp and Rustenburg and the extensive rural areas. The union represents educators across diverse, often isolated schools, and provides professional support, legal assistance and labour relations management. The service area includes regions with a high concentration of mining-related schools, agricultural regions as well as urban areas.

Circuit and regional divisions

North West has four districts, namely:

- Bojanala
- Dr Kenneth Kaunda
- Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati
- Ngaka Modiri Molema

The circuits are, however, divided differently due to member density being particularly high in Dr Kenneth Kaunda, which resulted in that district being divided into two circuits, while density is lower in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati and Ngaka Modiri Molema, resulting in those two districts being combined.

The circuits are therefore divided as follows:

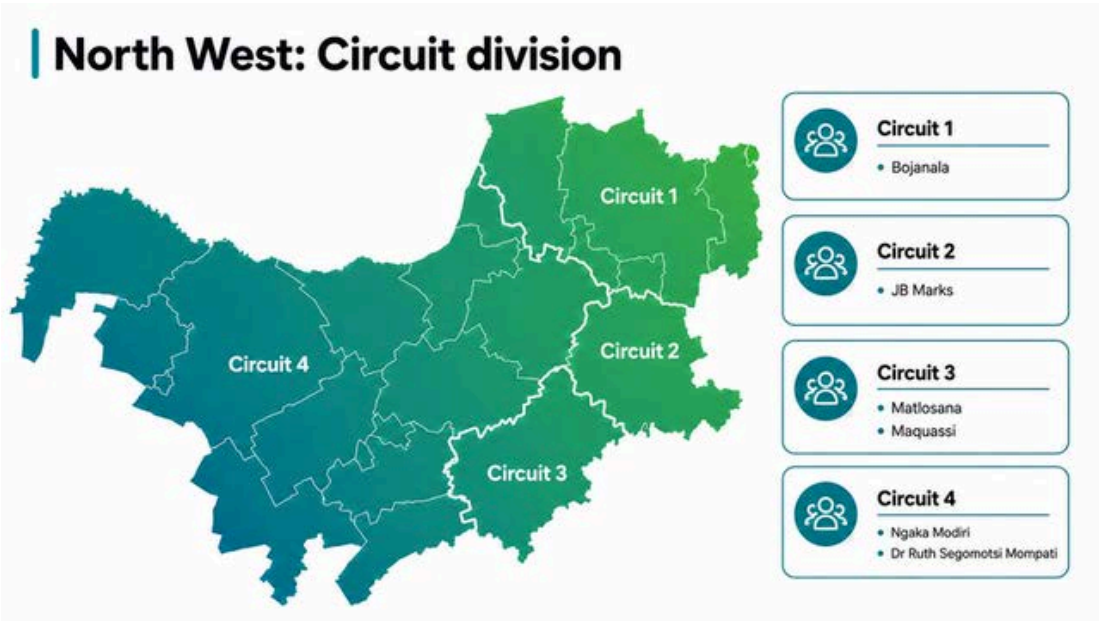
- Circuit 1 – Bojanala
- Circuit 2 – JB Marks
- Circuit 3 – Matlosana and Maquassie
- Circuit 4 – Ngaka Modiri and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati

Membership

There is sustainable and gradual growth in terms of total membership numbers, as well as with regard to Persal and SGB members. There has also been a reasonable and sustainable increase in independent school members and a significant increase in student membership numbers.

The largest grouping of members is between 31 and 35 years old. According to research, this is the age group in which educators are most likely to leave the profession. As a result, schools lose strong staff members who are already experienced enough for their expertise and contributions to make a significant difference in schools.

Almost 28% of North West's members are currently between the ages of 56 and 65, compared to the younger grouping between 22 and 30, which makes up only 13%, thus creating a discrepancy between those retiring and the emerging generation expected to fill that gap.



PERSAL: 2 227
SGB: 574
Independent Schools: 99
Students: 726

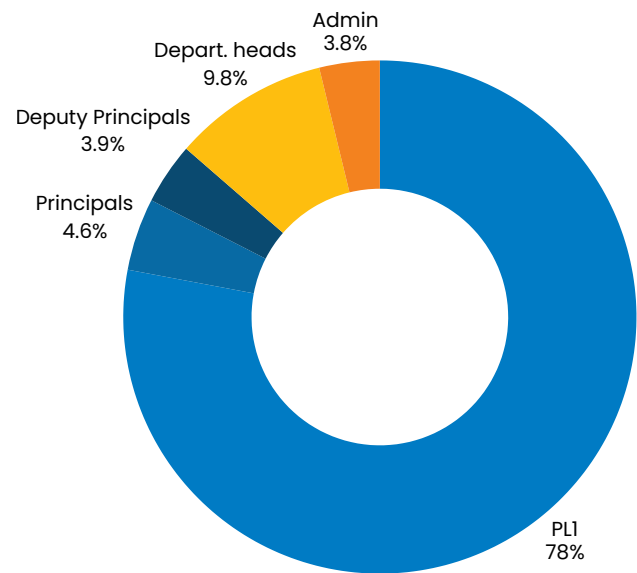


Primary Schools: 140
High Schools: 71

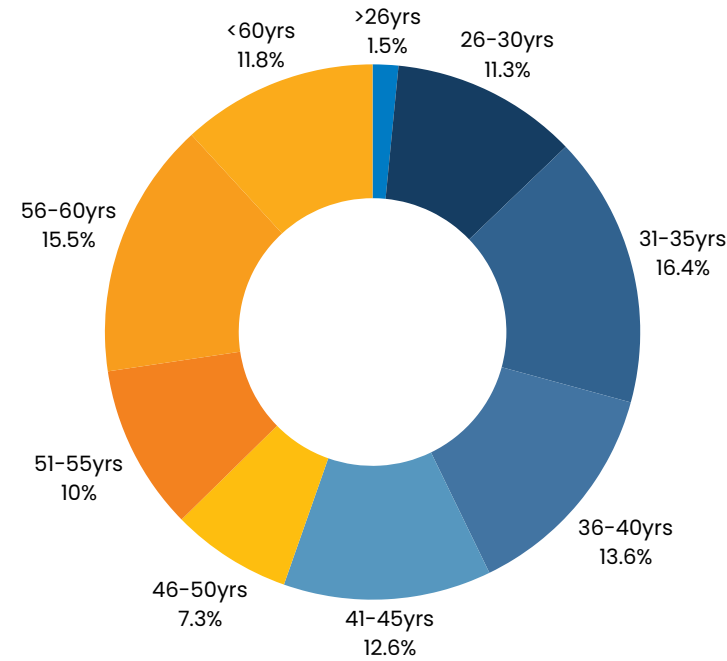
Independent Schools: 40
Combined Schools: 29

LSEN Schools: 14
Preschools: 10

Membership



Age distribution



Number of schools served

Since the previous Congress, there has been a decrease from 341 to 304 in the number of schools served by SAOU North West. This decrease is ascribed to the clean-up of the database, as well as departmental and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) institutions no longer being considered as schools, but rather as entities in their own right. The SAOU serves members at three DHET institutions, as well as office-based personnel (OBP) at 23 departmental institutions. The further variance can be attributed to normal developments at schools where there is only one member who has been promoted, transferred, retired, or exited the teaching profession, etc.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

The Provincial Standing Committee (PSC), together with the Provincial Secretary (PS), consists of the following persons elected from the Provincial Executive Council (PEC):

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028				
CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
-	Willie de Villiers	Chairperson (Principal)	JB Marks LEO	Potchefstroom
-	Karin Potgieter	Deputy Chair (Principal)	Bergsig Akademie	Rustenburg
1	Walter Krüger	Principal	Laerskool Brits	Brits
2	Morné Smit	Principal	Hoërskool Ferdinand Postma	Potchefstroom
3	Abri Cloete	Deputy Principal	Laerskool Goudkop	Klerksdorp
4	Retha Wheeler	Principal	Laerskool Buhrmansdrif	Mahikeng

Since the report was finalised, Willie de Villiers retired on 30 April 2026. Karin Potgieter was elected as Chairperson, Morné Smit as Vice-Chairperson and Danie Breed as circuit manager of JB Marks.

Functioning and focus

The PSC forms the foundation upon which the entire structural composition of the SAOU’s elected members rests. The PSC is elected by SAOU members from a number of schools that together form a circuit. These elected members represent the members within the relevant circuit and, together with the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and PS, form the PEC.

The PSC organiser is the first level of SAOU representation outside the school and is elected by all members within a circuit. The PDB of each respective circuit consists of members who have already earned recognition and respect among members in that circuit, and who have distinguished themselves as leaders with the necessary experience and knowledge. He or she is therefore someone trusted by SAOU members in the circuit to represent their labour and professional interests at circuit level, serving as a first line of defence before certain matters or member-related issues are referred to the SAOU North West office for further attention. This approach greatly assists SAOU North West staff, as situations are already addressed at circuit level and, in some cases, do not require further intervention from SAOU staff.



F.l.t.r.: Abri Cloete, Morné Smit, Willemien Strydom, Willie de Villiers, Karin Potgieter, Retha Wheeler, Walter Krüger

Key priorities during the reporting period

As a union, our core function remains, firstly, to focus on our members’ conditions of service. Over the past three years, North West has focused on our members’ bread-and-butter matters to ensure, as far as possible, a harmonious relationship between employer and employee. Focus has also been placed on ensuring that our members’ working environments are such that their safety is protected and that the necessary resources are available to them.

Part of SAOU North West’s priority was also to ensure that we serve our members regardless of their post level/focus group. Post level 1 teachers have the same rights as principals, and we are there to protect everyone’s rights.

In addition to the above, attention was also given to the professional development of our members, because continuous enrichment and training not only enhance the professionalism of the profession, but also has a direct impact on every teacher and the execution of their core task of facilitating teaching and learning.

According to a survey conducted by the SAOU, it was found that 54% of teachers suffer from anxiety. Part of our service delivery since 2023 has therefore also focused on the wellbeing of our teachers. A great deal of time is devoted to encouraging members, advising them and simply listening to their concerns.

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

The PEC currently consists of 17 members, of whom 14 were elected by members and 3 co-opted. The PEC reflects healthy representation in terms of gender, age and the various schools served. During co-option, special attention was given to making the management structure as representative as possible.

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026				
CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
	Willie de Villiers	Chairperson	JB Marks Leo	Potchefstroom
	Karin Potgieter	Deputy Chair (Principal)	Bergsig Akademie	Rustenburg
1	Adriaan Joubert	Principal	Hoërskool Wagpos	Brits
1	Walter Krüger	Principal	Laerskool Brits	Brits
1	Gys de Beer	Deptmental head	Bergsig Akademie	Rustenburg
2	Morné Smit	Principal	Ferdinand Postma Hoërskool	Potchefstroom
2	Alicia Olivier	Deputy Principal	Hoër Volkskool Potchefstroom	Potchefstroom
2	Danie Breed	Principal	Laerskool Baillie Park	Potchefstroom
3	Maryka Fouché	Post Level 1	Klerksdorp Primary school	Klerksdorp
3	Arno van Loggerenberg	Deputy Principal	Hoërskool Wolmaransstad	Wolmaransstad
3	Abri Cloete	Deputy Principal	Laerskool Goudkop	Klerksdorp
4	Retha Wheeler	Principal	Laerskool Buhrmansdrif	Mahikeng
4	Marthinus Stoop	Principal	Hoërskool Lichtenburg	Lichtenburg
4	Hardus Vosser	Principal	Laerskool Burgersdorp	Lichtenburg
LSEN	Fanus Wiese	Deputy Principal	ES Le Grange Skool	Potchefstroom
Rural areas	Weideman Coertze	Principal	Bloemhof Gekombineerd	Bloemhof
Office-based Member	Yvonne Mogaki	Chief Education Specialist	JB Marks LEO	Potchefstroom
LSEN	Leandri de Meyer	Post Level 1	Goodwill Primary School	Mahikeng

Since the report was finalised, Willie de Villiers has retired, and Fanus Wiese has been elected to the PEC in Circuit 2.

Strategic role

Members of the PEC take leadership and are actively involved in matters in which SAOU North West is involved by fulfilling the respective roles outlined below:

- Managing, organising and involvement in SAOU activities within their circuits.
- Assisting the provincial SAOU office with gathering information from schools in the circuit/region.
- Distribution of communication/collection of data on behalf of the provincial office.
- Communication with school organisers.
- Providing guidance to school organisers.
- Organising meetings and notifying circuit members of meetings within the circuit.
- Sharing relevant information communicated on departmental platforms.
- Involvement in member recruitment.
- Assisting members in disputes and grievances and representing SAOU members.
- Representing the SAOU at departmental meetings.
- Serving on relevant committees and attending task teams.
- Acting as spokespersons for the SAOU within the given mandates.
- Serving as advisors as well as panel members during shortlisting and interviews.
- General advice and emotional support to members within the relevant circuit.
- Communication with the provincial office where emerging issues arise within the province.



Back f.l.t.r.: Adriaan Joubert, Maryka Fouché, Yvonne Mogaki, Gys de Beer, Alicia Olivier, Danie Breed, Hardus Vosser, Marthinus Stoop, Arno van Loggerenberg, Fanus Wiese,
Front f.l.t.r.: Abri Cloete, Morné Smit, Willemien Strydom, Willie de Villiers, Karin Potgieter, Retha Wheeler, Walter Krüger, Leandri de Meyer

Committees

Members of the PEC are appointed to serve on national structures and committees.

National Executive Council (NEC)

- Karin Potgieter
- Morné Smit
- Willemien Strydom

Professional Committee (Profcom)

With the retirement of Willie de Villiers, a successor for secondary school representation will be appointed in the place of the newly elected Chairperson, Karin Potgieter, to ensure a seamless transition.

- Karin Potgieter (secondary school representative) (until 2026)
- Morné Smit (secondary school representative)
- Retha Wheeler (primary school representative)

Curriculum Committee

The role of the Curriculum Committee:

- Serve as liaison between the PEC and Profcom.
- Communicate challenges from grassroots level to Profcom and vice versa.
- Strengthen national networks and PEC involvement within the provinces.

Representation on the Curriculum Committee:

- ECD & Foundation Phase: Leandri de Meyer
- Intermediate Phase: Maryka Fouché
- Senior Phase: Gys de Beer
- FET Phase: Morné Smit
- LSEN: Fanus Wiese

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Individual contact with members occurs daily via telephone, WhatsApp or email. SAOU North West's service delivery protocol stipulates that members should, as far as possible, receive a response from staff within 24 hours. The SAOU also has a national WhatsApp channel on which national information is posted. There is also an active national Facebook page and Instagram account where information is shared.

The following information is distributed by SAOU North West:

- Provincial and national newsletters.
- Opinion polls, surveys and data collection.
- Information relating to provincial and national training opportunities and related registration links.
- National initiatives.
- Vacancy lists.
- Empowerment opportunities.

Communication sent to groups is coordinated by the Provincial Secretary (PS) and Administrative Officer (AO) to ensure that information is distributed at the most appropriate times and to prevent members from being overwhelmed by messages from the SAOU.

Each administrator of assigned WhatsApp groups updates their contact lists on the respective groups quarterly in accordance with the SAOU's WhatsApp protocol. New members are also added to groups by the AO or relevant administrator upon receipt of the membership application form.

Challenges in terms of effective communication

- Newsletters and/or information are not always read and, despite thorough communication, there are still members who remain uninformed.
- Members' contact details are not updated, and information is therefore not received. Members' information is checked during school visits and training opportunities, but updating remains a challenge.
- The d6 app, which was implemented at the end of 2025, presents the additional challenge that not all members have downloaded the app yet. The most recent statistics indicate that 456 members in North West have downloaded the app.

Improvements and innovation

- Administration relating to the membership database is continuously updated to ensure that all members receive communication.
- Sustainable and continuous updating of WPR information and the strategic utilisation of WPRs.
- Development of a WhatsApp chatbot and/or a chatbot on the SAOU website for basic and general enquiries.
- Exploring and establishing an automated "member journey" for new members (welcome letter, benefits information, links and resources).
- Continuing the active promotion of basic information such as Continuum (death benefit), the SAOU app, SAOU Help and SAOU Online amongst SAOU members, as well as initiatives such as the SAOU Facebook Vacancies page, etc.
- Exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven platforms for member-specific communication. Members respond better to personal messages than to mass-produced impersonal messages.
- Continuing with interactive polls.
- The Digi-man manual for WPRs, with the assistance of all provinces, is now available nationally for use by WPR. Complete information required by WPRs is electronically available and has, since February 2026, been placed on the SAOU app with exclusive access for WPRs. The Digi-man is also updated with the assistance of Marketing and Communication to ensure that all information remains available and relevant.
- Involvement and close cooperation with NWU, which will give SAOU North West direct access to an emerging workforce and the recruitment of new members from the start of their teaching careers. SAOU North West can also offer various opportunities to this grouping regarding teaching as a professional career, beginning already in first-year studies, as well as the role and responsibilities of a student teacher within the school environment.

- The approach to school visits can be adapted so that they do not only take place in the traditional manner, but are also linked to initiatives such as training or involvement of SAOU staff in school-related activities.
- Despite close cooperation with SACE, SAOU North West would like to cultivate even closer ties with SACE in order more regularly host SACE initiatives together with CTU-ATU partners.

Addressing member enquiries

Enquiries are received by SAOU North West staff through the following channels:

- Telephonically
- Via WhatsApp
- Via email
- From the Service Centre
- From the Legal Department
- During school visits and/or empowerment opportunities
- At meetings
- Service delivery form on the SAOU website and/or SAOU Online
- Through other provinces' PSs where members are transferred
- Through elected members and Presidents in Council (PIC)
- Feedback on evaluation forms

Nature of enquiries



Grievances and disputes



Temporary appointments



Pension matters



Conversions



Salary matters



Resignation from education



Transfers



Emotional support



Leave matters



Recognition of years of service



Disciplinary hearings



Injury on duty



Unlawful deductions



Interview procedures and panel composition

Response and processes

Comprehensive records are kept of all member interactions. SAOU North West uses an electronic database on SharePoint that keeps record of all enquiries per district. The system records who advised or consulted a particular member and when, as well as what feedback was provided and whether the matter has been finalised or is still ongoing.

With regard to labour related matters, an electronic case register is used to keep records and to monitor the relevant timeframes relating to disciplinary hearings, litigation, disputes and arbitrations.

SAOU North West also strives to provide thorough feedback via email so that members have access to the necessary information and so that a paper trail exists. Where serious matters are discussed telephonically, the discussion and decision are communicated electronically to the member as confirmation of the conversation.

General challenges and solutions

SAOU North West’s greatest challenge is, despite the province being geographically widespread, ensuring that the following aspects are managed optimally:

- Service delivery
- Manpower and capacity
- Financial management
- Remote schools and members
- Visibility and a visible footprint
- Relationships with departmental officials

Trends within the province that are annually problematic and negatively impacts our members include the following:

- Payment of acting allowances
- Conversion of temporary educators
- Racism and violence at schools
- Grade progression of therapists’ salary notches
- LSEN schools not being accurately accounted for in terms of post provisioning and learner weightings as contained in the PAM
- Post provisioning for parallel-medium schools
- School capacity and/or overcrowded schools
- Unlawful deductions

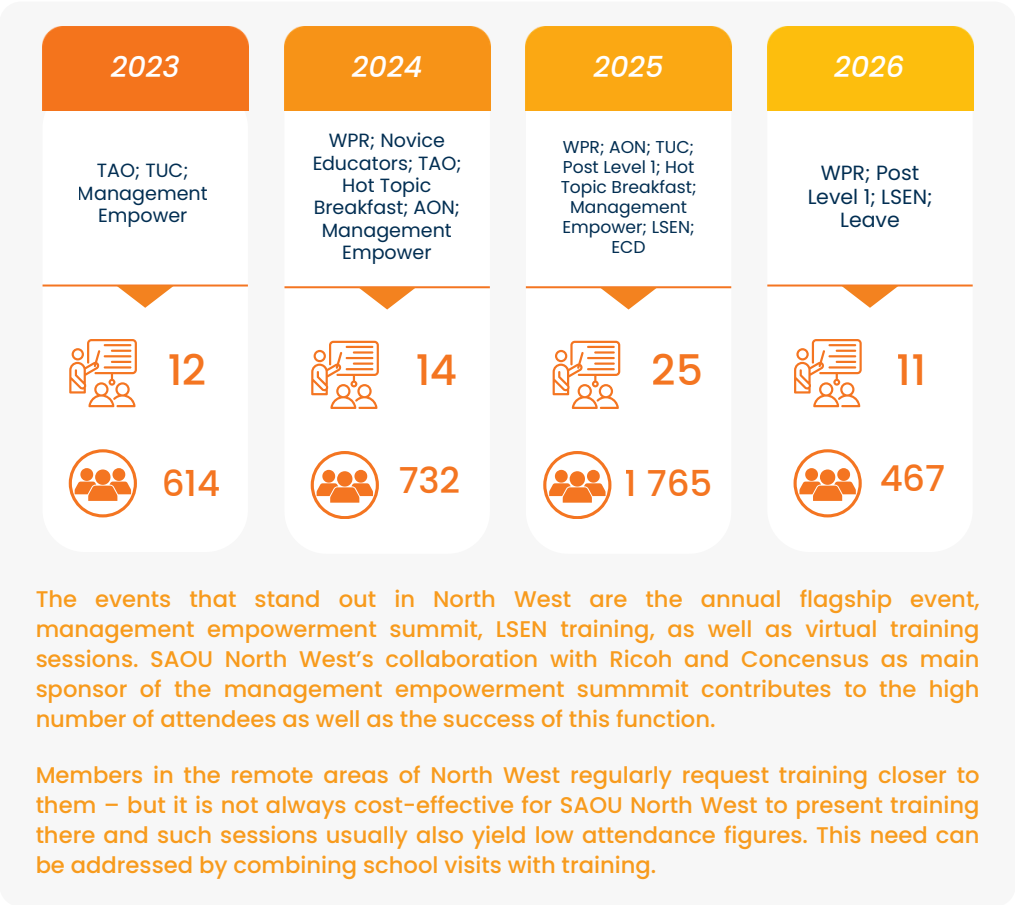
In addition to this, with the recent amendments to the South African Schools Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996, as amended, Grade R practitioners are experiencing challenges with regard to appointment challenges due to insufficient qualifications.

The Department of Education is currently in the process of absorbing Grade R teachers into permanent posts. Practitioners who are not yet qualified must now continue their studies in order to obtain the correct qualifications. There are also 167 Grade R practitioners who continue to experience delays in this process due to incorrect placements. Grade R posts are still not included as part of post provisioning at the end of 2025. In rare cases where departmental posts have been allocated for this purpose, these were also removed in the adjusted PPN.

North West is also experiencing an increasing amount of issues at schools where learner admissions and placements based on the amended SASA are procedurally not being implemented correctly – which has a negative impact on our teachers and learners. The first Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA)-related court case regarding admissions, as contained in the amended SASA, also took place in North West during the first quarter of 2026, with the judgment still pending at present.

Lastly, the Early Retirement Programme (ERP) has had a significant impact on our membership numbers, with 34 applications approved during Phase 1 despite the fact that the teachers approved according to the criteria set out, did not necessarily qualify.

Training, empowerment and professional development



Office Functioning

Staff structure

Willemien Strydom – Provincial Secretary (PS)
Based in the Head Office (Pretoria).

Sanet de Villiers – Full-Time Shop Steward (FTSS)
Based in Schweizer-Reneke (seconded from Laerskool Delareyville).

Surika Coetzee-Myburgh – Professional Officer (PO)
Based in Brits

Suné van Zyl – Provincial Administrative Officer (AO)
Based in the Head Office (Pretoria).

Workflow and administrative processes

- The PO and FTSS each respectively handle all member enquiries, school visits, labour related matters and task teams within the above-mentioned areas, as well as attendance at and/or presentation of training as requested within regions allocated to them.
- High-profile cases, sexual misconduct matters and cases where there is a conflict of interest in terms of the FTSS and PO are referred to the PS for further attention.
- In such cases, the PS handles the matter, Legal Services is involved, and/or one of the legal advisors assists the FTSS and PO with the matter.
- All national matters and the administration thereof are handled by the PS and AO from the Executive Office. This includes, amongst other things, the functions outlined below:
 - Ongoing administration, processing and collection of member data.
 - Monitoring and management of communication groups.
 - Managing logistical arrangements for SAOU staff as well as elected structures.
 - Organising province-related meetings.
 - Management and procurement of any corporate material required for school visits, training opportunities, etc.
 - Planning and logistical arrangements relating to training opportunities.
 - Coordination with Marketing and Communication regarding relevant graphics in line with the SAOU's Corporate Identity.
 - Financial management.
 - Record-keeping and reporting.

The workflow is not rigid and members still have the freedom and choice to contact any staff member.

Where activities overlap or specialist knowledge from a staff member is required, planning, implementation and attendance are handled jointly. Such coordinated actions are encouraged in order to reduce travel costs while still serving both members and staff optimally.

The aim of the strategy is to ensure that every role-player within the province can use their time and capacity optimally to focus on their core functions and fulfil the responsibilities allocated to each individual.



F.l.t.r.: Surika Coetzee-Myburgh (PO); Suné van Zyl (AO);
Sanet de Villiers (FTSS); Willemien Strydom (PS)

DISTRICT	S DE VILLIERS	S COETZEE-MYBURGH
Bojona		Brits, Damonsville, Pansdrift, Sonop, Kroondal, Hartbeespoort, Rustenburg, Koster, Mooi-nooi, Swartruggens, Derby, Jericho
Dr Kenneth Kuanda	Klerksdorp, Stilfontein, Orkney, Leeudoringstad, Wolmaransstad, Hartbeesfontein, Maquassi	Potchefstroom, Promosa, Ikageng, Ventersdorp, Noupoot
Ngaka Modiri Molema	Ottosdal, Gerdau, Lichtenburg, Mahikeng, Delareyville, Atamelang, Sannieshof, Biesiesvlei, Coligny, Bethel	Groot Marico, Zeerust
Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti	Stella, Kameel, Piet Plessis, Tosca, Vryburg, Tiger Kloof, Taung, Reivilo, Schweizer-Reneke, Bloemhof, Christiana	

Strategic relationships



North West Department of Education (NWDoE) and the ELRC

Visits to the various district offices are undertaken regularly, not only to address member enquiries but also to establish relationships with district officials. Good cooperation with the NWDoE, as well as ELRC, is high on our list of priorities and considerable effort is made to strengthen these relationships.

SAOU North West also endeavours, where possible, to attend events to which we are invited that may not necessarily have a direct impact on our members, for example the matric well-done ceremony, the National Teachers’ Awards (NTA) prize-giving, etc. Such events are attended in order to establish visibility, but also to foster relationships, a team approach and a willingness to cooperate.



Combined Trade Unions – Autonomous Teachers’ Unions (CTU-ATU)

Great emphasis is placed on the relationship with our colleagues within the CTU-ATU, which consists of:

- Professional Educators Union (PEU)
- National Teachers Union (NATU)
- National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA)
- SAOU

NAPTOSA has been the corresponding party since 1 July 2025 for the 2026 to 2027 period. Working together and forming part of planning and participation in negotiations is of the utmost importance. According to the two-year cycle, it was the SAOU’s turn to be the corresponding party, but after various consultations with NAPTOSA, we made a strategic decision to allocate the corresponding party role to NAPTOSA due to changes in staff appointments, as well as to strengthen the relationship.



Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS)

We also work closely with FEDSAS and consult one another where SGB- and member-related matters overlap.

Important interactions

SAOU North West serves on the following task teams and committees:

TASK TEAM / COMMITTEE	REPRESENTATIVE
PROVINCIAL	
CES Marking Panel	S de Villiers
DHET Community & Education TVET Colleges	S Coetzee-Myburgh
Dispute Prevention Task Team	S Coetzee-Myburgh
DSDC Committee	S de Villiers
ECD Task Team	S Coetzee-Myburgh
Health and Safety Task Team	S Coetzee-Myburgh
MTEF	W Strydom
NSC Provincial Task Team	S de Villiers
NTA: Provincial Panel Member	S de Villiers
NTA: Provincial Review and Planning	S de Villiers
Organisational Structure Task Team	W Strydom
PELRC Chamber RAVO-kamer	W Strydom
PELRC Strategic Planning North-West	W Strydom
PLT	W Strydom
PMDS Moderation Committee	S de Villiers
PTEDC	W Strydom
QLTC steering committee	A Viljoen (PUR)
QMS Committee	S Coetzee-Myburgh
STANCO	W Strydom
Temporary Teachers Task Team	S Coetzee-Myburgh

TASK TEAM / COMMITTEE**BOJANALA****REPRESENTATIVE**

Bojanala: Conversion of temporary Educators Committee

S Coetzee-Myburgh

Bojanala: Dispute Review Panel

S Coetzee-Myburgh

Bojanala: District Task Team

S Coetzee-Myburgh

TASK TEAM / COMMITTEE**DR KENNETH KAUNDA****REPRESENTATIVE**

Dr Kenneth Kaunda: DAIC

S Coetzee-Myburgh

Dr Kenneth Kaunda: District Dispute Review Panel

M Smit (PUR)

Dr Kenneth Kaunda: District Task Team

M Smit (PUR)

TASK TEAM / COMMITTEE**NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA****REPRESENTATIVE**

Lichtenburg Ditsobola Task Team

H Vosser (PUR)

Mafikeng LEO Task Team

R Wheeler (PUR)

NMM: Conversion of temporary Educators Committee

S de Villiers

NMM: District Dispute Review Panel

S de Villiers

NMM: District Task Team

S de Villiers

TASK TEAM / COMMITTEE**DR RUTH SEGOMOTSI MOMPATI****REPRESENTATIVE**

RSM: Conversion of temporary Educators Committee

S de Villiers

RSM: District Dispute Review Panel

S de Villiers

RSM: District Task Team

S de Villiers

Tswaing Task Team

S de Villiers

Vryburg LEO Task Team

W Coertze (PUR)

Liaison with national divisions

The SAOU has four national divisions that function in parallel and in cooperation with the provinces. SAOU North West's liaison with the respective divisions is outlined as follows:

Professional Services

Professional Services is primarily responsible for curriculum and training matters. Staff members from this division serve on various national committees, including those of the DBE as well as external institutions. Professional Services has advisors who are specialists in their respective fields, including specialists for LSEN schools, the FET phase, ECD phase and Intermediate Phase.

Mutual communication between Professional Services and SAOU North West takes place regularly. Professional Services keeps the province informed regarding, amongst other things, the following:

- Policy changes and development at national level.
- Important developments relating to issues that include:
 - Grade R curriculum and qualifications
 - Robotics and coding implementation
 - General Education Certificate (GEC)
 - Three-stream model
 - Placement of out-of-school learners
 - Involvement in drafting various standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- In cooperation with SAOU North West, they administer communication to members regarding the NSC Examination, processes, selection of markers, as well as the management and monitoring of marking centres.
- Professional Services handles both individual and joint training in various provinces through their own team, but also in cooperation with partners such as the Afrikaans Education Network (AON), the Trust for Afrikaans Education (TAO), and external project coordinators.
- Offers weekly webinars in every focus area, which are sent to SAOU North West members, as well as accredited online courses marketed by the province.
- Coordinates the SAOU Online platform.

Professional Services also regularly acts as speakers at provincial training sessions, as well as North West's flagship events. They also provide individualised training at schools on request, in consultation with the PS, or recommend external consultants with experience relating to specific requests.

Marketing and Communication

Marketing and Communication assists with the design of all graphics and ensures that SAOU North West's corporate identity is maintained by collaborating on:

- The design of graphics as required by the province.
- Design of invitations and programmes for events, etc.
- Procurement and design of corporate clothing and gifts.
- Logos according to the province's WhatsApp groups, training material and any other material required for specific events.

Marketing and Communication regularly provides assistance and training to staff regarding improved marketing strategies, as well as aspects relating to the SAOU brand.

Legal Department

The SAOU Legal Department handles high-profile cases involving children, as well as sexual offences. Cases are also overseen where North West staff has a conflict of interest. Furthermore, they support both SAOU staff and members with legal advice. It is also standard practice for someone from Legal Services to accompany a staff member to a matter in order to provide specialised knowledge and legal opinion, as well as to empower staff to handle more complex matters. Legal Services is also always willing to review and advise on affidavits or any other legally related documentation before it is finalised and sent out. This division also regularly provides internal training to empower SAOU staff.

Media and Liaison Officer

Liaison with local media in the various circuits can still be further expanded. There is, however, good liaison within Bojanala and regular placements relating to the SAOU in local newspapers. Maryna Besseling, who heads the SAOU's media division, assists the province with articles and provincial media contacts and networks with local newspapers.

Conclusion and prospects

Successes

SAOU North West's membership numbers in 2025 were the highest it has ever been, surpassing the 3,000 mark. The growth is taking place on a realistic and sustainable curve. Considerable attention continues to be given to maintaining focus on membership growth. This focus includes both the recruitment of members and service delivery, which ensures that we retain members.

SAOU North West's management empowerment initiative remains one of our annual highlights and flagship events, with attendance figures increasing annually, as well as the quality and standard of content offered to our members.

Comments have been made over the past period that SAOU North West is clearly visible within the province at matters that benefit our members. Genuine efforts towards cooperation within task teams and PELRC chambers are also pursued, even though this sometimes requires staff to step outside their comfort zones. Although we have increased our visibility, efforts must still be made not only to maintain it, but also to enhance it further.

The success of the province can be attributed to close cooperation between members of the PEC, our partners in external institutions, our fellow colleagues from the NEC and SAOU provincial offices, as well as relationships with various officials from the NWDoE.

SAOU North West has also successfully recovered R3 204 223.70 for members from the Department over the past three-year term.

Challenges

Challenges reported by elected members, educators and principals, particularly where trends are identified, are communicated either personally or by written correspondence to district managers, discussed at task teams or raised during ELRC meeting in an attempt to have them ratified.

Positive cooperation within the CTU-ATU has already been established, but SAOU North West must continue to work strategically with our CTU-ATU partners in order to continuously drive joint agendas and ratify matters such as those mentioned above. Better administrative processes relating to communication from the department to all unions, and the CTU-ATU in particular, must also be driven more strongly by the CTU-ATU.

Focus for the next congress term

Priorities

SAOU North West focuses, first and foremost, on making service delivery a priority and being there for our members, whether it is simply an enquiry, emotional support or a labour-related matter. That which is in the best interest of the member must always be pursued.

It is and remains a priority for SAOU North West to continue establishing visibility within the province. With only three SAOU staff members in the field, our visibility is sometimes challenging in terms of capacity, but we therefore establish networks with PEC members as well as WPRs where events/meetings cannot be attended due to operational requirements.

Member recruitment remains both a priority and a challenge, because the rate at which members are recruited is often matched by the rate at which members cancel membership for various reasons beyond our control. The younger generation is not necessarily interested in trade unionism, and we are working hard, through visibility as well as involvement in events within the provinces, not only to promote the importance of union membership, but also to demonstrate it.

Closing message from the Provincial Secretary

As we conclude this congress report for the 2023 to 2026 term, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to every member, office-bearer, representative and partner who contributed to the growth and success of SAOU North West.

Over the past term, characterised by many challenges and opportunities, we have succeeded – through unity, professionalism and dedication to education and our members – in further strengthening the voice and influence of our organisation within the province.

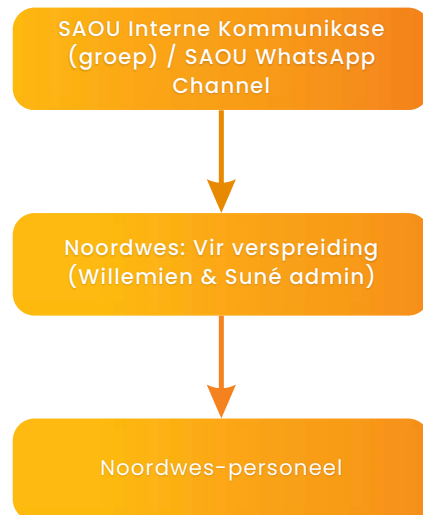
A special word of thanks to our colleagues, elected members, school representatives, provincial and national leadership, administrative staff and all our members who proudly embody the values of the SAOU. Your support, perseverance and willingness to render service have made it possible to act effectively on behalf of educators and to promote the standards of quality education.

As we look ahead, let us continue building on the solid foundation laid during this term. May we remain united in our pursuit of cooperation, integrity, professional excellence and the wellbeing of every educator we serve.

Together we can continue building a stronger future for education in the North West Province.

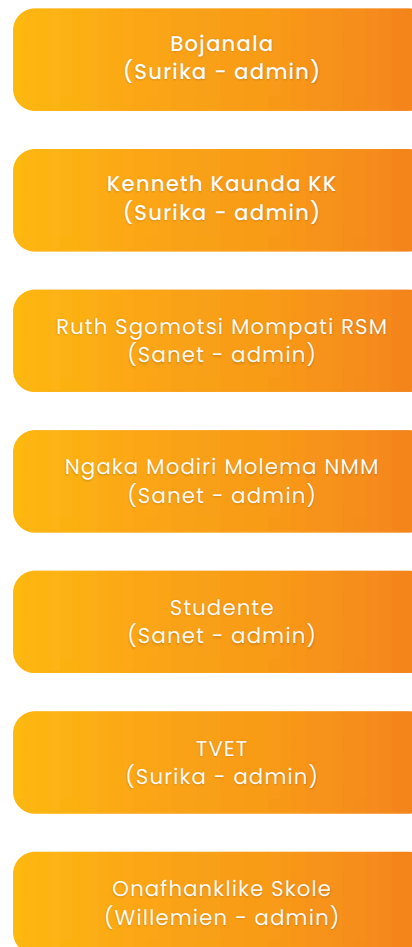
Thank you very much for your trust, support and loyal involvement in SAOU North West.

Internal Communication

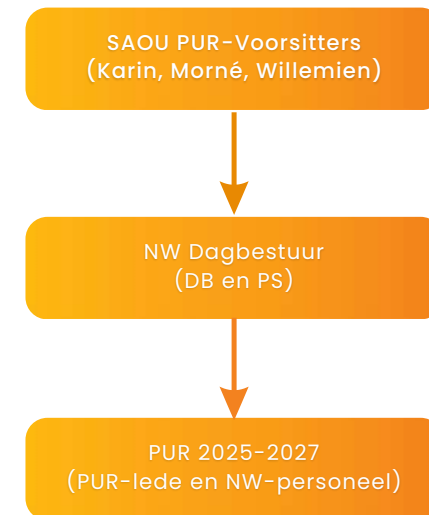


For distribution to members

According to Districts and Focus Groups



Elected members



SAOU NORTH WEST

TRAINING EVENT	NUMBER OF EVENTS	NUMBER OF EVENTS
Admin	2	125
Managament Empowerment	3	704
Student empowerment	1	118
Leave	4	128
Women's Day Celebrations	1	39
WPR	4	171

TUC AND NECT

TRAINING EVENT	NUMBER OF EVENTS	NUMBER OF EVENTS
Assessment for Learning (PL1 en SMT)	3	97
Bricks (Coding and Robotics)	1	12
Entrepreneurship	1	11
Tanks (Coding and Robotics)	2	40
Maths and Coding	4	119

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

TRAINING EVENT	NUMBER OF EVENTS	NUMBER OF EVENTS
Novice Educators	2	125
Hot Topic Breakfast	3	704
<i>Flambojante Eerste 100 dae</i>	1	118
<i>Flambojante Wiskunde</i>	4	128
Reading: Grade R Educations	1	39
Reading Remediation and Reading Intervention: Gr. 1 – 5 Afrikaans HL and FAL	4	171
LSEN and Inclusive Education	4	128
Post Level 1	1	39
ECD and Grade R	2	126

NORTHERN CAPE



SAOU



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision

Northern Cape at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

30.5% of South Africa's
total landmass

3 Circuits further subdivided
into 2 regions each



1 000km

The furthest point from the SAOU
provincial office in
Kimberley is Alexanderbaai.

43 years average age of
members

73.2% of all members are
Post Level 1

Membership



2 324

PERSAL: 1 983

SGB: 282

Independent Schools: 59



Women: 80.37%

Men: 19.63%



319

Primary Schools: 180

High Schools: 68

Private Schools: 20

Combined Schools: 17
LSEN Schools: 7

372 889 km²



2 285

members reached through 47
training events since July
2023 until June 2026



90%
Afrikaans

10%
English

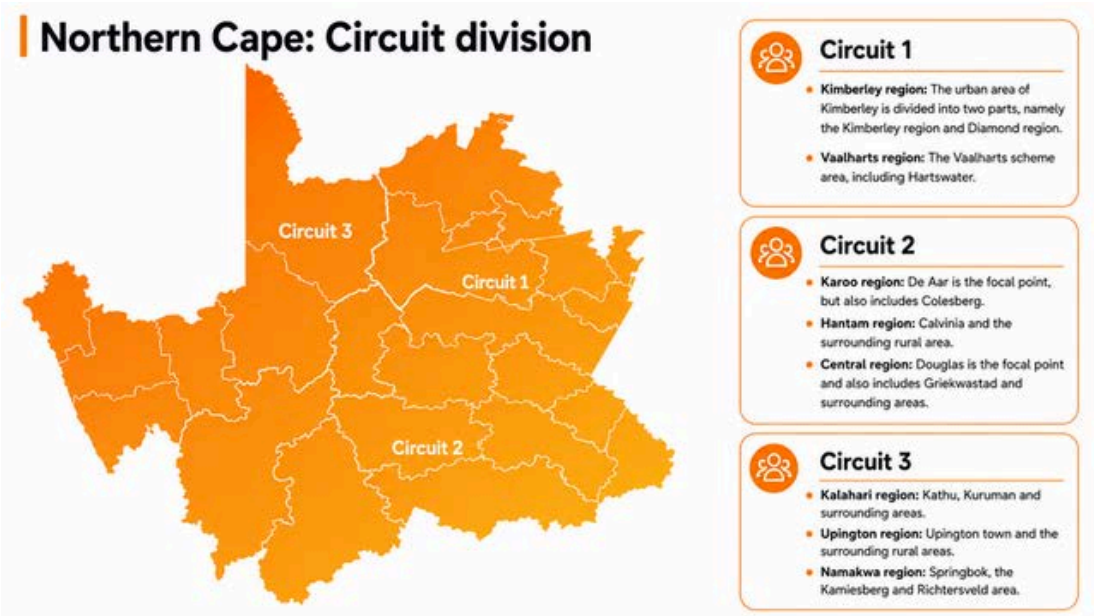
Demographic Information

The Northern Cape is the largest of all the provinces in terms of surface area. According to the 2022 census, the province covers a total area of 372,889 km² (30.5% of the country's total surface area) and is inhabited by 1.35 million people. 54.6% of the inhabitants speak Afrikaans and 33.1% Setswana.

The provincial office of SAOU Northern Cape is situated in Kimberley. The furthest point visited from the SAOU office is approximately 1,000 km away – as far as Alexander Bay in the north-west to Colesberg in the south-east. The vastness of the province and the resulting long distances that must be travelled by car place considerable demands on the effective functioning of SAOU Northern Cape. Modern technology has, however, ensured that communication with members remains effective. Visits are nevertheless undertaken to the different circuits as regularly as possible. Despite geographical limitations, the best possible service is provided to members. With the exception of Kimberley – which is classified as a city – the overwhelming majority of the province is rural in nature and hundreds of kilometres are travelled on gravel roads.

Circuit and regional divisions

The province is numerically organised into three circuits. Each circuit is further subdivided into two regions. The rationale behind this is to ensure that the elected Provincial Executive Committee members (PEC members) come from as wide an area as possible in the interest of full representation.



Circuit 1

- The urban area of Kimberley is divided into two sections: Kimberley region and Diamond region.
- Vaalharts region: The Vaalharts irrigation scheme area, which includes Hartswater.

Circuit 2

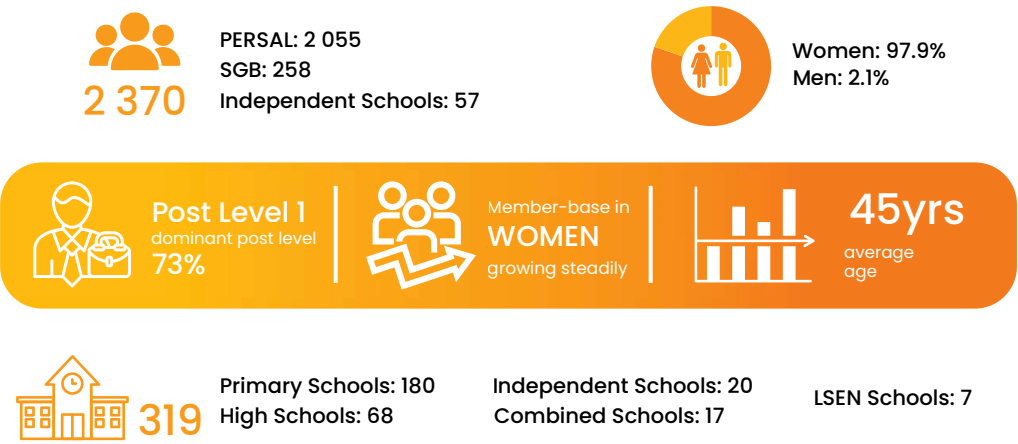
- Karoo region: De Aar is the focal point, but also includes Colesberg.
- Hantam region: Calvinia and the surrounding rural areas.
- Central region: Douglas is the focal point and also includes Griekwastad and surrounding areas.

Circuit 3

- Kalahari region: Kathu, Kuruman and surrounding areas.
- Upington region: The town of Upington and the surrounding rural areas.
- Namakwa region: Springbok, the Kamiesberg and Richtersveld area.

Membership

SAOU Northern Cape's membership numbers show a constant increase and the union is proud that membership has never dropped below 2,000. In April 2026, membership stood at a total of 2,324, following an earlier peak of 2,404 in July 2025.



Trends since 2023

It appears that provincial membership numbers have stabilised at around 2,200. Focused membership recruitment programmes are implemented annually during the first quarter in order to encourage new entrants to join the SAOU. The number of new members recruited during these periods is, however, gradually declining.

Reasons identified for the decline are the following: The majority of teachers at schools are already members of the SAOU, and there are a large number of two- and three-teacher schools that do not experience a high turnover of staff.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

The PSC, together with the Provincial Secretary (PS), consists of the following persons elected from the PEC:

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028				
CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
-	Pieter le Roux	Chairperson (Principal)	Laerskool De Aar	De Aar
-	Liesel Giliomee	Deputy Chair (Head of Department)	Hoërskool Upington	Upington
1	Etienne Venter	Principal	Laerskool Eureka	Kimberley
2	Elsie du Toit	Post Level 1	Hoërskool Douglas	Douglas
3	Adriaan Laubscher	Principal	Laerskool Seodin	Kuruman
-	Henk Brand	Provincial Secretary	SAOU (Noord-Kaap)	Kimberley



Back f.l.t.r.: Adriaan Laubscher, Elsie du Toit, Etienne Venter
Front f.l.t.r.: Pieter le Roux (Voorsitter) HB, (PS), Liesel Giliomee (O/Voors)

Functioning and focus

The PSC is required by the SAOU Constitution to hold at least four meetings per year. Given the distances that must be travelled and the associated costs, PSC meetings take place via MS Teams. Twice a year, the PSC also holds an in-person meeting with the Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS), during which matters of mutual concern are discussed. The aforementioned in-person meeting usually takes place on the eve of an in-person PEC meeting. The PSC deals with urgent matters between PEC meetings and has broad powers and decision-making authority to ensure the effective management and functioning of SAOU Northern Cape. The Standing Committee assists in ensuring that decisions of the PEC are implemented and must be actively involved in the effective functioning of SAOU Northern Cape.

Provincial Executive Committee (PEC)

The PEC currently consists of 14 members, of whom 11 were elected by members and 3 co-opted. The PEC reflects healthy representation in terms of gender, age and the different schools served. During co-option, special attention was given to ensuring that the management structure is as representative as possible. In terms of post level, representation is more difficult, as co-option also had to take account of representation across the different teaching phases. An important principle within the province is that members who are knowledgeable in specific fields and who can add value to the management of the SAOU are included in management structures.

The PEC is required by the SAOU Constitution to hold at least three meetings per year. Two of these meetings take place in person and the remaining one as a virtual meeting.

The primary focus of the PEC is to represent the SAOU within the regions from which they were elected. PEC members make direct contact with the district offices in which they operate in order to handle enquiries and follow-up work urgently. The PEC of the Northern Cape is also utilised to assist with simple disciplinary hearings, mediations, screening and interviews — effectively serving as an extension of the office.



Back f.l.t.r.: Dirkie Neels, Quinton Klackers, Etienne Venter, Adriaan Laubscher, Willie van Heerden, Clifford Klassen, Stanley Thiert
Front f.l.t.r.: Matha van Zyl, Rika Van Zyl, Pieter le Roux (voorsitter), Henk Brand (PS), Liesel Giliomee (O/Voors), Elsie du Toit, Hannerie vd Walt.

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026

CIRCUIT	NAME	OFFICE	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
-	Pieter le Roux (Voorsitter)	Principal	Laerskool De Aar	De Aar
-	Liesel Giliomee (Ondervoorsitter)	Head of Department	Hoërskool Upington	Upington
1	Etienne Venter	Principal	Laerskool Eureka	Kimberley
1	Clifford Klassen	Deputy Principal	Laerskool Staats	Kimberley
1	Willie van Heerden	Principal	Hartswater Hoërskool	Hartswater
2	Rika van Zyl	Principal	Laerskool Calvinia	Calvinia
2	Elsie du Toit	Post Level 1	Douglas Hoërskool	Douglas
2	Hannerie van der Walt	Post Level 1	Gekombineerde Skool Colesberg	Colesberg
3	Stanley Thiert	Principal	Hoërskool S.A. van Wyk	Springbok
3	Adriaan Laubscher	Principal	Laerskool Seodin	Kuruman
3	Nalinsa Potgieter	Deputy Principal	Hoërskool Duineveld HS	Upington
Koöpteer	Quinton Klackers	Head of Department	Groenpunt Elizabeth	Kimberley
Koöpteer	Martha van Zyl	Principal	Conradie Skool	Kimberley

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Effective communication with members is of cardinal importance. In addition to communication on a personal level, meetings, telephone calls and email, WhatsApp (WA) remains the most effective means of communication. At this stage, the SAOU app is not yet sufficiently established in the Northern Cape for it to become the preferred communication platform.

Handling member enquiries

The first communication channel for enquiries is the office switchboard. Janine du Toit is, in some cases, able to deal with enquiries immediately. Other enquiries are referred to the FTURs, or in more serious cases, to the PS for handling.

All enquiries are recorded. Each FTUR and the PS uses their own system of data collection and information storage. A standardised pro forma is, however, used and filed for ease of access. The office is moving increasingly away from a paper-based system and the electronic storage of enquiries is encouraged.

Given the fact that Kimberley is a relatively small city, most important points of contact such as the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), South African Revenue Service (SARS), Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) and the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) are in fact situated very close to the office. Enquiries are therefore handled very quickly and feedback is provided promptly. The Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDoE) and the local district office are within minutes' driving distance, and enquiries requiring follow-up can be attended to urgently.

Nature of enquiries



Observer allowances



Housing matters



Pension matters



Temporary appointments



Salary matters



Conversions



Transfers



Grievances and disputes



Leave



Emotional support



Disciplinary hearings

Response and processes

All enquiries are recorded in a register that is accessible to everyone in the office via MS Teams. Enquiries are also updated there as matters progress. The union is in fact fortunate to have such a small staff corps, because everyone’s matters are briefly discussed every morning during a staff meeting.

General challenges and solution

Members are becoming increasingly dependent on the SAOU and insist on representation in almost every incident. The vastness of the province and the long distances frequently result in the fleet vehicle already being away on a trip when transport is needed. In deserving cases, a vehicle can be hired at the airport to ensure that places where the union is needed can still be reached.

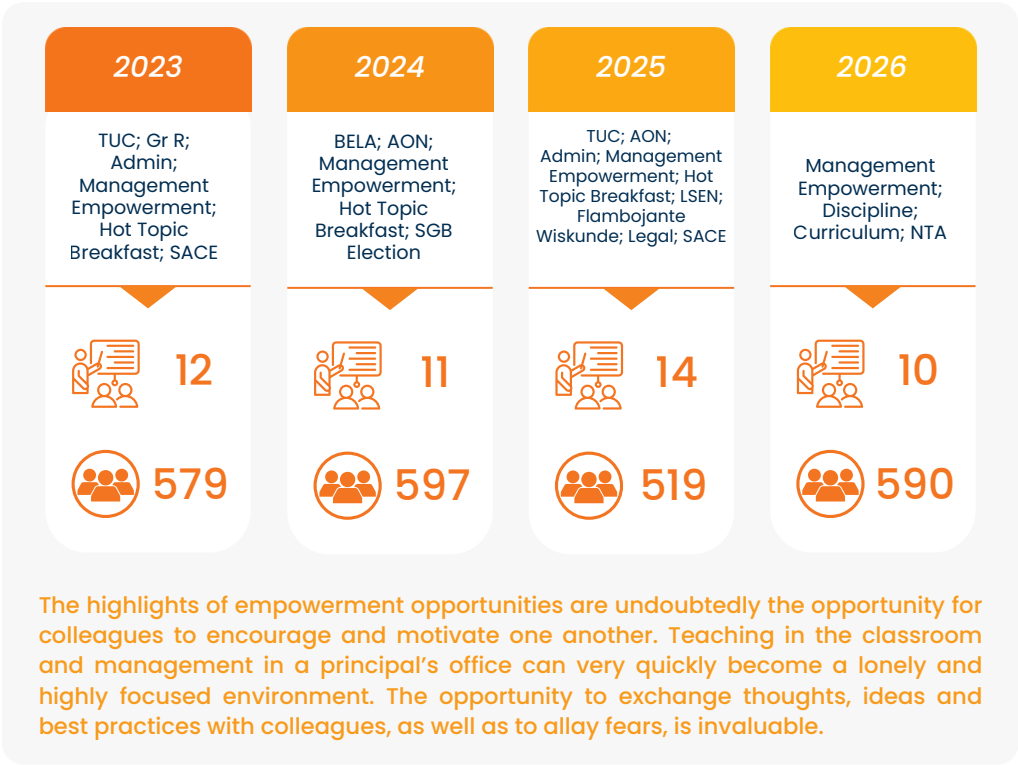
The NCDoe is slowly but surely collapsing, and it has become a trend for each academic year to take longer to get underway. For example, by the end of February 2026, appointments had still not been made to promotional posts that were advertised in 2025 and for which the processes had already been completed. Treasury regularly removes the NCDoe’s Persal function to ensure that the department does not overspend recklessly.

Training, empowerment and professional development

The vastness and sparsely populated rural nature of the Northern Cape complicate meetings and training within the province. Except for Kimberley and surrounding areas, distances are a limiting factor in bringing members together at central points. The furthest point from the SAOU’s provincial office in Kimberley is Alexander Bay (approximately 1,000 km). Further perspective is that Colesberg also falls within the Northern Cape province and the shortest safe route there is approximately 400 km, with no other Northern Cape schools in between. These challenges mean that training opportunities are limited to larger centres such as Kimberley, Upington, Kathu/Kuruman, Springbok and De Aar. An unavoidable result of this is that a very large proportion of SAOU members do not have access to, or the opportunity to attend, training or empowerment sessions. Contributing to this is the fact that national divisions such as Legal Services and Professional Services do not always have the manpower and time available to travel through the province for several days at a time.

To overcome the aforementioned challenge, office staff undertake numerous extensive journeys in order to visit every possible school personally. The working method is that an office is set up at the school for two to three hours, during which SAOU staff are available for enquiries, information and empowerment. The general view is that this model enables SAOU Northern Cape to reach more members and provides an opportunity to recruit members directly. The Provincial Secretary and FTURs provide continuous training to members on topical matters. Although this places considerable demands on office staff, it is the most effective and cost-efficient method of operation within the province. In the process, the Union becomes more visible and accessible throughout the province.

Amid the above-mentioned challenges, solutions and innovations, SAOU Northern Cape nevertheless presents the following in-person opportunities each year for training, empowerment and information:



Office Functioning

The office of SAOU Northern Cape is situated in the historic suburb of Belgravia in Kimberley at 10 Milner Street. The office is adequately equipped to function effectively. Every effort is made, within the limits of the budget, to function effectively and communicate with members by means of modern technology. The most important objective of the office is to provide the best possible service to SAOU members in the Northern Cape. Furthermore, the office has the use of an SAOU fleet vehicle.



Back: Henk Brand (PS)

Front f.l.t.r.: Amanda Clarke (Shop Steward),

Janine du Toit (Provincial Administrative Officer), Lize-Mari Mazzoncini (Shopsteward)

General functioning

PS and Shop Stewards

- Given the relatively low membership numbers and the corresponding frequency of member enquiries, each of the aforementioned posts literally handles everything. There is no division of duties in terms of member services.

Provincial Administrative Officer

- The administrative officer of SAOU Northern Cape is the first point in the office's communication line. Janine du Toit handles reception, finances, general office administration and straightforward enquiries. Enquiries that are referred to the PS and FTSSs are done so at the discretion of the administrative officer.

Each person handles enquiries as they are received. It is of the utmost importance that everyone dealing with enquiries is regularly kept informed of who is handling what. Technology makes it possible for an enquiry register to be maintained to which everyone in the office has access, thereby ensuring that enquiries are handled effectively and professionally.

KEY ISSUES IN THE PROVINCE SINCE THE 2023 CONGRESS

- The lead-up to the President of the RSA's final decision regarding the BELA Act. The various submissions to portfolio committees and the feedback to members were extremely important.
- Rumours began circulating regarding early retirement without penalties and members' enquiries and concerns in this regard had to be addressed.
- The 2024 academic year began with the overwhelming majority of quintile 1 to 3 schools not being ready to open because the NCDoe was unable to fulfil its responsibility of paying the so-called Article 21 funds to schools and/or delivering learning and teaching materials.
- On 1 September 2024, the new two-pot system came into operation. Initially, information regarding it was limited and at times confusing. Numerous empowerment opportunities were held virtually to explain the system and allay fears.
- During the second semester of 2025, early retirement without penalties and voluntary retirement after the age of 60 became a reality. SAOU Northern Cape had to provide focused empowerment in order to deal with the processes and expected outcomes.

Impact

Against the backdrop of the above, it became clear that the most significant impact SAOU Northern Cape had on our members was the fact that the union was able to render a core service, namely: while the member was in his/her classroom or office, he/she could focus on teaching and learning in the classroom, while SAOU Northern Cape handled their matters, liaised with the employer, gave members peace of mind, resolved bread-and-butter issues and allayed fears.

Strategic relationships

SAOU Northern Cape has a very good relationship with various role-players in education and is itself recognised as a valued role-player.



NCDoe / ELRC

The Shop Stewards attend all task teams and Lize-Mari Mazzoncini is even the Deputy Chairperson of the ELRC in the Northern Cape. The PS attends STANCO and Chamber as chief negotiator of the Combined Trade Union-Autonomous Teachers' Unions (CTU-ATU). It is very noticeable that SAOU staff at all levels have an excellent relationship with officials and office-bearers within the ELRC.



Media and the public voice

SAOU Northern Cape has a strong foothold within the public media domain and is regularly consulted to participate in current affairs programmes on RSG and SABC News. It is very important for them also to establish their footprint at Radio Riverside, Radio Teemaneng and Namakwa FM.



FEDSAS

The SAOU and FEDSAS work very closely together in many areas within the province and the Provincial Standing Committee holds an in-person meeting with FEDSAS Northern Cape twice per year. The two organisations continually keep one another informed of issues affecting both parties within the NCDoE.

Important interactions

SAOU Northern Cape's relationship with the current Head of the Education Department (HOD) is of such a nature that the PS is welcome to drop in on the HOD from time to time without an appointment.

The relationship with the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), within the ELRC, has also improved drastically, and the one supports the other in matters affecting both.

Interactions with FEDSAS are at a good level and supportive in nature.

Interactions between SAOU Northern Cape staff and CTU-ATU partners can certainly improve, but the other parties within the CTU-ATU are significantly smaller than the SAOU and operate largely in the background.

Successes and challenges

For the first time in the history of SAOU Northern Cape, physical industrial action was undertaken in 2025 through the declaration of a "work-to-rule" action together with SADTU. Although the union represents only 25% of the labour market, the employer took very clear note that the SAOU is a significant role-player in the Northern Cape.

Since the previous reporting period, the SAOU has succeeded in establishing a footprint at more schools within the province and membership has increased to more than 300 schools, compared to the 291 of the previous period. One challenge that can be frustrating is the poor communication of the NCDoE with its employees. The SAOU regards it as its duty to distribute as much relevant information and clarification to members as possible. The NCDoE, however, communicates very little, if at all, which leads to suspicion and tension among employees.

Conclusion and outlook

Successes

- A definite highlight during the reporting period was when SAOU Northern Cape surpassed the 2,400-membership mark.
- The SAOU's initiation of a "work-to-rule" industrial action had a significant impact.
- The Seminar for School Management Teams, presented annually, has become a flagship event that enjoys widespread recognition.
- Member recruitment remains a challenge and the union focuses on maintaining stable membership numbers while also growing them.
- The SAOU's death benefit, introduced in 2026, has increased interest in membership.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Two valuable lessons regarding member services emerged during the reporting period, namely: Office staff must exercise careful judgement regarding when to respond to a member via WhatsApp and when it is preferable to call instead, so that the member can hear how and in what spirit the advice is being given.

The registration form developed by Legal Services can be used far more extensively and to great advantage.

Towns are relatively far apart and the nearest is 35 km from Kimberley. Beyond that, distances are 100 km and more. When a member urgently requires representation, or crises arise at schools that must be resolved, the fleet vehicle is often already travelling elsewhere. A rental vehicle must then be utilised.

Focus for the next congress term

Priorities

SAOU Northern Cape will have to make a focused effort to ensure that membership numbers do not drop below 2,400. This in itself will already be challenging, as it will mean that the union must focus on potential members who are already members of other unions. Visibility within the province will have to be increased even further, as SAOU Northern Cape is already seeing the benefits of school visits. School visits by office staff will, however, need to be managed in a balanced manner.

Member recruitment

An increase in membership numbers could result in the province potentially qualifying to appoint a Professional Officer (PO) to staff the office during school visits by the FTURs and PS.

Objectives for the next reporting period

- Increase in membership numbers.
- Increased school visits.
- Expansion of capacity through the appointment of a PO.

At the end of this reporting period, the union would like to increase the number of circuits from the current three to five. More circuits would bring at least six additional PEC members, which would help broaden the union's footprint within the province.

This report does not cover all aspects of the SAOU's activities in the Northern Cape, but aims to provide a broad overview of its operations.

WESTERN CAPE



KONGRES 2026 CONGRESS

Drie Dekades met Een Visie
Three Decades with One Vision



Western Cape at a glance

* statistics for the period
July 2023 to June 2026

10.6% of South Africa's
total landmass

43 years average age
of members

6 Circuits further subdivided
into several regions



441 km

The furthest point from the SAOU
provincial office in Bellville
is Beaufort West.

Membership



8 420

PERSAL: 6 420

SGB: 1 707

Independent Schools: 293



1 058

Primary Schools: 587

High Schools: 219

Private Schools: 119

Preschools: 34

LSEN Schools: 39

Combined Schools: 11



Women: 79.8%

Men: 20.2%



10 629

members reached through
84 training events from
July 2023 to June 2026



88.6%
Afrikaans

11.4%
English

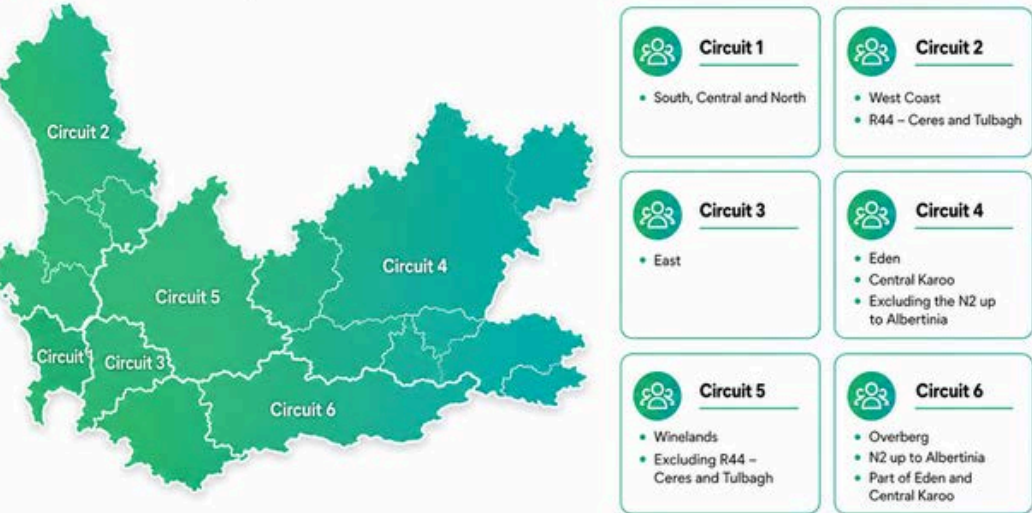
129 462 km²

Demographic Information

The Western Cape covers 129 462 km², making it the fourth-largest province in South Africa. The province is characterised by contrasts, with its vast geographical area, rich natural diversity, and the clear distinction between densely populated urban centres and extensive rural regions.

The office is situated in Bellville, near the Cape Metropole. As a result, travelling to the furthers areas of the province involves considerable distances.

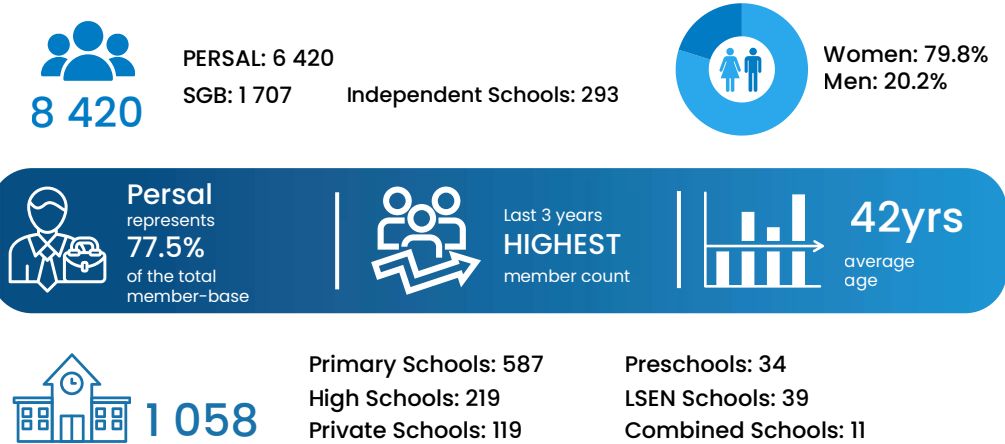
Western Cape: Circuit division



Circuit and regional division

- SAOU Western Cape is divided into six circuits, namely
- Circuit 1: South, Central, and North
 - Circuit 2: West Coast and R44 – Ceres and Tulbagh
 - District 3: East
 - Circuit 4: Eden and Central Karoo (excluding N2 up to Albertinia)
 - Circuit 5: Winelands (excluding R44 – Ceres and Tulbagh)
 - Circuit 6: Overberg and N2 to Albertinia (forming part of Eden and Central Karoo)

Membership



Trends since 2023

Over the past three years, the Western Cape has annually recorded its highest membership figures to date. A contributing factor to this success was the growth in membership across all components, namely Persal, SGB, independent schools and student members.

It is, however, becoming increasingly difficult to sustain membership growth. The union is not only growing at a lower rate compared to previous years, but the pace of growth has also slowed down. This is largely due to the poor financial position of the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED), which has resulted in fewer posts being added annually to the post establishment.

There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of educators resigning from the profession, which negatively affects membership growth. In particular, it is evident that many educators are choosing to leave the profession at an early stage of their careers.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS SERVED	
Type of school	
Department	29
FET College	2
Combined	11
High School	221
Hospital Schools	2
Preschools	35
Residences	4
Art Schools	4
Primary Schools	595
Agricultural School	3
Private School	121
LSEN	40
University	2
Other institutions	5
Total	1 075

Membership growth in independent schools remains limited in comparison to public schools. The union has found that several private/independent schools are reluctant to allow unions within their schools and, as a result, access to these schools remains extremely limited.

Schools in the Western Cape are geographically widespread, which makes it difficult to visit all schools on a regular basis.

It should also be taken into account that approximately 66% of the schools in the Western Cape are no-fee schools, which naturally employ very few SGB-funded educators. The needs and challenges faced by these members are significant, as many of these schools are situated in gang-ridden communities.

Provincial Governance

Provincial Standing Committee (PSC)

Functioning and focus

The Western Cape PSC consists of the elected members of the Provincial Executive Council (PEC). The PSC has the mandate to make urgent decisions at short notice in order to ensure effective functioning.

The PSC meets four times a year by means of virtual meetings.

All members of the PSC are required to remain informed regarding current matters within the province. Members are encouraged to attend meetings well prepared. The work of the PSC requires a comprehensive understanding of the PEC meeting that follows. The structure, agenda, and general flow are discussed. Should certain aspects require further clarification, they are referred for further action or action after the PEC meeting.

The PSC provides recommendations to the PEC based on careful consideration to ensure transparent decision-making.



Back f.l.t.r.: Hein Gunter, Faffa Coetzee, LW Wessels
 Middle f.l.t.r.: Reinette de Villiers, Morné Janson, Willem du Buisson
 Front f.l.t.r.: Sas du Plessis (Chairperson), Erna Joubert (Deputy Chairperson), André Smith

PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE 2025 – 2028		
OFFICE	NAME	SCHOOL
Chairperson	Sas du Plessis	George-Suid Laerskool
Deputy Chair	Erna Joubert	President Hoërskool
Circuit 1	Reinette de Villiers	Fairmont Hoërskool
Circuit 2	Hein Günter	Dirkie Uys Hoërskool
Circuit 3	Faffa Coetzee	Brackenfell Laerskool
Circuit 4	André Smith	Park Laerskool
Circuit 5	LW Wessels	Robertson Laerskool
Circuit 6	Willem du Buisson	Hoër Landbouskool Oakdale

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2026

CIRCUIT	NAME	SCHOOL	TOWN / CITY
–	Sas du Plessis (Chairperson)	George-Suid Laerskool	George
–	Erna Joubert (Deputy Chair)	President Hoërskool	Cape Town
1	Reinette de Villiers	Fairmont Hoërskool	Cape Town
1	Pieter Rademeyer	Jan van Riebeeck Hoërskool	Goodwood
1	Celesté Wepener	DF Akademie	Bellville
2	Hein Günter	Dirkie Uys Hoërskool	Morreesburg
2	Cobus Louw	Porterville Hoërskool	Porterville
2	Danie Serfontein	Olifantsvallei Laerskool	Citrusdal
3	Faffa Coetzee	Brackenfell Laerskool	Brackenfell
3	Johanna Kotze	Westcliff Vaardigheidskool	Bellville
3	Henri van den Berg	Bastion Laerskool	Brackenfell
4	André Smith	Park Laerskool	Mossel Bay
4	Carl Snyman	Langenhoven Gimnasium	Oudtshoorn
4	Werner van Huyssteen	Hartenbos Laerskool	Hartenbos
5	LW Wessels	Robertson Laerskool	Robertson
5	Louis Lategan	Paarl Gimnasium Laerskool	Paarl
5	Winifred Viljoen	Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof	Stellenbosch
6	Willem du Buisson	Hoër Landbouskool Oakdale	Riversdal
6	Benjamin Deysel	Swellendam Laerskool	Swellendam
6	Henco Smith	Langenhoven Hoërskool	Riversdal

Provincial Executive Council (PEC)

Strategic role

The PEC consists of three members from each of the six circuits within the boundaries of the Western Cape. Members are encouraged to come to the meeting well prepared regarding matters affecting the province. This representation includes a wide spectrum of educators, ranging from teachers to principals. Schools for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) are also represented. The PEC therefore fulfils a significant strategic role.

The greatest challenge over the past three years has been the management of posts lost by schools. The WCED was the first province to implement this policy. The process had to be managed very carefully through effective communication. The SAOU supported members who experienced considerable stress and uncertainty during this period. Unfortunately, the situation continues, and there is still significant uncertainty.

Meetings take place three times a year and are very well attended. The office staff forms an integral part of the operation of the PEC. Office staff are invited to provide clarification regarding matters within each department to members attending the meetings. This allows members to associate names with faces and enables uncertainties to be addressed immediately.

The Provincial Secretary (PS) is closely involved in matters relating to the Provincial Executive Council. Regular and thorough feedback is provided regarding matters concerning the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and proactive plans are developed to address challenges as effectively as possible.

Speakers from the SAOU National Office are invited to address meetings. Professional Services and Legal Services have added significant value in this regard.

The President and Executive Officer (EO) of the SAOU are also included on meeting agendas, whenever their schedules permit attendance. The membership figures of the Western Cape serve as testimony to dedicated staff and capable elected leadership.



Back f.l.t.r.: Henri van den Berg, Pyp Deysel, Hein Gunter, Henco Smith, Louis Lategan, Werner van Huyssteen; Johanna Kotze, Winnie Viljoen, Willem du Buisson, Faffa Coetzee;
Reinette de Villiers, Morné Janson, Danie Serfontein
Front f.l.t.r.: Sas du Plessis (Voorsitter), André Smith, Cobus Louw

Service Delivery

Communication with members

Communication channels are among the most critical challenges currently experienced by the Western Cape office. With modern technology, various media platforms are constantly changing. The significant difference in member demographics, particularly in terms of age, mean that members prefer different social media platforms and communication channels. This creates challenges in identifying a uniform communication method.

Initially, WhatsApp groups were used, but since WhatsApp only allows a limited number of people per group, this medium has become insufficient for communicating with more than 8 00 members.

The union still makes use of WhatsApp groups when communication with smaller groups is required, for example Workplace Representative (WPRs). With the huge difference in the demographics of the members, especially in terms of age, this means that members prefer different social media platforms and communication channels. This creates challenges in trying to find a uniform means of communication.

Since 2025, the Western Cape office has had its own Instagram page with more than 1 200 followers. This platform works exceptionally well for posting photographs of school visits and events. Important information is also communicated through this platform

Handling member enquiries

Member enquiries reach the office in various forms, including telephonically (landline and mobile phone), via e-mail and through personal visits to the office, as well as through contact with members during school visits or seminars.

The office handles approximately 400 enquiries per month.

When members make enquiries telephonically, it is possible in most cases to resolve the enquiry immediately. Due to the nature of certain enquiries, it is sometimes necessary to schedule a personal visit or further discussion.

The Western Cape office maintains a good working relationship with the WCED. Should a crisis arise at certain times, for example the non-payment of contract appointments at the beginning of the year, the union reaches an agreement with the relevant directorates within the WCED to compile lists of affected members. These are then submitted weekly to the WCED, which in turn provides the union with regular feedback.

In 2024, the SAOU continuously declared a large number of disputes on behalf of members whose posts had not been converted to permanent positions. This compelled the employer to meet with the SAOU and develop a focused strategy to resolve the disputes.

Response and processes

The Western Cape office staff jointly developed a service delivery protocol that provides guidance on how enquiries should be handled. For example, every effort is made to contact members within 24 hours of receiving an inquiry.

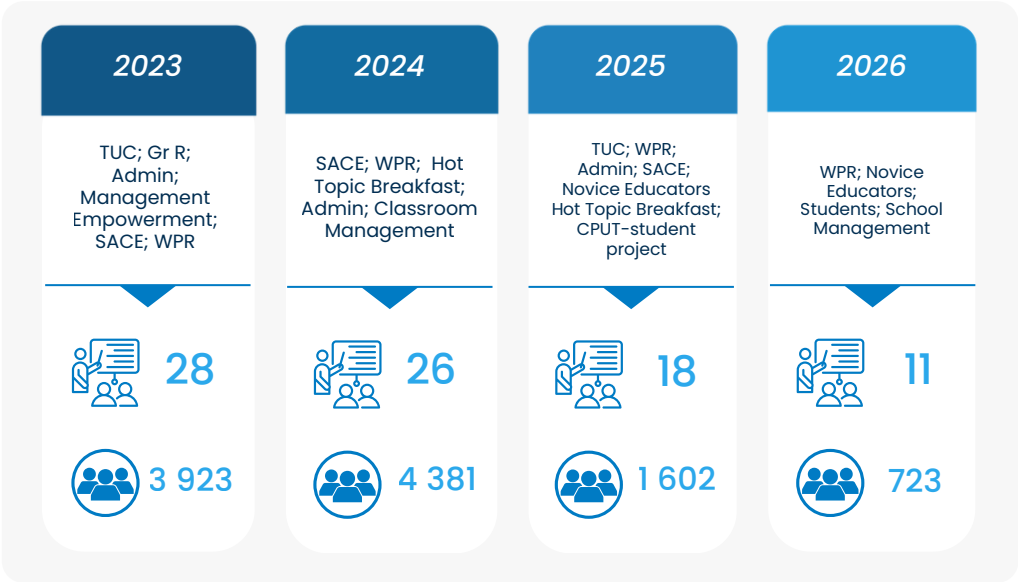
The SAOU Service Centre handles a large number of the union's telephone enquiries. The provincial office also receives daily calls. Measures are in place to ensure that someone is always available in the office to answer calls. Where possible, the Western Cape office also structures work schedules to ensure that someone is available to provide members with the necessary advice and representation.

Legal Services and Professional Services also provide significant assistance in handling enquiries from the Western Cape. This ensure that members receive expert advice and representation.

Nature of enquiries

- 
Observer allowances
- 
Salary matters
- 
Conversions
- 
Promotional posts
- 
Temporary appointments
- 
Grievances and disputes
- 
Transfers
- 
Bully behaviour and intimidation

Training, empowerment and professional development



Impact

SAOU Western Cape has decided to focus on quality rather than quantity with regard to training. The WCED offers extensive training at the district level, as well as through the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI). As a result, the SAOU competes with the employer in respect of training.

Despite the above, the union, has found that members prefer a balance between virtual and in-person training.

Hot Topic Breakfast-events are becoming increasingly popular, especially when hosted in area of the Western Cape with limited training opportunities. The focus of the topics is also directed at issues currently receiving significant media attention or causing challenges within schools.

The Administrative Day is also very popular and attracts the largest number of registrations, as there are limited training opportunities available for this group of members. Annual attendance ranges between 180 and 200 administrative staff members, and the focus is mainly on motivation as well as appreciation.

Office Functioning



Back f.l.t.r.: Raynardt Botha, Tamara de Jager, Morné Janson, Sias Jansen van Vuuren, Suzette Badenhorst, Ashwin Maloy
 Front f.l.t.r.: Illois de Goede, Cyndea Havenga, Rudolf Baard
 (Absent – Retha Richter)

Staff structure

- Morné Janson – Provincial Secretary (PS)
- Rudolf Baard – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS)
- Raynardt Botha – Assistant Provincial Secretary (APS)
- Cyndea Havenga – Professional Officer (PO)
- Sias Jansen van Vuuren – Professional Officer (PO)
- Illois de Goede – Full-Time Shop Steward
- Ashwin Maloy – Full-Time Shop Steward (FTSS)

Retha Richter – Member Data Administration
 Suzette Badenhorst – Senior Provincial Administrative Officer
 Tamara de Jager – Senior Provincial Administrative Officer

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE OFFICE	
PSDC Curriculum Forum Students SACE Observers NTA Vakkom. PTEDC WPR E-recruitment Disciplinarys Arbitrations Pilir	S Jansen van Vuuren + E Janson M Janson R Botha R Botha + A Maloy I de Goede + S Jansen van Vuuren + T de Jager R Baard S Jansen van Vuuren S Jansen van Vuuren + E Janson R Botha + C Havenga I de Goede R Baard R Baard A Maloy
PELRC Safety @ schools T + R QMS Pilir Dispute P. Chambers Stanco	R Botha + A Maloy M Janson + R Botha R Botha + C Havenga I de Goede + A Maloy R Baard M Janson + A.P.S. + ander per geleentheid M Janson
DSDC South: Deon Scheepers North: Celeste Wepener East: Faffa Coetzee Wynlands: LW Wessels West Coast: Danie Serftontein ECK: Sas du Plessis Central: Pieter Rademeyer Overberg: Pyp Deysel	S Jansen van Vuuren Koördineer vanuit kantoor (notules + verslae) E Janson Verteenwoordig op PSDC

The PS, APSs, Shop Stewards, and POs are all responsible for member enquiries and interactions. Where possible, representation on committees and task teams is allocated to specific individuals.

With regard to member enquiries, staff members are expected to be able to handle all types of queries. This is to ensure that a high level of expertise is maintained on a wide range of topics.

Legal Services plays an important role with the APS in handling disciplinary hearings and arbitrations. Grievances and conciliations are handled by the office staff.

Professional Services plays a critical role in dealing with queries regarding curriculum and assessment.

Both of these sections provide the help, advice, and resources needed to successfully handle the wide range of member interactions.

Strategic relationships



Western Cape Department of Education (WCED)

Over the years, the SAOU has built a strong working relationship with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Employment-related enquiries are handled professionally and discussions between the senior management of the WCED and the SAOU take place regularly as requested.

The Head of the Department of Education (HOD) also frequently uses the opportunity to invite unions for discussions, and SAOU Western Cape participates in these engagements. At least four appointments are scheduled annually. A special curriculum and assessment forum has also been established where unions meet with senior WCED officials to critically discuss curriculum and assessment matters.

In 2024, the Chief Director of Human Resources and the Director of Labour Relations were invited as guest speakers at a special PUR meeting regarding the cutting of posts in the Western Cape. Other senior officials from the WCED also participated as speakers at various empowerment events.

In preparation for the publication of the post establishment, unions meet twice annually with the MEC. This is followed by a further two meetings with the HOD.



Provincial Council of Labour Relations in Education (ELRC)

The provincial bargaining chamber of the ELRC functions well and various task team meetings are held quarterly to cover a wide range of matters. Part of the chamber's success lies in the professional respect that the various unions and the WCED have for one another.

For the past five years, the Combined Trade Union-Autonomous Teachers' Unions (CTU-ATU), consisting of the SAOU and the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), has been the majority party in the Western Cape ELRC. This has resulted in additional representatives within the bargaining chamber, as well as an additional FTSS appointment for the SAOU.



NAPTOSA

Since 2015, the SAOU and NAPTOSA in the Western Cape have maintained an agreement in terms of which the responsibilities of the corresponding office are shared. The SAOU functions as the secretariat, while NAPTOSA serves as the party leader.

SAOU Western Cape also regularly undertakes projects together. In January 2026, the SAOU and NAPTOSA issued media statements carrying both organisations' logos to address the 37% issue.



Media and other public voices

During the past three years, the PS has been quoted in Netwerk24 reports. This was particularly during the period in 2024 when the WCED cut 2 407 posts, which resulted in significant media exposure for the SAOU.

Over the past three years, the PS has also appeared on several occasions as a guest on the radio station Voice of the Cape's programme, Education Indaba.



Other organisations

The PS currently serves on the Member of the Executive Council's (MEC) Education Council. The committee was established by David Maynier, Western Cape MEC for Education, and consists of various interest groups and institutions within the education sector. The purpose of this committee is to advise the MEC on various educational matters.

SAOU Western Cape also maintains a strong relationship with the two governing body organisations. The Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) and Governing Body Foundation (GBF). Information is regularly shared between the organisations and the SAOU has on several occasions been invited to participate as a speaker at seminars and webinars presented by FEDSAS.

Over the past three years, SAOU Western Cape has also developed a new relationship with Tim Gordon, CEO of the Association of Public Boys' Schools of South Africa. They meet regularly to exchange information, share ideas and occasionally participate as speakers at the training events of both organisations.

The Western Cape has a unique entity called the School Evaluation Authority (SEA) with David Millar serving as the Chief Executive Officer. The purpose of this entity is to evaluate schools and formally report to the MEC. Several schools where SAOU members are employed have already been evaluated by the SEA. The SAOU PS and David Millar meet regularly to strengthen the working relationship between the two organisations.

Conclusion and outlook

Highlights of the reporting period

Several hot topic breakfast events were launched, featuring excellent speakers who provided valuable insights to audiences. Various training events were well attended and members were able to gain valuable insights from them. SAOU Western Cape has found a good balance with the provision of in-person training and virtual training. There is a need for both, with the hot topic breakfast events, Beginner Educator sessions and Administrative Day providing particularly popular as in-person training opportunities.

The SAOU's footprint in the Western Cape is extensive. Membership not only grew significantly over the period, but representation at various schools and WCED offices also increased. The SAOU has members in more than 1 100 schools and offices in the Western Cape, which indicates that the service provided by the SAOU Western Cape resonates with a broad audience.

Part of the union's success lies in the strong relationships and networks that exist between SAOU Western Cape and role players in the education sector. These relationships are therefore crucial to the success of the Western Cape office. Various challenges, including the non-payment of the 37% for contract educators, the conversion of educators, cutting of positions, unfilled positions, CSPID and related matters, were managed and addressed, often with positive outcomes.

The SAOU, as an organisation in the Western Cape, is in a strong position. Members are provided with opportunities at various levels to grow and further develop their skills. The SAOU online application plays an important role in this value offering.

Challenges and lessons learned

Over the past few years, the education sector has been severely affected by the financial crisis currently facing the country. Education departments have fewer funds available, which not only means that fewer posts can be allocated to schools but also places an immense pressure on services such as the construction of new schools and classrooms, feeding schemes, transport, learning materials and related support services.

Schools are also experiencing financial pressure, as parents are increasingly struggling to pay school fees.

With the signing of BELA, Grade R has now become part of compulsory education. The reality is that there are more unqualified and underqualified Grade R practitioners in the system than fully qualified educators. The focus is now threefold, namely:

- Creating opportunities and securing funding for Grade R practitioners to improve their qualifications.
- Placement of Grade R learners, in other words ensuring that sufficient space is available at schools for the enrolment of Grade R learners.
- Securing funding for the permanent appointment of fully qualified Grade R educators at the same level as Post Level 1 educators on school establishments.

An important lesson from the financial crisis of the past three years is that no one has been spared – everyone in education finds themselves in the same situation. Some schools are more severely affected than others, but the state, as employer is struggling to fulfil its obligations to all schools in the Western Cape. This is where strong networks become extremely important. It's not only about exchanging ideas, resources, and help, but collaboration also places pressure on the state, as an employer, to remain accountable. This has opened the door to direct communication and excellent cooperation between the SAOU and the Western Cape HOD. Problems are there for identified more quickly in an effort to find solutions through cooperation and improve the situation.

Focus for the next congress term

The SAOU represents individuals employed within the education sector. The focus is therefore on the individual who has to perform his or her job under immense pressure.

Posts, whether on contract or permanent appointments, will always remain a critical requiring the attention of the SAOU Western Cape. The trade union will need to monitor how factors such as the influx of learners into the Western Cape and the Grade R matter will affect the WCED's ability to continue fulfilling its obligation towards schools and employees. The reduction of posts is happening not only at the school level, but also at the district and head office level, which directly affects the support provided to schools. To ensure stability within schools, attention must be given to the reasons why permanent appointments and conversions take so long.

A further focus for SAOU Western Cape is to be true to its motto, "the change in education". The union's approach and outlook must be more proactive than reactive. The union possesses the knowledge and experience to be one of the leaders in the education sector. Members want to feel confident that their union understands the matters affecting them and is prepared to advocate strongly on behalf of its members. The SAOU can only create this sense of reassurance among members by maintaining strong communication channels with the WCED and other unions, enabling SAOU Western Cape to identify and anticipate trends and developments proactively.

Anyone currently working in the education sector will confirm that it not easy. The challenges and associated pressures experienced by members are immense. SAOU Western Cape must ensure that members' concerns, frustrations and problems are addressed with the necessary empathy and insight. Members do not only want to be heard they also want to feel that someone is on their side and willing to stand up for them.

Members don't just want to be heard; they want to feel that there is someone on their side and will stand up for them.

CONCLUSION: THREE DECADES WITH ONE VISION

As the SAOU celebrates 30 years of service under the theme *Three Decades with One Vision*, this report reflects more than a review of activities, structures and achievements. It tells the story of an organisation that has remained steadfast in its purpose while continuously adapting to meet the changing needs of educators and the broader education environment.

The work reflected in this report spans six national departments, nine provinces, elected structures, committees and strategic initiatives. Together, these components demonstrate the breadth of the SAOU's service offering and the depth of its commitment to members across South Africa. From professional services, legal support, communication and member value to provincial representation, local engagement and organisational development, the report illustrates how the SAOU gives practical effect to its mandate at every level.

Over the past three decades, the SAOU has built a proud legacy founded on principled leadership, professional excellence, meaningful representation and unwavering commitment to its members. From its establishment to its current position as a respected and influential voice in education, the organisation has consistently placed members at the centre of its mission.

The initiatives and strategic processes highlighted in this report demonstrate that the SAOU is not only honouring its legacy but actively preparing for the future. Through strategic positioning, member-focused research, organisational development, innovation and targeted support, the SAOU is strengthening its ability to serve, support and empower educators in an increasingly complex educational environment.

The findings of the needs assessment reaffirm that the organisation's greatest strength lies in its members. Their trust, participation and commitment continue to shape the SAOU's direction and ensure that its services remain relevant, adaptable and impactful.

At the same time, the dedication of elected leaders and staff across all structures remains essential to the organisation's continued success.

As we reflect on thirty years of achievement, we do so with gratitude for those who laid the foundation, appreciation for those who continue to build upon it, and confidence in those who will carry the vision forward. The challenges facing education may evolve, but the SAOU's commitment to protecting, promoting and advancing the interests of educators remains unchanged.

Three decades have passed, yet the vision remains clear: to be a trusted, value-driven organisation that champions quality education, empowers educators and contributes meaningfully to the future of South African education.

With a strong legacy behind us and a clear strategy ahead, the SAOU enters its third decade united in purpose, confident in its direction and committed to serving its members with excellence for many years to come.