



FOR PSA MEMBERS: **EDUCATION LABOUR RELATIONS COUNCIL (ELRC)**

15-01-2026

Update: Grade-R Practitioners contracts

A special Council meeting was held on 13 January 2026 to discuss the non-renewal of contracts for unqualified Grade-R Practitioners.

Non-renewal of contracts of unqualified Grade-R Practitioners

Members will recall that the employer reported that agreement was reached with the ETDP-SETA for R66 million funding for upgrading Grade-R qualifications. Further, Collective Agreement 2/2025 was concluded and signed on 29 September 2025 to regulate the process to upgrade unqualified Grade-R practitioners. Subsequently, labour was alerted regarding inconsistent application of rules amongst provinces, which led to the CTU-ATU requesting a special meeting.

The CTU-ATU, of which the PSA is part, submitted the agenda item regarding the non-renewal of contracts for unqualified Grade-R Practitioners. Although the employer had communicated that the contracts of unqualified Grade-R Practitioners will not be renewed, the CTU-ATU raised concerns regarding the inconsistency in provincial contracts, non-consideration of service, exclusion based on age, and barriers to upskilling despite willingness to study and called for practical and inclusive alternatives.

- The Northern Cape Provincial Department of Education offered Practitioners three-year contracts whilst other provinces are renewing contracts annually, which creates distress amongst Practitioners. The CTU-ATU called for National Department of Basic Education (DBE) to issue a directive for all provinces to emulate the Northern Cape in the interest of fairness and equity.
- Exclusion of Practitioners who are 60 years and above is inhumane and the Department needed to look into this matter carefully.
- The high rate of applicants for Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Foundation Phase Teaching degree declined by UNISA is very concerning and the CTU-ATU urged the Department to engage the institution to find amicable and sustainable solutions.
- The CTU-ATU indicated that since ELRC Resolution 2/2025 makes provision for both diploma and degree qualifications, the latter option should be considered for those Practitioners who do not meet the requirements for a degree.
- The non-renewal of contract is premature as the Collective Agreement has made provision for a five-year transition period.

The employer indicated that all Provincial Departments of Education (PEDs) should only sign one-year contracts going forward and that the Northern Cape would be engaged. The five-year transition is only for those who will be studying, to allow them to complete their qualifications.

The employer also provided the UNISA application report as at 9 December 2025, which showed that the institution has processed only the lists from four provinces, namely, Free State, Gauteng, Northern Cape, and Western Cape, whilst the rest are in process. Out of 883 potential applicants, between these four provinces, 527 applications were received, and 236 received offers, with 81 incomplete applications owing to outstanding documents/unpaid application fee, 291 did not meet the minimum requirements, and 275 did not apply.

The Department does not have jurisdiction to have minimum requirements, including the APS score, relaxed. The Department is, however, concerned about the high number of Practitioners who did not apply, despite indicating their willingness and will visit provinces to have engagements with these groups. PEDs were advised to renew the contracts for a fixed period of three months whilst the DBE and UNISA are still dealing with admissions and administrative matters. The DBE is concerned about the low intake versus the R66-million funding sourced. Thus, the DBE will approach HEDCOM to seek a mandate to open negotiation with Higher Education institutions offering a Diploma in Grade-R Teaching to register those who do not qualify to enrol for a degree, with a provision that such diploma will be used as a bridging course towards the NQF Level-7 qualification accepted by the Council for Higher Education (CHE). The General Secretary cautioned parties that the CHE is reviewing the Minimum Requirements for Teachers Qualifications and that a diploma does not feature. Care should be taken not to create expectation for these Practitioners.

Shop stewards are urged to assist members who qualify and are willing to study, noting the availability of funds and the fact that their employment will discontinue upon full implementation of Collective Agreement 2/2025.

Members will be informed of developments.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website or contact PSA Provincial Offices.

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GENERAL MANAGER