

## **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

### **FOR WRITTEN REPLY QUESTION 263**

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#### **Mr GR Morgan (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

1. Whether her department has a policy on the use of South African Sign Language (SASL) as (a) language of study and (b) an examinable language; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what is the policy;
2. Whether the policy is reflected at provincial level; if not, why not; if so what are the relevant details,
3. How many learners (a) studied and (b) wrote matric exams on SASL in each of the most recent years? NW313E

#### **REPLY:**

1. Yes, the Department of Basic Education has several policies that have relevance to the South African Sign Language. Firstly, The Language in Education Policy (14 July 1997) published in terms of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) states that in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognizes that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, among other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language and the languages referred to in the South African Constitution.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement, Gr R – 9, 2002 states that the Languages Learning Area Statement includes all eleven official languages as well as languages approved by the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) such as South African Sign Language (p.19, Overview). It must however be noted that the process of standardising South African Sign Language, although far advanced, has not yet been completed by PANSALB.

Although Education White Paper 6 on Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, July, 2001, published in terms of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) does not make specific reference to SASL, it emphasises that language and medium of learning and teaching are critical barriers to learning that have to be addressed in education (Section 2.2.6.1). SASL is thus used as a medium of instruction in schools for deaf learners. Several Guidelines that have been developed to strengthen the implementation of the Departmental policies have emphasised the strengthening of SASL as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners (e.g. Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and Support in Special Schools and Special School Resource Centres, 2007; the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2008; Guidelines

for Inclusive Learning Programmes, 2005). The Department has also ensured that the capacity of teachers at schools for the Deaf are strengthened in the area of SASL by several nationally organised training programmes between 2006 and 2008.

SASL is not an examinable subject. The National Senior Certificate: A Qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), 2005, does not list SASL as a nationally approved subject that complies with the programme requirements of the NCS Grades 10 – 12 (General) under either Group A or Group B. Provision is made in the policy for the recognition of subjects not listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) provided that formal application is made to the Department of Basic Education according to set procedures. Such a process has not yet been formally initiated by the SASL interest groups.

2. All the above-mentioned policies are carried out by Provincial Departments of Education. The Department of Basic Education identifies priority areas of development and monitors whether these are implemented. One of the priority areas has been the strengthening of educational standards in all special schools. This includes continued professional teacher development in the use of SASL as a medium of instruction. All curriculum policies are implemented at provincial level.
3. No learners have studied SASL as a subject, nor written the National Senior Certificate examination in SASL, as PANSALB has not finalised the development of the SASL as a language. A curriculum has therefore not yet been developed for the study and examination of SASL as a subject. SASL is used as a medium of instruction in a number of special schools.

