

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY
QUESTION 190

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DATE TO REPLY IN PARLIAMENT: 20-09-2006

Mr A M Mponshane to ask the Minister of Education:

(1) Whether, in light of media reports (copy furnished) that many schools did not receive their textbooks for the 2006 school year on time, there are any plans in place to implement a more effective mechanism to ensure that learners receive the necessary material needed to begin their school work on time; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether her department has conducted an investigation to determine the number of schools that did not receive the required learning material on time; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

(1) Yes. The provincial departments of education have laid better plans for 2007. A forum, represented by all stakeholders, has been established and has identified the supply chain as the critical area for improvement. It will make recommendations to me in this regard.

My Department, through a committee of subject experts, selects textbooks for the new curriculum (grades 10, 11 and 12) and circulates them to schools in the form of a national catalogue.

The procurement of textbooks for the grades 1 to 9 is still a provincial responsibility. However, timelines for evaluation, selection and distribution have been negotiated with the provincial departments of education as well as with the Publishers' Association of South Africa.

My Department's directorate of provincial and administrative support provides me with monthly reports of progress.

(2) No. However, as part of a broader monitoring, evaluation and support process, the Department has monitored a sample of 20 schools per province to see whether learners received learning materials. The schools were selected randomly, and included schools close to the provincial offices as well as those in rural schools - furthest away from the provincial offices. The report confirms that not all learners have the necessary learning materials in all learning areas and/or subjects. This is an unacceptable state of affairs.

I am pursuing all avenues to improve the provision of learning materials to schools, including the exploration of the latest technology for the speedy and cost-effective means of printing of books, as well as improving retrieval systems in schools.