NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 215

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Mr A M Mpontshane (IFP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) Whether she is taking any steps to ensure that the quality of education for learners in the public school system is equal to that of the education which is currently provided in private schools; if so, what are the relevant details; if not,

(2) Whether she is taking any steps to narrow this quality gap to ensure equal education and opportunity for all learners; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

Reply

There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the quality of education provided by independent schools is better than in public schools, if you control for social-economic status and resource inputs. However, various steps are being taken to improve the quality of public schools.

Both public and private schools follow the National Curriculum Statement Grades R -12. In addition both the IEB, the examining body for independent schools, and public schools examinations, are accredited by Umalusi, the Quality Assurance body for school education. As the curriculum for both independent and public schools are the same, the quality of education, in terms of the curriculum, are comparable. Our efforts and plans are all directed at ensuring that the quality of outcomes associated with learning achievement are attained by the majority of learners in our public schools.

One major step undertaken is to put in place intervention measures that are evidence-based and having clear measurable targets. Such an intervention is the Annual National Assessments, which will regularly monitor the quality and levels of learning outcomes that our learners achieve. The Annual National Assessments focuses on literacy and numeracy which are critical skills for all the learning that children must experience. The Annual National Assessments will be conducted in grades 3, 6 and 9 and grade 12. Information from these assessments will assist to identify

specific areas of intervention in terms of the support to be provided to teachers or the kinds of curriculum materials that are required to address learners' needs.

To ensure equity in the provision of infrastructure to schools, my Department published the National Policy on an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment as Gazette 33283 on 11 June 2010 in terms of section 3(4) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996(Act No 27 of 1996). The aim of the policy is to regulate and formalise the provision of school infrastructure, and to provide guidelines towards an equitable provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment for all learners in South Africa as well as to indicate clear roles and responsibilities of all role players and unify accountability in the provision of school infrastructure

Over and above that, the Department is developing as part of the education sector plan, an initiative that aims to achieve Basic Functionality levels in targeted schools infrastructure within the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan Period. The aim of the initiative is to accelerate the delivery of schools infrastructure and more specifically at the improvement of existing schools infrastructure to meet strategic targets. This schools improvement programme will be launched in parallel with the current provincial infrastructure programme and structured within the MTEF financing framework.

My Department is continuously strengthening pro-poor policies to ensure that access of learners to education can be improved. The improvement in quality also involves reducing barriers that hamper effective teaching and learning.