

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY QUESTION 148

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Mr GG Boinamo to ask the Minister of Education:

(1) Whether her department has a policy in place on measures to improve the performance of principals in dysfunctional schools; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) what are the details of this policy and (b) when was it implemented;

(2) whether the development of such a policy has been discussed with the provincial education MEC's; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

(1) No, we do not have a policy in place as yet, but the draft policy framework for education management is at an advanced stage of planning and will be promulgated during 2007. The policy will create the environment in which the new standard for school leadership can operate. The school leadership standard is part of a holistic revision of the conditions of service of school principals. It is supported by the proposed new employment status for principals (the Education Institutional Management Service) and improved pay and conditions for principals. In return principals will have to sign performance management contracts with their employers.

The school leadership standard is being developed through a number of specific school-management guidelines. One of these guidelines focuses on failing principals. It allows for their redeployment in the system. Non-performing principals may be redeployed if they cannot improve, after having been taken through a process of setting targets for themselves and the school, targets that are specified in their performance contracts.

The Department has been working with principals in under-performing schools for some years. Programmes have been developed at national and provincial levels to assist in improving under-performing schools. Interventions include matric-improvement programmes, school-development programmes, the national School Effectiveness Project, and a range of partnership projects, including the Integrated Education Programme and the Quality Learning Project. The Department has just appointed a project manager at senior level to manage and co-ordinate initiatives designed to assist and intervene in under-performing schools. Research undertaken by the Department has indicated that schools can be 'turned around' within a couple of years.

In addition a specific training programme for principals, who are managing under-performing schools, is being developed. It will use many of the same materials and practice-based methods as the new national qualification for school leadership.

(2) Yes the development of the policy framework and the school leadership has been a collaborative process, discussed both in the Council of Education Ministers meetings and the Heads of Education Departments' Committee meetings on a number of occasions during 2005 and 2006.