

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY QUESTION 110

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Mr G G Boinamo to ask the Minister of Education:

(1) With regard to the fact that Grade 10 learners in the Western Cape had a sixty percent failure rate in their mid-year exams which was structured according to the Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum, (a) what is her department's explanation for this result, (b) what are the shortcomings in the FET curriculum and (c) how does her department intend rectifying these shortcomings;

(2) whether there are any plans to review the training of teachers who have to implement the FET curriculum; if not, why not; if so, what plans?

N1090E

REPLY:

(1) The Western Cape Education Department report that the failure rate varied widely across schools and my colleague MEC Dugmore answered a question on the specific reasons for failure in the provincial legislature only yesterday. I draw your attention to that response, but let me highlight two points he made.

First, there are no higher and standard grades in the new curriculum. In the past a higher grade failure could be converted into a standard grade pass. This cannot happen any longer. So in some schools the poor pass rate in home languages increased the number of learners who failed quite dramatically. This subject is compulsory.

Second, some schools reported on sections of assessment only and did not include CASS or oral marks as required. That also affected results negatively.

But beyond the specific details there are some general remarks that need to be made about the higher standards demanded in the new curriculum.

It is important to note that the new curriculum for Grades R – 9 has been available for teachers since 2002 and teachers have been encouraged to work towards the new higher standards in preparation for full-scale implementation in 2006 and 2007. In the same way the new curriculum for grades 10 –12 has been available for teachers since 2003 and teachers were encouraged to prepare for 2006. Many schools have done this and report

good progress. However, changing to the new curriculum is not going to be easy and will require a very special effort by parents, learners and teachers.

It is not so much that 'change is difficult' or that 'the curriculum requires a change in teaching approach'. Much more significant is the fact that the curriculum is more cognitively demanding. It requires extensive reading and extended writing. It requires that all learners study some form of mathematics; that learners solve problems and apply their knowledge in known and unknown situations.

(2) No, we are not going to review the training of teachers. We have already reviewed the training of teachers on the new curriculum. Initially when we began to introduce the new curriculum we trained teachers to focus on the principles of child-centred pedagogy through a light programme of afternoon workshops.

However, in 2005 we adopted a different approach for the new high-school curriculum. The focus was on subject knowledge, provided through a 100 hours of instruction, with monetary incentives for attendance and knowledge acquisition.

This teacher training programme continued in 2006 for grade 11 and 12 teachers. Training will continue in September 2006 and in the April and July holidays of 2007 and 2008. Many teachers have also taken responsibility for developing their knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum and are commended for these efforts.