

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1158.

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1158. Mrs D van der Walt (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

- (1) What (a) is the number of teachers in her department who are able to teach in isiXhosa mother-tongue language and (b) is her department's plan to develop isiXhosa as a medium of instruction;
- (2) what steps is her department taking to develop languages other than English or Afrikaans so that they can adequately be implemented as a medium of instruction in schools;
- (3) whether her department has any plans to work with the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation to open teacher training colleges and produce teachers who are qualified to teach in mother-tongue languages; if not; why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (4) whether her department conducted any research on the impact of teaching and learning in mother-tongue languages for reading and writing for meaning; if not; why not; if so, what were the outcomes of such a study?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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QUESTION 1158.

Response

1(a) The Eastern Cape Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education initiative has 2 295 teachers who are able to teach through the medium of IsiXhosa and Sesotho.

1(b) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is in the process of putting a plan in place to promote all the nine previously marginalised official African languages as languages of learning and teaching beyond Grade 3.

2. The DBE is collaborating with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) to put a plan in place to promote the nine previously marginalised official African languages (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, IsiNdebele, Siswati, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga) as languages of learning and teaching post Foundation Phase. The DBE is establishing a task team comprising different stakeholders. The Old Mutual is part of the Task Team. So is the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. We are still in the very initial stage of the plan and trying to identify and bring in all the relevant stakeholders.

The DBE, through the Eastern Cape Education's own initiative, piloted the Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education wherein IsiXhosa and Sesotho were utilised as languages of learning and teaching for Mathematics and Science and Technology beyond Grade 3. The learnings from the Eastern Cape Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education pilot taught us to be very prudent on dealing with a programme of this nature.

3. The DBE has a working relationship with the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (DHESI) on teacher production. The DHESI will be part of the African Languages Mother Tongue Education Task Team. The different options of accelerating teacher training in Mother-Tongue Based instruction will be explored by the Task Team and use of Teacher Training Colleges, could be one of the options. However, Teacher Training Colleges do not fall under the jurisdiction of the DBE.

4. Research worldwide shows that learners learn best through their home languages. The DBE has continuously been conducting research on the impact of learning in one's home language. The Early Grade Reading Studies (EGRS) were designed as nested Randomised Control Trials led by the DBE in collaboration with other academics. The EGRS studies focus on the Foundation Phase, evaluating different interventions for supporting the teaching of reading. The studies aim to build evidence about what works to improve the learning and teaching of early grade reading in South African schools.

EGRS was a comparison of the cost-effectiveness of three promising intervention models to improve reading outcomes in Setswana as a Home Language. The

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1158.

interventions were (i) a structured learning programme with lesson plans and integrated materials as well as centralised training, (ii) the same structured programme with lesson plan integrated materials but with on-site coaching, and (iii) a parent involvement intervention.

Of the three interventions the coaching showed a substantial positive impact after two years of intervention. Learners who received two years of this coaching intervention were approximately 40% of a year of learning ahead of the students in the schools that received no intervention. The gains were sustained when the same learners were measured in Grade 4, one year after the intervention they were still about 40% of a year of learning ahead. A further follow-up on these learners was conducted in 2021 to measure long-term gains and the data thereof is currently being analysed.

An improvement plan was developed based on the recommendations. This was adopted by Cabinet and the implementation of the improvement plan has been ongoing. Documents relating to EGRS are attached.