

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2215.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 09/05/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 18/2025

2215. Mr S L Ngcobo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) (a) Given the crucial role of her department in shaping the future of the Republic through quality education and how essential the use of effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are to ensure accountability, transparency and continuous improvement, and (b) in view of persistent challenges around learner performance, infrastructure delivery and curriculum implementation, what specific M&E systems are currently being used to assess the effectiveness of the Early Childhood Development programmes across all provinces;

(2) (a) how often are school infrastructure projects, particularly those involving sanitation and classroom construction, independently evaluated and (b) what consequences follow when targets are consistently missed;

(3) what mechanisms are in place to track and publicly report on the implementation and impact of learner support interventions aimed at improving literacy and numeracy outcomes in underperforming districts?

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Response

(1) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) and its social partners have invested substantial time and resources in establishing the administrative information systems and frameworks necessary to support quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) service delivery and routine reporting. Key initiatives include:

- **Early Childhood Administration and Reporting System (eCares):** The DBE is currently developing and implementing eCares as a bespoke national management information system for ECD. This system will significantly improve the administration of ECD programmes by enabling access to up-to-date information regarding enrolment, programme reach, and quality across the country.
- **National ECD Outcomes Framework:** This framework supports the National Integrated ECD Policy by enabling government departments to report collectively on progress towards improved child outcomes across all domains of the Nurturing Care Framework.
- **Thrive by Five Index:** First conducted in 2021, the Thrive by Five Index tracks the proportion of children on track developmentally in early learning, physical growth, and socio-emotional functioning. A second round of the survey has been completed and is due for public release in August 2025.
- **Quality Assurance and Support System:** The DBE is developing a national Quality Assurance and Support System for ECD. This will provide clear quality standards and a comprehensive support framework to guide ECD programmes in achieving these standards.

Together, this dynamic suite of monitoring and evaluation tools places South Africa on a strong footing to ensure the progressive realisation of high-quality ECD services across all provinces.

(2)(a) Public school infrastructure projects, including sanitation and classroom construction, are subject to continuous monitoring through an established Infrastructure Assessment Framework. Evaluations typically occur:

- **During the planning phase,** to assess design feasibility and identify risks;
- **At major project milestones,** such as the start of construction, practical completion, and final handover; and

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- **Post-disaster or event**, to determine the extent of damage and requirements for reconstruction.

(b) Where targets are consistently missed, several remedial actions may be taken, including:

- Re-evaluation and adjustment of project scope and timelines;
- Reallocation of budget or reprioritisation of projects;
- Termination or penalisation of underperforming contractors or implementing agents; and
- Enhanced reporting and accountability mechanisms, including referrals to law enforcement or Treasury for serious infractions.

(3) Learner performance in literacy and numeracy is currently tracked through **School-Based Assessments (SBAs)** administered by teachers and moderated at the school and district levels. While there is no system-wide external assessment of literacy outcomes in the intermediate or senior phases, the DBE continues to implement targeted literacy interventions in selected districts.

These interventions are not based exclusively on district performance rankings but focus primarily on **Quintile 1 to 3 schools** to identify gaps and pilot scalable models. Examples include:

- The **Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS)** and the **Early Grade Reading Programme (EGRP)**, which have provided valuable evidence on effective reading support in African languages. These programmes are not yet implemented at scale.

The DBE is working toward expanding its learner support monitoring systems, guided by evidence from these pilot initiatives, to ensure stronger national reporting and accountability mechanisms in future.