NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2723.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 16/05/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 20/2025

2723. Ms P P Mngadi (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

With reference to her reply to question 1721 on 15 April 2024 and the Fourth Quarterly Report on the performance of the Department of Basic Education wherein it is indicated that 462 public schools are not offering Mathematics and/or Technical Mathematics in Grade 12, and that 427 of the specified schools are labelled as small and non-viable, and given her department's R32.6 billion budget for the 2024-25 financial year (details furnished), (a) how does her department justify being this far behind on its core mandate of equitable access to quality learning and (b) on what date will her department initiate time-bound, specific interventions to rectify the specified systemic failure?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2723.

Response

(1)(a) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) acknowledges that 464 public schools are currently not offering Mathematics and/or Technical Mathematics in Grade 12, with 427 of these identified as small and non-viable schools.

The DBE has advised that the key contributing factor to this is the application of the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN), which allocate teaching posts based on learner enrolment. In small schools with limited enrolment, it is often not feasible to appoint separate teachers for Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy due to insufficient weighted learner numbers. This often results in the exclusion of Mathematics offerings in favour of Mathematical Literacy.

For example, Bovaal Agricultural School in the Free State, with a total enrolment of 295 learners across Grades R to 12 and only 11 allocated teaching posts, cannot accommodate an additional Mathematics teacher without exceeding its staffing allocation. Many schools in this category have expressed a willingness to offer both subjects, but are constrained by staffing and budgetary realities.

(b) While the DBE cannot override staffing allocations determined at the provincial level, the DBE is actively supporting provinces to improve Mathematics provision through a range of time-bound and systemic interventions, many of which were detailed in the response to PQ 1721. These include:

- **Regular engagement with provinces**, including monthly Mathematics coordination meetings to share strategies, track implementation and provide support.
- **Curriculum support and advocacy**, encouraging learners to take Mathematics based on their abilities and career aspirations.
- **The MST Conditional Grant**, which supports 500 secondary schools, 300 technical high schools and 200 feeder primary schools, providing equipment, teacher training and learning resources for Mathematics.
- **Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)**, which aims to improve comprehension and performance in Mathematics by supporting instruction in both home language and English.
- **Review of Post Provisioning Norms**, to improve post distribution and potentially reduce Foundation Phase class sizes, allowing for more targeted Mathematics teaching in the early grades.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2723.

- **STEM Focus Schools Programme**, which aims to expand access to Mathematics and Science in purpose-designed learning environments.

- **Curriculum resource improvements**, including the update of the National Catalogue for Foundation Phase learning and teaching materials.

- **Early Childhood Development and foundational literacy and numeracy**, which remain a key ministerial priority. Improving basic numeracy skills from an early age ensures more learners are capable and confident to pursue Mathematics in higher grades.

The Minister and the DBE are committed to improving access to quality teaching and learning for all learners, including in gateway subjects like Mathematics. While financial and structural limitations exist, a combination of targeted interventions, resource alignment and policy reviews are being undertaken to ensure more learners, including those in small and rural schools, have access to Mathematics education.