

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2790**

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**2790. Ms N M Gasa (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

**[564] [Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is more than quota (Rule 137(8))]**

(1) By what date will she implement compulsory international benchmark testing such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for all Mathematics teachers, given that the Grade 9 teachers in the Republic scored below their own learners in the 2019 TIMSS teacher competency assessment; (2) whether she will table her department's plan to fire incompetent teachers and replace them with qualified professionals; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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##### **Response**

(1) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) currently participates in a range of international benchmark assessments, including the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ). These assessments are conducted at learner level and occasionally include contextual questionnaires for educators to assess their pedagogical content knowledge and practices.

Whilst the DBE does not currently mandate TIMSS-style competency assessments for all Mathematics educators, it uses data from international and national assessments to identify gaps in educator knowledge and inform targeted professional development interventions. Owing to cost considerations, the DBE has no immediate plans to implement universal international benchmarking tests for all Mathematics educators but remains committed to improving the quality of teaching through evidence-based training, support and continuous professional development.

The DBE works closely with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) to ensure that all educators meet minimum qualification and professional development requirements. The Funza Lushaka bursary scheme, subject-specific in-service training and teacher upgrading programmes also contribute to improved Mathematics teaching competencies.

The DBE is committed to future participation in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) by learners at Grade 5 and Grade 9 levels in 2027. TIMSS does not assess educator competencies but educators complete questionnaires to provide further context on teaching and learning conditions and approaches.

(2) The DBE does not have a policy to dismiss educators based solely on learner performance or benchmarking results. It must also be noted that the DBE is not the employer of educators in public schools.

In terms of section 3 of the Employment of Educators Act, the Head of each Provincial Education Department (PED) is the employer of all educators appointed to publicly funded posts on the educator establishments of public schools in that province. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the respective PEDs to manage the performance of educators in their employ and implement any related human resource interventions.

PEDs implement performance management systems to evaluate educator effectiveness. Where educators are found to be underperforming, the applicable procedures in terms of the Employment of Educators Act and the Labour Relations

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

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Act are followed. This includes developmental support, performance improvement plans and, where necessary, disciplinary processes.

Should any educator be identified as incompetent, he or she must be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Relations Act and the Employment of Educators Act by the relevant PED.

Nevertheless, the DBE has implemented a range of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South African schools. These include:

- **Improving Teacher Quality:** In collaboration with SACE and Umalusi, the DBE promotes teacher accountability and professional standards.
- **Teacher Development Programmes:** The DBE offers continuous professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing the skills and subject knowledge of educators.
- **Education Policy Reviews:** The DBE regularly reviews education policies to strengthen teaching quality and improve learner outcomes.

To address incompetence among educators, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) enforces a code of professional ethics. Educators who fail to uphold these standards may face disciplinary action in line with SACE's mandate.