

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2797.**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 24/2025**

**2797. Mr S G Mwali (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

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

Whether her department has any mandate with regard to delayed payments to education suppliers in KwaZulu-Natal; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) is the detailed timeline for settling all outstanding debts to education suppliers and (b) measures will she implement to mitigate the impact of the delayed payments on the delivery of educational services in the specified province?

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#### **Response**

The payment of suppliers and service providers appointed by Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) is the responsibility of those PEDs, in accordance with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the Division of Revenue Act (DoRA). Funds for such payments are drawn from the equitable share allocation, which is transferred to PEDs by National Treasury through their respective Provincial Treasuries. Accordingly, the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Minister of Basic Education have no direct mandate or authority to issue instructions regarding such payments. That authority lies with the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

That said, the Minister of Basic Education and the DBE consider the matter of delayed payments, particularly in respect of core education services, to be of serious concern. The Minister was informed that the cause of the delay is linked to administrative and budgeting constraints at the provincial level. Given the essential role that service providers and educators play in enabling access to quality education, the DBE has taken several proactive steps to support KZN in addressing these challenges.

For the first time, under the leadership of the Minister, the DBE has conducted a comprehensive financial analysis of all nine provinces. KwaZulu-Natal was identified as a high-risk province, and the Minister subsequently mandated the Director-General and senior officials to engage with the KZN Department of Education (KZN DoE), the KZN Provincial Treasury, and National Treasury to determine the depth of the financial crisis and identify possible interventions.

Key meetings to date include those held on 12 November 2024 and 2 December 2024, where the KZN DoE provided detailed input on outstanding debts to suppliers. Following these engagements, the KZN DoE was directed to develop a credible financial recovery plan and submit it to the KZN Provincial Treasury for approval.

Subsequently, on 15 May 2025, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Basic Education convened a high-level meeting with the MEC for Education, the MEC for Finance, and representatives from the Office of the Premier in KwaZulu-Natal. The following resolutions were taken:

- The KZN DoE will share its approved comprehensive recovery plan with the DBE for review and input;
- The Minister of Basic Education will initiate further discussions with the Minister of Finance to outline potential national support mechanisms and assess the impact of the funding crisis on core services;

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- A joint oversight team comprising the DBE, National Treasury, KZN Provincial Treasury, and the KZN DoE will be established to oversee implementation of the recovery plan; and
- Regular update and monitoring meetings will be convened to assess progress and ensure accountability.

On 26 May 2025, the Minister convened a meeting of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), attended by all MECs and Heads of Departments, to discuss sector-wide financial risks. At this meeting, the Minister formally requested all provinces to submit financial recovery plans by the next CEM session. These plans will be analysed by the DBE for credibility and alignment with the broader objective of protecting teaching, learning, and infrastructure delivery. Where necessary, technical support and oversight will be provided.

The Minister has also emphasised that provinces must prioritise spending on essential services, such as the provision of teachers, school infrastructure, and learner support, over non-core or vanity projects. Public funds must be used effectively to support the educational needs of learners, particularly in under-resourced and rural communities.

In conclusion, while the Minister does not have a direct mandate to settle supplier payments in KZN, she remains actively involved in ensuring that proper governance, accountability and oversight mechanisms are in place to resolve the situation and protect the right to basic education for all learners.

The Honourable Member is respectfully requested to refer the specific details of supplier payment timelines to the MEC responsible for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, in line with section 92(3)(b) of the Constitution and Rule 134(5)(b) of the National Assembly Rules.