

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2917.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 23/05/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 22/2025

2917. Ms P P Xaba-Ntshaba (ANC) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Whether her department has the power to implement specific strategies to address the funding crisis in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

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Response

The Minister of Basic Education and the Department of Basic Education do not have legal authority to impose and implement specific strategies to address the funding crisis in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE), but may engage with and provide recommendations to the MEC for Education and KZN DoE. The Minister of Basic Education only assumes direct intervention powers if a province is subject to a formal intervention in terms of section 100 of the Constitution and such intervention vests such powers in her.

However, as part of the national government's oversight mandate to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective governance, the Minister of Basic Education has taken proactive steps to support the province. The Minister instructed the Director-General and senior officials of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to engage with the KZN DoE, the KZN Provincial Treasury, and National Treasury to determine the depth of the crisis.

Several meetings have taken place, including on 12 November 2024 and 2 December 2024, where the KZN DoE provided detailed inputs regarding outstanding payments to service providers. The KZN DoE was directed to draw up a financial recovery plan and submit it to the KZN Provincial Treasury for review and approval.

On 15 May 2025, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Basic Education and MECs responsible for Education and Finance in KwaZulu-Natal, along with a representative from the Office of the Premier, met to address the matter. The following resolutions were taken:

- The KZN DoE will share the approved comprehensive recovery plan with the DBE for further review and input;
- The Minister of Basic Education will initiate further discussions with the Minister of Finance to identify measures to address the crisis, including an assessment of affected services and the KZN DoE's proposed strategies to manage them;
- A high-level task team comprising officials from National Treasury, DBE, KZN Provincial Treasury, and the KZN DoE will oversee the implementation of the recovery plan; and
- Regular update meetings will be held to monitor progress and provide necessary support.

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Furthermore, during the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) meeting on 26 May 2025, chaired by the Minister of Basic Education, all provinces were instructed to submit financial recovery plans. These plans will be reviewed by the DBE to provide technical guidance and ensure their alignment with sector priorities.

While the Minister of Basic Education and DBE cannot directly control provincial budgets, they remain committed to using all available mechanisms to support provinces in ensuring that financial constraints do not compromise the provision of quality education.