

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 5.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 03/03/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 05/2025

- 5. Ms Z N Ngcobo (KwaZulu-Natal: MKP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

Addressing educator shortages

What strategies will she undertake to (a) address educator shortages and (b) improve educator training, including the provision of incentives for educators to work in rural and disadvantaged areas (details furnished)?

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Response

The issue of "educator shortages" needs to be considered in context. Information indicates that, in quantitative terms, there is no shortage of the supply of initial teacher education graduates. In contrast, a number of indicators, such as the rate of absorption of initial teacher graduates in public sector posts and reports on an increasing pool of unemployed educators, point to a surplus. A recent internal departmental report found that only 64% of the 2018 Foundation Phase graduates found work in the public schooling system in any year from 2019 to 2022, and only 55% were employed in this system in 2022.

However, available information also shows that there is a distributional shortage, though to a limited extent and not widespread. Existing information shows that despite oversupply in absolute terms:

- Certain schools struggle to recruit in certain subjects (particularly mathematics and science in secondary schools);
- There is a general undersupply of Foundation Phase graduates and graduates who are trained to teach in an African language as a Language of Teaching and Learning; and
- There is skewed geographical distribution of educators resulting in schools in some remote and rural areas struggling to recruit and retain qualified teachers.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) currently utilises the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme (FLBS) to address areas of shortage, at least at the level of supply. The scheme focuses on mathematics, science and languages (especially African languages) in the Foundation Phase. The FLBS also sets aside a portion of bursaries for district-based recruitment to address the geographical shortage. Given the observed undersupply of Foundation Phase graduates, the FLBS will allocate more bursaries in this area.

The allocation of educators to public schools by Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) is determined in accordance with the Post Provisioning Norms that determine the distribution of educator posts to public schools (which account for over 80% of the budget allocated to our PEDs).

Under the leadership of the Minister of Basic Education, the DBE is currently ensuring that the Post Provisioning Norms are reviewed as a matter of urgency. Unlike most other education policies, the Post Provisioning Norms have not been updated in over 20 years. Our education landscape and priorities have changed during this time.

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Therefore, we must take steps to ensure that these Norms account for our drive to achieve quality universal access to Grade R and our focus on improving reading and calculating in the Foundation Phase.

The Post Provisioning Norms, in their current form, favour high schools that offer large numbers of subjects in Grades 10, 11, and 12. The consequences are massive inefficiencies and large Foundation Phase classes, which should essentially be under 30 to effectively teach reading.

Through the review of the Post Provisioning Norms, we hope to ensure that these Norms will better support our efforts to improve learning outcomes across all phases of schooling, provide for a more efficient distribution of educator posts and assist PEDs in mitigating the impact of budget reductions.

In addition to managing the supply through instruments such as the FLBS, the DBE works closely with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), through DHET's enrolment planning mandate to influence the profile of initial teacher education enrolment to focus on undersupply phases and subjects.

In addition to managing teacher supply and influencing enrolment planning, the DBE is working with Provincial Education Departments to strengthen recruitment strategies for rural and hard-to-staff schools.

While financial incentives for rural placement fall under the jurisdiction of provinces, the DBE supports targeted measures to attract and retain educators in disadvantaged areas. Ultimately, addressing educator shortages — particularly in high-demand subjects and remote communities — requires a coordinated approach across all spheres of government.

To ensure that rural schools attract and retain quality educators, the DBE works with PEDs to introduce the following:

- **Rural Incentives for Educators:** These include housing allowances, transport subsidies and additional incentives for educators who commit to teaching in rural and under-resourced communities.
- **Teacher Development Centres (TDCs):** Located in rural provinces, these centres provide ongoing professional development and mentorship to support educators in isolated areas.
- **Online and Distance Learning Support:** The DBE is expanding digital educator training programmes to ensure that rural educators have access to continuous professional development without the need for relocation.

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The DBE remains committed to ensuring that every learner has access to a qualified educator, and that the teaching profession continues to receive the necessary support, recognition, and investment to deliver quality education for all learners.