

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 99.

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99. Mr M A Maimane (BOSA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Given that she committed to reviewing Grade 12 pass requirements and curriculum delivery through the National Education and Training Council, what (a) are the reasons that there is still no timeline for its operationalisation and (b) steps will be taken to improve curriculum delivery in Quintile 1 to 3 schools?

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Response

The quality of learning outcomes is not solely dependent on minimum pass marks per subject but is influenced by multiple factors that impact the effectiveness of teaching and learning. A range of elements contribute to the overall success of learners, and addressing these holistically is essential to improving education outcomes across all schools.

One of the most important factors is the protection of teaching and learning time. Instructional time must be maximised and unnecessary disruptions — such as extra-curricular activities, school closures, absenteeism and administrative burdens — must be minimised to ensure that learners receive the full benefit of the curriculum during the allocated hours for teaching and learning.

Another key factor is teacher training and professional development. Teachers must be adequately equipped with both subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to effectively deliver content, particularly in critical subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Language. Targeted training and ongoing support ensure that educators can adapt to curriculum changes and meet the learning needs of their students.

Ensuring access to learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) is also critical. Every learner and teacher must have access to essential resources, including textbooks, digital content, and supplementary learning aids, to enhance curriculum delivery and ensure equity in learning opportunities.

Finally, assessment and targeted support play a crucial role in ensuring learners receive the support they need. Schools must implement effective assessment strategies that identify learning gaps early, allowing for timely intervention and remediation before issues become entrenched. This ensures that learners master key competencies before progressing to higher grades.

In line with my commitment to evidence-based policymaking, the National Education and Training Council (NETC) is being operationalised as an advisory body to guide policy interventions on school education-related matters, including curriculum delivery, assessment standards and learner support. The call for nominations for NETC members closed at the end of January 2025, and the selection process is currently underway.

Once operational, the NETC will focus on:

- Providing expert guidance on the review of National Senior Certificate pass requirements, ensuring alignment with international best practices while maintaining fairness and accessibility for learners;

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- Assessing the broader curriculum delivery framework, particularly in under-resourced schools, to identify gaps and propose targeted interventions to improve learner outcomes; and
- Reviewing the resourcing model applicable to schooling in South Africa, to ensure that the model is responsive to the inequalities in the system.

The NETC will ensure that any potential changes to pass requirements or curriculum structure are evidence-based, internationally benchmarked and aligned with South Africa's developmental needs. Timelines for its full operationalisation and key deliverables will be communicated in due course.

To improve learner outcomes in under-resourced schools, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is implementing several targeted interventions:

Firstly, teacher development and support is being expanded. The DBE is intensifying subject-specific training for teachers, particularly in Mathematics, Science, and Language, through both in-person and online professional development programmes. Teacher Development Centres, online learning platforms, and professional learning communities are being leveraged to ensure continuous upskilling of educators.

Secondly, provision of learning and teaching support materials is being prioritised. The DBE is ensuring that all learners in no-fee schools receive comprehensive Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM), including printed and digital resources. Additionally, subject-specific support materials, such as mathematics kits, science laboratory equipment, and reading materials are being provided to enhance practical learning experiences.

Thirdly, remedial and catch-up programmes are being strengthened. The DBE is expanding interventions such as the Reading and Mathematics Improvement Programmes to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills. After-school, weekend, and holiday learning programmes are also being expanded to provide additional support for struggling learners.

The responsibility for school infrastructure development and maintenance lies with the Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), as outlined in the South African Schools Act and the Government Immovable Asset Management Act. This includes the construction of new schools, expansion of existing facilities, and ensuring basic services such as sanitation, water, and electricity are in place.

The DBE works closely with PEDs to monitor infrastructure projects and provide necessary support to ensure that provincial infrastructure priorities align with national education goals. Infrastructure challenges, particularly in historically under-resourced

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areas, remain a concern. To mitigate overcrowding and expand access to quality education, key interventions include:

- Accelerating infrastructure projects in high-demand schools to reduce overcrowding, improve sanitation, and expand classroom space.
- Ensuring that PEDs prioritise the use of funds allocated through the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and do not return unspent funds to the National Treasury while infrastructure backlogs persist.
- Supporting PEDs in deploying mobile classrooms and temporary structures in areas experiencing high learner growth while long-term infrastructure expansion continues.
- Enhancing oversight on infrastructure project implementation to avoid delays and ensure that construction projects meet quality standards.

Furthermore, e-learning initiatives are being expanded, and efforts to improve connectivity and device provision are underway to ensure that digital learning opportunities reach remote and under-resourced communities.

Ensuring that education reform is guided by research and best practice is essential, and this is precisely where the NETC will play a key role. Any potential changes, including revisions to pass requirements, must be carefully assessed, internationally benchmarked, and aligned with South Africa's developmental needs.

The debate around pass marks cannot be separated from broader systemic improvements. It is not just about setting numerical benchmarks but about ensuring that every learner receives the support they need to succeed. That is why my Department is taking a comprehensive approach — focusing on teacher development, strengthened curriculum delivery, enhanced learning materials, and infrastructure expansion.

The DBE will continue working closely with PEDs to monitor and support infrastructure projects, ensuring that school development aligns with national priorities and that no learner is left behind due to a lack of adequate facilities.

The NETC will provide the necessary research and policy guidance to ensure that these efforts lead to a stronger, more equitable, and forward-looking education system — one that prepares every learner, regardless of their background, for meaningful participation in the economy and society.