

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1585.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 28/03/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: `13/2025

1585. Mr M Shikwambana (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) (a) What number of school principal vacancies are not filled in each province, (b) how long have the specified vacancies been open, (c) what (i) are the reasons for the vacancies and (ii) steps have been taken to fill the vacancies,

(2) (a) what number of vacancies are there for (i) Mathematics and (ii) Physical Science teachers, (b) how long have the specified vacancies been open, (c) what are the reasons for the vacancies and (d) what steps have been taken to fill the vacancies?

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Response

According to section 3 of the Employment of Educators Act:

- the Head of a Provincial Education Department (PED) is the employer of all educators (including school principals) in the service of that PED in posts on the educator establishment of public schools for all purposes of employment, except for the determination of salaries and other conditions of service (for which the Minister of Basic Education is considered the employer); and
- a public school is the employer of all persons in the service of that school in posts created and funded by the School Governing Body of that work (which excludes principals of public schools).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) therefore does not directly manage staffing, resource allocation or funding for the employment of educators (including school principals) within provinces, as these responsibilities fall under the jurisdiction of the respective PEDs. The responsibility for ensuring that public schools are adequately staffed for the 2025 academic year lies with each PED, which manages educator recruitment based on available vacancies, funding and school needs.

In line with national policy, PEDs recruit and employ qualified educators (including school principals) on an ongoing basis, depending on vacant funded posts at schools. Educator vacancies arise in two primary ways:

1. Permanent vacancies due to attrition: When a post is vacated due to retirement, resignation or other forms of attrition, the post is either immediately filled permanently or temporarily filled pending an appointment in that post on a permanent basis.
2. Temporary vacancies due to short-term absences: When educators (including school principals) are on maternity leave, ill-health leave or other temporary absences, substitute educators are appointed for the duration of the absence.

To streamline the recruitment process and minimise delays, public schools are permitted to:

- Advertise vacant posts locally, allowing for a quicker turnaround in filling positions;
- Select candidates from recruitment databases maintained by PEDs, where such systems exist; and

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- Make temporary appointments to vacant promotional posts, ensuring that school management structures remain functional while recruitment processes for permanent appointments are underway.

PEDs are mandated to ensure that vacant posts, including those of school principals and educators, are filled in a timeous and transparent manner. This includes maintaining updated records of vacant positions, and ensuring proper procedures are followed for recruitment, selection, and appointment.

Vacant posts are typically advertised through the provincial bulletins issued by each PED. These bulletins detail available positions, requirements, and deadlines for application. The process ensures that recruitment is conducted in a standardised and equitable manner across all public schools.

The DBE plays an oversight and support role, including monitoring provincial performance on educator provisioning and facilitating system-level improvements in recruitment and retention.

The DBE is currently in the process of collating all information requested from all nine PEDs. Once all PED inputs have been received and verified, a consolidated and comprehensive response can be submitted to Parliament.