

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1721.

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1721. Mr M Shikwambana (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

What (a) number of schools are not offering Mathematics in each province, (b) are the reasons for not offering Mathematics and (c) steps has her department taken to rectify the situation?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1721.

Response

(a) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has advised that the total number of public schools not offering Mathematics per province is as follows:

PROVINCES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOT OFFERING MATHEMATICS
EASTERN CAPE	84
FREE STATE	14
GAUTENG	31
KWAZULU-NATAL	135
LIMPOPO	78
MPUMALANGA	11
NORTH WEST	31
NORTHERN CAPE	19
WESTERN CAPE	61
NATIONAL	464

(b)

The DBE has advised that learners, in consultation with their parents and schools, are required to select subject streams in Grade 10 that align with their interests and prospective career paths. While Mathematics remains a high-priority subject, schools — particularly smaller ones — may not have sufficient resources or demand to offer both Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy.

Additionally, some schools face challenges such as:

- Limited enrolment in the Mathematics stream, making it unviable to run a full class;
- A shortage of qualified Mathematics teachers; and

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1721.

- Budgetary or timetabling constraints that limit subject offerings.

(c) The DBE actively promotes the offering of Mathematics in all schools. Some of the key interventions to achieve this include:

- Regular engagement with provinces: Monthly Mathematics meetings are held with all Provincial Education Departments to share best practices, address challenges and promote increased enrolment in Mathematics from Grades 10 to 12.
- Subject advocacy and curriculum support: Schools and learners are consistently encouraged to choose Mathematics over Mathematical Literacy where appropriate. Provinces are also supported in strengthening teacher capacity and learner performance in Mathematics.
- Improving teaching methodology: Ongoing professional development includes a focus on methodology, with the aim of enhancing learner understanding and retention in Mathematics.

The Minister of Basic Education, together with the DBE, is committed to improving learner participation and performance in Mathematics. Several strategic interventions have been put in place, many of which align with the findings from recent global and regional assessments, including TIMSS, SEACMEQ V, and SASE.

1. MST Conditional Grant Support

The Mathematics, Science and Technology Conditional Grant supports teaching, learning and resourcing in 500 Secondary Schools, 300 Technical High Schools and 200 Feeder Primary Schools. The grant provides for the procurement of equipment, teacher training and learner support to strengthen Mathematics instruction.

2. Trilateral Cooperation with DHET and DSTI

The DBE is reviewing and updating the Trilateral Co-operation Framework with the Departments of Higher Education and Science, Technology and Innovation. This initiative is intended to consolidate efforts across the three departments and maximise the impact of aligned Mathematics priorities (among other priorities), particularly in teacher development and research uptake.

3. STEM Focus Schools Programme

New impetus is being placed on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Focus Schools Programme. This is aimed at expanding

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1721.

the number of schools that offer specialised learning environments for learners with aptitudes in STEM, allowing them to pursue deeper, skills-based engagement with technical and scientific subjects.

4. Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)

Recognising the language barrier that hampers comprehension in Mathematics, the DBE is rolling out a Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education initiative. This will allow learners to access Mathematics instruction in both English and their home language, improving understanding and performance. This includes investment in bilingual learning and teaching support materials and the training of educators in bilingual pedagogies.

5. Strengthening Foundation Phase and ECD

As emphasised by Minister Gwarube, the DBE is prioritising Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Foundation Phase education as the cornerstone of future Mathematics success. A mass registration drive for ECD programmes, the development of National Curriculum Framework-aligned materials, and professional development for ECD practitioners and Foundation Phase educators are underway. Improving literacy and numeracy at an early age will directly impact future Mathematics participation and performance outcomes.

6. Review of Post Provisioning Norms

To support early Mathematics development, the DBE is reviewing the Post Provisioning Norms to ensure smaller Foundation Phase class sizes and prioritisation of teaching posts that enhance numeracy development, addressing inefficiencies in current post distribution.

7. Strengthening Curriculum Support and Resources

The DBE is updating the National Catalogue of Learning and Teaching Support Materials for the Foundation Phase. This ensures that all schools, including those in under-resourced areas, have access to high-quality, age-appropriate Mathematics-related resources.

8. Protecting Teaching and Learning Time

Protecting teaching and learning time has been emphasised as essential to improving outcomes. Through the five Ts — Time on Task, Teacher Preparedness, Testing at the Right Level, Textbooks and Technology — the

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1721.

DBE is ensuring that schools are focusing on what matters most for learner success.

These measures are part of our broader strategy to improve learner participation and performance in Mathematics and ensure that more schools are equipped and encouraged to offer the subject.