

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 5359**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 12/09/2025**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: NO 38 – 2025**

**5359. Ms P P Mngadi (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

In light of the fact that public schools serve over 13,5 million learners across nearly 25 000 schools, with an average of 571 learners in each school, almost double that of independent schools, what measures has her department taken to reduce the growing (a) learner-to-school and (b) learner-to-educator ratios in public schools, which continue to place enormous strain on resources and undermine equitable access to quality education?

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION 5359

##### Response

With regard to the learner-to-school ratio, a rising value is not necessarily a problem or impediment to improving learning outcomes. Given the national policy focus on rationalising small and non-viable schools over the last decade, we should expect the learner-to-school ratio to increase. This only becomes a problem for the quality of education if the physical infrastructure and staffing of a school do not expand in line with enrolment.

Stagnating budgets for capital investments remain a concern. The Minister has already initiated a new round of discussions with the Presidency and National Treasury to address what she has acknowledged as a budget crisis in the basic education sector. The most recent School Monitoring Survey indicates that the percentage of schools with sufficient classrooms has remained largely unchanged, 69% in 2011 compared to 68% in 2022. While this stability is notable, the system ideally should have moved closer to 100% by now.

On learner-to-educator ratios, the figure has remained broadly stable at around 29.5 nationally since 2015. However, this stability has been sustained in part through below-inflation salary adjustments for educators, which reduced average costs but are not a sustainable solution. To address this, the Minister announced in her 2025 Budget Speech that a **comprehensive review of the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN)** is being undertaken. This review will prioritise lowering learner-educator ratios in the Foundation Phase and in historically disadvantaged schools, where smaller classes are critical for building strong literacy and numeracy foundations.

Further reforms announced by the Minister also strengthen the Department's long-term response to ratios and resourcing pressures:

- **Strengthening foundational learning:** Literacy and numeracy have been placed at the centre of the national education agenda. By ensuring that learners can read for meaning and calculate with confidence by age 10, we reduce the need for remedial interventions and improve throughput.
- **Teacher development and support:** The **Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme** is being reviewed to prioritise Foundation Phase teaching and attract high-quality candidates into shortage subjects. Teacher development initiatives are also being streamlined into a coherent set of offerings with greater scale and impact.
- **School resourcing model review:** The newly operationalised **National Education and Training Council (NETC)** has been tasked with advising on how best to amend and strengthen the existing school resourcing model to

## **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

### **WRITTEN REPLY**

#### **QUESTION 5359**

ensure that it is fairer, sustainable, and smarter, ensuring that resources are tied to improved outcomes while addressing inequities in learner-to-school and learner-to-educator ratios.

Together, these measures reflect the commitment of the Minister and the Department to ensure that every learner is taught in a safe, adequately staffed and properly resourced school environment. Addressing the challenges of both ratios requires not just additional resources but smarter, evidence-based reforms that align infrastructure, staffing, and funding with the actual needs of learners.