

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 5434.**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 39/2025**

**5434. Ms L M Ngobeni (ActionSA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

Whether she intends re-introducing the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit Bill, with enhanced provisions for independence and accountability, to enable the unit to exercise its mandate effectively and thereby conduct proper oversight over her department; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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#### **Response**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has advised the following:

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) Bill no longer has any formal status following a policy decision taken by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in 2013 to pursue a different legal and institutional pathway.

At that time, the DPSA determined that the most appropriate organisational form for NEEDU would be that of an independent government component, to be established under the generic title Office of Standards and Compliance for Basic Education (OSCBE) in terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996). Consequently, the NEEDU Bill was abandoned in favour of this approach.

It was argued that this model would allow for greater flexibility and accountability, while remaining within the framework of the Public Service Act (PSA). Specifically, the OSCBE was envisaged as:

- A separate and independent institution within the public service, with its own powers, functions, staff and budget, and listed under section 3 of the PSA;
- Directly accountable to the Minister of Basic Education, with administrative and operational responsibilities vested in the Head of the OSCBE;
- Governed by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), with the Head serving as the accounting officer;
- Functionally independent, yet administratively able to share certain corporate services with the DBE; and
- Capable of being established without requiring new enabling legislation, as the PSA could be amended in parallel.

However, following interdepartmental consultations with the Ministers of Public Service and Administration and Finance, it was concluded that the significant financial implications of establishing the OSCBE made it unfeasible. The cost estimates included:

- Establishing separate premises to ensure operational independence;

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- Creating four core divisions: (i) Research, (ii) Norms and Standard Setting, (iii) Evaluation Services, and (iv) Service Delivery and Quality Assurance;
- A phased staff establishment of 79 posts (51 in 2014/15, 64 in 2015/16, and 79 in 2016/17); and
- A projected annual operational cost of R99 213 323 for 2016/17 alone.

Given these budgetary constraints, it was decided that NEEDU would continue to operate within the DBE rather than as a separate government component.

While housed within the DBE, NEEDU retains functional independence in the execution of its mandate, with dedicated time, space and resources to perform its duties as originally envisioned in the draft Bill and in the draft Regulations for the Establishment of the Office of Standards and Compliance for Basic Education.

This arrangement also enables the DBE to integrate NEEDU's findings, recommendations and evaluations directly into departmental planning, programme design and monitoring systems, ensuring that its work informs ongoing efforts to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Given the fiscal constraints currently facing the basic education sector, the DBE does not intend to reintroduce the NEEDU Bill at this stage. However, the principles of independence, accountability and evidence-based evaluation remain integral to NEEDU's continued operations within the DBE.