

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 541. [É90]

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**541. [É90]. Mr B B Nodada (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:
to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

**[Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it
is in excess of quota (Rule 137(8))]:**

With reference to multiple local and international studies that have found that many learners cannot read for meaning in any language, what are the (a) reasons that she has found account for the poor literacy rates and (b) relevant details of the plans of her department to address the poor literacy rates?

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Response

a. The ability to read well, and with comprehension, is a result of a number of factors, and what happens at school level, is but a part of that. The other factors, which are equally important, are linked to the environment outside of school, which is the home and the greater society. With regard to what happens at school level, there are challenges that we are trying to address, and these include the competencies of some of our teachers to teach reading for meaning, particularly in the lower grades; teacher support; access to exciting reading resources, particularly in the home languages of the learners; ensuring that schools have environments conducive to successful reading development; and the general readiness of our children when they start school.

b. The Department of Basic Education's (DBE's) response is multi-pronged, to allow for the implementation of fit-for-purpose reading interventions. These interventions are being implemented across provinces as part of the National Reading Sector Plan and Provincial Education Departments' (PEDs') reading strategies:

- Strengthening the competencies of teachers begins with what happens during initial teacher education. To reinforce this area, we work closely with universities, who have begun to develop pre-service programmes which focus on teaching reading as part of their undergraduate programmes.

- In terms of continuing professional teacher development, we have designed reading methodology programmes which are aimed at strengthening the capacity of our teachers to teach reading for meaning, in Home Languages and in English First Additional Language (EFAL). Some of these programmes are:

- The *Primary School Reading Improvement Programme* (PSRIP) in Home Languages and EFAL, and the *Early Grade Reading Study* (EGRS), which are structured learning programmes complemented by the provision of resources such as lesson plans, readers, reading texts, videos etc.; training in methodology, pedagogy and the use of the resources; as well as implementation support through training subject advisors and School Management Teams.

- Early Grade Reading Assessment

- Development of Reading Benchmarks for early grades

- Foundation Phase Home Languages Literacy Lesson Plans

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- Language across the curriculum
- Comprehension across the curriculum
- Annual Teaching Plan guides to norm reading activities
- Provision of Workbooks in Home Languages and EFAL to every child
- Monitoring PEDs to ensure availability of readers, especially in early grades.
- In regard to creating a culture of reading in- and outside school, the focus is on the following:
 - Implementing the Read to Lead Campaign, which allows us to interface with families and communities to amplify our message about the importance of collaborating to promote reading
 - Deploying more than 70 000 young people as Reading Champions to support schools in the creation of conducive reading spaces and provision of general support for teachers
 - Mobilising a wide range of partners, which include the National Reading Coalition to support DBE's reading promotion and resource provisioning efforts.
- DBE is also focusing its efforts on increasing access to quality early learning and development opportunities for children aged 0-5, as this stage is critical for early literacy development and school readiness.