

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 170.

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170. . Dr S S Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Noting how her department is facing a well-documented crisis which include (a) poor educational outcomes, (b) rising illiteracy rates, (c) the fact that about four out of five teachers in public schools lack content knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach their subjects and (d) a predicted shortage of teachers in years to come, what immediate interventions will be taken to change the situation?

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Response

a. Poor educational outcomes

Learners' poor educational outcomes are indeed well-documented from different sources or research findings. The poor performance of South African learners, particularly those from Quintile 1-3 schools, just to mention few, on: (1) national (Annual National Assessment); (2) regional (the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ)); (3) international assessments [the Progress of International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)]; and (4) the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)) has its footprints on poor basic reading competency skills in lower grades. Reading interventions, particularly in primary schools are the apex priority of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

b. Rising illiteracy rates

In response to the rising illiteracy rate the DBE has developed the National Reading Literacy Strategy to arrest the upward trajectory of illiteracy. In the country The Strategy is premised on four main pillars (1. Reading Policy, 2. Initial Teacher Development and Training, 3. Learning and Teaching Support Materials, and 4. Parents and Communities. Also included in the Strategy are the following three cross-cutting strands that are embedded in the above four pillars: 1. Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2. Advocacy and Communication, and 3. Partnerships.,

Furthermore, the DBE has a number of intervention programmes that are aimed to improve learners' learning outcomes and teachers' pedagogical competencies. Just to mention few, the Early Graded Reading Assessment (EGRA), Primary Schools Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP), Reading Across the Curriculum, Systemic Improvement of Languages and Numeracy Project, Study Guides on how to teach and assess, etc.

c. The fact that about four out of five teachers in public schools lack content knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach their subjects

The Department of Basic Education is adhering to outputs 1 to 3 of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development, 2011 by implementing the National 3 – Year Plan for Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) which comprised of Provincial Plans. This is to ensure that there is alignment between DBE and Provinces in responding to sectoral priorities. These CPTD programmes are SACE endorsed to address issues of quality and also to ensure that teachers are credited with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points. The Department monitors quality of these programmes through the SACE endorsement process as well as through

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monitoring by officials from Teacher Development and Curriculum. The Department has collaborated with the NECT and VVOB to develop tools to measure the impact of CPTD programmes. These will assist in determining whether the delivered programmes are making the required impact. DBE has also developed an Online Teacher Development Platform (OTDP) to improve access of teachers to development opportunities. This will ensure that more teachers can have the opportunity to develop themselves. The DBE is also strengthening Teacher Development Platforms such as teacher centres, Teacher Union Collaboration and (TUC) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in order to expand access of teachers to training opportunities. Efforts are being undertaken to strengthen the coordination in the delivery of programmes, as well as more efficient use of skills development funding to support training initiatives.

- d. A predicted shortage of teachers in years to come, what immediate interventions will be taken to change the situation?

In 2020, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published a report entitled "*School Teacher Supply and Demand in South Africa in 2019 and Beyond*". This alerted the sector to the potential shortage of educators in the next 10 years. This is based on the expected higher-than-normal attrition rate resulting from retirements, this then being a case of replacement demand that will be higher than normal.

Consequently, the Department has as a result made an analysis of the potential impact on the sector. This included an analysis of the trends in the supply of initial teacher education graduates which have been on an upward trajectory since 2008. The audited report of initial teacher education graduates released by the DHET indicated the output of 29,712 graduates in 2021. As per the historical trends of both enrolment and graduation rates, this number is unlikely to be reduced. Therefore, we believe that even at the highest peak of demand, estimated to be around 26 000 the supply will be adequate to meet the demand.

However, the Department, working with other stakeholders including the DHET and university research units is focusing on improved planning and analysis of the future demand in relation to the mix of skills that will be required. Initiatives in this regard include improving the quality of data required for more accurate predictions, especially on issues such as phase, subject and language specializations.

Furthermore, in addition to improving the planning, the Department continues to influence the shape of the graduation output through its flagship bursary scheme, the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme. The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme is a targeted initiative focusing on granting bursaries for studying scarce skills including the

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Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Foundation Phase in African Language; and new subjects.

The Department believes that these initiatives will help mitigate the effects of any future teacher shortages.