

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 2699.

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2699. Mr B N Herron (Good) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) Whether, with regard to the alleged lack of payment and support to the young people hired as teaching assistants under the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative in the Eastern Cape, she has been informed that the youth were given the job description of being assistant teachers, but have to teach up to 120 students; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether she has been informed that many of the assistant teachers are not properly trained and do not have the authority to educate; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether she has been informed that the teacher assistants are still waiting to be paid their R4 000 stipends that they have earned since their protest march on 20 June 2022; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(4) what steps is she taking to (a) support the initiative and (b) rectify the education crisis within the Eastern Cape;

(5) whether she has informed the President, Mr M C Ramaphosa, of the performance of the specified initiative; if not, why not; if so, what (a) support did her department receive from the Presidency for the initiative and (b) are the further relevant details?

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Response

1. The Department of Basic Education provided all provinces with the job descriptions for all categories of jobs created through the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative in the Basic Education sector. The Department of Basic Education provided an additional guideline on placement for Assistants in PYEI. Through this guideline the schools are informed of what the duties entail. The Department held orientation meetings with provinces, districts, circuits, and school principals that explained what the roles and responsibilities of Assistants in schools are. In the orientation meetings the Department informed all participants that NO Assistant is allowed to teach learners. Teaching and assessment are the responsibility of the appointed professional in the school that is the teacher and no one else.

2. Yes, the Department informed all assistants that they are not allowed to teach. Teaching of learners in schools remains the responsibility of the appointed professional teacher in each of the schools. The Assistants are not appointed to replace the educators but to support and work alongside the teachers. The Department provided the contract – called the conditions for placement, the code of conduct as well as the job descriptions for each category. Furthermore, placement guideline was provided.

3, According to the Eastern Cape Education Department all Assistants placed in Phase 3 of the PYEI were paid. Throughout the Initiative, the DBE conducted the monitoring which confirmed that payment of stipends was done. The Department also has a channel through which the Assistants can lodge complaints. In Phase III of the PYEI there has not been queries regarding non-payment of stipends in the Eastern Cape.

To provide context to the response, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE), like other eight provinces applied for roll-over of funds unspent for PYEI Phase I, in order to extend Phase I with one month (month of April 2021). The roll-over was not approved by the Provincial Treasury and the decision was communicated after the extension. This meant that EDDOE started Phase 2 in 2021 with budget accrual, which meant that the province had to adjust the approach to the future phases. the Eastern Cape Education Department, communicated with all stakeholders that Phase 3 will be implemented in a staggered approach, of which the Department of Basic Education and the Provincial Treasury supported. The DBE supported the approach because the programme should not leave any provincial education department with budget accruals or budget overrun after implementation.

4. (a) The Initiative is part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES), meant to address unemployment in the country – including support to youth employment. The

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initiative is fully supported by the Presidency. The PES is implemented by more than 14 government Departments, meaning that the initiative is tackled as a joint effort by the whole government.

In Education, the Department partnered with South African Council for Educators to evaluate the value added by Assistants in schools, and to provide insights on the value added. The report will assist the department in investigating the possibility of having Assistants to support teaching and learning in schools.

(b) is referred to the province for more details that will assist DBE to respond

5, The Department of Basic Education reports to the Presidency on a monthly basis as part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus as well as through specified reporting tools on the performance of the PYEI. The Presidency is also a key stakeholder in the Project Steering Committee, which sits monthly to receive updates on implementation. The Department has received full support from the Presidency for the implementation of the initiative: (a) Monitoring support, oversight and reporting. (b) Unlocking challenges where there was a need for interdepartmental activities (working with SASSA to block double dipping) (c) Exchanging of experience and knowledge between departments (Learning Management Forum) to ensure that departments learn best practices between each other. (d) Connecting Departments with partners that offered services at no cost to the department.