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**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1126**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 20/04/2018**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 12 OF 2018)**

**Mr A P van der Westhuizen (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

(1) What are the reason(s) for the significant drop in the number of learners at level 4 at each community education and training college for the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017, as illustrated by the number of learners sitting for examinations in language learning areas of 152 720 learners in 2015, 116 133 learners in 2016 and 73 076 learners in 2017;

(2) whether she has found this drop in the numbers of learners studying through community education and training colleges to be a matter of concern; if so, (a) what steps does she intend to take to reverse this trend, (b) when will the specified steps be implemented and (c) to what extent should a turnaround be experienced;

(3) whether there is any explanation from an operational point of view for the vast differences in the pass rates at community and education colleges for each year, as illustrated by the pass rates for the language learning areas of 46,0% in 2015, 62,9% in 2016 and 94,5% in 2017; if not, what would explain the vast differences; if so, what would the reason(s) be?

**NW1219E**

**REPLY:**

1. The Department has monitorin the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) since 2017,has undertaken lecturer roadshows from January 2018 to February 2018. In these engagements with CLCs, the following factors were attributed to the low enrolment numbers:

* Delay in the certification of students:

There are challenges with the data from the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) system for certifying students who have written the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC): Adult Basic Education and Training qualification. The SITA system is unable to consolidate the results of students who have written individual subjects over a number of examination cycles. An examination forum inclusive of officials from the Department’s Community Education and Training (CET) branch, CET colleges, Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), SITA and the National Assessment and Examination unit has been established to deal with the challenges identified.

* Inadequate provision of learning and teaching support materials:

There is an inadequate college budget allocated for the provision of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) to students. The procurement of LTSM takes place through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, which is slow and results in students not getting their LTSM on time. Engagements are taking place between TVET colleges and the Department to address these issues. In addition, training is taking place for the requisition of goods and services by CET colleges so that they have a clear understanding of the supply chain management processes within TVET colleges.

* Demoralised lecturers due to the non-resolution of conditions of service:

There is an inadequate allocation for the Compensation of Employees budget for the standardisation and improvement of conditions of service. The lack of resolution or finalisation of the standardisation and improvement of conditions of service causes tensions and conflicts within CET colleges and demoralises lecturers. Funding bids have been submitted to National Treasury to address the standardisation and improvement of conditions of service.

* Learning space/infrastructure that is not conducive for students to learn:

Given that a number of the community learning centres are located in primary schools, with furniture tailor-made for young children; this poses a problem for the youth and adults attending these classes. The lack of CET infrastructure means that facilities, such as ablution facilities are locked when classes commence late in the afternoon or early evening resulting in students not having access to basic amenities within the host school. There are continuous engagements with PEDs and the CET colleges have begun a process of identifying closed schools and unused government infrastructure.

1. (a) The drop in the number of learners studying at CET colleges is a matter of concern since it negatively affects the overall objective of increasing access and success. The Department has undertaken the following steps:

* a national teaching and learning improvement plan has been put in place to address poor performance;
* budget bids have been submitted to National Treasury for additional funding on the baseline to address inadequate learning and teaching support materials;
* an examinations forum has been established with PEDs to address delays in certification;
* proposals on the conditions of service have been developed, which require funding and negotiations within the appropriate bargaining chamber for finalisation; and
* engagement with the Department of Public Works for the possible use of underutilised and unused infrastructure.

1. The above steps are at various stages of implementation:

* the current financial year is the second year of implementing the teaching and learning improvement plan;
* budget bids were submitted to National Treasury in 2017 without any success;
* the examinations forum held its first meeting in the first quarter of 2018;
* the establishment of a bargaining structure for Community Education and Training is on course; and
* the identification of alternative infrastructure is an ongoing process.

1. A turnaround due to different interventions is expected within the 2018 Medium Term Expenditure Framework period.
2. CET colleges develop strategic and annual plans, including interventions regarding teaching and learning. The performance of students at each college is informed by the implementation of their improvement plans, the calibre of lecturers in the college and provision of leadership with regards to teaching and learning. These factors are reflected in the various monitoring reports undertaken by the Department. The National Policy on Curriculum Development and Implementation, and National Improvement Plan focuses on specific interventions to be undertaken on poor performing subjects, as well as national interventions on the training of lecturers. The improvement in the pass rate for languages in the learning areas can be attributed to the implementation of the National Improvement Plan.