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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1331**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 13 OF 2022**

**Dr N V Khumalo (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

What (a) interventions and support structures has he put in operation to grow a strong research culture in the higher education sector in the past five years and (b) are the details and statistics of success from the specific interventions?

**NW1595E**

**REPLY:**

The Department of Higher Education and Training has been supporting research productivity in the higher education system through its “Policy and Procedures for Measurement of Research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions” since 2003. Since its inception, the policy aimed to sustain current research strengths and to promote research and other knowledge outputs required to meet national development needs. The purpose of the policy is to encourage research productivity by rewarding quality research output at public higher education institutions. Therefore, the Department has been subsidising research productivity at the universities through this policy.

The policy was later revised and improved and now with a new title: Research Outputs Policy, 2015. However, the original aim and objectives have been maintained. Currently, in the 2022/23 financial year, the Department invests **R5 226 955 000.00** on research productivity in the university sector, from **R1 124 807 000.06** in the 2004/05 financial year. The policy uses research publications in peer-reviewed journals; published peer-reviewed conference proceedings; peer-reviewed books; research Master’s and Doctoral graduates as proxy for research activities within universities.

The subsidy also includes the creative and innovations research which are subsidised through the Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions (2017).

Since the inception of the research policy in 2003, the number of units (used to calculate all the research outputs as enumerated above – publications, graduates, artefacts and innovations) grew from **12 051** in the 2004/05 financial year to **40 847** units in the 2022/23 financial year.

In the earlier years of the implementation of the policy, the Department made available developmental funds to institutions that struggled to meet their set research output norms. The subsidy formula allowed for such funding. This has since been converted into the University Capacity Development Grant, which covers several projects within institutions, including the development of researchers and young academics. The Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant allocated to the institutions defined as historically disadvantaged allows for coverage of such a need, depending on the priorities the affected institutions identify.

Independent analysts have associated the growth of research productivity in the higher education sector in recent years to the positive impact of the above-stated policies. Thus, it is believed that the policies and projects of the Department have instilled a research culture at the universities. However, institutional policies and practices do also play a role too in this regard. Plans are underway to also deal with its unintended consequences, such as predatory publishing and a focus on quantity rather than quality.