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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 17/2021**

**1805.  Ms L H Arries (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

What (a) is the updated number in her department of learners who have dropped out of school from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to date  and (b) measures has she taken to ensure that those learners return to school?

**Response**

(a) Provinces are verifying data on the drop-out rate, since learners returned to school in the third term.  The verification process has to be carefully executed for a number of reasons, so that learners are not counted as drop-outs, when that is not the case.  Some schools follow a weekly rotation timetabling; learner attendance is marked when it is a learner's turn to come to school.  In some cases, learners are absent for an extended period of time, and this may erroneously be interpreted as a drop-out.  Some learners are physically at school, but are either learning virtually from home or are participating in home education programmes.  As provinces are verifying learner drop-out statistics, they need to consider these issues, which may be construed as drop-out.

(b) Strategies to get all learners back to school include schools supported by districts; and following-up on learners who have not returned to schools.  This includes engaging with parents or caregivers to address the issues that result in learners not going to school.  To minimise learner drop-out, at the national level, the Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) is the most effective instrument that is being used, to engage with all relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to parents, schools and local authorities.