**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

 **WRITTEN REPLY**

 **QUESTION 2283

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**INTERNAL OUESTION PAPER: 21/2015

2283. Ms A T Lovemore (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) What (a) are the details of the baseline assessments carried out in February 2015 prior to the commencement of the piloting of three alternative interventions in selected schools in the districts of (i) Ngaka Modiri Molema and (ii) Dr Kenneth Kaunda in April 2015 and (b) methodology was utilised in each of the interventions:
(2) who (a) developed and (b) provided the training to the teachers involved in the specified interventions:
(3) whether the teachers' abilities to teach reading skills were assessed either before or after the training; if not, why not: if so, what are the relevant details:
(4) what are the relevant details of other alternative interventions to address reading and literacy being (a) piloted. (b) implemented and (c) planned elsewhere in the country.? NW2644F.

**(1) What (a) are the details of the baseline assessments carried out in February 2015 prior to the commencement of the piloting of three alternative interventions in selected schools in the districts of (i) Ngaka Modiri Molema and (ii) Dr Kenneth Kaunda in April 2015 and (b) methodology was utilised in each of the interventions;**The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is evaluating three new interventions aimed at improving early grade reading. The evaluation is being conducted through a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) to evaluate the causal impacts of the following three interventions: (i) a teacher training course focused specifically on the teaching of Setswana reading and literacy. accompanied by scripted lesson plans and graded reading materials; (ii) an on-site support programme to teachers from reading coaches, accompanied by scripted lesson plans and graded reading materials; (iii) and a package designed to improve parent involvement in - and monitoring of - learning to read.

Each intervention is being implemented in a group of 50 schools over a period of two years in North-West Province (specifically, in the education districts of Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda). A further 80 schools have been selected as a comparison group.

The project has two arms: 1) a service provider undertaking the implementation of the project interventions. 2) An independent service provider conducting the assessment of the project's impact.
The separation of the services required is in line with best practices to maintain objectivity between implementers of the interventions and assessors of the impact in order to attain objective findings.
Both service providers have been appointed.

(1a)
In line with the RCT design and project plan. a baseline assessment of all the 230 schools in the research project was conducted from 3-24 February 2015 by the appointed service provider. The service provider was not informed of the distinct groups of schools as part of the mechanisms to eliminate a bias.

The service provider that conducted the baseline assessment is still in the process of finalising the data collected. The DBE, in partnership with a Research Team of local and international experts, will then process the data and compile a baseline report by October 2015.

(1b)
The same assessment methodology was used in the baseline assessment for all 230 schools in the research project. The baseline assessment consisted of the testing of 20 Grade I learners in each of the 230 schools in the research project. The test focused on pre-literacy skills and was administered orally by an independent fieldworker in Setswana. In addition, questionnaires were administered to the Grade 1 teachers and school principals. A home background questionnaire was also administered.
 **(2) Who (a) developed and (b) provided the training to the teachers involved in the specified interventions;**As indicated above, the DBE appointed a second service provider to implement all three interventions in the research project according to the approved Terms of Reference. Each of the three interventions requires specific deliverable5 from the service provider; the same applies for the interventions based on teacher training and on-site support. The service provider has considerable experience in running similar training programmes in the sector and has therefore developed and improved the content over a period of time. The content was then adapted for this project by the service provider. The training and on-site support is provided by employees of the service provider, including former teachers who are fluent in Setswana.

The Terms of Reference specify that all material developed/used for the research interventions must be Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) aligned. A Reference Group consisting of the implementation service provider, representative from the North West Provincial Education Department (PED), Subject Advisors from the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District as well as DBE officials in the Curriculum Branch has ken established to review the materials used for the project.

**(3)Whether the teachers' abilities to teach reading skills were assessed either before or after the training; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;**The study did not administer any substantive assessment of teacher knowledge or pedagogical skill for those teachers receiving the training programme. The research design would require that such a test would be valuable if it were administered to all teachers in the evaluation. i.e. also those teachers in the control group.

The research design in its current format. as it follows an RCT methodology, would have allowed the testing of only the 50 schools in the intervention (i) a teacher training course focused specifically on the reaching of Setswana reading and literacy. accompanied by scripted lesson plans and graded reading materials. This would provide the DBE with information on these schools only but the same information would not be available for the remaining 180 schools, and thus no comparison would be possible. Therefore. testing only those teachers who are participating in the training programme would have been of limited value.

The DBE did. however. administer teacher questionnaires in all 230 schools as pan of the data collection effort. These questionnaires collect information about teaching beliefs and practices (thus providing some indication of pedagogical knowledge). The DBE will again collect this information at the end of the interventions to examine whether teachers improved their knowledge of effective teaching methods through the programme. A small component of the teacher questionnaire administered at baseline was also a short reading fluency test in Setswana.

This was a very rudimentary assessment, but it will enable the department to explore whether the success of a training programme depends on the teacher's own reading fluency. The DBE plans on assessing reading fluency after the intervention again, to see whether their own reading fluency might have improved through the training.

All the data collected in this project will be made available for public release for further research purposes once the project reaches completion. i.e. no sooner than July 2017. **(4) What are the relevant details of other alternative interventions to address reading And literacy being (a) piloted, (b) implemented and (c) planned elsewhere in the county?**

**a) Piloted**The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is currently being piloted in 1000 schools nationally in Grades 1 to 3 in all 11 official languages.

**b) Implemented**

The resuscitation of the Drop All and Read programme is being implemented nationally. The English Across the Curriculum (EAC) programme is being implemented in Grades 4 to 12 to support the acquisition of English asthe Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The provision of Workbooks. reading resources, the hosting of the annual National Spelling Bee Competition, the establishment of reading clubs and the implementation of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) in Grades I to 9 in 2015 is aimed at improving reading and literacy outcomes.

**c) Planned elsewhere in the country?** The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) has rolled out literacy projects in the Foundation and intermediate phases in targeted districts in KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Mpumalanga. This project i s currently being replicated in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo.