**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2329**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 11/08/2017**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 26 OF 2017)**

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

(1) With reference to the leaking of examination papers and the postponement of the July/August 2017 examination papers as announced in circular TE39 of 2017, what steps have been undertaken to identify the source(s) of the leaking of examination papers;

(2) did the department’s experience regarding the leaking of examination papers in the past lead to any improvements in the security measures regarding national examinations; if so, what steps have been taken to improve (a) security and (b) to protect the integrity of the examinations;

(3) has the department over the past five years acted against any official(s) implicated in the leaking of examination papers; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(4) whether the department reported any incidences of examination leaks with the SA Police Service; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(5) what improvements will be undertaken in order to try and eliminate future leaks of examination papers?

**NW2574E**

**REPLY:**

1. Noting that the conduct of examinations is a multi-organisational and multi-process value chain, including several organisations and role players within each organisation and that the leakages of question papers can take place at any point in the value chain or organisation. The Department has undertaken the following steps to identify the source(s) of the leaking of examination papers:
* The examinations monitoring and evaluation unit has met with all role players in the value chain and requested investigations into the adherence of security measures and standard operation procedures by officials.
* The Department has also met with senior officials of the Government Printing Works to review any breaches in the printing, packing and sealing of examination papers.
* A case of theft has been reported to the South African Police Services (SAPS) and they are currently investigating the matter to determine the source of the leakages.
* As most of the reports of leakages originated from the Limpopo region a day or so before the leaked papers were to be written, Departmental officials were immediately dispatched to monitor all delivery points in Limpopo and check that question papers were secure and packages were not tempered with.
* The Director-General has requested the Acting National Commissioner of Police to prioritise the investigation of examination related cases.

No evidence of the sources of the leakages has thus far been identified.

1. (a) The following security measures, among others, were taken:

- the question paper setting-unit has been placed in a secure area with limited access;

- printing and packaging of question papers was moved from onsite printing and packaging to a high security environment with CCTV cameras and security guards at Government Printing Works;

- where possible the packing of question papers is automated to reduce the number of hands on live papers;

- question papers are double sealed, firstly in a tamper proof bag and then secondly in a custom made box which is only opened in front of the students in the examination venue; and

- secure delivery points were established nationally at carefully selected public colleges where examination centres collect their question papers one hour before an examination commences and return scripts one hour after the conclusion of an examination.

(b) The following steps to protect the integrity of the examinations, among others, have been implemented:

- a leaked question paper is replaced immediately when the leak is reported and verified twenty-four hours before an examination sitting. Colleges are sent replacement papers for the sitting; and

- where the leak is reported and verified during or after an examination, special measures are put in place to monitor patterns of answering of questions during marking and where there are gross inconsistencies in the scores of candidates as compared to the scores expected, the scores are adjusted to the norm.

1. The Department has not acted against any official in connection with the leaking of question papers during the past five years as no departmental official could be linked to the leaking of question papers. It appears that there is a criminal syndicate active in the leaking of papers and therefore SAPS has been engaged, as the Department does not possess the capacity to investigate criminal elements.
2. The leakages were reported to SAPS at the Pretoria Central Police Station, reference number: CAS 54/8/2017 and New Brighton Police Station, reference number: CAS 12/8/2017.
3. The following improvements are currently being undertaken or being put in place in order to try and eliminate the future leaking of examination papers:
* vetting of officials working with live question papers;
* monitoring of Government Printing Works by a senior Departmental official to ensure security measures are adhered to during the printing and packaging process;
* a tender is being prepared for a service provider that can deliver a fully secure automated printing, warehousing and packaging solution; and
* a feasibility study is being undertaken on a secure digital solution to replace the current printing and transport of question papers.

COMPILER/CONTACT PERSONS:

Tel:

DIRECTOR – GENERAL

STATUS:

DATE:

QUESTION 2329 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED/AMENDED

Dr BE NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STATUS:

DATE: