**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2772**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 31/07/2015**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 26 OF 2015)**

**Mr W M Madisha (Cope) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

Whether his department supported the publish or perish principle for South African academics at tertiary institutions to ensure that the quality of research and teaching equated with the best in the world and that promotions in the academic sphere were directly related to peer endorsement of academic work; if not, why not; if so, what are the (a) details and (b) outcomes of pursuing such a policy?

**NW3204E**

**REPLY:**

The Department does not support the so-called principle of “publish or perish” for South African academics. The Department supports the development of academics that value teaching, research and community engagement as outlined in the recently approved *Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework (SSAUF).* This includes supporting universities to be innovative and produce quality research. We expect that universities have some highly productive researchers, that may not focus much on teaching, and equally that there will be scholars who have a greater focus on teaching. The focus on publishing at all costs regardless of the quality or substance of the research is not supported by the Department.

It should be noted that the Department does not control nor develop policies on the promotions criteria at universities. The Department admits that highly productive academics, whether in the sphere of research or scholarship of teaching, should be recognised. It is also aware that some universities value research as a key criterion for promotion.

The Department has recently published a revised *Research Output Policy* *(2015)*. The purpose of this policy is to encourage research productivity by rewarding quality research output at public higher education institutions. The policy is not intended to measure all output, but to enhance productivity by recognising the major types of research output produced by higher education institutions, and uses appropriate proxies to determine the quality of such output. While increased productivity is a key driver behind this policy, what has informed the revision was the need to ensure improved quality of subsidised research outputs.

Within the total subsidy funding allocated to universities in 2015/16, R3 billion which is just under 15% of the total block grant of R20.5 billion, is allocated for research output subsidies and implemented through the Research Output Policy. The remainder of the block grant (85%) is linked to teaching inputs and outputs as well as institutional factors. As can be seen, teaching is the area that is allocated the largest proportion of funding.

Since the implementation of the research outputs subsidy in 2005, South Africa’s research outputs have increased at a rate of 13% per annum, which is a substantial return on investment. The Department takes pride that our universities’ research productivity has improved significantly since 2005. South African universities’ research productivity is ranked top in Africa, and recent impact studies show that more South African research is published in high-impact journals than all other Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) member states.

Compiler/contact persons:

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DIRECTOR – GENERAL

STATUS:

DATE:

REPLY TO QUESTION 2772 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED/AMENDED

Dr BE NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STATUS:

DATE: