**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 840**

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**840. Ms H S Boshoff (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) Whether, with reference to comments made by the Minister of Finance, Mr Pravin Gordhan, in his 2016 Budget Speech delivered on 24 February 2016, that she is working with social partners on the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) to identify and implement school improvement initiatives, any school improvement initiatives have been identified to date; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) have any school improvement initiatives been implemented to date; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details in each case;

(3) with reference to the NECT stating its intention to transform eight chosen priority districts which represent 18% of South African schools and just fewer than 2 million learners shortly after its founding in July 2013, (a) which districts were chosen as priority districts, (b) why were they chosen as priority districts, (c) what was the National Senior Certificate pass rate in each specified district in (i) 2013, (ii) 2014 and (iii) 2015 and (d) what amount did the NECT spend in the eight priority districts in each specified year? NW959E

**RESPONSE:**

1. Yes, school improvement initiatives have been identified. The National Education Collaboration Trust NECT has been working with over 317 officials in eight focus districts to design and implement interventions in over 4 362 schools that make up the 8 focus districts. The interventions in these district jurisdictions are provided in higher dosages in 415 schools (across the 8 districts) which have been identified as test sites for the interventions.
2. Yes, the school improvement initiatives has been implemented. The NECT has registered many successes in the target districts and schools, and more and more of the successful interventions are being replicated in other schools and districts. These successes registered are in respect to the six themes of the Education Collaboration Framework:
* Professionalisation of teaching:

Year-long learning programmes in seven languages have been designed and introduced in every classroom in the target districts. A total of 958 151 resource packs have been provided to 19 398 teachers who teach mathematics, science and languages in the target schools. The learning programmes include a pack of basic learning materials such as lesson plans, management trackers, posters and flashcards. Additional African language readers are also being secured through a partnership with Zenex Foundation. These learning programmes have been designed and packaged to assist the teachers to implement the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) at the required levels and to ensure curriculum completion. There was quarterly training of 40 023 teachers in 2015 and in-school support of teachers in a sample of schools.

Several national dialogues on teacher professionalisation were held. These have resulted in seminal dialogue with the South Africa Council of Educators (SACE). SACE is currently reviewing its policies and measure for teacher certification. As a collaboration vehicle, the NECT continues to drive dialogue among key stakeholders to promote the intents of the National Development Plan. In addition to a focus on professionalisation, the NECT organised dialogues on reading, learner safety and security in schools and on the role of the Non-Government Organisations in implementing the National Development Plan. While the dialogues involve up to 200 people in each event, the NECT has used electronic and print media to reach and engage millions of South Africans on pertinent educational matters.

* Promotion of Courageous and Effective Leadership

Curriculum management training and in-school mentoring and coaching are provided for principals and Heads of Departments. The training and support is reinforced by instruments that help the School Management Teams (SMTs) to monitor curriculum coverage. A total of 12 998 tools have been provided to SMTs of the target schools. Furthermore, SMTs are also trained and coached in two important leadership and management areas with an intention of building sound internal locus of control in schools. These are in-school self-assessment and feedback instruments and courageous leadership. The self-assessment training and support is designed on the basis of policy and programmatic requirements for school effectiveness. These instruments cover key processes and functions that each and every school should have in order to function effectively as required by policy and identified by education research. The second area, courageous leadership intervention, aims to initiate conversations about, and bolstering courageous management actions among, school management teams.

* Parent and community involvement

The NECT worked with the DBE to develop a parent involvement guide which was recently approved by the Council of Education Ministers for nation-wide distribution. The Multi-stakeholder District Steering Committees (DSCs) comprising key stakeholders such as religious and traditional leaders, business, teacher unions and academics, continue to drive social mobilisation and advocacy in the eight target districts. This model is being reviewed by the Government Technical Advisory Agency for efficacy and possible replication.

* Learner Welfare

The psycho-social referral and treatment trial that was carried out last year in over 110 schools has yield responses of over 15 000 learners on their welfare and security in schools. This data is being analysed to establish the efficacy of the model and to make recommendations on how to improve learner welfare in schools.

* Contribution to building capacity of the State to improve the quality of education

The NECT has been working with over 400 officials from districts, provinces and at national level to design and implement specific education improvement programmes. Experts drawn from the private sector by the NECT assist to strengthen critical skills of the education officials at the various levels. The NECT brought in experts to support Information and Communications Technology (ICT) planning in the Department. The same experts also supported the education ICT Operation Phakisa. The NECT is working with the DBE to undertake research into the modernisation of the school administration system (SA-SAMS). Towards the end of 2015, the NECT collaborated with the DBE, some local and international organisations, to research how other countries promote innovation in education. The research recommends an establishment of a South African education innovation hub, whose primary focus will be to improve the co-ordination of innovation initiatives nationally, with the aim of support systemic education improvement in the country.

1. (a) The NECT has chosen the following districts as priority districts:
* North West Province: Bojanala District
* Mpumalanga Province: Bohlabela District
* Limpopo Province: Waterberg District
* Limpopo Province: Vhembe District
* Eastern Cape Province: Mt Frere District
* Eastern Cape Province: Libode District
* KwaZulu-Natal Province: Pinetown District
* KwaZulu-Natal Province: UThungulu District

(b) The NECT has chosen the priority districts because of the following reasons:

* consistently underperforming;
* poor infrastructure;
* enrolment dwindling;
* poor leadership; and
* serious societal problems (drugs/ conflict/ teenage pregnancy).

(c) The National Senior Certificate pass rate in each specified district was as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority districts** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| North West Province: Bojanala District | 87.2% | 84.6% | 81.5% |
| Mpumalanga Province: Bohlabela District | 72.0% | 76.8% | 76.7% |
| Limpopo Province: Waterberg District | 70.6% | 70.5% | 58.1% |
| Limpopo Province: Vhembe District | 80.6% | 81.1% | 74.7% |
| Eastern Cape Province: Mt Frere District | 58.8% | 55.1% | 55.1% |
| Eastern Cape Province: Libode District | 60.1% | 62.4% | 48.6% |
| KwaZulu-Natal Province: Pinetown District | 81.5% | 75.8% | 64.6% |
| KwaZulu-Natal Province: uThungulu District | 72.7% | 64.0% | 54.6% |

(d) The amount the NECT spent in the eight priority districts was as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority districts** | **\*2013/14** | **2015** |
|  | **R’000** | **R’000** |
| North West Province: Bojanala District | 4 103 994 | 11 378 312 |
| Mpumalanga Province: Bohlabela District | 4 483 993 | 12 431 859 |
| Limpopo Province: Waterberg District | 15 027 884 | 31 100 088 |
| Limpopo Province: Vhembe District | 16 064 289 | 33 244 922 |
| Eastern Cape Province: Mt Frere District | 13 009 705 | 11 423 206 |
| Eastern Cape Province: Libode District | 13 877 019 | 12 184 753 |
| KwaZulu-Natal Province: Pinetown District | 14 727 994 | 25 827 008 |
| KwaZulu-Natal Province: UThungulu District | 18 348 283 | 32 175 546 |