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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 09/2021**

**955.. Mrs D van der Walt (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

What (a) is the current staff shortage for (i) Grade R and (ii) learners with special educational needs in each province and (b) immediate steps has her department taken to deal with the specified staff shortage in each case?

**Response**

(a) (i) Grade R is currently not part of compulsory education. And as such, allocation of educator posts in schools that offer Grade R classes is not done in terms of the post provisioning norms. The majority of educators appointed in Grade R posts are paid a monthly stipend as opposed to a salary. In schools where Grade R classes are offered, all posts are always filled. The is, therefore, no shortage of Grade R educators at schools, quantitatively. However, when considering the level of qualifications of Grade R teachers/practitioners appointed at schools there is an indication of qualitative shortage. The qualification of Grade R teachers/ practitioners currently employed at schools ranges from below Matric to a fully appropriate educator qualification. The latter category makes only about 34% of the 21 700 Grade R educators appointed at schools. It should, however, be noted that the sector will always find it difficult to attract fully qualified educators into Grade R teaching posts given the current conditions of service of Grade R educators.

(ii) The post provisioning norms are used to allocate posts of educators teaching learners with special educational needs. The allocated posts are filled with appropriately qualified educators.

(b) The Department runs ongoing targeted programmes that ensure the supply of educators in areas of need. Grade R and special needs education are part of the priority areas. With regards to improving Grade R qualifications, provinces are financially supporting Grade R educators currently employed in schools to upgrade their qualifications, either to the level of Grade R Diploma or the Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase. About 2 700 such educators are currently being supported. As part of the Funza Lushaka Bursary scheme, the Department prioritises, in addition to African Languages, bursaries for studying towards a Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase with specialisation neurodevelopmental needs, Braille, and South African Sign Language.