

Textbooks adopt inclusive approach to diversity

The interim report released by the Basic Education Ministerial Task Team (MTT) has found that textbooks used in South African schools generally adopt a mildly inclusive approach to diversity.



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The Department of Basic Education on Tuesday, 18 April 2017, said Minister Angie Motshekga has received the interim report into the evaluation of learning and teaching materials, particularly textbooks that are used in schools.

The Minister established the task team in February 2016 to ascertain whether the text and illustrations used by authors and publishers in textbooks are inclusive, sensitive and promote the values of unity in diversity, democracy as well as equity, and empower learners for the future.

Content analysis

According to the department, the task team also conducted a content analysis to ascertain the specific discrimination biases, frequency and type of such discrimination, as well as examined the extent to which different forms of discrimination manifest in South African textbooks.

“The content analysis focused on biases which could be associated with race, gender, class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, family status and age. One of the interim findings of the MTT is that textbooks, generally adopt a mildly inclusive approach to diversity.

“For instance, while there are no obvious potential forms of discrimination with regard to race, and there is certainly an overriding focus on representing the African subject, there remains an abiding mono-racial attitude towards what families, communities and societies look like. Also, when it comes to languages, race becomes a key descriptor,” said the department.

Eradicating stereotypes

The work of the Ministerial Task Team is aimed at eradicating social, economic and political stereotypes, especially in the classroom.

The department said it does not allow for a teaching and learning environment where individuals or organisations are misrepresented and/or ridiculed.

“While the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) clearly outlines what should be taught in schools, some teachers have, however, been found to have overstepped the boundaries.

“Where such incidents have taken place, such teachers using racial slurs on others, swift action has been taken against the implicated teachers.

“It must be stressed that where such isolated incidents have taken place, these do not arise as a result of a defined norm or practice of a particular school, nor a dictate from the CAPS. It is rather individual teachers who tend to do so, hence the swift action against such individual teachers,” said the department.

Social transformation

It said CAPS is based on the principles of social transformation, ensuring that all ills of apartheid education are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are made possible for all sections of the population.

“CAPS promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives.”

The department said it will continue to monitor the implementation of the curriculum to ensure that all textbook content is consistent with the Constitution of South Africa in all respects. The Minister will receive the final report later this year.