

Fewer teacher posts next year

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Eastern Cape education bodies have expressed mixed reactions to the Department of Education's failure to increase the number of teacher posts for the third consecutive year.



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The post provisioning norms (PPN) for next year were released by the department yesterday, 12 September 2017.

It showed that 54,026 posts will be available, with 6,377 for non-teaching support staff for public schools.

The figure is 721 less than this year's allocation of 54,747, which was also the allocation last year.

Last year's allocation was 1,049 fewer than the 55,796 posts allocated for 2015.

While the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu), SA Onderwysersunie (SAOU) and National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa) raised concerns about the decrease, all acknowledged the department's ongoing efforts to stabilise the state of education.

According to the statement issued by the department, no schools will have a teacher to pupil ratio above 1:36.

At least 96% of schools will either gain or remain the same in their staff establishment and 1,995 of the posts will be allocated to foundation phase support, including Grade R.

Additionally, it states no school loses a post unless there is a decrease of more than 40 pupils from November last year.

Sadtu provincial secretary Chris Mdingi said: "For public education to function properly it would require a teacher in front of every class irrespective of the size of that class.

"Every child in every class across the province is being taught the same syllabus and needs to be given equal attention - that cannot be done by decreasing posts.

"However, we need to take cognisance of the fact that the department did listen to our appeals for more posts, which increased by more than 1,000 from its original figure."

SAOU provincial secretary Debbie Harvey said the union remained optimistic about teacher allocation and deployment in the province.

"This is the first year the department has implemented a workable model for the allocation of teachers, which will help in stabilising education in the province," Harvey said.

"Yes, there are fewer teachers available but the model makes us optimistic.

"The fact that we will be sitting down [tomorrow] to work out an action plan to give to principals, is already a step in the right direction, considering how it was done in the past.

"The principals will receive that plan this month, a month earlier than usual."

Naptosa secretary Anton Adams said: "The fact that 96% of schools won't be affected or will improve is a good sign.

"The fact that Grade R allocations are being recognised is something that hasn't happened before and led to a lot of problems previously.

"These are both positive aspects.

"We understand that the national budget was cut by 1% and that affects all sectors of education. However, the question remains, as it always has, as to whether the department will actually be able to fill those vacant posts."

Northern Areas Education Forum secretary Richard Draai said after meeting with the New Brighton school governing bodies that they were concerned about the post numbers.

"We have been fighting for more teachers for years now ... but we were not consulted about the PPN at all," he said.

"Yet schools have been closed for weeks at a time due to teacher shortages.

"[And] if the number of teachers is decreased, the education of the special needs pupils in the area is as good as dead. What they are doing to these kids is criminal."

DA shadow education MEC Edmund van Vuuren said: "The 2018 declaration has failed to address the ongoing issue of substantive vacant posts in the province. Currently, the province still has a total of 3,456 vacant posts.

"We cannot continue with a situation where vacant substantive posts are not filled year in and year out but instead are filled by walk-in staff on a three-month basis. This is not conducive to good teaching practices or job security."

Provincial education spokesman Malibongwe Mtima directed questions on the PPN to the department's superintendent-general, Themba Kojana.

However, Kojana could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Source: Herald

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