



**MINISTER
BASIC EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Mr E Naidoo
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Dear Mr Naidoo

CONCERNS ON COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE)

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letters as well as the petition handed to the Department on 30 November 2019 in parliament. I wish to express our appreciation of your active involvement in the matters of education in our country. Education requires the involvement of the whole society for its success, and I am encouraged by your commitment to work with us.

South Africa is at the epicentre of the HIV pandemic and has the unenviable distinction of having the largest HIV population on Anti-Retroviral Treatment globally. Worryingly, approximately 1 300 people are infected with HIV every single week, the vast majority of whom are girls and young women aged 15-24 years of age (2017 data). This is somewhat down from estimates of 2 000 infections per week in 2012. Data from recent research in 2017 conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council shows that boys aged 15-19 years are also increasingly getting infected. All this points to the need to strengthen and improve programmes on HIV prevention.

Teenage pregnancy also remains a pressing challenge. Data from the Department of Health from April 2018-March 2019 recorded 121 099 babies that were delivered by mothers aged 15-19 years of age, and 3 529 by those 10-14 years old. This is an increase of 7 573 deliveries compared to figures in the 2017/18 financial year (10-19 years). Note that these

figures exclude termination of Pregnancy, thus the actual pregnancy levels are likely to be higher.

As a government, we continue to believe that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is necessary to address these challenges of HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, rape and sexual abuse of women and girls, amongst others. As we address the crisis of gender based violence, CSE can serve as one of numerous interventions in our collective response.

I am aware of a concerted campaign of misinformation and that lies are peddled on the CSE content. This is unfortunate and is misleading. It however persists despite government having provided numerous statements and media engagements to clarify that the intent of CSE is not to sexualize children, but is aimed at addressing the social issues above. The content was developed in the country and is geared to address the contextual issues and barriers to education that South African learners experience.

The campaigners against CSE have not responded to the true facts and content of the government developed materials which have been released to the public and are placed on the DBE website at www.education.gov.za. We encourage you and others to download the materials and to provide the Department with feedback on recommended improvements.

We enjoy overwhelming support from parents in our schools to provide appropriate content through the curriculum aimed at providing learners with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to make healthy and informed lifelong choices. Sexuality Education has been implemented in the Life Skills and Life Orientation Curriculum since 2000. The CSE content in the Scripted Lesson Plans (SLPs) is aimed at developing critical skills among our learners including respect for self and others, tolerance of differences as it uses a human rights approach that is aimed at building values of respecting the human dignity of all. The SLPs also provide Life Skills (LS) and Life Orientation (LO) educators with resources and tools to guide their teaching of the CSE component of LS/ LO.

The DBE will continue to consult with all education stakeholders through the various established structures and processes on an ongoing basis including School Governing Body Associations, the Principal's Association, learner formations and teacher unions. Academics, researchers, health practitioners and the general public will also be consulted through established processes. Prior to implementation of programmes, the DBE conducts vigorous advocacy and mobilisation drives in provinces which takes into consideration the views of educational stakeholders including parents.

In the New Year, I intend to host a meeting with different stakeholders, including religious and traditional leaders, on CSE and how implementation and roll-out can be enhanced in the country. Family Policy Institute (FPI) and associates will be invited.

Once again, I thank you and FPI for your interest in safeguarding the wellbeing of our children. We remain available to engage further to find sustainable solutions to the social ills faced by our communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mrs AM Motshekgwa', written in a cursive style.

MRS AM MOTSHEKGA, MP

MINISTER

DATE: 27 DECEMBER 2019