

Home education and the BELA Bill - What you need to know

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Impaq takes a closer look at what the proposed bill will mean for home education.

In an effort to modernise education laws, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga published the Draft Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill in the Government Gazette on 13 October 2017. The new bill proposes important changes in home education law and aims to clarify some of the issues that have been raised in various court cases in the past few years.

Home education was legalised in South Africa under the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996 and has been increasing in popularity since then. Impaq, an integrated education solution, estimates that there are currently around 90,000 home-education learners in South Africa, of which 16,000 makes use of Impaq's products and services.

What is the new BELA Bill about?

The draft BELA Bill proposes to amend the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act No. 84 of 1996) and the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (Act No. 76 of 1998), so as to align them with developments in the education landscape. The amendments include clarifying certain existing provisions and adding certain provisions not provided for in the existing legislation. While most of the amendments in the BELA Bill apply to public or independent schools, there are some changes relevant to home-education learners and parents, as well as tutors supporting these learners.

How will this bill affect parents?

The most significant aspects, proposed by the BELA Bill, which affects home-education learners are listed below, though most of them do not differ from what is already legally required:

- The BELA Bill provides more detail on the role of the parent when it comes to assessing a learner's progress and determining whether the learning objectives have been met. (Previously taken up in the Home Education Policy of 1999).
- Compared to the existing documents, the BELA Bill provides more clarity on the deregistration of a learner and the role of the Head of Department (HOD).
- **A significant change** to the previous documentation is that parents who want to continue to educate their child at home after their child has completed Grade 9 **must use the services of a private or independent service provider accredited by Umalusi to register for the National Senior Certificate (NSC)**. According to the bill, the intention of this amendment is to guide and assist parents to help ensure that the lesson material used for education at home will be of the required standard. Keep in mind that this requirement only relates to parents who want their child to complete an NSC. It does not apply to any other curriculum.

The future of home education

The next few months will decide the future of home education in South Africa. Impaq has already provided a first round of comments through the Home Education Working Group of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on 13 October 2017.

Stefan Botha, CEO of the FutureLearn Group (which owns Impaq), said that their clients' interests come first. "We at Impaq

will continue to engage with the relevant authorities and use all legal and other avenues available to us to ensure that our clients' rights are protected", Botha said. He added that they will continue to support their clients' in their quest to provide the best possible education for their children. Impaq will deliver another round of comments directly to the Minister by the 10 November 2017 deadline.

All home educators, parents, institutions and organisations have been invited to submit their comments on the bill by 10 November 2017. The draft BELA Bill can be found here:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Legislation/Gov%20Not/BELA%2013Oct20172.pdf?ver=2017-10-20-111357-920>

Impaq

Impaq is a CAPS-aligned curriculum provider. They provide all the necessary products, services and tools a learner needs to complete Grade R to Grade 12 at home. Tutor centres across the country make use of Impaq's products and services while schools and teachers also benefit from Impaq's lesson materials and teacher guides. Impaq is part of the FutureLearn Group. FutureLearn is an education group that provides a guided learning ecosystem to learners at school, at home or any other environment.

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