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PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

The Council met at 14:02.

The Chairperson took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

The Chairperson announced that the hybrid sitting constituted a Sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(Policy debate)

Vote No 16 - Basic Education and Vote No 17 - Higher Education:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: House Chairperson, to the Deputy Minister, Dr Regina Mhaule, to the chairperson of the select committee, hon Feni, hon members of the NCOP, Director-

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General and the senior officials of the Department of Basic education, good afternoon. On behalf of the department I lead and the Deputy Minister, we would like to express our gratitude to the National Council of Provinces for the opportunity to table the 2024-25 Budget Vote No 16.

This Budget Vote takes place under very unique circumstances in our country. Unique in that we are operating within a Government of National Unity, which is important and historically significant because it reflects the will of the people. We also operate under extremely difficult fiscal conditions which require innovation, creativity and firm financial discipline in all our provinces.

As we navigate these unique times, we are reminded of our shared commitment to uplift and empower every child in South Africa through the provision of quality education, especially every child living in poor communities located in every part of the country. Together with our MECs, it is our mandate to give meaningful expression to the right to basic education as it is enshrined in our Constitution. The power of education to change one's life trajectory cannot be underestimated.

IsiXhosa:

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Nje ngomntu osuka ezilalini zaseQonce, eMpuma Koloni, ndiyazazi iimeko abantwana nootishala abaninzi abafundela; nabafundisa phantsi kwazo. Ngaphezulu koko, ndiyakwazi ukubaluleka kwemfundo esemgathweni kwaye ndiyazela apha kum. Ndime apha namhlanje nje, kungokuba ndafumana ingqeqesho nemfundo esemgathweni.

English:

Access to quality basic education should not be a privilege that is afforded only to a few. There are far too many children in our country for whom quality education is out of reach and for whom life chances are severely diminished. So we simply cannot shrink away from our responsibilities to them. This speech is not going to delve deep into detailed implementation plans. That will come in time. But this is a clarion call to all our stakeholders in the sector and provincial education departments to tighten their belts, accelerate delivery and guard against falling foul of our constitutional responsibilities of delivering quality education to all.

While there are improvements in terms of outcomes at a matric level, I remain deeply concerned about the financial management of some provinces and the infrastructure backlogs

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which remain. Members of this House, we need your intervention and your diligence in holding us all accountable to high standards of delivery. As the House that is concerned with provincial mandates, I implore you to be our eyes and our ears on the ground conducting oversight, giving feedback on your findings in order for us to improve our service.

All provinces must pull together to sustain the improvements that have been made throughout the years. However, the debate today is about sober allocation of resources and funds which we have obtained from the fiscus. So although the usual five year planning cycle does allow for changes, given that this government was sworn in halfway through the academic year, there was little to be gained and frankly, it would have been irresponsible to change fundamentally some of the programmes already in operation. But despite that, we must consistently strive to do better and objectively assess whether all the programmes we have are impactful and changing lives.

We must be bolder. we must be ambitious, we must set high targets for ourselves, and it is for this reason that the centre must hold, and must be responsive, and everybody else in the system must play their part. This is also why provincial departments must be responsive and obsessive about

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delivery. Let me make an example. It is important that we communicate to communities about projects that are coming to them. Often you will see communities striking saying that there are delays in the projects that needs to be delivered. And sometimes it's simply a matter of us not communicating in time with the communities that this is when the delivery of these projects is anticipated to come and when there are delays, we need to take them along with us. In this regard, I have begun the work of also critically assessing our targets and milestones as the department.

Already in my short time in office, I have been asked by parents of learners who are reaching the end of Grade 4 who cannot read for meaning or manipulate simple numbers, how we intend to improve this? Literacy is the only way we can unlock economic opportunities for our learners in the future. I therefore applaud those components of our national system who have taken it seriously on, and how important it is to increase our reading and calculating ability of our youngest learners, making sure that every learner has a fair chance of staying the course until Grade 12.

While there have been some improvements, our literacy and numeracy rates remain unacceptably low. This is why we need to

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move towards utilizing and exploiting the value of mother tongue-based bilingual education. Research confirms that there is value in utilizing mother tongue-based bilingual education to drive up literacy rates. In this regard, we must be deliberate and support this implementation.

The collaboration and co-operation of the Council of Education Ministers is critical to the work that we do. We need MECs to hold their departments accountable and seriously drive outcomes. This is a collaborative effort. The true implementation power of this department lies in the provinces. That is where this House and its powers really becomes critical in the work that we do, and you helping us drive these outcomes.

The link between monitoring and improvements is obvious. But it's sometimes easy to confuse that increased monitoring will automatically lead to increased performance. This is simply not the case. This is another area where I will be critically assessing whether our efforts to monitor quality in the system are truly driving improvements.

South Africans are rightfully concerned about the quality of education offered in our public schools and the level of

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assessment that we do. To address these and other pressing education issues, I intend to establish an Advisory Council Representative of Basic Education System as soon as possible. This needs to include all our key stakeholders across the sector, as well as experts in key disciplines.

This week I had the pleasure of interacting with all five teacher unions, and I can report that the leadership of the teacher unions declared their support for this administration and have committed to working together to lift the system from where it currently is, to a better level. And so as we continue to build for the future, we must recommit to building a solid foundation for quality and efficient Basic Education system which takes the learner from the Early Childhood Development, ECD level through to foundation, intermediate and senior phases to further education and training band.

In line with this commitment, we have identified five key priorities as the seventh administration which will inform our decision making in this portfolio. Firstly, we want to intensify our efforts to improve access to and the quality of early child's development because we recognize that laying a strong foundation for our children is important for their future. Secondly, we want to be steadfast on improving

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literacy and numeracy skills across all the phases of schooling. Thirdly, we want to improve access to and the quality of inclusive education, particularly for our communities and our learners with special education needs. Fourthly, we want to intensify and improve access to and the quality of training and professional development opportunities that are available to our school management teams and our teachers. This is important because teachers are the backbone of the education system, so we must be able to support them as much as possible in order for them to be effective in the work that they do. Finally, but certainly not least, we will be working tirelessly to improve the safety and the quality of school environments for our learners and our teachers, especially because this is important for their dignity. This includes reducing overcrowding in classrooms, improving access to electricity, water and adequate sanitation facilities and removing inappropriate structures such as pit toilets in our schools.

In particular, I will carefully review the recently published norms and standards for school infrastructure to ensure that it gives greater clarity and drives meaningful improvements in this regard. Chair and members, we cannot have learners in danger of drowning in pit toilets or learning in inappropriate

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infrastructures 30 years into our democracy. I have discussed this with my colleagues - the nine education MECs - about these priorities and the need to move with speed in order for us to drive outcomes.

Allows me to table the budget. The provincial 2024-25 financial year budget is as follows: The Eastern Cape Department of Education is allocated R42,4 billion. The Free States Department of Education is allocated R17,9 million. The Gauteng Department of Education is allocated R65,8 billion. KwaZulu-Natal Basic Education department is allocated R63 billion. Limpopo is allocated R40 billion. Mpumalanga Department of Education is allocated R26,4 billion. The Northern Cape is allocated R8,1 billion. The North West Department of Education is allocated R22 billion. And the Western Cape Department of Education is allocated R30,8 billion. Therefore, the total budget allocation for the Department of Basic Education and the nine provincial education departments combined for this current financial year is R324,5 billion, which is an increase of 3,4% from the previous financial year.

We wish to remind the House of our action plan, which is called towards the realisation of schooling 2030, which gives

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expression to the Constitution, to the National Development Plan, NDP, as well as continental and international conventions, which continues to provide the moral imperative and mandate for government to make the social justice principles of access, redress, equity, efficiency, inclusivity and quality education opportunities available to all.

The Council of Education Ministers in the sixth administration had approved what they called the provincial inclusive basket to provide monitoring and evaluation oversight to all provincial education departments. The provincial inclusive basket includes the performance in national senior certificate examinations according to fee paying status of the schools. The markers for success were the following: performance and critical subjects, which included accounting, mathematics, physical science, technical maths, participation in mathematics, bachelor passes obtained and passes with distinction achieved throughout the ratios.

I do want - in as much as I lament some of the big challenges in our provinces - want to give credit where credit is due to the provinces. For instance, Mpumalanga, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape have achieved the highest throughput ratios. Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng have achieved the higher

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percentage pass rates. Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West had the higher maths participation. Limpopo and Free State have higher achievement in accounting, Western Cape, Free State, Gauteng and North West have higher performance in maths and physical science. KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape had the highest passes with distinction. My plea is that the work that is being done in these provinces must not only be sustained, but it must be radically improved in the next five years.

As I said earlier, we need to work harder. We need to accelerate the outcomes in all aspects of the sector. There's growing acknowledgement that the deliberate and sustained systemic efforts must be made to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa. It's common knowledge. At all times we must remind ourselves about the non-negotiables of the sector.

As with the Government of National Unity, our national and provincial stakeholders in the Basic Education sector need to work collaboratively, creatively and earnestly, irrespective of our different backgrounds and beliefs, in order to make sure that we make meaningful strides in strengthening and

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enhancing our existing systems and doing everything possible to make sure that we improve the life chances of our children.

The best interests of the learner need to guide our collective efforts. We continue to engage with the school governing body associations, the principals' associations, the national organisations responsible for learners with special needs, as well as independent schools' associations. These are some of the partners and stakeholders who do the work on the ground and so their wise counsel is appreciated and will inform our work.

In the coming weeks, I will also be visiting each and each and every one of the nine provinces to engage with my provincial colleagues and their respective departments to ensure that my work is informed by the provincial realities and needs that they are experiencing.

We wish to thank our select committee chair and the hon members to whom we met last week. They gave us invaluable input and committed to holding us accountable against targets and set goals. It was also encouraging to hear that the committee intends on conducting oversight across the country.

Their observations are critical, not only to the work of this House, but to the work of the department.

IsiXhosa:

Siyafuna ukuba amaLungu ePalamente aye kuzibonela kumaphondo onke. Kaloku silapha nje, sithunywe ngabemi beli lizwe ukuba sibathethelele. Yiyo loo nto ke ndiwuxabisile umsebenzi walapha ePalamente.

English:

I wish to thank the Deputy Minister, Dr Mhaule, and the Director-General, Mr Mveli, and indeed the Department of Basic Education team as a whole. Members, often we don't give credit where credit is due. In our public service, there are dedicated officials who seek to make meaningful change. I am pleased to note that there are many such in the Department of Basic Education.

Let me end by thanking each and every stakeholder who plays an active role in the delivery of our education in our country each and every day. Many of whom and some of whom who are here today as guests, from our schools, their principals, educators, staff and governing bodies, to the teacher unions, the governing body associations and independent schools'

associations that support them, to civil society, community-based organisations, and to the parents of our schools, please do join me on my own learning journey in this department. With your support we can improve the quality of education outcomes in South Africa. It is not insurmountable. And if we improve the learning outcomes in South Africa, we do so not just for this generation, but for further generations to come.

IsiXhosa:

Ndiyabulela.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: House Chairperson, thank you so much, the Minister of Basic Education, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, hon Buti Manamela, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, hon Dr Mimi Gondwe, the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, hon Dr Muhaule, the premiers present, the MECs, and hon members, the Department of Higher Education and Training has each footprint in all provinces, through our institutions of higher learning, consisting of public universities, the TVET colleges and community education and training colleges as well as Sector Education Training Authority, Setas, aiming to develop a skilled and capable workforce to support economic growth path.

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Before, I present our substantive submission to the policy debate today. Allow me to clear some of the housekeeping matters that are making the news headlines pertaining to higher education and training. Firstly, the headline that says higher Education Department returns 580 million to National Treasury. This is indeed true. However, the headline does not provide the context. Today I'm standing here before you to account and provide clarity, in this regard. Firstly, this 580 million was for compensation of employees as well as goods and services. This amount is a cumulative savings from two financial years against the final appropriation. We should then stop scoring cheap politics around this matter. It was not meant for student funding.

The amount arises from personnel attrition, which the department could not fill due to COVID and delays in capital assets received in procurement processes. Our system makes provision for such and spends funds to be returned to National Revenue Fund. Even as the department surrenders this amount, I am happy to announce that it has achieved 99% performance against its target. However, we are going to address this gap that we have made.

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Secondly, the same vein the department will surrender an additional 150 million over this financial year. This is the residual amount from Vista University Trust that was meant to settle claims of former employees who were forced into early retirement, where the university was merged. The last claim was processed in 2021 and the remaining funds must be surrendered to the National revenue Fund.

Thirdly, Chairperson, is the ongoing litigation between NSFAS, and eZaga holdings, which is of public interest as the fund benefits over a million of students. For now, House Chairperson and hon members, while we respectfully wait for our courts to adjudicate, our primary consideration is to ensure uninterrupted payment of benefits to students, universities, TVET colleges, and auxiliary service providers such as accommodation landlords. We will always be on the side of the marginalised.

IsiXhosa:

Simele bona abantu bakuthi, sithunyiwe ngabo kwaye siza kuqinisekisa ukuba abantwana besikolo bayayifumana le nkxaso-mali yabo.

English:

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Fourthly, Chairperson, is the so-called alleged appointment of the services Seta CEO. What we should understand is that appointments and terms of office of Seta CEOs are aligned with the terms of offices of Seta Boards or accounting authorities. We are not going to violate our own statute. So, in the interim we will make provision as to ensure that there is no vacuum in the services Seta.

For accountability purposes, I wish to bring to the attention of hon members that the terms of offices of Setas, Seta Boards are coming to an end in March 2025. We will then call for nominations and I wish to assure this House that we will see quality Board members and we will prioritise their induction with a premium of their fiduciary responsibilities.

Hon members, in this current financial year, our work will be supported by a budget amounting to 137,5 billion with an annual average increase of 4,8% from R130,5 billion in 2023-24 to R150,2 billion in 2026-27. Through our DDM, we aim to promote integrated planning and co-ordination for sustainable development. House Chairperson, we will therefore continue to collaborate with the provinces to ensure that all our skills and training interventions provided through our institutions

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respond to provincial economic development and industry demands within specific districts.

Through higher health, we will continue to seek close collaboration with the provincial governments in fighting the scourge of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in our universities, the TVET colleges and CET colleges. Gender-based violence requires all of us to harness our collective responsibilities.

In 2020, my predecessor launched the GBV Policy Framework, and we have put systems and capacity in all our institutions to respond to Gender-Based Violence. We will further ramp-up our efforts to ensure that we reduce the incidences of Gender-Based Violence in our institutions.

Hon members, as I said in our 2024 budget vote presentation last week, in the National Assembly, we have listened attentively to the voices from within and outside the PSET sector agitating for transformation for efficiencies at the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. I must mention that I am personally receiving a number of queries with reference numbers following up on their appeals and applications from students and we are attending to those appeals.

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I can assure this House today that we are dealing with all the concerns raised by all stakeholders. We will further do so in recognition of our first democratically elected President, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela whose vision it was to establish a government-funded national student financial aid model.

We are working hard to address the current inefficiencies at NSFAS. However, we must also celebrate the successes of the scheme. From its humble beginnings in the early 1990s, NSFAS has grown from a budget of R33 million in 1991 serving 7, 240 students, to about R47,6 billion in 2023 supporting 1,1 million students. Since its inception, NSFAS has supported more than five million beneficiaries, producing hundreds of thousands of skilled professionals and the middle class, especially those from the poorest of the poor.

At a basic level, NSFAS represents the government's deliberate intervention to broaden access to those sections of our communities who had no access to post school education and training. Certainly, this is one of the most important achievements of this government over the past 30 years of our democracy.

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Earlier this year, we have committed R3,8 billion initial capitalisation fund to support “missing middle” students, effective this financial year. This is the category of students who come from families with total income of more than R350 000, but not more than R600 000 per annum. At least 31, 884 prospective learners stand to benefit from this investment. As we gradually implement the Comprehensive Funding Model, we will continue to work with all funding stakeholders to ensure that multiple bursary schemes are consolidated.

Hon Chairperson, in April this year, Dr Blade Nzimande appointed NSFAS Administrator and simultaneously dissolved the Board. As the Administrator takes over the governance, management, and administration of NSFAS for a period of 12-months. His task also involves resolving misalignment of data between NSFAS and institutions resulting in the unreliability of data as a matter of urgency, in order to ensure finalising all the necessary funding decisions and outstanding payments including student accommodation and overseeing the opening of the 2025 online application process.

I will closely monitor the work of NSFAS in addressing all challenges raised by stakeholders including rooting out

corruption; and maladministration on the NSFAS grant payment system. We are working overtime to ensure that NSFAS systems are ready for the commencement of the 2025 application season, which is scheduled to start in September this year. We have agreed with the DG and the administrator that we should get or receive a weekly progress report in this regard

We remain resolute to change the size and shape of our Post Secondary Education and Training system, particularly to expand the college sector. The National Plan for Post-School Education and Training directs that we should drastically increase intake in TVET and Community Education and Training colleges. We are therefore targeting one million enrolments in Community Education and Training colleges and 2,5 million in TVET colleges by year 2030.

Equally, we will continue to diversify our public universities based on their strengths and the needs of the communities in which they are located by targeting 1,6 million enrolments by 2030. In improving the responsiveness of our PSET sector to the world of work, we have significantly reduced the waiting period to issue certificates to qualifying candidates at our colleges. On average, certificates were released within two

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months during 2022-23 financial year, against the target of three months.

We are investing in research and development and advancing in skills revolution to identify emerging skills gaps and trends in the labour market to ensure our artisans are equipped with relevant skills for the job market. It remains our target to produce 30 000 artisans per annum. In this regard, in 2022-23 we produced 19 461 artisans - and our target for 2024-25 is to produce 26 500 artisans

The placement of unemployed TVET graduates into work-integrated learning opportunities remains one of our priorities. With support from the Setas, we encourage our colleges to seek placement opportunities with both public and private sector institutions and with nongovernmental organisations. The Centres of Specialisation at public TVET Colleges have increased from 26 in 2019 to 53 in 2024. We have so far invested R238 million to upgrade the infrastructure at these centres. These centres play a critical role in producing more artisans required to grow our economy.

In the current financial year, our total investment in infrastructure is R4,3 billion. We have completed the

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feasibility studies for the establishment of the University of Science and Innovation in Ekurhuleni - and the University of Policing and Crime Detection in Hammanskraal. We intend to commence the construction of these two new universities in 2025. Furthermore, we have concluded a feasibility study for the establishment of a campus of the Tshwane University of Technology. The Imbali precinct led by the Durban University of Technology is taking shape with the targeted completion of the Engineering Building in the current financial year. Lastly, planning for the Ulundi Campus of the University of Zululand is also at an advanced stage.

We are building and refurbishing our TVET colleges with modern facilities, updating the curriculum to align with industry needs and fostering partnerships with industry and business. We have increased our financial investment in TVET college education by allocating R2,6 billion to build 12 new college campuses. We have further identified 10 TVET colleges which have been allocated funding for improved ICT infrastructure in the current financial year.

Student accommodation has also received added attention in the last five years to increase access, success and safety for students. In this regard, the planning of new student

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accommodation in seven institutions including TVET colleges is at an advanced stage. So far, House Chairperson and hon members, 9 721 beds have been completed in the past two years to the value of R2,5 billion. Overall, through the lease-to-own scheme, we intend to complete 300 000 beds by 2031. We have also commenced the planning for the construction of Community Education and Training Colleges and allocated R1 billion over three years for this commitment.

In conclusion, House Chairperson, my gratitude goes to the ministry staff, the DG and his team, the Board and executives of our entities, the Deputy Ministers that I'm working with and everybody who continues to be part of the journey of developing skills and building I'm so sorry about that - And a capable workforce. I call upon members of the NCOP to support our initiatives as we traverse the length and breadth of our country to change the lives of the ordinary citizens of our country ...

IsiXhosa:

... iimpula zikaLujaca, abantu bethu abangenanto. Enkosi.

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The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon members, please if you feel like taking a comfort break, there are tea stations outside. You are more than welcome to do so.

Mr M FENI: Hon members, let me take this opportunity, Chairperson to greet everyone currently in this House, and let me say all protocol is observed.

IsiXhosa:

Ndingalibali ukugqithisa amazwi kumntwan'egazi esinaye ngaphakathi. Ndithi kuwe mntwan'egazi, iinkosi mazithambe izicaka zivumile.

English:

Let me take this opportunity as the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Education, Sciences and Creative Industries, to welcome the Budget Vote No 16 of the Department of Basic Education and Budget Vote No 17 of the Department of Higher Education.

Hon Chairperson, it was the late former President Mandela who said, and I quote:

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It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine; that the son of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation.

Indeed, education is a powerful weapon that can be used to overcome the triple challenges our country continues to grapple with. They include poverty, unemployment and inequality. It is for this reason that I have a pleasure for being part of this important portfolio committee.

Hon Chairperson, on Tuesday 16 July our committee had a privilege of engaging with both the Departments of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education led by their respective hon Ministers and Deputy Ministers. Senior officials took us through the annual performance plans, APPs. They proposed Budget Votes for 2024-25 financial year. All of which the committee had to consider. Having engaged robustly, with the Department of Basic Education, I got to appreciate the proposed budget as it speaks to issues currently facing our education sector.

One of the impressive commitments by this government of national unity is the appreciation of the need to improve

school's infrastructure. Hence, we saw that close to halve of the department's budget commitment of R15 billion was towards the upliftment of school infrastructure. The school infrastructure budget allocation through education infrastructure grant which saw 11% in the financial year 2024-25. The accelerated infrastructure delivery initiative will go a long way in overcoming backlogs in appropriate school infrastructures.

Provision of services such as water, sanitation, electricity in schools and total eradication of pit latrines.

IsiXhosa:

... abantwana bangaphindi basondele ematyholweni apho thina sasithanda ukuya kuzinceda khona kuba sibethwa ziimeko.

English:

Another impression we saw in the presentation of the budget is an increased allocation of the National Schools Nutrition Programme to the tune of R9,8 billion in this financial year. That will ensure that each child will receive a meal in school. No learner will be left behind because of an empty stomach. This is in line with the speech by our hon President

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Ramaphosa during the opening of Parliament on Thursday where he stated that no child will study on an empty stomach.

We, however, would like also to see more investment in other activities that will create an enabling environment for learners to thrive which include sport and cultural activities in schools. That will strengthen the health and wellbeing of learners as well as foster social cohesion.

We call for the smooth integration of Early Childhood Development into basic education that will ensure that each and every child receive good educational foundation. We also call for strengthening of the school curriculum that will enable learners to read for comprehension and understanding by the time they reach the age of 10.

IsiXhosa:

Abanye bethu saba nelishwa lokufundiswa ngentothoviyane ...

English:

... the locust. So, this is good response on that particular question.

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Regarding the Department of Higher education; the committee acknowledges and appreciate the sector's efforts in ensuring that at least 1,3 million students from poor households and the missing middle will receive funding from higher education through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, is allocated R46 billion. This is a significant milestone for the country which continues to strive to build skills that will grow the economy and create jobs.

The committee also appreciates the department's plan to increase the number of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges that will train the number of artisans in the country. However, the committee also raised concerns over the growing number of unemployed graduates that are not absorbed by the labour market.

In response to this challenge, we have called for the department to review that training offered by our institutions of higher learning is whether it produces skills needed in the market. This will go a long way in trying to find solutions to the challenge of skills mismatch and redirecting students towards acquiring skills that are needed by the economy.

The department is also to prioritise funding for scarce skills in the country to ensure that students can actively participate in the economy after graduation.

We also call for the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, and the National Skills Fund to prioritise empowering our youth with skills that drive entrepreneurship for those that are working towards starting their own business.

IsiXhosa:

Bangajikelezi izindlu nezidanga ekubeni sebezifumene, koko baye kwezi ndawo zifumanekayo.

English:

Lastly, we call for the increased funding for the technical and vocational training that will ensure that the country produces 30 000 newly trained artisans by the year 2030.

Hon House Chairperson, the committee adopted the Budget Votes for both departments not as a blank check, but on condition that the budget will go to where it is intended to. As the committee, we will perform our oversight over these departments and ensure that the funds are used efficiently for

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the benefit of our people. We will leave no stone unturned in situation where we find abuse or misuse of public funds. We will hold these departments fully accountable and ensure smooth running of the sectors. With those words, we call on this House to support both Budget Vote No 16: Basic Education and Budget Vote No 17: Higher Education. I thank you, Chairperson.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon member, I want to draw your attention to Rule 58 which provides that a delegate must address the Chair when speaking not the House Chairperson.

Thank you very much. I now call upon the hon Fienies.

Ms D W FIENIES: Hon Chairperson, hon Deputy Chairperson, hon Ministers, hon Deputy Ministers, hon House Chairpersons, hon Chief Whip, hon delegates and the Secretary to the National Council of Provinces, NCOP, good afternoon. The importance of basic education is dealing with socioeconomic issues. Basic education is a cornerstone for addressing a wide array of socioeconomic issues.

It lays the foundation for individuals to lead productive and fulfilling lives. Contributing to the overall wellbeing and

development of society. The census and other Statistics SA reports demonstrate that access to education has significantly improved since the dawn of democracy.

From early childhood education to postsecondary education, almost all young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are literate. While adult literacy has increased from 64% in 1996 to 85%, currently.

Infrastructure development and maintenance at public schools are fundamental to providing quality education especially in townships and rural areas. The state of school infrastructure directly impacts learning experience success, teachers' effectiveness and the overall community's development.

Adequate facilities ensure that educational institutions can function optimally fostering environments where learners can strive academically and socially.

Some of the key issues that the government of national unity need to address is the enhancement of learning environment, health and safety, encouraging attendance and reducing dropout rates. We must support teachers and staff. Promoting community development and bridging the urban rural divisions.

A well-built infrastructure makes a big difference in the classroom. Classrooms, libraries, labs and sport space that are well-built and maintained give learners the tools they need to participate in a thorough educational experience.

Health and safety should be top priorities in every educational setting. Adequate sanitation facilities, clean water supply, sufficient ventilation and structurally sound buildings are critical for reducing health problems and fostering a healthy learning environment.

Improved infrastructure can have a substantial impact on student attendance and dropout rates. Students who have access to well-maintained facilities are more likely to attend school frequently and participate in learning activities.

Poor infrastructure such as overcrowded classrooms, a lack of basic utilities can reduce attendance and contribute to high dropout rates. Teachers and staff also benefit from improved school infrastructure. Well-equipped classrooms, access to teaching aids and safe working conditions enhance job satisfaction and retention rates among teachers.

This in return positively impacts learners. As motivated and well supported teachers are more effective in their roles.

Sports play a vital role in the holistic development of learners. Sports promotes physical fitness, teamwork discipline and resilience. However, inequalities in access and opportunities such as school tournaments leagues can hinder these benefits, particularly in marginalised communities.

Addressing these require a strategic approach involving collaboration with the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. Sports participation has several advantages for learners. It improves mental health, strengthen the body and develop social skills.

The 2024 state of the nation indicates that over the last 30 years we have tried to use education to promote equality. Our basic education outcomes are constantly improving. The latest matric pass rate of 82,9% was the highest ever. We need to build on that as we usher in more years into democracy.

In the modern era digital literacy has become an essential component of education playing a crucial role in equipping

students with skills they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

In South Africa, providing basic computer skills in schools is vital for enhancing the quality in standard of basic education. Digital literacy encompasses the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information. It is a critical skill preferred for the 21st Century underpinning various aspects of daily life, education and employment. Digital literacy enables learners to access information, develop critical thinking, enhance communication and prepare learners for the workplace.

Despite the clear benefits of digital literacy, several challenges hinder its widespread adoption in the South African schools, teacher training, incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum, cultivating public and private partnerships and involving communities are all important measures for attaining this aim.

South Africa can create a more fair and prosperous future by ensuring that all children have access to digital literacy

education. Giving each kid the potential to excel in the digital age.

We are confident that the department will build on the gains of the Sixth Administration which piloted robotics and coding. This has developed capacity and experience to expand delivery and access to the subject.

As the ANC we urge the department to focus on the aspect and ensure increase access, prioritising of rural communities and townships. The ANC has transformed the basic education sector through interventions introduced in the democratic dispensation. These interventions are the introduction of school fee exemption and school nutrition programmes. These interventions were introduced to ensure that poverty does not stand in a way of children's access to quality education.

The provision of child nutrition in schools is a critical aspect of education and public health policy in South Africa. Adequate nutrition is fundamental to the physical and competitive development of children.

We also believe that we must mobilise our parents, guardians, unions, education sector organisations, communities and

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traditional leaders to join hands in supporting the school echo system. We must deal with the social ills such as the sale of alcohol and drugs to the students.

We must address the scourge of gender-based violence and bullying which also impact our learners in schools and communities.

As the ANC we remain committed to the advancing transformative legislation. In the sixth term we succeeded in the completion of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill which was processed over a period of more than a decade by the department and by Parliament in the sixth term. The Bill seeks to transfer the basic education system and we should mobilise society behind its noble ideals.

I therefore as the ANC support the Budget Vote No 16: Basic Education. I thank you, Chairperson.

Ms N S DU PLEISIS: Hon Chairperson, hon Ministers, hon Deputy Ministers, hon members and fellow South Africans. When I started in politics many years ago as an activist, I was always told we can say, and all protocol is observed.

Investment in secondary education provides a clear boost to long term economic development, not only to the individual who now has access to further economic opportunities, but it boosts a country's economy. And when I look at the budget, it seems that there is in fact investment into Higher Education.

It is clear that there is an analysis of needs to ensure entry into the economy, as the department is not only looking at university education, but it is supporting artisan and specialised skills as well as first level entry.

As a country, we have moved, in theory, to a society that opens entry to higher education. These range from TVET colleges, to bridging courses, to National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS bursaries. We are without a doubt a country that talks and sometimes understands the importance of quality higher education to all who have not historically had access to it.

It is through this that we can build towards a strong and growing economy and give people the power to determine their own future, regardless of their characteristics of their birth. Within this, a child born in the most abject of poverty can be a sports hero, a neurosurgeon or a concert pianist.

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I serve in a community that covers Lehae, Protea South, Ennerdale, Lenasia and Lawley. Those of you who come from Johannesburg can understand that this is a lower ...

[Inaudible.] Last year I had a community or constituency meeting with residents from all parts of the of this constituency.

There were 240 people there and a cross section of society with the youngest being 16 Thabo, and the oldest being Mamogapi at 104. There was a mixture of gender. There was a mixture of ethnicity. And really just a cross section of the marginalised that have been left behind.

However, as an icebreaker, I asked various questions and I started with easy questions. Like, everybody who likes Simba chips, please stand up and those people would stand up. After the fifth question, definitely a Simba chips supporter here.

After the fifth question, I started asking questions about the socio-economic circumstances that these residents are facing.

And my first question was everybody who has finished primary school, please stand up, and 95% of the group of 240 people stood up. I then asked everybody who's completed a high school

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diploma or certificate, please stand up, 88% of the residents stood up. I then asked everybody who has any form of higher education to please stand up, and I was the only one standing. That is not redress. That is sad. That is criminal.

As a Department of Higher Education and training in 1998 various sector education and training authority, Setas were created to address the need for first level entry of South Africans into higher education and skills-based education and I'd like here to point out Setas cannot still be aiming to, Setas should have already.

The Setas were envisioned to lift South Africans up out of poverty by giving access to an economy that most people have not had access to. One of the Setas that were created was for the tourism industry and obviously because tourism is one of the biggest growing industries in South Africa.

Culture, Art, Tourism Hospitality, and Sport Sector Training Authority, Cathseta, as they call it, as established to assist trainers in tourism. I have had in the past while various trainers in tourism come to speak to me about the failings within Cathseta that are withholding people from accessing

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economic opportunities, people who desperately need these opportunities.

First and foremost, within the past 30 years, these trainers have informed me Cathseta has changed their electronic system three times, not once improving or making it more user friendly, but just having a contract with somebody who gives a tick box exercise and the implication of this is that many people are not receiving their certificates. Trainers have been waiting since 2014 for trained tourist guides to get certificates that they have not.

Within the past year and a half, something like 90% of the trainers have reported on various groups that they have not received certificates for tourist guides so that they can do their job. Now many years ago in about 1994 till about 1998, there was a discussion to move tourist guides from national guides to site or community guides, which is a very positive idea.

Basically, what it did is somebody who lives in Wupperthal or somebody who lives in St Lucia and is a subject matter in their community can become a site guide. The curriculum has

now changed to remove first level entry to site guides. This excludes people from the economy.

Recently, I did an oversight and Garankuwa Hospitality school in Gauteng. This falls in the curriculum under Cathseta. It's also a TVET or a community college and there is nothing happening there. We were there at midterm. There was not one student. At some point the head of Garankuwa slipped and said well, sometimes the gardener has to give class. That's a bit of a shocker.

This school was established to feed some cities need for world class hospitality staff. There are many other Setas, many other TVETs and many other examples that I could bring that shows that we have not opened the barriers for the poorest of the poor and the marginalised to access higher education and to access the economy.

The department or the Department of Higher Education and Training, DHET website says the vision of the DHET is of a South Africa in which we have differentiated and fully inclusive post-school systems that allow South Africans to access relevant post-school education and training in order to

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fulfil the economic and social goals of participation in an inclusive economy and society. Isn't this what we all want?

There are various issues with the budget and various not. Which one is the exponential increase within planning policy and strategy and not no certainty as to where this money will go and also with subsidies. However, the hon Minister has spoken to ... [Inaudible.] ... so, I will not continue with that. However, we need to make sure that money spent by government is money that benefits the lives of South Africans.

The issues are not new, I could list them, but I think you could give me longer lists as well within this House. And I'm not the first person to talk about this, but the disconnect from the vision and mission is almost criminal. The lack of leadership over many years in a department that is directly able to redress the injustices of the past, as well as to contribute to long term economic growth in South Africa cannot be argued away, neither can the curious amount of money spent.

As the National Council of Provinces, we are responsible for oversight of the executive. We carry the voices of South Africans on our shoulders. It is our responsibility to ensure that the executive builds a South Africa that is inclusive. A

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South Africa that redresses the injustices of the past and the failings of the past that 30 years. We need to do more.

We need to do more so that in five years' time when we ask in any community, how many of you have had access or competed higher education, that every single person in that room stands up proudly and says I have a degree, I have a certificate. I have something that allows me access to the economy, that allows me access to the industry, that has prepared me for the unwritten rules within the workplace. That is what we need to push towards as the National Council of Provinces and hold the DHET to account by going to the ground and not just reading our reports and seeing what is happening to the people of South Africa in this most important department. I thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Greetings to the Ministers and Deputy Ministers that are here today. I just want to throw in a little commercial. I was a former educator myself, so I wanted to do a quick crash course. The young lady that left this chair just now, she is the National Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces. I'm the Deputy Chairperson. We have two House Chairs, the hon Ryder who is seated there at the back and the hon Radebe who is not in the House today, and the Chief Whip of the National Chairperson of the National

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Council of Provinces the hon Mmoiemang was sitting next to me there. I thought I'd just give a little bit of education while we are in an education debate. Thank you very much. I now call upon the hon Gade who will debate for 10 minutes.

Mr F GADE (Eastern): Hon Chairperson of the NCOP, Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, the Minister of Basic Education and the Deputy Minister, the Minister of Higher Education and Training and the Deputy Minister, members of the NCOP and invited guests, good afternoon.

Chair, my sincere apologies we have an executive committee, Exco today and so we had to connect from where we are. I felt I must apologise on that one first Chair. The second aspect is that the South African people have put the National Development Plan, NDP at the centre of their own development as a compass. The National Development Plan is a comprehensive roadmap that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequalities in the country by 2030.

One of the key areas of focus within the NDP is the education that is the subject of discussion today, precisely because it is widely recognised as a fundamental driver of economic development and social progress. The NDP outlines a number of

strategies and goals for improving the quality of education in the country we are, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that all citizens have access to higher education and skills development opportunities.

One amongst the main goals of the NDP is to improve the quality of basic education in our country. This includes ensuring that all children have access to quality early childhood development programmes, as well as improving the quality of teaching in schools and increasing the overall pass rate in key strategic gateway subjects such as mathematics and science in the country.

The NDP also aims to address the challenges of access and inclusivity in the education system by ensuring that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to quality education. One amongst the other focus of the NDP is on improving the postschool education and training system in the country. This includes increasing the number of students who are able to access higher education institutions, as well as improving the quality and relevance of vocational training programmes.

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Chair, the NDP also highlights the importance of promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in the education system that we have adopted. The Department of Basic Education has put in place concrete measures, through the Education Systems Transformation Plan, to ensure that we can navigate ...
[Inaudible.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon colleague, you seem to be having difficulty with your bandwidth. If you have any other devices that are switched on, please switch them off.

Mr F GADE (Eastern Cape): Chair, early childhood development plays a critical role in shaping children's future, success and well-being. The early years of a child's life, especially the first 1 000 days, are a crucial period for brain development, laying the foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development respectively.

Providing early childhood basic education and support in our country is essential for breaking ... [Inaudible] ... creating opportunities for growth and sustainable economic development. Hon Chair, as a developing country, the early childhood programmes can help improve our children's health outcomes ...
[Inaudible.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon member, you can switch off your video if that will help you with your bandwidth now that we have seen you.

Mr F GADE (Eastern Cape): [Inaudible] ... to clean water and basic health care services are essential for children's cognitive development. By providing early childhood support, we can help reduce infant mortality rates, improve maternal health, and promote healthy growth and development. In addition to academic and health benefits, early childhood development programmes can play a crucial role in promoting social and emotional well-being.

Children who receive nurturing care, love, and support in their early years are more likely to develop stronger in terms of their social skills, emotional resilience, and positive relationships with other kids. These social and emotional skills are essential for children to succeed in their school, work, and their life *in toto*.

Hon Chair, the second aspect that we would want to leave for the attention of the leadership here is that it is critical for the country to be able to define, identify itself in the context of the policy on language. So that we can be able to

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address some of the shortcomings that we have witnessed in the recent times on the basis of the policy on language in terms of the access in some areas or communities within the country either through the areas of residence, ethnicity or the undertones of patriarchal implications that we have. The nation must be able to address that.

Lastly Chair, the most important one again is that the lives of learners must be able to perform academically. But to succeed on that, we need to put the school nutrition programme at the centre as the epicentre of access to education, but equally as part of the allegations of poverty within the communities that we serve. Chairperson, thank you for the time that you have given to us.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Dr M M Gondwe): Hon Chairperson, as I present my maiden Budget Vote speech in the NCOP, it gives me immense pleasure and honor to join the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nkabane and Deputy Minister Manamela in presenting the Department of Higher Education and Training Budget Vote in this 7th Administration.

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The success or failures of Higher Education sector is dependent in no uncertain terms on the effectiveness of the administrative interface provided by the department. For this reason, it is imperative that the department pursued a two-pronged approach, which prioritizes improvement in its internal performance targets on one hand and the governance of entities reporting to it on the other hand.

As the 7th Administration begins its work to chart a new governance path for South Africa under a Government of National Unity, I am encouraged by the common realization and understanding between myself, Minister Nkabane and Deputy Minister Manamela that a lot more can be done to deliver on the department's mandate as derived from section 29 of the Constitution.

The stuck in realities that if a department does not improve the performance of its own administrative interface, it will struggle to resolve the governance and administrative deficiencies at entities such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, and some of our Sector Education and Training Authority, SETA. The most immediate metric by which this administration will be judged on by students in the

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sector is how speedily and effectively we resolve the governance and administrative issues at NSFAS.

As such standing here, I want to assure students right across the length and breadth of this country that NSFAS is one of the priority areas that we will be focusing on to resolve issues relating to amongst other things, the late or nonpayment of students allowances and the inconsistent disbursement of fees to institutions of higher learning.

It is not a core incident that NSFAS is currently under administration having first suffered the same fate between 2018 and 2020. Given the seemingly, intractable problems that the entity and the impact this is having on the smooth operation of the post-secondary education sector in South Africa perhaps the time has come for us to consider decentralizing the current students finance administration and disbursing funds directly to those institutions of higher learning with the administrative capacity to manage and administer this funding. It has become abundantly clear that we are currently facing some serious and widen challenges in so far as the disbursement of funds by NSFAS to institutions of higher learning is concerned.

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As a case in point, is the fact that just a few days ago the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, reported that it had recovered R112 million in irregular payments made by NSFAS to undeserving beneficiaries. According to the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, this money was recovered from 412 students across five universities, 40 TVET colleges from students who did not qualify to be funded by NSFAS. The SIU attributed these irregular payments to weak and vulnerable control within NSFAS. As such, there is an urgent and pressing need to strengthen the administrative and operational capacity of NSFAS to disburse funds to deserving beneficiaries. More importantly, NSFAS has to work towards restoring the confidence of its clients, the students and this will only happen if the entity can improve its corporate governance outcomes.

Another area of primary concern relates to the recurring operational challenges impacting the work of some of our CETA, which are often made worse by misplaced priorities and maladministration.

The Auditor-General continues to flag irregularities in the audit outcomes of some SETAs with irregular expenditure being a common feature or denominator. We will need to resolve these

as a matter of priority if our SETAs are really going to start making a fact mount impact on delivering on their mandate for skills and human capacity development.

We will be failing in our oversight responsibilities as a department if we did not intervene and put an end to irregular and wasteful expenditure and require that all of our 21 SETAs strictly focus on their mandate of helping to combat unemployment by developing and rolling out programs end in the narrowing the skills gap in the economy.

Despite the important role that both TVET and Community Education and Training, CET, colleges play in the post-secondary education sectors. Their partnerships with industries are still not where they should be. Take for instance, target to have all 50 public TVET colleges signed at least two protocols with industry and place learners for workplace experience was not achieved by the department.

In the interest of job creation, we will need to expand and increase partnerships between industry and the post-secondary education sector. In that way, we will produce the skills they are required demanded by the economy. This being what President Ramaphosa referred or termed during his recent

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address at the opening of Parliament as a demand-led skills development approach.

Hon members, the internal challenges facing the department also require some honest introspection if we have truly begun the process of creating a new governance culture. In the coming days, weeks and months, we will be working together to address the well documented government issues within the department, which include amongst other things. The department currently has four employees on suspension with full pay whilst six cases have been finalized. This has cumulatively cost the taxpayers close to R7 million per annum. The department understanding, which the Minister referred to across six core priority programs. So, it surrenders back to Treasury over R500 million in the last two financial years.

The department had the option to apply for deviation from the National Treasury to ensure that this money is channeled elsewhere, and they didn't. And I think we should not be too afraid to call out our department where there are shortcomings.

This ministerial leadership team is alive with the fact that it cannot be business as usual for as long as the department

administrative interface remains maid and persistent corporate governance challenges.

The CET colleges were established in 2015 to assist young people who are currently out of school to acquire skills and enhance their basic qualifications. The National Development Plan, NDP, target for enrolment at these colleges is 1 million students by 2030.

In 2022, the enrolment stood at a little over 128 000. This is against over 17,1 million people between the ages of 16 and 60 who are within the need bracket in 2022. That is people who are not in employment, education or training. As a consequence, the department will need to find innovative and novel way to massive enrolment at CET colleges because if it does not then I am afraid we might not be able to reach the target set by the NDP in 2030, which I might add is only five and a half years away.

The challenges in the Higher Education and Training sector are many. I will not lie to you, but these challenges are not unique to South Africa. Countries such as Singapore and Malaysia were once caught in the low growth trap that South Africa currently find itself in. But they understood one thing

and that is that the economist will not grow unless they develop an educated incapacity to workforce.

The department has an important task to ensure that we capacitate our citizenry with the knowledge and skills to help them compete and thrive in the new knowledge economy. Despite the numerous challenges that we currently face as a sector, I can assure you that this ministerial leadership team is equal to the task, and we have already started engaging various stakeholders across all the nine provinces in an effort to find lasting an impactful solution to the challenges besetting the sector.

As we vibrate as builders not brakers and vultures, we will and we must make a difference in the Higher Education and Training sector for the benefit of all our stakeholders with the most important of this being our students.

Sepedi:

Ke a leboga.

English:

Thank you.

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IsiZulu:

Nk N N CHIRWA-MPUNGOSE: Mabandla kaMjokwane kaNdaba, Sihlalo, thina siyi-EFF asisisekeli isabelomali seVoti u-16 kanye no-17. Thina siyi-EFF sinomgomo wokuqinisekisa ukuthi uHulumeni ufanele uvikele isizotha sabantu baseNingizimu Afrika. Thina siyi-EFF sizimisele ukuphoqa uHulumeni wokubambisana we-GNU ukuthi bavikelwe abantu baseNingizimu Afrika.

English:

The GNU has taken a position to protect one another. As the EFF, we are protecting our people who rely on us to present the truth, advocate for sound policy and implementation, and never overlook detail because comrades must eat.

IsiZulu:

Izinga lemfundo yamabanga aphansi selonakele kakhulu.

English:

Nono, a young black woman from Nellmapias Extension 6, took it upon herself to get training and qualifications to be an early childhood development, ECD, practitioner, completed a course and opened her facility. Years later, there isn't any support for the facility, and oftentimes they're not, she spends more

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on the education and nourishment of the children than what the facility affords and receives in return.

Chairperson, the women who came before us in the socialist movement, fought for the state subsidy of early childhood development, and your government is reversing all those gains by not preserving and sustaining early childhood development adequately. Racism remains an ailment that haunts us under your leadership in our schools. The Premier of Gauteng in 2017 did a public relation, PR, stunt at Pretoria High School for Girls following racist incidents and stated that they would implement policies that would prevent these from happening in the future. The future did not arrive. We are still waiting for the future even today racist incidents have worsened in the school, with the most recent being last week, and other schools across the country following suit. A young black girl in grade eight recently attempted to commit suicide because she was called the K-word at De Wilgers Secondary School in Pretoria, where she's the only black girl, the only black child in her class. She is not protected, and there have been no consequences for the perpetrators to date. This case will dissipate into thin air because ANC deploees want cameras to follow them around or else they don't work at all.

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Knowing your government, you will pretend to care on the day her suicide is reported on the news like you are now pretending to care about the seven-year-old boy from Bayview Primary who committed suicide following being bullied and not being rescued when he reported his plight. It must be put on record, there is no such thing as a white school in the public sector in South Africa. Panyaza Lesufi attempted to institute apartheid Bantu-style separation politics and policies in Gauteng by limiting our children to schools in their zones so that black children in townships do not go to the supposed white schools in the suburban areas.

In this budget, your government still spends less on township and rural schools and more on white schools, no different from the government of Verwoerd that used to spend R6 per day on a black child while spending R600 on a white child. This budget won't build a sports ground in ... [Inaudible.]. It won't resolve the safety and security crisis at Mamelodi Secondary and J Kekana High School. It won't put shoes on the feet of poor children. It won't pay teachers what they deserve. It will merely maintain the status quo as is and as it has been for the past 30 years. The EFF does not agree with that. You refuse to ensure that sports should be catered for all in all public schools on the same level and then further prevent our

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children from going to schools that cater for their sporting codes because they are poor and according to your policies, they belong in township schools where they come from.

Every year during the announcement of matric results, we always ask you, where is the other half of the Grade 1s that didn't make it to matric. One of them is Ntokozo, a 21-year-old young woman who dropped out in Grade 9 because she couldn't read or write, and the workload suffocated her to the point of the demise of her academic journey. The question is, how did she go all the way to Grade 9 if she couldn't read or write? Where are these teachers that gave her a pass when they should have been a failure? And if the fails got too overwhelming, why did your department not intervene?

This department fails both the children and the teachers. You leave the teachers with no solution and no option but to rid themselves of learners with continuous issues because you fail to make interventions in the department for struggling learners and overworked teachers. Learners are condoned when they are required not only extra support but psychological evaluations that dig into why the learner is struggling and what can be done to assist them.

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Minister, we ask you to provide a report on every school and every school child that is no longer in the schooling system prior to completing matric and the reason for each of them. You have not done this, and neither will you include this in your indicators for the end-of-the-term reports because it will expose you for neglecting our children as the government of the day. You then blame the parents when you know very well that the majority of our children come from dysfunctional homes, riddled with domestic violence, alcohol addiction, unemployment and mental health illnesses. You know these people who dropped out and where they stay. You have their records in your offices, and yet you admit to Parliament that you don't know what happened to them and what is the reason they didn't make it to matric.

A child comes to a classroom today and doesn't return tomorrow, and you can't tell us why and how that happens. This is in a country where 40% of sexual crimes are committed against children and our children are forced into substance abuse and gang violence. Where are the children that didn't make it to matric? Your immediate task from today onwards is to go and find them and bring them into our schools. Some of these pupils bring evidence of their rapes into your classrooms and you don't want to take it upon yourself as a

department to find out why a 10-year-old girl in Grade 4 is pregnant and why the rapist isn't behind bars.

Duzenendlela State-Aided School for learners with special needs in Orange Farm is a site for continuous crimes of this government of the day against children with special needs. Every year, this Parliament approves the budget that is meant to deal with infrastructural decay at the very same school, and every year, the pupils of the school don't have flushing toilets, chairs and tables, and the roof in almost all the classrooms are sinking into the rooms.

IsiZulu:

Siphi isizumbulu semali okwahlelwa ukuthi kulungiswe uthango lwezitimela zokuthutha izihlalo zabantana abakhubazekile kusukela ngonyaka ka-2018? Umnyango Wezemfundo wenzani ngemali yokulungisa izindlu zangasese kube nanikwa imvume la komkhulu ePhalamende? Akuhlukile kwimfundo ephakeme. Nicela imvume ngesabelomali uqeda ishabalale. Njengo-Gabedi Mogade noBongeka Hlela baseNyuvesi yasePitoli abathola umfundazwe we-NSFAS, kodwa nanamhlanje izifundo zaco azikhokhelwe. Kubaphathi bakwa-NFSAS uma sebethumelwa izinkinga zabafundi basemanyuvesi, abakugqizi qakala.

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Njalo siphakamisa izikhalazo zabafundi koNgqongqoshe, kube yizinhlanga zimuka nomoya. Izinkulungwane zabafundi ziphoqeleka ukuba zishiye phansi izikole, zibuyele emakhaya, zishiyiwe umhlaba ngoba u-NSFAS ubaphuce ikusasa labo namalungelo abo emfundo yamahala esathenjiswa u-Nelson Mandela ngo-1994.

English:

Where does the money that was approved in this House for higher education last year go if there are outstanding fees that aren't paid by NSFAS? And why isn't this House calling for an overhaul of the entire system to adequately fix what is broken as is our responsibility as Members of Parliament? How do we approve projects that don't do what they are meant to do? We asked both departments to send us names and places of the infrastructure you are claiming to be developing, but both departments have not responded despite committing to do so. How do we approve a budget for both developments? How do we do oversight of buildings we don't know? Here are some of the many solutions that we continually give to this House and deliver to the government of the day. Make free early childhood development compulsory from the age of three. Develop an ECD curriculum that will make children understand the environment. Employ all ECD practitioners permanently on a

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full-time basis. Implement universal coverage and computer literacy in all our public schools. Don't leave out the schools in townships and rural areas.

Abolish the Independent Examination Board, IEB, system and ensure that all our children adhere to one education system. Give our children the same education that is preserved for your children in private schools. Work with local taxi associations to ensure that scholar transport is provided for students who live more than two kilometres away from the school. Build more schools that cater for children on the autism spectrum. There isn't a single school for autistic children in many districts in the Eastern Cape.

Twelve-year-old Eshle from Tsitsikamma died in a fire three months after we begged the department to accommodate him in a school that caters for special needs. Disabled and unable to flee a vicious fire during schooling hours while at home, Eshle died. Train teachers and deliver educational material for autistic children and have remedial teachers in all the public schools. Give our children ... [Inaudible.] ...

nutritional meals per day. One isn't enough. Children must have breakfast as well so that they are fully participating in the first half of the timetable. Eradicate pit toilets. Not on

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TV, not in press statements, eradicate them with your actions. We are tired of hearing Ministers every year commit to eradicating toilets and then burying our children a week later because they drowned in pit toilets.

... [Inaudible.] ... psychosocial support for teachers, launch a campaign that will solely prioritise the returning of dropouts to school, even if they are now domestic workers or sex workers and young boys and girls who dropped out for whatever reason. Introduce indigenous languages as the foundation of the educational system in all the provinces. Ensure that all schools have a science laboratory. Abolish all teachers who sleep with learners and publicise their information. All pregnancies of children below the age of 15 should automatically result in criminal investigations, and create a direct link and a satellite oversight by the SAPS into our schools. Make all secondary education compulsory for all learners and make it free and decolonised. Cancel all student debt and reintegrate those who were financially excluded so they can complete their qualifications. It is true that no institution should ever withhold a qualification because someone is poor and can't afford to pay their school fees. Repurpose all ... [Inaudible.] ... and abandoned buildings and make them student accommodation sites,

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especially for TVETs that have a crisis of accommodation that isn't being addressed with the speed it requires.

Insource all the working staff in institutions of high learning and synchronise the goals of the economy with the offerings of the courses. Establish a central digital library that all students can access across the country. Establish satellite campuses for mining, mineral beneficiation, agriculture, agro-processing and renewable energy. We reject the Budget Votes as they do not reflect our aspirations of building an education system that will respond to our social and economic needs. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr M M PETER: Hon Chair of the NCOP, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, ...

IsiXhosa:

... ndiyanibulisa.

Afrikaans:

Goeie middag.

IsiXhosa:

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Okokuqala Sihlalo, imfundo sisiseko sobomi. Abantwana balikamva lobomi. Ubomi yimpilo. Iititshala ezinika abantwana bethu imfundo zibanika imfundo amehlo ejonge emnyango kuba ukhuseleko lweetitshala alukho ezikolweni. Abantwana abafundiswa ziititshala bangena ezikolweni bengena neziyobisi. Iititshala ziyoyika ukufundisa abantwana.

SiyiUDM asinalo ithuba lokuthi asilwamkeli olu hlahlo lwabiwo-mali. Isizathu sokuba silwamkele kukuba, ukuba singathi asilwamkeli loo nto ingathetha ukuba sithi iititshala bazingafundisi bantwana. Ukuba sithi olu hlahlo lkwabiwo-mali asilwamkeli, sithi abantwana bethu mabangafundi. Sinyanzelekile ukuba olu hlahlo lwabiwo-mali silwamkele.

English:

... [Inaudible.] are the strips of the progress spoken by the department, which resulted to the gradual improvement of the overall matric pass rate, more especially in provinces such as Eastern Cape. However, there are several challenges that the department should address urgently in order to achieve its mission and its goals, such as shortage of teachers, mud schools and violence in our schools, to mention only but a few.

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The allocation of the approximately R12 million of the education infrastructure in grant for 2023-24 is not enough, considering that there are still backlogs on the eradication of pit latrines, mud school and shortage of schools for learners with autism/special educational needs. The UDM is concerned with the department's lack of employed qualified teachers.

In April 2024. The Minister of Basic Education, hon Angie Motshekga, confirmed the existence of over 31 400 vacant teaching positions in school across the country, while thousands of teaching graduates remain unemployed. This worsens the ongoing challenges of teacher shortages, particularly in public schools located in rural areas. The shortage of teachers not only delays jobs performance, but also leads to uncovered syllabuses and high levels of stress among teachers due to heavy weight loads and poor academic performance among learners.

Another challenge. Is there violence in public schools?

According to the SA Democratic Teachers Union, Sadtu, 50 teachers are attacked or threatened by learners in Southern Africa, every month. The department should find effective solutions to protect teachers from the same learners. The

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department should allocate more funds to beef up security on the school premises.

For example, since November 2023, about 131 schools in the nurse in Mandela Bay Metro have been robbed, many at gunpoint. The UDM suggests that the department should install surveillance cameras, access control systems, alert buttons that are linked to the police station, as well as fences to make sure our schools are safe.

IsiXhosa:

... ongena kweli sebe, siyazi ukuba kwenzeka ntoni kwiilali zethu. Siyalubona usizi olwenzeka ezilalini zethu. Ukuthetha kwethu isiLungu apha asithethi kuba sifuna ukuvisa abantu kamnandi. Sithetha esi siLungu kuba sifuna zenzeke ezi zinto. Asizanga apha ukuza kuveza izikolo zethu, koko senzela ukuba singene kuzo sizixoxe ezi zinto ukuze bafunde abantwana bethu

English:

We support the Budget Vote without doubt, Chair!

Mr M K CHILOANE (Gauteng): Thank you, Chair. I hope that I am audible enough.

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The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Yes, you are. Continue!

Mr M K CHILOANE (Gauteng): Thank you so much, hon Chair. Thank you, Minister, the Deputy Minister, hon members of the NOCP. This year is an important milestone for our democracy, as we enter the seventh administration. Furthermore, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our democracy. I believe that this is an opportunity for us to be able to address the NCOP and this opportunity is to review the progress that we have made in realising the vision of our Constitution, to ensure that our success in education goes a long way to realise the struggle of the 70s.

Chair, over the last three decades we have travelled far in transforming education as a sector in this country and to honour the rights in the Constitution. While there are still numerous challenges facing education, we have achieved a level of stability in education that we have not seen in 20 years prior to democracy. That is across all communities; not just for those that were advantages. We have also, furthermore, put in place social security packages that ensure that there is access to learning in the classroom.

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Meanwhile, we have been providing nutrition, nutrition programs, scholar transport and further provide preferential education funding that is both pro-poor and equitable. In addition, we have progressively ensured that there is universal access to Grade R. Despite the growing infrastructure pressures, we have improved school infrastructure, including renovation to school building facilities, facilitating electrification and the provision also for communication to our schools.

We have gone further to deploy educators in an equitable way and in a pro-poor manner. The increased investment in personnel has specifically increased the number of educators in the system. Despite all these successes, one, from time to time, need to reflect and ask the question: Have we done enough; and how much more can we do?

So, despite all these challenges, South Africa is progressing in all international benchmark tests and fundamental improvement in grade 12 performance. We have seen a massive reduction in the achievement gap between what we call the township schools and non-township schools, former model C schools. Therefore, Chair, we are building on these gains.

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We have adopted a set of elevated priorities for education to respond to key challenges facing our people, in particular, in Gauteng. Therefore, we know that education needs to ensure that it contributes to the reduction of inequalities in our population. Foremost, among these challenges, is access to quality schooling in communities that we live in and respond to the high level of migration, in particular, to our province.

Therefore, in this financial year, we have noted the reduction in some conditional grants, but as a province we have seen marginal increase in our 2024-25 financial year, which amounts to R65,8 billion and which signals an increase of about 3,8% from the previous year. We have seen that obviously, with conditional grants which cover largely Infrastructure Grant HIV and Aids Grant, Nutrition Grant, Mathematics, Science and Technology Grant, Learners with Profound Intellectual Disability Grant and the ECD Grant.

What we have welcomed the most, as a province, is the Fundza Lushaka Bursary Scheme by the Department of Basic Education, which will produce several teachers to fulfill the provincial requirements of teacher shortages, to contain the impact of rapidly aging teacher workforce and growing population in the

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province. So, within our budget, we further went to prioritise the utilisation and focus on following mainly the improvement on the Grade 12 performance in the province, as well as continuing improvement of quality learning, in particular, in the FET Band.

We, as the province, have furthermore invested in what we call investing in the skills of the future. We have increased access to relevant curriculum offering through schools of specialisation, technical high schools and special schools. In addition, we have introduced what we call Multi Certification Skills Program for learners across all our schools. Multi Certification Skills Program is a program whereby we are offering additional skills, over and above the academic syllabus that is provided our schools. These are coding, robotics, rocketry, drone technology, sign language, and much more.

This means that, as opposed to a child who exits grade 12 to only experience a certificate for the first time at grade 12, when they pass, they get additional certified skill from Grade 1 up to Grade 12. Should they drop out in Grade 11, which the hon member from the EFF was concerned about, they have got 11

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other certificates to take them with, to demonstrate the actual skill they have received.

We have what we call school specialization or rather focus schools. So far, in the province, we have managed to launch 35 of them, and they focus on multiple disciplines, in particular, focusing on math, science, IT, engineering, commerce and entrepreneurship and sports and performing arts. So far, we have launched 35 and we intend to increase all of them.

In terms of inclusive and full-service school, we are working hard to expand access to schools for learners with special educational needs through the implementation of the inclusive educational policy. The ECD has two broad elements: Pre-Grade R; and Grade R programs. The department is working around to show that all learners entering the school system have participated in one way or the other in ECDs, regardless of their social economic status.

As things stand in the province, we have since been able to reveal that there are 10 800 ECD sites in the province and those that we have managed to register are 2 500 sites. There are multiple factors why there is a delay in ensuring that all

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these CD sites are registered, but now we are working around the clock to show that all of them are registered and are recognised.

Furthermore, we are looking at the ECDs in hostels. So far, as the province, we have managed to establish six ECD sites in the six hotels hostels that are under the responsibility of the provincial government. However, we have noted that there are a further 72 hostels which are the responsibility of local government, and we have been liaising with the local councils to ensure that we are able to establish ECD sites in all the hostels.

Furthermore, as the province, were investing in what we call 'ECD of the future'. This will be the first of its kind ECD Centre. It will be built in the Tshwane Corridor, in Soshanguve, which will be committed in the outlook of what should an ECD look like. Furthermore, within the ECD, we are gradually introducing a curriculum to meet the challenges of the 4IR, where we are currently piloting coding and robotics in ECD centers across our province, universalizing access to Great R.

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This is quite important, hon members. I know that currently there is an issue of Basic Education Law Amendment Bill. We would want to edge the leadership, the Minister, to really urge the President to quickly sign that Bill, because this is about excess and admission. We should look beyond the politicking and really say those in the education sector have a responsibility to ensure that we contribute to building a nation.

For a nation to grow, it needs to live and play together. If they can't be in the same classroom, they can't play together and there can't be a nation. So, the admission policy is important. Language policy is important. The access to Grade R is important. So, we urge the Minister, the Deputy Minister and those leadership to urge the President to quickly sign the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill.

We have noticed school safety, which is a problem or a challenge across. We have been able to identify 275 schools in high-risk areas. There is no such thing as a high-risk school; it is a school in a high-risk area. In these schools, we have been able to dispatch over 5 000 patrollers through the collaboration with the SAPS, CPF and community, including the

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wardens and including additional security, to ensure that we keep making sure that our schools are safe.

Without noting time, we continue to build schools. We have built over 250 schools as a province, and furthermore, we are looking to build another 100 schools in this coming term. We continue to roll out ICT schools. All our high schools are being transformed into ICT schools. With that said, hon members, noting time, it is against this background and the social pressure that we will unreservedly support the Minister's thrust for quality education and support the 2024-2025 budget for Basic Education. Thank you so much.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Mr K B Manamela):
Chairperson, our Minister, Dr Nkabane, and Deputy Minister, Dr Gondwe and the officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training, let me join both the Minister and Deputy Minister in presenting this Budget Vote of Higher Education and Training for the 2024-25 financial year.

The history of our post-school education and training system has been indicative of the fact that we have privileged university education over the years and of course, this trajectory changed in the last 14 to 15 years when priority

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was given to building a community education and training sector and the Technical Vocational Education and Training, TVET, sector.

Around 2010-12 when priority was invested in both sectors, the numbers in both the quality and qualitative state of TVET and community colleges were nothing compared to the progress that has been made in investing resources in our education system. In the interceding years over the last 30 years ... and I listened passionately to hon du Plessis who was speaking about her constituency where she comes from and the fact that for the last 30 years, nothing has been done for the 274 people or so that she spoke to in her constituency.

We had a university sector that had about 400 000 people, and today 1,2 million students attend universities, with the intention of increasing that number to up to 1,6 million by 2030. I think the progress that we have shown in the university sector shows that this target will be met. With the TVET sector, from a mere 100 000 students with about a 100 or so TVET colleges, we now have 360 campuses, and the Minister has already indicated that for this year we are completing three of the 13 campuses that we had invested resources into, and we are hoping that this intervention will help accelerate

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us in meeting the target of 2,6 million students in the TVET sector. Yes, we are now at about 500 and I think the most that this sector has been able to accommodate in terms of numbers has just been around 600 000.

In the area that you are speaking of, hon du Plessis, within a 30 kilometres radius - which is in Vereeniging, Soweto, Johannesburg, Carletonville, Krugersdorp and all those areas - there is at least, in each of these places that I've mentioned, a TVET college campus that covers the majority of the people in that section.

The reason why I'm lifting this is because we should not allow the conditions we find ourselves in or to find ourselves generalising and problematising the constituencies where we find ourselves in and the few people that we interact with in those constituencies and create that into a national problem.

Yes, there are challenges even with the community education and training sector, where in we have set certain targets.

This budget seeks to ensure that we prioritise the community education and training sector as the institutions of choice, particularly as it relates to those who demand occupational trades, those who want to improve their skills and those who

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are already in employment or in entrepreneurship and want to better themselves.

I heard some of the hon members preferring their own views in terms of what needs to be done, but I think it's important that we acknowledge the reality where we find ourselves in first and not claim that nothing has been done. We have to. Yes, there are challenges, and unless you are new here, you cannot just come here and say nothing has been done, we need to start afresh, and we need to do this and that. I have seen the same energy from the oratory prowess that was presented by the hon Naledi Chirwa talking about some of the things that are already happening in the post-school education and training sector and proclaiming them as innovation and new ideas of what needs to be done.

Over the last five years, for instance, and given the progress in technology that we have seen, a lot of programmes and qualifications have been introduced in the TVET sector with the intention of strengthening its quality and improving quantitative intake in the TVET sector.

Part of the bigger challenges why the TVET sector will not be able to meet its potential in 2030 as targeted by the National

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Development plan, NDP, is that we currently spend about R9 billion on the TVET sector, and it is minuscule compared to what we spend in the university sector and so the NCOP and probably both Houses have to help us support the case we have made for resources to be invested in the TVET sector.

The growth that we have spoken about over the last 10 to 12 years has mainly been out of financial creativity of the department officials and the ministry, over the years, getting resources invested from the National Skills Fund, and sector education and training authorities and so on, to help build new campuses to help innovate in terms of new programmes and to introduce programmes such as robotics, and also to help us to keep the TVET sector up to date. So, we will have to get those resources.

There are currently about 400 000 students who are going into TVET colleges. We project or the NDP imposes a target of R2,6 million. It means we need five times more resources to invest into the TVET sector if we to meet that target. We believe that the foundation has been laid and we have learned from the centres of specialisation that we have established, and we have improved greatly in terms of training of artisans.

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Despite the setbacks that we have experienced during COVID-19 we are meeting the target of producing 30 000 artisans by 2030 as imposed by the NDP. We have established strong working relations now with the industry - and I think the Minister spoke about the number of students who are either from occupational trade or from whatever qualifications who have been deployed in workplaces to gain their diplomas. So, the basics are in place for us to quantitatively expand the system, but if we do not get those resources over the next five years to meet the NDP targets, we will not be able to satisfy some of the very good points that the hon members have raised as it relates to this Budget Vote.

Finally, beyond all of these targets that we've set - I think the Minister addressed some of the urgent issues - but I think going forward it would mean that the resources that resides firstly internally within the department and also within some of the entities within the department have to be geared towards supporting the TVET sector, our projects around artisan development and our placement of learners in workplaces so that they are able to qualify.

We have had so many points that have been raised around free education and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme,

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NSFAS, and its role. Ninety percent of students who study at TVET colleges receive the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and the CEO has indicated that most of these students have now been migrated from all the administrators and are now being paid directly by the banks. We are confident as being said that this institution - and I think both Minister and Deputy Ministers emphasised this - that the NSFAS will be fit in order to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students. [Time expired.] Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Ms Z N NGCOBO: Thank you, House Chairperson, I would like to greet the Chairperson of National Council of Provinces, Deputy Ministers, Ministers, Chief Whip, MEC and hon Members of Parliament, I am honoured to address this House today. I stand here before you, as a member of uMkhonto Wesizwe party, a party which is led by our former President Jacob Zuma.

I'm going to touch on the National student Financial Aid scheme, NSFAS. According to what is going on the ground, NSFAS is insufficient. There are issues everywhere like funding shortfalls, administrative, inefficiencies and limited coverage. Even earlier this year at the beginning of the academic year, we witnessed students sleeping on the side of the road because they were financially excluded.

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President Ramaphosa mentioned in his 2023 budget speech that the budget for the 2023 and 2024 financial year is 133,8 billion, with an annual average increase of 3,8%. Yes, our young black students are still found sleeping on the streets since most of them are not funded and cannot afford accommodation.

Historically, the NSFAS has faced challenges in dealing with historical debts impacting students' funding. Students don't have access to their qualifications because of their historical debts accumulated while they were still studying without funding. I think that we should prioritize funding for postgraduate students because it will assist disadvantaged students in furthering their academics.

The discrimination of students from TVET colleges, we continue observing students who are studying in TVET colleges treated as secondary citizens. How do you explain the huge gap in their living allowance? For instance, a student from TVET college studying in Tshwane South TVET with a neighbour studying at the Tshwane University of Technology, buying the food in the same shops? This one has an annual allowance of 10 000, whereas the university students get double the amount.

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As uMkhonto Wesizwe party, we demand an immediate change in these insults to the children of the poor.

To claim our dignity as the poor, the MK party will establish indigenous languages as mandatory official languages taught in schools from Grade 0 to grade 12 used in higher education, legal proceedings and all official state communications. We will eliminate all remnants of colonialism and apartheid from cultural and political life, including mandatory subjects into the education curriculum focusing on African history, values, ethics and morals.

With special attention to gender relations, we will ensure that national culture and the arts affirm our African. We will ensure that national culture and the arts promote the principle of social justice, discourage class material and all forms of elitism. We collaborate with faith-based cultural groups and creative to implement a national education programme focusing in African spiritual and moral values. We ensure that every young person reaching the age of 18 serves a year of military service to cultivate discipline and patriotism among our youths.

Also, we will repatriate and rebury the bodies of all our heroes who fell in foreign land. Now, when it comes to basic education, there are numerous challenges faced by that department. There is so much budget allocated for basic education, yet we still face the problem of teacher shortages in public schools and the lack of training which leads to poor learning outcomes and limited subjects, offerings. Teachers' shortages, and inadequate training can be far reaching and have severe consequences on the education system, learners and society as a whole. Inadequate training can lead to reduced academic achievement, lower literacy and numeracy rates, and decreased learner engagement. Teachers' shortages can result in reduced subjects' options, limiting learner's academic and career choices. Teachers end up teaching two or more subjects while they are qualified teachers sitting at home with their qualifications unemployed.

As well as in the school feeding scheme, there is poor hygiene, poor menu, late payment of service providers, lack of sufficient training for food handlers. Learners are not provided with plates or dishes for a meal, and they use containers for certain things to dish food. They come to school, obviously hungry and they wait until 10:30 to get milk.

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In conclusion, in KwaZulu Natal there are approximately 25 566 unemployed teacher graduates with 3 720 vacant teacher posts, and nationally, nearly 30 000 educators are unemployed in South Africa, despite their existing teacher shortage.

IsiZulu:

Kanti kungani kungavalwa lo mkhakha lo wobuthishela okanye umiswe emaNyuvesi uma ngabe abafowethu, odadewethu, nezingane zethu bezomsha isikhathi sabo befunda kanzima ngezimali ezishisiwe, nazo futhi ezitholakale kanzima. Abanye bebe funda ngezimali zogogo babo baphinde bahlale emakhaya bengasaqashwa Kungani uhulumeni ka-ANC elokhu eqhubeka ekhiphana nemifunda ze ekugcineni angaqashi. Kusho ukuthi ngempela ngempela uhulumeni ka-ANC uyayimosa imali kahulumeni.

English:

I would like to leave you on that note. I thank you. I am Zamathembu kaMthembu kaJama kamnisi wemvula.

Mr M P SIBANDE: Chairperson, hon Ministers and hon members, the Department of Basic Education is one of the most crucial portfolios, as it is where the nurturing of future leaders takes place. For this reason, the sector must be wholeheartedly protected. We appreciate the department's

efforts in allocating a significant budget to the early childhood development, ECD, grant. This important grant was increased by 37% to R1,6 billion from the previous financial year. This allocation is vital for the implementation of compulsory ECD and the training of our ECD practitioners in schools, providing a strong learning foundation for our young children.

We also appreciate the budget allocated for school infrastructure which will be good for reducing overcrowding in classrooms and will also boost local employment opportunities as we know that one of the biggest drivers of the job creation is large-scale investment in infrastructure.

We also call for more schools in historically disadvantaged areas to be equipped with libraries and science laboratories so that our students can become scientists and inventors of the world.

Hon House Chair, despite the efforts that the department is driving to produce an inclusive and fair education to our children our schools still have to grapple with the endemic of racism. We still have schools that discriminate and reject learners based on their race. We, therefore, call on the

department to do an audit in all schools that deliberately refuse to admit black African learners so that such incidents are dealt with and eradicated from our society. It cannot be that in the 30 years of democracy we still grapple with issues of racism in schools which negatively affect our innocent children who did not have to bear the brunt of apartheid.

When promoting access to institution of higher education, it is imperative to also prioritise the availability of proper student accommodation. The spatial development of student accommodation needed urgent attention. During the sixth administration universities and technical and vocational education, and training, Tvet, institutions experienced significant protest due to the lack of student accommodation despite students having gained access to the educational sector.

It is crucial to provide more internal funding for student accommodation while ensuring accreditation of accommodation standards. A critical assessment of existing student accommodation has revealed shortcomings including unsafe location due to high crime rates, distance from the educational institution and overcrowding.

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The African National Congress intends to ease a transition in the management of student accommodation to improve the living conditions of students. Our Ministry must ensure that the strategic implementation of student bed provision projects with a focus on achieving speedy completion of the outstanding accommodation facilities requires technical ability and skills in the companies that are awarded the contracts to build the beds. We must ensure that this process is not hijacked by corrupt mismanagement.

Hon members, addressing the challenges faced by young people who are not in education and employment requires a thorough assessment and strategic use of community education and training institutions. This institution plays a significant role in the massive provision of skills training that is essential for the education and skills development of young people in our communities.

To achieve these, we need to focus on building ability for community colleges by providing national funding for qualifications, ... [Inaudible.] Monies within the National Skills Fund have been distributed for ability building and lectures for the community colleges as well as for the implementation of skills development programmes, learning

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programmes and non-formal programmes including civic education. These progressive measures have significantly helped community education and training institutions and will continue to be essential in the coming administration and in the medium term. We assure the government of our full support for the ongoing efforts in this area.

Hon Chairperson, nevertheless, let me correct something which was raised earlier on. The ANC supported budget while the puppets of doom are obviously rejecting everything. People must be told as to why other people are betraying any progress.

When we appealed that Tvet colleges and university students must be provided with funds from the National Student Financial Aid, NSFAS, they refused. They even went as far as refusing to distribute to National Youth Development Agency, NYDA, even though the sector was given a clean audit. In the basic education, we support that funds must be distributed for infrastructure development, and we support that workers compensation must be funded, but their response is unimportant. They even refuse when we wanted to provide funds for workers' pay. But they expect the workers to perform.

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Chairperson, I would like to borrow from the words of Dr Chuba Okadigbo who said, and I quote:

If you are emotionally attached to your tribe, religion, political leanings to the point that truth and justice become secondary considerations, your education is useless. Your exposure is useless. If you cannot reason beyond petty sentiments, you are a liability to the humankind.

Let me remind everyone of the importance of private partnerships. We must not forget individuals like Oprah Winfrey, who donated over \$140 million to support South African children, especially girls. Additionally, we should recognise Mr Robert Gumede from Mpumalanga, who campaigned tirelessly for the establishment of a university in Mpumalanga.

Lastly, we must honour December Mpapane from Nkomazi in Mpumalanga, who selflessly dedicated his time to assist children with mathematics during holidays and after hours, even sharing a portion of his own salary, while others argue against allocating a budget.

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Another thing I would like to suggest to those who say that we must not get a budget is that we are not mature when we start talking about important things, but when we start understanding small things. I will again quote from the African Proverb which says:

Unlike the brain the stomach alerts you when it's empty.

IsiZulu:

Bese ngiyabuya futhi ...

English:

I want to say to the employees of the department, not to be discouraged when they are labelled corrupt when they work for the department. Get on with your work. We will pass the budget. And the ANC will support the budget. Listening is a skill. We were silent when you were talking. Hon Chairperson, without wasting your time. I would like to conclude my debate speech on that note. Thank you very much.

Ms M M LERULE-RAMAKHANYA (Limpopo): Hon Chairperson, good afternoon and let me also take this time and extend my greetings to the hon Minister of Basic Education, the Minister of Higher Education, the Deputy Ministers in the House and

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also my colleague, hon MECs and also the other members of the House as they have been debating.

Let me take this opportunity to also welcome the budget vote as presented by the hon Minister. It is heartening to see the continuity and the desire for provision of better, quality and meaningful education in our country and in our provinces.

Our children deserve better, and they rely on the presented allocation to make their lives better. As Limpopo is one of the rural provinces we fully support and embrace the allocation as it has been debated. We believe that the increase will go a long way in shaping their lives of our future leaders.

We must appreciate that the budget has presented, firstly, it talks about inclusive education amongst other programmes. Again, the department has declared 2024 a year of inclusive education and matters that concern our needy learners must be elevated and take priority.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that learners in our special schools receive equal treatment and resources in their schools.

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On the National School Nutrition Programme, NSNP. The allocation of funds for the NSNP will ensure that learners attend school and stay for the duration of their classes on a daily basis.

In the current financial year, the province is providing meals to learners at 3 552 public schools and 35 special schools.

This important intervention also addresses the challenge of the high rate of unemployment by providing jobs to food handlers. In the current financial year, we have appointed 10 664 volunteer food handlers and we are busy affording them the necessary training.

The department, together with the Department of Environmental Affairs, have been giving our food handlers training so that then they can be able to be trained and legible on executing their responsibilities with diligence.

We must also indicate that the enrolment in our schools had increased since the introduction of the programme and the dropout rate has significantly decreased.

On scholar transport. The success story of how we have reduced and minimized absenteeism of the learners. We currently transport over 70 000 learners to and from our schools every day.

The budget allocation for the year 2024 and 2025 has been set aside for the provision of the learner transport for qualifying learners to access their learning centres with ease.

The second issue that has been effectively addressed is the long distances that is between our schools and where our children reside. We are working very closely with the transport authorities to ensure that the buses are in good condition and they are fit for the purpose.

We need to have entrepreneurs that have the same objectives as us, safety for the learners in this transport and the entrepreneurs that are ready to engage schools and society to give better service and responding to the needs of our learners.

In infrastructure provisioning. Decent learning environment and conducive proper learning is a key issue. That is also a

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priority for us. The Infrastructure Grant will come in very handy as we continue to provide decent learning environment to our learners.

As alluded earlier, we have over 3,5 public schools and infrastructure need is a continuous process. Where we have given the state-of-the-art school, we need to understand the maintenance need and the expectations as we continue to govern.

We are satisfied with the milestone and targets reached in the past 30 years, but more still needs to be done. The increase of Infrastructure Grants and allocation to rural provinces must be a priority.

New ventures on how to do transformation to ensure that every learner is housed in a proper and decent shelter is of importance.

We need to place timeframes to our cycle when we give temporary relief of mobile classes as a temporary measure ... where safety of our learners is concerned.

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On the programme of reading for meaning, hon members, as Limpopo we take note of the concerns raised regarding our learners in the immediate phase, who cannot read for meaning.

As a province we have already started to respond to the programme and some of the strategies that we have put in place was the mobilization of social partners who can be our partners in the reading and become reading champions to work with the schools.

Again, it was the agreements with donors who bring and donate mobile libraries for our learners to be able to have access to books to be able to practice reading.

The partnership that the province has with the National Education Collaboration Trust, NECT, in particular their presence in our province gave us a new strategic opportunity.

The trust was with us when we launched libraries and introduced reading programmes for our children in the most rural and remote areas where these learners will not be able to access any town library in their lives. We need more institutions to come on board so that we can have the positive change that we desire.

On the training of teachers. We also take note and commend the allocation for the Teacher, Education, Human Resources and Institutional Development.

Hon Minister, you are correct that the educators are the backbone of our schooling system. Bridging the gap between the senior educators and the newly ... [Inaudible.] ... will give us the balance and the outcomes that we want.

We have to target the new graduates who by ... [Inaudible.] ... we are getting teachers who can be able to embrace the new technology and subject specialists that need to revolutionize our education.

The sector and has to respond to the 21st century challenges that we are expected to address.

Training and empowerment of the teachers who are already in the system should be a continuous response to the challenges and also responding to the skill gaps that has always existed and this training and empowerment will be a responsive strategy towards us addressing the needed workforce that we need.

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I want to quote the words by our former statesmen, Ntate [Mr] Nelson Mandela when he said "Don't waste time. We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always right to do right."

With that, hon Chair, we believe, as the Limpopo province, that the time is right, always for us to be able to do right and empower our learners through the budget and the resources that have been allocated.

With that, as Limpopo we support the budget vote as presented by our hon Minister. Thank you so much.

Mr L VAN WYK (Western Cape): Hon Chairperson, Deputy Ministers, MECs, committee chairs, members and officials, as we embark on a new era for our nation it is critical that we reflect on the importance of education. We need to provide our children with the very best education that we can offer them, not just for their own sake, but for the sake of the entirety of South Africa. We have to ensure that they are able to access opportunities and to equip themselves with the skills they need to make a brighter future in the rapidly changing world in which we find ourselves.

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As public representatives we should all agree that the education of our children is an investment for the future. We owe it to them to ensure that they are equipped for adulthood and opportunities. Our parents wished to see a better future for our generation, and so too do we wish to see a better future for our children and grandchildren. It is therefore our duty and priority that we use the resources we have available wisely and ensure that the mammoth task of fixing our education system proceeds without delay.

In this budget we are fully supportive of the need to improve school infrastructure, to support learners with intellectual disabilities, to provide high quality learning materials, to ensure that teachers are well qualified and to ensure that early childhood development is improved. However, we are also conscious of the extraordinarily constrained fiscal environment. We cannot afford to implement policy that does not work, and that does not move us toward our goal of a better education for all children in South Africa.

I wish to encourage the Ministry and the Department of Basic Education to examine the work being undertaken in the Western Cape as an illustration of some of the critical issues where we can learn from each other and collaborate to ensure that

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our resources go the distance. I believe that this is an objective which all of us share.

As several of my colleagues have noted, one of the greatest challenges we face in education is that of infrastructure, and perhaps nowhere more so than here in the Western Cape. This province is the fastest growing in South Africa by population, and the constant introduction of new learners places even more strain onto our already overstretched education sector.

However, the Western Cape government has risen to the challenge. Our provincial education department's Rapid School Build programme has proven capable of constructing entire schools in under 70 days - on time and on budget. We have built hundreds of new classrooms in some of the poorest communities of our province, allowing learners in Belhar, Kwanokuthula and Fisherhaven to bridge the gap of economic hardship, and to get the quality education which they deserve. As I speak to you now, the new Lwandle and Blue Ridge Educational precincts are steadily underway, meaning that soon even more learners will benefit from this initiative.

Earlier this year, the Rapid School Build programme received a huge vote of confidence from the National Treasury, who allocated an additional R2,549 billion toward this initiative.

The point here is clear, our province has proven that it is possible to build new classrooms and entire schools within a very short span of time. Yes, the task of resolving our infrastructure deficit is massive. But I would encourage policy-makers to look to our province for a model of what can be done when government leverages the power of diverse stakeholders towards a common good.

Another area in which lessons can be learned from the Western Cape is the issue of improving our basic mathematics and literacy scores. In the Western Cape, like many other parts of our nation, our efforts have been placed under great strain due to the aforementioned growth in learner numbers and the COVID-19 induced learning losses. These factors have accentuated the challenges already being experienced that flow from socioeconomic and psychosocial constraints such as poverty, high levels of unemployment, gangsterism, violence, drug abuse and inadequate infrastructure.

But once again, our provincial government has risen to meet these challenges head-on. To assist with improving our all-important Reading with Meaning metrics as well as recovering from the pandemic's learning losses more generally, the Western Cape Education Department, WCED, has implemented the

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landmark Back on Track programme. This programme sees the allocation of budget and resources for additional learner tutoring and holiday and weekend classes. The results thus far have been sterling. One of the objectives has been to improve language and mathematics scores at national senior certificate level, and efforts in this regard reflect that progress is being made.

At the other end of the scale, the Foundation Phase was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with this in mind extra time has been allocated to reading as well as interventions in early grade literacy and numeracy. These efforts have already shown significant gains in Grade 3 scores compared to the previous year in both languages and mathematics. The education department is also focussing on ensuring that schools are safer, more secure places of learning. Wellbeing and psychosocial support are receiving attention. We are supporting learners in terms of behaviour programmes and counselling support to deal with rising antisocial behaviour, bullying, assault and the possession of illegal substances.

Chairperson, I have mentioned these numerous efforts being undertaken by the Western Cape Education Department as they

continue to strive for improvements to ensure quality education. This should be the vision and objectives for all provinces and the national Department of Education. The quality of education is critical for South Africa, for our children. We therefore need to work together in our pursuit of shared solutions for education. The quality of schooling directly impacts on the lives of all our citizens, including their safety, their opportunities for training and jobs.

Before I conclude, I believe it is necessary to once again encourage this House to give consideration to the comments made by parents and other stakeholders in regard to the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill. The education of our children is important to all parents who need to be able to communicate unique and school specific needs at a local, decentralised level. We saw this sentiment earlier this year in the Western Cape when thousands upon thousands of parents, educators and learners came out in their numbers to roundly condemn this Bill. We should agree that not only do certain clauses remain concerning to many citizens, but also that the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill remains significantly underfunded, and that the burden of funding will likely have to be carried by provinces if implemented. If this were to be the case, then so many of the innovative thinking and smart initiatives

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championed by the departments such as the Western Cape Education Department would be thrown into jeopardy.

As we embark upon a government of national unity it is important that we listen and work towards understanding each other. This government represents a wonderful opportunity to become inclusive of other views and perspectives that can strengthen our democracy and help improve our policy-making processes. I look forward to a future in which the DA-led Ministry of Basic Education embraces evidence-based programmes, the inclusion of new ideas, greater accountability and unwavering dedication to our educational landscape. We know full well that children are our future. So, let us work together to make that future brighter than ever before. Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION (Dr R Mhaule): House Chairperson greetings to you and greetings to the Chairperson of the NCOP, and the Deputy Chair of the NCOP, greetings to the two Ministers, Minister of Higher Education and Minister of Basic Education and my absent friend here, has just left and the two Deputy Ministers for Higher Education and hon members, especially the Chairperson of the select committee, comrade Makhi Feni, let me also acknowledge director

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general, DG, and all the hard working team from the Department of Basic Education, colleagues, good afternoon or good evening.

It is my honour House Chair, to address this august House - the National Council of Provinces, for the first time as the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, in the Republic of South Africa in the seventh administration. I am not older, I'm the new Deputy Minister.

Over the last half decade, the department has made substantial progress towards achieving the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, Sustainable Development Goals, the National Development Plan, 2030; and our own vision of our department towards the Realisation of Schooling, 2030. The progress over the last five years has built upon longer term advances over the last 30 years, since the transition to a democratic, unified basic education system.

House Chair, to respond to an ever-changing economy and to better prepare learners for the future, the country has introduced a curriculum that equips learners with skills and competencies for a changing world.

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The new curriculum offerings include inter alia coding and Robotics; 11 new technical subjects and new technical subject specialisations: Civil Technology, Civil Services, Construction and Woodworking; Mechanical Technology (Automotive, Welding and Fitting and Machining); Electrical Technology (Power Systems, Electronics and Digital Systems); as well as Technical Mathematics and Technical Sciences and Marine Sciences.

The department is working to introduce Aviation and Aerospace Curriculum, Mining Studies Curriculum and Aquaponics Curriculum to equip learners with skills they need to thrive in the ever-changing economy.

The entrepreneurship framework is also being implemented in many schools to prepare young people for entrepreneurship, employment, and employability. This is because the department wants to see many young people acquiring knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship, employment and employability.

One area, where our country has achieved dramatic change, is in the opportunities for Early Childhood Development available to our children.

The hon members in this House, may recall that in 2022, the ECD migrated from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. In an inaugural meeting, the President, Mr Ramaphosa when he launched the Inter-Ministerial Committee on ECD, which is chaired by the Minister of Basic Education, he had this to say:

There is nothing more noble a country can do, than to set up the next generation to be better than the current generation.

We have come a long way since the ECD function shift two years ago. We conducted four key studies in preparation for the function shift, which included the ECD Census; the Thrive by Five Study; the Public Expenditure and Institutional Review; and the Deep Dive Study into the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four Years.

The four studies have helped us to understand the size of the ECD Sector; the outcomes being achieved and those still need to be taken further sector itself; and the challenges faced by the ECD.

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Using this invaluable information gathered from the four Studies, the department has developed a *Roadmap to Achieving Universal Access to Comprehensive, Inclusive and Quality ECD*.

House Chair, as part of access to education, a range of pro-poor education policies, such as the no-fee schools which caters for 80% of schools in our public sector; providing daily nutritious meals to about 90% of deserving learners, and providing scholar transport to more than 70% of deserving learners on school days to avoid drop-out rates which has since improved roughly to 99% in learners between the ages of 7 - 15 year olds. The department will continue to monitor these trends, and implement interventions designed to keep learners in school with successful outcomes.

House Chair, I have already said a lot about ECD, I won't talk much but what I want to say is that the department held a series of workshops, looking at the achievements of the past 30 years and the past administration. Then we wanted to look at the gaps to say what could be the gaps. They had a workshop on early child development, learning and literacy, inclusive education and the three streams model and Infrastructure.

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The workshop was held and clear recommendations for the seventh administration were outlined, which will be easy for the seventh administration to work on the gaps that have been identified by sector.

So, on mother tongue-based bilingual teaching, learning, and assessment is a mechanism to ensure an effective response to human resources and provision of learning and teaching support material. Schools are currently providing data on e-forms to ensure a scientific response to the real language profile of each school for 2025.

Artificial Intelligence will be the vehicle to use to ensure the success of the Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education roll-out. Because what make our language learners at grade four to be seen as reading without meaning is the language. Those that whose English is their first language, they do well and those whose Siswati is their first language they don't well. So, that's why we are exploring this mother tongue teaching, which has been piloted in the Eastern Cape. And we believe that it will yield fruits.

House Chairperson, on the inclusive education the goal of the department is to ensure that learners with severe to profound

intellectual disabilities access quality, public funded education, and to provide the necessary support, resources and equipment to identify care centres and schools for the provision of education to learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities.

The outcomes aim to improve access to quality basic education for children with severe to profound intellectual disabilities in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate active participation in the community.

Our Constitution calls on us to build an education system founded on the equality, human dignity, and advancing human rights and freedoms. These values are the bedrock of our democratic society and are integral to fostering an inclusive education system that benefits all learners.

On the Three Streams Model in realizing that not all young people will follow traditional academic paths, we are strengthening vocational, technical and occupational education.

To address the issue of Fourth Industrial revolution, hon members, we happy to announce that the Coding and Robotics is

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piloted in schools and now the gazette has been signed and it will be rolled out from 2025 to all schools.

So, on the issue of infrastructure, I think my Minister has indicated, but much has been done when we at schools that were submitted that did not have proper toilets, they were 3804, we are left with 290 or 70 as the President has indicated that there nothing wrong. So, but I am saying all the schools are addressed. We are still going to work with our provinces and districts to make sure that we eradicate pic latrines.

But with the triple engine of intelligent, young, visionary Minister and the supportive Deputy Minister and hardworking DG we promise that education will see the light of the day. Thank you.

Ms L C DLAMINI (Mpumalanga): My greetings to the Chairperson of the NCOP, Ministers in the House, Deputy Ministers, Chairperson of the Select Committee, hon members in the House, my fellow MECs from different provinces.

We are truly grateful and most humbled by the opportunity to debate in this august House. We share a collective view that for any country or province to succeed, prosper and to be able

to care in the true meaning of the word, its education delivery needs to be progressive, productive and efficiently delivered for all.

This must at no stage be seen as a privilege, but a guaranteed constitutional imperative purposefully delivered for the growth and development of all.

We are deliberately emphasising the word all to be clear injunction that no one must be left behind in our quest to educate the nation.

Indeed, this was vividly encapsulated by the Minister of Basic Education in the list of priorities for the 7th Administration. All our energies therefore are geared in mobilizing communities, young and old, to rally side by side with the department towards the attainment of the set targets within the stipulated timeframes and in our lifetime.

We are encouraging that Mpumalanga province is one of the few provinces with the highest throughput rate, meaning that the majority of learners that enter the education system in Grade R in Mpumalanga there are high chances that they will complete Grade 12.

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I also make a special plea to all sister departments and relevant institutions to appreciate the fact that it takes the whole village to educate a child.

Therefore, there must be a deliberate quest from all to lend a helping hand for education to thrive in our country.

As Mpumalanga, we are moving with the necessary speed to improve school infrastructure, eradicate pit latrines, improve learner performance and indeed create conditions that are favourable for us to achieve this.

Mpumalanga Province has 101 schools where it is compulsory for learners to do Mathematics and Physical Science. In this regard, Mpumalanga province has improved the number of learners who are taking Mathematics and Physical Science. We have 16 Agricultural Schools, 45 Technical High Schools, 107 Schools which are piloting Coding and Robotics and eight Secondary Schools where all learners and teachers from Grade 8 to 12 are using tablets for learning and teaching. This is to respond to the requirement of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

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We have also for the past three years, this is our third year, where we are providing tablets to all our Grade 12 learners. In Mpumalanga, we want our learners to embrace the ICT of doing things and be able to compete with their counterparts throughout the world.

In this regard, we are exploring to add to these focus areas by introducing New School of Art, where music, film and video will be done in those schools and also Schools of Excellence where all different sports codes will be supported. Three streams model will be implemented and as per the pronouncements made by the President and reiterate by the Minister of Basic Education. The former President Nelson Mandela once said: "it always looks impossible until it's done". We must work together to ensure that we do not have instances where learners are unable to be in classes because there is no running water within the vicinity, where teachers are unable to focus on core responsibility because they are scared of a possible intruder who may enter a class to rob them of their belongings, where a parent may not be certain that his or her child will return home safely.

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These are but a few impediments which have the potential to make it difficult for us to create conditions that are favourable for learning and teaching to thrive.

It is for this reason that we are making a clarion call for us to unite in action and act in unity towards a joint effort to free schools from any form of social ills, be it drugs, gangsterism, bullying, corporal punishment to name but a few.

Our view is that "Education remains a precious commodity" which cannot be relegated solely to the Department of Basic Education, it is everyone's enterprise. Therefore, we are inviting everyone to be part of us. We will continue to work with education labour formations and all civil society to advance the course of education delivery throughout our country.

We are therefore saying as a responsible province that is caring for our learners supporting the Budget Vote as presented by the Minister. We are behind the Budget Vote. We are committed to support as we implement. Thank you very much.

Mr B J FARMER: Chairperson, hon Ministers and hon members, education, unfortunately, is not what it is supposed to be for

our communities. Where education should be the vehicle to deliver our people from poverty, it is now the reason why our pool of poor people just keeps on growing and growing.

Education and free education for that matter, should enable our children to ensure that they do end up at a much more privileged premise than that of their fathers and mothers.

However, several issues are getting in their way to achieve this. If I could group all under one umbrella, it would be inequality. Not being able to provide the same service at the same level to all is single-handedly the reason for different outcomes. To allow child X to sit and receive their education in a class of only 14 learners, while child Y is sitting in an overcrowded class of 40 plus learners, can never be regarded as equal education.

Our children are set up for failure. How can the two teachers in both these scenarios be measured? We need more teachers to be appointed, not just for job creation, but also to lower the numbers in our classes, as a matter of urgency.

As the PA, being part of this GNU, it is our mission to get God back into our schools. We need our norms and values to be installed into our kids. Kids attacking and assaulting their

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teachers cannot be tolerated for a minute longer. My hometown, called Lamberts Bay on the West Coast finally got a high school about two to three years ago, called Lamberts Bay High School, after several years of struggle by a lot of our community leaders, some of which has passed on already and could not sit in the shade of the tree they planted.

It is a former primary school that was converted into a high school recently. But having been a primary school that now must serve as a high school, obviously does bring its own set of challenges, amongst others, class sizes. Clearly, primary school classes are not conducive to serve as high school classrooms. Sports facilities and infrastructure are nonexistent. Asbestos roofs and walls in classes and in the hall is a serious health risk. The intercom system for better and quicker communication between office admin educators is crucially important. Insufficient fencing, and in some areas, no fencing is an urgent matter that needs attention.

Even though 377 learners need WCED outsourced bus transport daily, the routes are allocated to two primary schools. Obviously, it creates a serious challenge for the high school programming. I must, however, mention that the current personnel are doing their level best, and that under the

leadership of the principal, Mr Carstens, and his Deputy, Mr. Lakay, they are doing very well under the circumstances.

Allow me to say a few words about the Western Cape Education Department. It is a boys' club of former principals who only care for each other. In all managerial positions is our former principle. It is almost an exclusive notion that only former principles need to apply. When people use the opportunity to stand behind a microphone and brag about how many schools are built and how well-run a certain province is, parents and school governing bodies only lower their heads, as what is said, and the reality is on the ground are not corresponding.

We can only hope that those commentators do find solace in the words they speak, for only they believe it. Thank you.

Ms T BREEDT: House Chairperson, hon Farmer, I agree with you.

Afrikaans:

Gelyke geleentheid is wat ons kindes gaan nodig hê.

English:

Nelson Mandela said, education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.

Afrikaans:

In 'n land soos Suid-Afrika is dit in besonder waar, maar wat belangrik is om van bewus te wees is dat hierdie nie net van toepassing is op tersiêre onderrig nie, maar ook op basiese onderrig. Ons het Graad 6 leerders wat nie begrip het vir wat hul lees nie en dit gaan later in hul lewens baie probleme veroorsaak. Ons het meer as die helfte van Graad 1 leerders wat dit nie tot by matriek maak nie. Dis nog 'n groter krisis.

English:

This is particularly worrying when you look at the over 9,2 million people that receive SRB grants. To qualify for these grants, of course, you need to be a South African citizen between 18 and 60, and all of those, but you must not receive a social grant. You must not contribute to and be eligible for UIF. You must have no financial support. So, basically, you must be unemployed.

Afrikaans:

Vandag het baie van my kollegas oor tersiêre onderwys gepraat. Ek sal graag wil fokus om basiese onderwys, want ek voel dat ons baie keer van basiese onderwys vergeet. Ons het nodig om 'n soliede fondasie daar te stel en dit is wat ons gaan kry in ons basiese onderwys. Christine Gregoire het immers gesê...

English:

"Education is the foundation upon which we build our future."

Afrikaans:

Wat hierdie fondasie gaan versterk is as daar op moedertaal-onderrig gefokus gaan word. Agb Minister Gwarube en u Adjunkminister het dit vandag genoem. Ek sê dit ook nie net lukraak nie.

English:

In an article why mother tongue language-based education is essential, posted on Unesco's website, it says: "Research shows that education in mother tongue is a key factor for inclusion and quality learning. It also improves learning outcomes and academic performance. This is crucial, especially in primary school, to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension and most importantly, multilingual education based on mother tongue, empowers all learners to fully partake in society."

Afrikaans:

Wat skrikwekkend is is dat slegs 5% van alle Graad 6 leerders die keuse het om in hul moedertaal skool te gaan. En dan wonder ons hoekom so baie kinders uitval. Dit is 'n skreiende

skande dat in die jaar 2024, ons net in Afrikaans en Engels kan skool gaan.

English:

But another area that is very close to my heart is early childhood development, and according to Dr Hickman in his report, early childhood education, quality and access pay off. He says that research shows that a comprehensive birth to age five programme has lasting effects on IQ, boosts academic and economic achievement and helps prevent incidences of chronic disease and obesity in adulthood.

In South Africa's ECD Census of 2021, 1,6 million children under the age of six were enrolled in early learning programmes. Concerningly, that figure was closer to 2 million before the Covid-19 pandemic, and, more alarmingly, 1,15 million children aged three to five are not enrolled in early childhood development programmes.

The other statistics are even more alarming: 40% do not have flush toilets at those schools, 45% do not have access to running water, 22% exclusively use bowl or buckets to wash their hands, 34% do not have outdoor play areas, 44% do not

have age-appropriate books and 50% do not have materials for counting and the list continues.

Afrikaans:

Die verskillende vorme van tersiêre onderrig is belangrik, maar dit is ons basiese onderwys wat die fondasie van ons toekoms lê. Ons kan baie oor Bela praat en ek gaan dit nie vandag doen nie. Lat ek afsluit ...

English:

... with a Tibetan proverb that says: "A child without education is like a bird without wings." I thank you.

Ms J M ADRIAANSE: Madam Chairperson, hon Ministers, hon members, fellow South Africans, good day. Education is indeed the foundation of our children's future. It can either build or break their future. When I drive in the North West, I often see children playing in the streets and I think, why are they not in school? Each missed day of school creates educational gaps and diminishes future opportunities. Just as a strong foundation is vital for a sturdy house, basic education furnishes our young with the essential knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong growth and development. Early childhood development acts as a bedrock of a child's future, educational

and personal growth. The formative experiences of early childhood play pivotal role in sculpting a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Just as a house needs regular maintenance for longevity, ongoing support and investment is vital for sustaining the quality of relevance of basic education.

Continuous development, curriculum updates and professional development of educators, are essential for maintaining and enhancing educational system effectiveness and responsiveness to evolving needs. By prioritising maintenance and upkeep, we ensure that our education system remains robust and responsive to the evolving needs of our leaders of our society. The persistent disparities and history of inequalities in education are evident, influencing poor educational outcomes still today, namely, rising illiteracy rates. A lot of people can read, but do they read with understanding? We as South Africa ranked last out of 57 countries. In the 2021 progress in International Reading Literacy Study, IRLS, with 81% of Grade 4 children unable to read with understanding. If you can't read with understanding, you can't study. Hon Minister, I know this pains you just as much as it pains me because our children need to be able to study. Four out of five teachers, lack the necessary content knowledge to teach the subjects

that they are teaching. This leads to poor performance in the classroom when coupled with the widespread overcrowding in the classes, the battle is almost lost before it starts.

Many teachers lack the skills and work ethics, resulting in subpar performance. You see them dashing off just after the bell rings, there they go, as quick as possible, forgetting about the calling of teaching on their lives. About only 32% of workbooks were delivered in January 2024 to the schools, and hopefully, by July 2024, 100% of these books were delivered. Lack work of deliveries are unacceptable. We cannot expect our teachers to execute miracles when they are burdened with so much already, namely, unsafe infrastructure challenges like, pit toilets, mud and asbestos structures, and then we handcuff them, the daily care teachers, more by prolonging the access to textbooks. This, dear Minister, can certainly be streamlined moving forward. These challenges underscore the urgent need for addressing the literacy crisis and improving teacher quality in South Africa's education system. Solutions to the South African children's reading struggle include addressing the poor quality of education and integrating digital tools early on, as shown by a study conducted by School Need SA, SNSA. Dean schools in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape partook in this study where each school received

a secret learner, tablets and an Xbox Kinect, along with specially selected apps and games. These tools, combined with extensive teacher training and support, were integrated into teaching and learning activities in Grade R and Grade 1.

Over 4-year period, the progress of learners in foundational skills was tracked. Data was compared with that of learners from construal schools who were assessed in tracking and tracked in a similar manner but did not have access and benefit of these resources. The results put those who took part in this program showed significant improvement in their achievement across all five foundational literacies, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, numeracy, visual literacy and oral communication skills. Looking at the budget the following arise. Program 5 educational enrichment services. This is a programme where we improve learning health and wellness by implementing school health programs, including the provision of nutritional meals to all schools in learners in Quintals 1,2 and 3 primary, secondary and identified special schools. While the budget primarily focuses on the nutritional programme, which is essential as a hungry child can't focus on learning properly. However, we also need to take a look at holistic developmental approach to ensure that our children are provided with all the developmental building blocks. Then

there's a big auger corruption, as we saw in the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, investigation of 2,4 billion in KwaZulu-Natal with the school nutrition programme, robbing the children whose only meal for the day comes from the school of nutrition.

In the journey of education, every stick is crucial, much like the construction of a house, where each phase must be properly completed for this structure to withstand the state taste of time. Similarly, learners skipping school at will, and teachers lacking the necessary qualifications can jeopardise the foundation and building of our education system. The implementation of grade zero and Grade R enriched with opportunities for incidental learning, can play a pivotal role. However, the practicality of these measures remains a present question. My heart goes out to the small little learners that might be put into our schools for the sake of educational continuity. In conclusion, let's ponder the current challenges in education, like the increasing illiteracy rates, knowledge gaps and education, dedication issues which impede progress towards achieving quality education for all. Collaboration is essential, and every step must be scrutinised, and especially the fact that higher education, which is the roof of the house, receives 4 times

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the budget allocation to basic education. Recognising the parallel between building a house and shaping education, underscores the importance of a strong foundation. In early childhood development, let's commit to working together, bridging gaps, fostering a culture of collaboration to transform education and unleash the unlimited potential of our future generations.

Setswana:

Ke a leboga.

English:

I thank you.

Mr M F MOKWELE: Hon Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mme Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane, the Deputy Chairperson of the House, hon Govender, House Chairpersons, the Chief Whip of the NCOP, hon members, permanent delegates and nonpermanent delegates, -those that are with us and those that are on the virtual platform - the Minister of Basic Education, hon S Gwarube, and your Deputy, the Minister of Higher Education, hon Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, and your Deputy, Chairperson of Select Committee on Education, Science, Creative Industries, hon Feni - my chairperson, MEC present here and those that joined us on

the visual platform, sector department, ladies and gentlemen,
good afternoon.

Sepedi:

Thobela.

Afrikaans:

Goeie middag.

Tshivenda:

Ndi masiari.

English:

... hon MEC of Limpopo, Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya and your team. The Select Committee on Education, Sciences and Creative Industries and Higher Education received the presentation on Budget Vote No 16 and 17 for both the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education. As we were engaging robustly on the presentation, we all noted that there is a need to intensify our oversight role as members of the committee by making sure that funds allocated are used for its intended purpose. I am here, Chairperson, and I am referring to all members of the committee, including hon Chirwa. We also

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agreed as the committee that we must hold the executive accountable in the implementation of the budget, Ministers.

We also agree that, as the committee, we must make sure that we monitor the spending patterns of both departments. There is a question that I want to pose, especially to hon members, those that want to hold us back - those that we call breakers. How are you going to hold the executive accountable on the budget that you never approved? Furthermore, how are you going to make oversight on the budget that you always say ...

IsiXhosa:

... asiyifuni ...

English:

... and you are not accepting? That is the question that I want to pose. Minister, you know here are dealing with what you call denial syndrome. People who will deny even if you can put the facts on the table. Even if you can put all the facts ...

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Mokwele, could you please take your seat. Hon members can we please observe the Rules of the House. When the member is on the podium, can you please

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refrain from conversing loud in exchange with what she's saying? If you could just please do that. Continue, hon member.

Mr M F MOKWELE: Thank you, Chairperson, for protecting me. Even if you can put the facts on the table, they will always say no. It is not up to me to judge, but it is going to be up to those electorate who voted for them. They will decide on whether they have wasted their vote or not. So, it's not going to be up to me. As we have been proceeding with the presentation, in her Budget Vote speech, the hon Minister, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, emphasised that the primary objective for the seventh administration is the development of the skilled and capable workforce, along with the expansion of the country's skills base to support inclusive growth.

The Minister also stressed the significance of sharing a vision of the future and establishing evidence-based research-guided priorities to steer the direction of the Higher Education and Training portfolio committee. The ANC strongly aligns with the Minister outlined sentiments. The remarks are fully cognisant of the fact that effectively and sustainably building an economy involves equipping individuals with requisite skills and expertise.

Accordingly, there is a considerable interest in observing collaborative efforts between the government and the Minister to fortify the correlation between the skills developed and the requisites of the workplace. It is their firm belief that the attainment of government targets demands the empowerment of all individuals through the quality education and skills training. This in turn facilitates active engagement of citizens in a democratic process and ensures the production of skilled workers essential for the economy.

In the current administration, we maintain an unyielding dedication to the youth of our nation. We aspire to participate in a committee advocating for skills training directly linked to the economic policy forming an integral part component of economic restructuring. Notably, a significant number of young South Africans are currently not engaged in employment, education or training. Subsequently, it is imperative that our government continues to prioritise the employment of young individuals across all strategic initiatives. This entails expanding initiatives that provide the young people with work experience as well as affording support, financial resources and market opportunities for aspiring young entrepreneurs. Moreover, there is a need to harmonise the provision of grants with pathway into

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employment, self-employment, training and other facets of economic development.

Our overarching objective is to broaden access to higher education and training opportunities, whilst enhancing the quality, responsiveness, and efficacy of the post-school education and training system. Enhanced skills development is pivotal in preserving our national competitiveness in confronting societal challenges. The ANC is steadfast in its commitment to addressing educational inequalities and ensuring equal opportunities for all students in higher education and learners in schools. We firmly assert that access to education and knowledge is a fundamental human right, irrespective of race, class, gender, creed, age, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disability. That is why as the ANC we are surprised that we still have political parties that are interested in political grandstanding when we are talking about these things.

Our dedication to addressing issues related to higher education across all sectors remains unwavering. We express confidence in the government's remarkable progress since 1994 in expanding access to post-school education and training. Furthermore, we advocate for the fostering of positive mental

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health and the cultivation of healthy relationships to create a supportive and inclusive campus community that values and understands its students.

The serious administrative failures of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, in the last administration have also been a key breach of trust in the system. We therefore welcome the various proposals of a turnaround strategy by the Ministry of Higher Education. Furthermore, we urge the Minister to ensure that the scheme is meeting its principal commitments and collaborating with institutions. It must work together with and within the higher education and training ecosystem where shared accountability is possible. An effective, efficient and trusted financial aid scheme would be a powerful glue for systemic trust in higher education.

Ensuring the removal of financial barriers to accessing higher education and knowledge in post-secondary institutions has been an enduring and focused priority in our democratic state since 1994, but they can still deny. We emphasise the critical importance of funding opportunities for students in higher learning institutions. The Ministry has pledged to undertake significant efforts to ensure the National Student Financial Aid Scheme - NSFAS, systems are prepared for the upcoming 2025

application season, slated to commence in September of this year.

The Minister underscored the essential nature of this preparation, as NSFAS experienced a substantial increase in bursary applications, totalling approximately R2 million in the current financial year. Despite this surge, a significant number of applications were successfully processed and approved, providing financial aid to a historically high number of students. Of the total volume, 419 447 were returning students, with 297 809 being first-time entry students. Given these figures, all necessary measures are being taken to ensure the readiness of NSFAS systems. That is why as the ANC we are supporting this budget.

Over the medium term, the bursary scheme is poised to benefit a significant number of university and Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, totalling 1,5 million and 1 million respectively, across 76 public higher education institutions. The anticipated cost for the implementation of this substantial initiative is estimated at R168,9 billion over the forthcoming period. The department's transfers are expected to

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constitute approximately ... [Time expired.] Thank you. As the committee, we are approving the budget. Thank you very much.

Sepedi:

Ke a leboga.

Tshivenda:

Rholivhuwa.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you to the Members of the NCOP for their robust engagement.

IsiXhosa:

Xa sithetha ngokubaluleka kwePalamente sithetha ukuba amaLungu ePalamente mawazijonge izinto esizizisa kuwo kwaye ajonge ukuba zezi zinto baqubisana nazo phaya ngaphandle kusini na.

English:

We do appreciate robust engagement ...

IsiXhosa:

... xa silapha. Amalungu amaninzi apha aye akhankanya izinto ezininzi eziyimiceli-mngeni ezikolweni zethu.

English:

Firstly, the issue of safety at schools, which includes overcrowding; secondly, the issue of safety for teachers. I think sometimes we forget that there are 500 000 teachers who too must go into schools, often risking their lives because of some of the challenges of crime that we face in various communities; thirdly, they also raised the issue of infrastructure, which is particularly something that I am passionate about and something that I want to champion in the department, because over and above just simply dealing with the backlog of pit toilets in the department, we also need to look at the issue of inappropriate infrastructure. The fact that there are still schools with no windows, the fact that there are still - a member mentioned here - some asbestos schools and some mud schools, those things need to be done. But that is why I was asking the members of this House that we need your support because ultimately, the funding of education is a concurrent function. Over 80% of the budget allocated to us is sent to the provinces. We need these Houses' support to make sure that we hold the provinces to account. I was heartened to see that several of the MECs ... and I appreciated their participation in the debate and their commitment to making sure that we deliver on some of the commitments that we have made. This is important because if

you look at it in this way, provinces are the real implementing agents in education. In fact, they are at the coalface of where schools are or where Student Governing Bodies, SGBs, are. And these things matter when it comes to delivery. I do not expect, as the Minister of Education to see a single cent being sent back to Treasury with all the myriads of challenges that the sector faces. It must not and cannot be. Provinces must make sure that we spend all our budgets to make sure that we are dealing with the challenges that the members have raised.

Chair, I need to address several issues. The early childhood development, ECD, and its rollout featured prominently in some of the members. I want to assure the members that, firstly, there is no underfunding of the ECD programme. Ultimately, this is how it would work as you will remember that the function was moved over to the Department of Basic Education, two years ago. As we ramp up the rollout of the ECD centres, so will be the allocation of money. It would make no sense for the Treasury to give us large sums of money when we have not demonstrated that we are able to roll out at pace, and that is why it is important that we demonstrate as the department, and that is where the R150 million comes from. It is indicative of the fact that Treasury has made the commitment. It is one of

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the key pillars of the Seventh Administration. The commitment is made, it is there, and it is now up to provinces and us in the department to keep rolling out so that we can make a case to Treasury as to why we need more money for the rollout.

I want to also just deal with the issue around pit toilets. I personally will not rest until the backlog of pit toilets is cleared in this country. The President made it very clear that this is one of the blemishes of our constitutional democracy and so the team and I will not rest until these things are cleared. But also, it is important that as members, when you go into communities where there are instances of inappropriate infrastructure that has not been reported ... Remember, we are dealing with the repository of information that is reported to us, but we cannot be eyes and ears everywhere. That's why we have members like yourselves who can report to us where they see some of these things.

Lastly, I want to say, with R300 billion in the sector, we are not ever going to be able to deal with all these issues and that is why I personally commit to being a pain in Cabinet with my colleagues to make sure that the police come on board, to make sure that justice comes on board in terms of dealing with sexual offences in schools, to make sure that local

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government comes on board in terms of delivery of local basic services. Water and Sanitation and Public Works, if we are going to fix this sector, then we must work together. It cannot be just up to Education to deal with the crisis of quality education. We must bring the entire government into the system for us to improve the quality of our education. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Hon Chair, firstly, I am going to start by welcoming these robust engagements by the members of the NCOP. It is true that there are skills mismatch in South Africa because we are still facing a situation whereby there is a discrepancy between what the employer sought and the skills that our people possess. That is why we are coming up with these various interventions and initiatives and the post school education and training, PSET, system, we are trying to address that gap.

Hon Chairperson - I am learning. That's why I keep on thinking before ... Yes. You know today, what is interesting is that we had to learn the characterization of the years between 1994 to date, which have been characterized as the 30 wasted years. I am also interested to know how hon Du Plessis can characterize the years between 1948 to 1994. I wish one day, hon

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Chairperson, or out of this session, she can as well characterize those years to me so that I get a proper understanding of what is it that was happening in that period.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Order, hon member. Sorry, hon Minister, can you please take your seat. Hon member, once again, can I remind you that in terms of Rule 68: "No member is allowed to interrupt another speaker on the floor." If you could just respect the Rules and make sure that if there is anything that you want to raise, do so in accordance with the Rules, as a point of order, please, hon members.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Hon Chairperson, I am happy to learn today that all of us here in the House, who are going to drive the transformation agenda, because I picked up from the speakers when they were presenting their statements here. They spoke about redressing the imbalances of the past. They spoke about the inclusion. I wish when we stand here in this podium, we are not grandstanding. We are then going to translate what we say into action. How I wish I could see the interventions that hon Du Plessis is talking about when she says we must have interventions that focus on our marginalized people, that redresses the imbalances of the past, and that ensures inclusion of our people. When we speak about inclusion

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of our people, we are speaking about the Africans and the black people. I hope when she speaks about this thing, she is also referring to the black people who are the majority in this country. I believe the Government of National Unity is going to work if we all intend to redress the imbalances of the past.

I want to speak about one issue around NSFAS. There are challenges. Hence the predecessor decided to appoint the administrator to address all the challenges that hon members are raising. What we are facing currently is that when the administrator joined the entity, we had a backlog of 88 000 appeals in the office that were supposed to be attended. Again, if I can report today, we only have 27 000 appeals that we are busy attending to and hoping that all those will be finalized before the end of July, this year. We are also receiving - as I have already indicated, House Chairperson - numerous queries and appeals via our private emails and SMSs. I want to make a typical example in this House. Deputy Minister Manamela received an email from the University of Free State, which is led by the EFF student command. What I can inform you today is that that query or appeal has been attended to because we are responding to the needs of our people, and we mean business. We are working day and night to

make sure that they do access their funds. Someone said sector education and training authorities, Setas, are not responding to the needs of our people. What I can say before the House is that, as this government, we are making strides in terms of our work integrated learning programmes, where we ensure that there is application of knowledge and skills to real professional work context. So, we take our people to practical work environments where they learn technical skills, where they touch, feel, and see things happening. We do that through our programme of artisans' development. So, we are working. Those who can't see are blind. It's not our problem if they can't see. House Chairperson, during the summit, which was focusing on the Setas, we highlighted six high impact programmes: Firstly, is infrastructure development and public policy institutional delivery capacity; secondly, is skills for jobs programme; thirdly, is sustainable entrepreneur, SMMEs, and co-operative development for self-employment creation; fourthly, digitalization and technological infrastructure; Seta-wide learning information management system; and lastly, is rural development for community impact. We are committed and dedicated to ensuring that we advance as far as skills revolution is concerned. Thank you so much.

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The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon delegates, I would like to thank Minister Nkabane, Minister Gwarube, the Deputy Minister Manamela, the Deputy Minister Mhaule, Deputy Minister Gondwe, and all the MECs that have joined in today's debate, MEC Chiloane, MEC Lerule, MEC Ramakhanya, and MEC Dlamini, as well as our permanent delegates, our special delegates, SA Local Government Association, Salga, representatives for availing yourselves and having participated in this important debate, and we wish you well in your respective deployments, young as you are, we have confidence in you and we believe that you are going to propel the agenda of transforming the livelihoods of the people of South Africa. In you, we believe.

Debate concluded.

The Council adjourned at 17:55.