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MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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MEMBERS OF THE MINI-PLENARY SESSION MET AT GOOD HOPE CHAMBER

AT 16:45.

Members of the mini-plenary session met at Good Hope Chamber at 16:45.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn) took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 16 - Basic Education:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: House Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of Basic Education, my co-pilot, Deputy Minister, hon members, fellow South Africans ...

IsiXhosa:

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... molweni.

English:

Let me begin with the tale of two 10-year-olds. The first one is Lindiwe. She attended an early childhood development centre, ECD, structured learning ... [Inaudible.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): I would ask the table to just confirm... And for now, we just suspend business for a minute or two. My apologies, hon members.

Ms L M NGOBENI: Chair, Chair, I am questioning the air quality in here. It is a bit cramped.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): - Stuffy? It appears we have a multitude of problems.

Ms L M NGOBENI: Yes.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): It appears we have a number of problems. However, we can also request that this be turned down. Thank you. Order, hon members! The virtual platform is connected. As we speak, we are gradually lowering the

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temperature. Let us do the same in the House, in terms of debate.

Hon Minister, if you do not mind, I am going to ask you to start again. We know Lindiwe and Nelson are present in the House, but those on the virtual platform do not. So please begin from the start.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: ... I thought I introduced them very well, Chair. For the benefit of the members on the platform, I would like to tell the House the story of two 10-year-olds. The first is "Lindiwe," who has attended an ECD centre, experienced structured learning, been taught by qualified practitioners, and received proper nutrition. By age 10, she reads with understanding, solves mathematics problems confidently, and her future is bright.

The second one is "Nelson." He is just as bright and just as deserving but did not attend an ECD centre. He first encounters a book in grade one, and by age 10, he still cannot read for meaning, yet he must write the same assessments as "Lindiwe."

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The curriculum moves forward, and Nelson is left behind. The argument I am making here is that over 90% of children in South Africa are mostly Nelsons and not "Lindiwes." This is the education injustice of our time. So, the question before this House today is whether the implementation of this budget Vote helps more children like Nelson receive strong foundations than children like "Lindiwe" already have. Because strong foundations are the difference between a child who enters the future and a child who is locked out of it. And that is why I tabled the budget Vote No 16 under the theme - Strong foundations for strong futures. In a few short weeks, this administration will mark two years in office.

We inherited weak accountability, infrastructure backlogs, procurement failures, declining public trust. In over two years, this administration has chosen a different path. We have chosen reform, discipline, and delivery that must be felt in classrooms, teacher support, and learner outcomes.

This budget is tabled under severe fiscal pressure, but the future of South Africa cannot wait for perfect conditions. It supports our core priorities, quality ECD, foundational literacy and numeracy, inclusive education, teacher

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development, school safety and infrastructure, and stronger governance.

If we want Nelson to keep up before he is left behind, we cannot start in grade four or in Grade 12. We must start earlier. That is why early childhood development is central to this budget Vote. ECD is where inequality either begins to narrow or it begins to harden.

Last year, we set ourselves an ambitious target of registering 10 000 ECD centres in one year. Many believe that it could not be done, but I am happy to announce that we registered more than 13 300 ECD centres, exceeding our target by 33%. ECD registration has grown by 200 between 2021 and 2026. This means that 1,2 million children now have access to registered ECD programmes and will enter school better prepared than before.

I am also pleased to announce that the ECD nutrition pilot has entered implementation. The contract was advertised in March 2026, and we will soon pilot ECD nutrition in centres in the Eastern Cape. This responds directly to the Thrive by Five findings that 7% of South Africa's children are stunted due to

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malnutrition. These interventions mean more "Nelsons" will start schools ready to learn. Emerging international evidence points to developmental risks from excessive screen exposure in early childhood.

I am therefore announcing that we will develop a national screen time guidance for children aged between two and six to help protect the development of language, attention, memory, and social skills.

We are also reviewing the 2004 White Paper 7 on e-Education and developing practical national guidance on the use of artificial intelligence, AI, in our classrooms. Our approach is clear: The machine may assist, but the teacher must decide, the learner must think, and the system must protect.

Compulsory Grade R is one of the most important reforms in democratic South Africa, but implementation has a cost.

Aligning qualified Grade R practitioner salaries with foundation phase educators while appointing additional Grade R teachers will cost approximately R10 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF. National Treasury has not allocated the full funding for this. We have therefore

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redirected R800 million from the ECD grant to address the immediate Grade R pressures. This is not ideal, but doing nothing would be far worse. We will be continuing engaging with National Treasury for sustainable long-term funding.

We are also putting the regulations in place to support responsible implementation of the BELA Act. Draft regulations on admissions, school capacity, and learner pregnancy have already been published for public comment. Further draft regulations on teacher development, home education, notice on school governing bodies, SGB, elections, and amongst others, will be published for comment during this financial year. Work to amend the South African Schools Act to recognise and regulate online schools is also underway.

I am also happy to announce that Cabinet has approved the Children's Amendment Bill, which will now proceed through Parliament. It is critical to a more efficient and a child-centred ECD system. And reform is now being translated into law that make delivery easier for the child, the parent, the school, and the teacher.

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Fellow South Africans, a child experiences financial mismanagement in an overcrowded classroom, a vacant teacher post, or a textbook that never arrives.

In September 2024, I informed the public of the results of a financial analysis we had initiated into provincial education departments. The findings were deeply concerning. The analysis projected that three of the provincial education departments would fall into the red by 2025/26, and seven in the outer years of the MTEF. Those risks are now materialising in KwaZulu-Natal, in the Free State, and in the Northern Cape, with others growing pressure.

Today, I am announcing a multidisciplinary recovery technical support team of experienced advisors to support provinces on budget planning, financial analysis, and school resourcing. When provincial education finances fail, learners suffer. Provinces must also ensure that norms and standards funding allocations are paid to schools on time. These funds are not optional. They are not a favour to schools. They are the lifeline of teaching and learning. And where payments are overdue, provinces must act urgently. A learner must not become the shock absorber of provincial cash flow failures.

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National government will still strengthen its oversight role. Colleagues, we are strengthening learning where it matters the most, from foundation phase. This year, 10 000 Foundation Phase teachers will receive targeted literacy and numeracy training, while we will refresh the implementation of the South Africa's National Reading Literacy Strategy and Plan. But policy alone does not improve outcomes. Quality teaching does. Therefore, teachers cannot spend more time filling in forms than teaching children.

I am pleased to announce that the National Education and Training Council has submitted proposals to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and the department will soon issue directives to provinces to drastically reduce reporting tools. To the teachers of South Africa, we have heard you. Every hour returned to teaching is an hour returned to children.

The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme has also shifted decisively towards foundation phase education. In 2025, 42% of Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme bursaries were allocated to foundation phase education, and I am pleased to announce that in 2026, this has increased to 55%. The review of the formula used to allocate teachers to schools is also expected to be concluded

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in this financial year, and this will make sure that teachers are allocated to the Foundation Phase. If we are serious about literacy and numeracy, the earliest grades must receive the strongest support.

The next phase of reform must also change in how we measure success. We must applaud the Class of 2025 for achieving a pass rate of 88%, the highest in the country's history. But for too long, the national conversation on quality has been reduced to a single mark.

Therefore, I am announcing that going forward, the department will rank provincial performance through an inclusive basket of indicators focused on quality. This quality basket will include an overall pass percentage, bachelor pass attainment, distinction, participation, and performance in gateway subjects such as mathematics, physical science, and accounting, as well as learner retention. This will give South Africans a more honest picture of quality, participation, progression, and subject depth. Because for "Lindiwe" and Nelson, a credible matric certificate must mean more than just survival. It must mean readiness for the next step in life.

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We must also salute South Africa's quality markers who in 2024 detected anomalies in a small number of scripts in Gauteng. The breach was quickly identified, traced, and those implicated are now facing disciplinary and criminal processes. The department has also implemented strengthened safety measures in line with the recommendations that were made by the independent panels.

I am also pleased to announce that this year South Africa will conduct the second South African systemic evaluation to measure national literacy and numeracy competencies in grade three. We want to move towards annual rollout of these types of assessments. We are also strengthening mother tongue based bilingual education assessments in rolling out the General Education Certificate programme to strengthen pathway planning and skills development. Together, these reforms will provide clearer data and stronger tools for intervention.

School safety and infrastructure remain urgent priorities. We have eradicated 99,9% of the pit toilets identified in the 2018 Sanitation Appropriate for Education, SAFE, Initiative backlog, with mop-ups already underway with the one remaining project in construction.

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I am pleased that we are closing the last project of this backlog but angry that it has taken us this long. Project management in public service must improve. There may still be pit toilets that may have been missed in 2018 and those that have emerged after 2018, and therefore we are allocating R16 billion to the Education Infrastructure Grant for safety, sanitation, overcrowding reduction, and rural infrastructure.

Corruption destroys state capacity. In education, corruption steals directly from children and teachers. It robs families of strong futures. That is why integrity in procurement is critical. Serious concerns were raised regarding the foundation phase catalogue process, which affects learning materials of our youngest learners in Grade 1 to three. I have considered advice from National Treasury and will not pre-empt any outcome. However, there were serious enough concerns that were raised that require independent testing.

While Treasury's consideration on the matter was inconclusive, it raised a concern about our own department's deviation from ordinary competitive bidding processes. And I am therefore announcing that the department will be launching an independent external investigation in accordance with Treasury

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advice into the foundation phase national catalogue process. This investigation must be conducted urgently by a reputable, independent law firm with expertise, credibility, and capacity to withstand the scrutiny. This is about ensuring that quality textbooks reach learners on time through a lawful, fair, transparent process. Corruption in education is never victimless. Neither is weak governance. Both are paid for by children.

Budget Vote No 16 allocates R38,2 billion in this current financial year, R11 billion for school nutrition, R16 billion for school infrastructure, R4,6 billion for ECD, R477 million for mathematics, science and technology, R307 million for learners with disabilities. These allocations only matter if they reach learners quickly, efficiently, and transparently. Delivery must be felt in the classroom.

History will judge us not by the number of speeches we gave or plans we announced, but by whether children could read and count better, learn in safe environments, receive meals at school, and leave with stronger futures because we governed effectively. This administration chooses reform over excuses, delivery over slogans, and children over petty party politics.

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Stronger foundations will produce stronger schools, stronger communities, and a stronger nation. And so, our task is clear: we want to infuse quality into our education system. And this is precisely why we are even reviewing the way in which we are announcing matric results, because we want to show South Africans that we want to consistently move the needle towards quality at all times.

I want to assure I want to assure the people of South Africa that in us you have advocates for your children in us you have people who will make sure that we are not only providing access to education but also, we are producing quality in our education. So, our task is clear: build the foundations build them early, build them well, and build them for every single child. Because stronger foundations prepare children for the future. Strong foundations build strong futures. Thank you, Chairperson.

Sepedi:

Moh K J MAIMELA: Mohl Modulasetulo, Maloko a Palamente ao a hlomphegago, Tona ya Thuto ya Motheo yeo e hlomphegago, Motlatšatona wa Thuto ya Motheo yoo a hlomphegago, baeng bao ba hlomphegago, badudi ba Afrika Borwa bao ba hlomphegago,

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lehono re thekga Boute ya Ditekanyetšo yeo e bolelago thwii ka bokamoso bja setšhaba sa rena, bana ba rena, dikolo tša rena, le temokrasi ya rena. Boute ye ya Ditekanyetšo e tšweletšwa nakong ye bohlokwa kudu leetong la rena la temokrasi. ANC ka mehla e kwešišitše gore thuto ke sebetša se maatla ntweng kgahlanong le bodiidi, go se lekalekane, tlhokego ya mešomo le tlhabologo.

English:

For this reason, the 2026 state of the nation address correctly identified education as central to improving foundational learning, strengthening state capacity and advancing equality. These priorities are not abstract aspirations. They are continuation of a historic mission of the democratic state to dismantle the structural inequalities inherited from apartheid and to build a capable developmental state that places the needs of the poor at the centre of governance. The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education therefore welcomes the strategic direction of Vote 16, which allocates R38,2 billion in 2026-27, increasing to R42 billion by 2028-29 to support quality basic education for all learners. At the heart of this budget lies the responsibility

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to confront the foundational learning crisis in literacy and numeracy.

The ANC-led government recognises that without strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, meaningful transformation in education cannot be achieved. The committee therefore strongly supports the department's commitment to improving foundational skills through structured interventions in early grade reading and mathematics. We further note the department's objective of improving reading proficiency in underperforming rural and township schools through the early grade reading assessment tool, with a focus on phonics, fluency, comprehension and word recognition.

Research consistently demonstrates that children learn best in a language they understand. The committee therefore welcomes the incremental roll-out of mother-tongue-based bilingual education up to Grade 7 over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period. This intervention is both educationally sound and socially transformative. It improves comprehension, strengthens cognitive development and increases learner retention, particularly among children from historically marginalised communities whose languages and cultures were

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systematically undermined under colonialism and apartheid. The ANC has always championed the recognition of indigenous languages as instruments of empowerment, dignity and nation-building. We therefore commend the department for allocating resources to train teachers in bilingual teaching methodologies and to provide mathematics, science and technology support materials in home languages alongside English.

The committee also notes the allocation of R95 million over the medium term to support implementation of this strategy. However, implementation must move with urgency. Language policy cannot remain progressive on paper, while classrooms continue to operate without adequate support materials, trained educators and curriculum alignment. Provinces must ensure that schools receive the necessary support to implement structured reading programmes effectively and consistently. This budget must also be understood through the lens of social justice.

More than three decades into democracy, apartheid-era inequalities continue to shape the realities of schooling in South Africa. The ANC inherited an education system

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deliberately designed to exclude the black majority from quality learning opportunities. Learners in historically disadvantaged communities still face overcrowded classrooms, inadequate sanitation, infrastructure backlogs, limited digital access and shortages of teaching resources.

We therefore note the continued support for school nutrition with R33,9 million allocated over the medium-term to provide nutritional meals to approximately 9,9 million learners in 19 800 schools annually. These interventions are not acts of charity. They are instruments of equality, dignity and redress. A child cannot learn effectively while hungry, unsafe or studying in a collapsing infrastructure. The committee therefore calls for equitable resource allocation that intentionally prioritises poor rural township and no-fee schools.

During the portfolio committee's oversight visit to Limpopo and Mpumalanga, the committee witnessed first-hand the realities confronting many schools, especially special needs schools, rural schools and early childhood development, ECD, centres. While we observed inspiring examples of resilience, leadership and community participation, we also encountered

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severe infrastructure backlogs, unsafe sanitation, overcrowded classrooms, unreliable water and electricity supply and serious learner transport challenges. The committee visited schools, including Yingisani Special School for the Deaf, Bosele School for the Blind and Deaf, Setotolwane School, Kamaguguu Inclusive School and Silindokuhle Special School, where educators continue to deliver quality education under difficult conditions. These schools highlighted the urgent shortages of specialised educators, therapists, psychologists, sign language interpreters, assistive devices and suitable learner transport for children with disabilities.

Honourable Minister, in some cases, learners with disabilities travel several hours daily and have to leave their homes before 4 o'clock in the morning simply to access education. These are children who are disabled. These are young children. This reality demands urgent investment in learner transport, boarding facilities, inclusive infrastructure and specialised support services. We are serious about restoring foundational learning. Early childhood development must become the centrepiece of our education and transformation agenda. The ANC government has correctly recognised ECD as a national priority because inequality begins, as you said, Minister,

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long before a child enters Grade 1. Children who are denied nutrition, stimulation and quality early learning opportunities are disadvantaged from early beginnings of their educational journey. No education system can rise above the quality, availability and morale of its teachers.

South Africa faces a growing crisis in educator recruitment and retention, particularly in rural communities, township schools and no-fee schools where shortages are more severe. The ANC has consistently maintained that teachers are nation builders and critical agents of social transformation. Declining personnel capacity therefore threatens curriculum delivery, learner performance and the sustainability of foundational learning reforms.

The committee therefore calls for accelerated teacher recruitment, improved workforce planning and expanded support for new educators entering the profession. We welcome the continued investment in Funza Lushaka's bursary scheme. However, bursaries alone are insufficient if newly qualified teachers remain unemployed. While schools experience severe shortages, we urge stronger co-ordination between national and provincial departments to ensure the timely placement of

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qualified educators, especially in underserved communities. The committee also notes with concern the projected decline in funded personnel posts within the department over the medium term. At a time when the system requires stronger institutional capacity, reductions in personnel must not undermine service delivery, oversight, curriculum support and educational planning.

Honourable Minister, you speak about how you are busy registering ECD centres. We must move beyond registration. We must now see quality ECD centres in our communities. What you also don't mention then is how you have promised this Parliament that by March you would have eradicated pit latrine toilets. To date, you have not fully eradicated pit latrine toilets. This budget presents an opportunity to rebuild the foundation of our education system. It is an opportunity to ensure that every child can read with meaning, collocate with confidence, learn in a language they understand, access quality early learning opportunities and be taught by qualified, supported educators in safe and dignified schools. Let us therefore move decisively to restore foundational learning, strengthen educator recruitment and advance equality

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through education. The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education supports the Budget Vote 16. I thank you.

IsiZulu:

Mnu S W MKHIZE: Mgcinisihlalo, i-MK Party izokhuza nanku umshophi obhidlangile wokubulawa kwezikole zemfundo eyisisekelo i-ANC yomhlonishwa u-Ramaphosa ne-DA. Zibolile zonke izikole emakhaya, emalokishini nasemapulazini. Indlu yegagu iyanetha! Umongameli ayigangamlomo. Sihlalo, uHulumeni we-ANC kamhlonishwa u-Ramaphosa nw-DA uzibulale nya izikole zikaHulumeni.

Sisho nje ngoba siyazi ukuthi lezi zikole zaqala ukubola ngenxa yokugantshulwa kwezimali kusukela ngonyaka u-2017 kungena uThumamina, kanti uzoqeda nya zonke izikhungo zikaHulumeni. Ngakhoke, bantu bakithi, sizayikhotha imbenge yomile umangabe i-ANC ne-DA besasemandleni. Ongakwazi lokhu engikushoyo akaye kulezi zikole ezilandelayo; KwaDenge High School, KwaNongoma ezigcemeni-3, lapho khona othisha nabafundi bezikhulula emgodini onezimpethu; KwaMagwaza Primary School, eMthonjaneni ngaphansi kwe-IFP, uzofika lapho abafundi befundela ezindongeni ... [Ubuwelewele.] ...

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English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon member, just hold on for a moment. Please, take your seat. I have a hand at the back. Hon member, why do you want to be recognised?

AN HON MEMBER: House Chair, on a point of order: Please intervene, the member is drowning in his own voice that we can't even hear him.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): No, hon member, that is not a point of order. Order! Hon members, order! Hon member, continue as you see fit.

IsiZulu:

Mnu S W MKHIZE: ... zodaka eziwayo nophahla oluwayo. Hamba uye eMgangeni High School, uzoyithola laphayana eMbo, uphahla lwapheshulwa isiphepho bangalungisa, baletha imijondolo emhlophe emine, kwabola yonke into amadeski nezincwadi ngaphakathi, lo Hulumeni we-GNU. Noma uhambe uye eMathubeszwe, uzofika ikilasi linabafundi abayikhulu, ikilasi ngalinye. Akwaxhiwe lutho laphayana eOkumhlophe High School eMlaza, uzofika laphayana kunomjondolo oyigumbi labasebenzi lothisha nabafundi, kule-GNU le. Noma hamba uye eMpumalanga,

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kumbe eMpumalanga Koloni, noma uye e-Limpopo, uye eNyakatho Koloni, noma uye eNtshonalanga eseNyakatho, konakele zonke izifundazwe. Inhlekelele enkulu, Sihlalo, ukuthi, alukho isu lokuhlenga lezi zikole kule minyaka emithathu ezayo. Ngokusho kukaNgqongqoshe, nangu la phambi kwami, ukulungisa zonke izikole ukuthi zibuyele ezimweni zazo uzodinga u-R140 billion, kodwa kulesi sikhathi seminyaka emithathu, ngokwe-Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, uzothola u-R49 billion kuphela. Kukuthsela ukuthini? Ukuthi kule minyaka emithathu ezayo, kunegebe lika-R90 billion.

Kuthini lokho kuwena? Kuthi izikole zizoqhubeka zibole kakhulu kunamanje ngoba leli gebe lika-R90 billion alivaliwe. Ngakhoke asikuvume bakwethu ukuthi, umangabe i-DA nale-ANC ka-Ramaphosa isasemandleni, zisazobola izikole. Sibona izizumbulu ... [Ubuwelewele.] ...

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon member, just take your seat, once again. Hon member, why do you want to be recognised?

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Mr S T D LOUW: House Chairperson, on a point of order: There is no Ramaphosa here. The member must call the name of my President Ramaphosa. Thank you. Rule 82!

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon member, order! Hon members, may I just firstly say this, it might just be that some learners are watching this debate. Let us try and set an orderly example for them at least. Hon member, I did not necessarily hear you just refer to Ramaphosa, but this is a general reminder to the House, that we don't refer to members, as well as the President, and the members of his executive who are not Members of Parliament by surname or name only, but by either Mr, or President, or Minister. Please continue.

IsiZulu:

Mnu S W MKHIZE: ... zika-R270 million ezihlonzelwe ukuyokhokha imali yokukhokhela ukuhlala endaweni, eyani le nto engaka bakwethu? Kuyobe le mali ifakelwa lezi zigebengu zika-ANC, ngoba siyawazi umkhuba wazo wokufaka imali ngenhla bese beyihosha ngezansi. Kuyomele sibheke ukuthi eyiphi le migulukudu ka-ANC ezothola lo-R270 million okuthiwa imali ekhokhelwa ukuhlala endaweni.

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Vimbani bantu bakithi, kungenjalo, kuphela nya ngezemfundo. Siyabona futhi izizumbulu zika-R4,6 billion ezifakwe kwimfundo eyisisekelo, yodado, kodwa ohlelweni lwezemfundo akuveli ukuthi zingaki izikhungo ezizokwakhelwa izindlu zangasese ezizonikeza izingane isithunzi zingakhandi izimpethu. Futhi abangakulutholi usizo kulolu xhaso, njengaseNdwedwe, bona bazosizakala kanjani? Akuvele ukuthi omama abagade odado ezindlini ezivuzayo, abazakhe ngodaka, bazokwakhelwa kanjani izindlu ezizonika abantwana isithunzi ezibafanele.

Lokhu kuveza ukuthi vele lokhu ngeke kwakhiwe. Kusikwa nje elinye ivenge elizodikadikwa abaholi be-ANC. Ngandani bakithi, nali ukhetho selufikile. Akusekude phambili. Kubuhlungu ukubona, Sihlalo, ukuthi ngenkathi singenzi kahle kwezesayensi, ezibalweni, ezobuxhakaxhaka nokuxhumana, lo Hulumeni ubona kufanele ukwehlisa uxhaso luka-Funza Lushaka ngemali engango-R306 million. Emuva kwalokho, yena lo Hulumeni, uzothi sishoda ngothisha balezi zifundo. Uthi abaphambene kodwa ekhanda?

Kuyimanje, othisha bayatoyiza KwaZulu-Natal bafuna imisebenzi, kodwa asikho isabelomali esibhekene nokuqashwa kothisha kule-Medium-Term Expenditure Framework yenu. Kodwa wona futhi lo

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mkhakha uthi unesidingonqangi sokukhanda imisebenzi. Kungani Hulumeni ka-ANC kaMnu u-Ramaphosa ne-DA ningaziqashi lezi zingane ezifunde kabuhlungu nge-National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, nezimpesheni zogogo kodwa izikhala zikhona? Ayikhulunywa nhlobo le yokunyuswa kwemiholo yothisha kulesi sabelomali esikhuluma ngaso. Hheyi, nali ukhetho selufikile. Khiphani le mihumuheko yamasela khona i-MK Party izolungisa izwe. Siyabuza ukuthi, lesi songezo sika-R500 million ngaphansi kohlelo lokudla lwezingane ezikoleni, kufinyelelwe kanjani kuso ngoba kunezigidi ngezigidi zezingane njengamanje, Ngqongqoshe, ezingakutholi ukudla. Kuyimanje, lezi zigidi zezingane azikutholi ukudla emalokishini, emapulazini nasemakhaya.

Ngakhoke, le ngcosana yemali eniyifakile nithi makudle yiphi ingane kungadli yiphi ingane? Ngokufanayo asikho isongezomali esicacile ngaphansi kohlelo lokuthutha abantwana abahlala kude nezikole. Amabhasi ayinqwaba afile, amanye ayizikorokoro, aze amiswe ngamatshe emaphandleni ngenxa yokunganakekelwa. Manje njengoba kungenasongezo kule mali, nifuna izingane zize zife kuqala khona nizokhipha le mali yini, Ngqongqoshe. Bantu bakithi, vikelani izingane zenu kulolu khetho oluzayo.

Awaphume amasela angenawo unembeza. Uma ubheka amasu oMnyango

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Wezemfundo Eyisisekelo onyaka wezimali u-2026-27, ubona lokhu okulandelayo; lamasu akhelwe ngaphansi kwezimo zokuqagela, ngoba alukho ulwazi oluphusile olunikeza izinkomba zomonakalo kanye nezidingo zomnyango. Azikho izinombolo zokuthi zingaki izikole ezintsha ezizokwakhiwa. Okusho ukuthi alukho uhlelo lokwakha ngaphansi koHulumeni ka-Ramaphosa. Akukho zibalo zokuthi zingaki izikole ezizolungiswa njengoba zibole zonke nje. Kuzolandelelwa izikole ezingu-55 kuphela kodwa kube kunezikole ezingu-23 000 ukuthi ngeziphilini ezinikeza izindlu zangasese ezihlanzekile. Zakamizi ezinhle, ngabe yini enisayilindile ukuthi niyibone ukuthi lezi yizehluleki okumele zikhishwe kuHulumeni.

Lesi sabelomali asikhathalele ukuthi ububha abuhlume nokhula. Izikole azibole zifike la zithanda khona. Akulambe ingane elambayo. Akufe ofayo kwezokuthutha abantwana ezikoleni. Luthi abantwana abamukele izimpethu njengengxenye yezimpilo zazo. Abakhala ngemisebenzi abazibonela njengoba kwasho u-Mantashe. Ngithi mina, banikeni impendule ethi, nintshonsha okokugcina, masela ndini, iyeza i-MK Party izosikhulula. Nali ithuba ngo-4 Novemba

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Iqembu le-MK Party lithi, imfundo mayibe mahala. Imfundo ayilethwe ngolimi lwasekhaya. Imfundo ayakhiwe phezu kwesisekelo sobuAfrika. Makuqashwe othisha. Makukhiwe izikole zamakhono la zingekho khona. Makulungiswe zonke izikole ezibolile. Akufakwe amanzi la engekho khona kanye nezindlu zangasese. I-MK Party iyasichitha lesi sabelomali.
[Ubuwelewele.]

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon members, before we proceed, may I remind members on the virtual platform that you must please remain muted until you are recognised. Hon Reddy, on the virtual platform, do you want to be recognised?

Mr V G REDDY: Hon Chair, on a point of order: I had my hand up. Somebody on the virtual platform was interrupting the speaker while he was making some very important points. I missed those points. Can you allow him another two minutes to repeat the last two minutes of his speech, please?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): No, hon Reddy, here is a bit of good advice for you; all these debates are on YouTube.

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You can go and watch them there again. The next speaker is the hon Jordaan.

Ms C JORDAAN: House Chairperson, we dream of a society in which every South African, whether they are from Ezamokuhle or from Camps Bay are able to reach their full potential, if they take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them.

This is what the DA calls an open opportunity society. The realisation of this dream begins with education - the bridge between poverty and possibility. The success of this budget will not be measured by the money spent, but by children being able to read and calculate, schools that are able to keep their learners safe and families that are able to build a future.

We welcome a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and early learning outcomes. We note financial backing towards early Grade reading assessment that will assist in preventing long-term learning collapse and Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education finally seeing the light of day. Research consistently proves that mother tongue education in the

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foundational years can contribute critically to the abilities of a child. Children learn faster, retain more information and develop cognitive skills when they are given the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue in these formative years.

We know from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, Pirls, assessment that nearly 81% of learners aged 10 are unable to read for meaning. If we are serious about addressing the literacy crisis, then we must support learners in the language that builds comprehension and confidence as far as practically possible. Perhaps someone in another portfolio might disagree, but to me, a consistent focus on ensuring learners read for meaning by Grade 4 is arguably one of the most important priorities that government can pursue to ensure future economic prosperity.

We also see marked improvements in regulation and strides in the movement towards universal access for young children to early childhood development, ECD, initiatives. ECD centres built across the country by mothers and gogos [grandmothers], remarkable people in communities that are providing young children with safe spaces to learn, eat and grow have been enabled through the Bana Pele ECD registration drives. More

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children are starting their education journeys in ECD centres with government support than ever before.

The DA welcomes the continued allocation of the R24 per-child per-day subsidy, but I don't think anyone can argue that this is simply not yet enough. The DA will continue to advocate for greater investment into early and foundational learning. Hungry children cannot learn.

A critical undertaking in the sector is the National School Nutrition Programme. Millions of learners rely on this programme every single day. For these learners, this is not merely a meal at school, but the reason they are able to learn anything at all.

An astonishing number of learners are reached by this programme, combating the malnutrition crisis in the country and supporting learning at an incredibly personal level. They remain, however, serious concerns. Cabinet approved cuts to the school infrastructure backlogs grant, the education infrastructure grant and workbook allocations risk, worsening the overcrowding infrastructure backlogs and affecting educational quality that can be felt at a classroom level.

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A watchful eye is required over conditional grants.

Implementation capacity varies dramatically across provinces with some provinces yet to prove that they can be trusted with public funds. The crisis in education is not policy failure; it is years of political neglect that has led to administrative collapse. We see this when provinces like the Eastern Cape fails to pay schools their shares, forcing them to close their doors, and procurement scandals in Mpumalanga, and when financial mismanagement in KwaZulu-Natal results in this province needing a babysitter for their spending.

The DA is deeply concerned about school safety. Schools should not be crime scenes. While the Ministry has made significant strides in reimagining how school safety has been approached nationally, provincial departments continue to undermine these efforts, despite crime statistics continuously highlighting that learners are being raped, assaulted and even killed on school grounds quarter on quarter.

In Gauteng, over 270 security personnel posts in high crime areas were cut due to funding constraints. What is this province prioritising if not the safety of its learners?

Parents should be worrying about school projects and sport

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matches, not whether their children will return home after a day at school.

The year 2025 saw a record-breaking 88% pass rate. Now, we are also beginning to see what outcome-driven governance under the DA looks like within this department. Increasingly strategic plans seek to reduce bureaucracy and instead, focus on impact, where children can read for meaning, numeracy improves, schools are safe, learners are fed, dropout rates decline, and educational quality competes internationally.

Now we need provincial departments and administrative staff who inappropriately spend their time focusing on political matters instead of brainstorming how to solve the literacy crisis to get with the programme.

Recently, Minister Gwarube has requested an investigation into a textbook tender that took the media by storm. Somehow, critics in the portfolio in the department understood this as meddling, rather than a demonstration of ethical and honest leadership. If this is not saying that some people are spending time in political study groups and seriously being worried about looming lifestyle audits, then I don't know what

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will. The DA will continue supporting clean governance, accountability, private-sector partnerships, innovation and evidence-based reform in education.

Hope is inspired where we see these principles coming together. It is our obligation to ensure that education is supported by resources because it remains the greatest equalizer, the greatest tool to break cycles of poverty permanently. If we get this right, if we build strong foundations early enough, we will change the future of our country and create an open-opportunity society for all.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon members, may I request members who are next to speak to join us here in front. It is clear that whenever a member just needs to move from their seat to the podium, other members think it is time for across-the-aisle engagements. So, please assist us all with some order by joining us in front if you are next.

Mr M SHIKWAMBANA: House Chair, the EFF rejects Budget Vote 16, because the Department of Basic Education is no longer only facing a crisis of infrastructure, literacy and inequality; it is now facing a crisis of credibility under the DA Minister

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Siviwe Gwarube. South Africans were told that when the DA enters government, professionalism, merit and clean governance will finally arrive. Instead, within months, Parliament was already dealing with allegations of political interference, manipulated recruitment processes, withheld documents and procurement controversies.

The director-generally himself confirmed before Parliament that supporting recruitment documents prepared for the portfolio committee were withheld after instruction from the Minister herself. That is the Minister attempting to obstruct Parliament oversight. The committee further had evidence that the outcomes of the independent panel in senior appointments were ignored and lower-ranked candidates were preferred over better performing candidates.

But even worse, the Minister's Office sent external CVs directly to the HR recruitment process after applications had already closed. Ordinary South Africans apply through the formal system, attend interviews and follow procedure. But inside the Department of Basic Education, politically connected individuals get CVs hand delivered from the Minister's office itself.

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South Africans were told for years that cadre deployment destroyed institutions. Now the DA sits in government and behave exactly the same. Cadre deployment of the DA is the one in a blue T-shirt and with a module-C accent.

The foundation-faced national catalogue controversy has exposed the deeper rot inside this department. The department only became concerned after it was exposed publicly. The department reduced approval targets from eight to three, dramatically increasing the financial and commercial value of inclusion in the catalogue processes.

How do you justify awarding a R285 million textbook tender to a company registering three days after contract specifications were issued? The department's own presentation confirmed that, once quality thresholds were met, price become decisive.

Suddenly, when the poor black children are involved, quality becomes negotiable. Minister Gwarube, referring this matter to the National Treasury does not absolve you of accountability.

You cannot continue to hide behind Treasury and media statements, while Parliament demands answers. You remain politically accountable for the conduct of the Department of Basic Education.

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While the department is consumed by scandal management and media demand control, the real crisis inside schools continues. Every year, more than 500 learners disappear from the schooling system. Yet, the department still does not have the capacity to properly track where these children are going. More than 1,2 million children enter Grade 1, but only around 600 000 finalists sit for the matric examination. Half of these children disappear from the system before they even reach matric.

In townships, school violence is becoming normalised for both learners and teachers, while rural and poor schools continue to receive an education completely different from former module-C institutions. The education infrastructure grant exceeds 16 billion, yet pit toilets, overcrowding and unsafe schools remain normal in our poor communities.

Programme 3 that is dealing with teachers, education and human resources and institutional development declined by more than R300 million compared to the previous financial year. At the same time, the online placement system in provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape continue leaving thousands of

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learners without replacement, while government officials issue media statements instead of solutions.

Poor schools still face teacher shortages, collapsing infrastructure and unequal access to science and learner support. The GNU promised South Africans a governance of competence. Instead, South Africans are witnessing a measure between ANC arrogance and DA hypocrisy.

South Africa was promised a competent alternative. What we are getting is a blue version of the same political culture that has damaged the state for decades. The children of the poor deserve better than a government that turns education into another side of political games and procurement scandals. The EFF rejects this Budget Vote. I thank you.

Mr S L NGCOBO: Hon Chairperson, the IFP strongly believes that quality basic education is the key to a truly equitable South Africa. We cannot hope to build a prosperous future for our nation without properly educating its children.

We welcome the debate on Budget Vote 16 as an opportunity to strengthen the state of basic education in our country. We

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applaud the department's goal of granting 1 million children access to registered early childhood development programs. The first few years of life are crucial for the development, and the government has a responsibility to ensure that each child receives the best start possible. All children are entitled to this, regardless of their socioeconomic standing.

In light of this, we note with concern the minimal budget increase for early childhood development nutrition initiative. This is a worrying lack of growth, considering the fact that nearly 30% of children under five years suffer from stunting in South Africa. These nutrition programs are a lifeline for food insecure households, particularly in rural communities. We urge the department to ensure that feeding schemes are both well-funded and effectively run. We cannot expect our children to learn while their stomachs are empty. For them to grow into thriving, capable adults, the department must financially prioritize its early childhood development nutrition programs. In pursuit of this, we call for the implementation of feeding schemes in all South Africa's public schools.

We welcome the department's goal of enrolling roughly 140 000 learners with disabilities in special schools. Educational

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equity has always been one of the party's keystone beliefs. We maintain that all children are entitled to quality education, regardless of their capabilities. We are committed to ensuring that no child is left behind during educational reform and will closely monitor the practical steps taken by the department to achieve this goal.

Lastly, we note with concern the lack of detail on learner transport in this budget. Safe transport to and from schools is essential for students to thrive. Children cannot be expected to perform equally when some walk several kilometres through rough terrain while others get driven to school. This is a major structural barrier and it's our government's duty to ensure that all students are transported safely to their place of learning. We therefore urge the department to take practical steps towards ensuring that all schools have free scholar transport.

The IFP approves Budget Vote 16, but it maintains that more practical action is needed to overcome the structural barriers that prevent disadvantaged learners from reaching their full potential.

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Chairperson, may I say that it's the competency of the national and provincial governments to build schools, not of the IFP in Mthonjaneni. That is misleading. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Ms J S PETERSEN: House Chair, hon members, Ministers, members of the public, the PA rises today to debate Vote 16, Basic Education; a Vote that is about the future of South Africa's children. Yet far too many families are being failed by a broken placement system, overcrowded classrooms, and poor administration.

Across our communities, parents are frustrated and desperate. Children are being placed in schools far from homes, forcing families to spend money that they do not have on transport and placing young learners at risk through unsafe daily commutes. Even worse, hon Minister, siblings are being separated and sent to different schools, despite the clear importance of keeping families together.

The placement system crisis has exposed a department that is disconnected from the realities facing ordinary South Africans. Parents queue for days, submit applications on time,

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and still receive no answers. Circuit managers make promises, but communities continue to suffer while children are left uncertain about their futures.

Hon Minister, our schools are overcrowded and overstretched. Classrooms are packed beyond capacity, teachers are overwhelmed, and resources are under pressure. The PA raises concerns that in many communities, the uncontrolled pressure placed on public schools by illegal foreigners is contributing to the crisis while South African children are left without placement and without access to quality education. South African learners must come first. Education is not just a budget item. It is the foundation of opportunity, dignity, and national development.

When children cannot access schools close to home, when siblings are divided, and when overcrowding continues unchecked, then vote ceasing is failing the people of this country. The PA therefore calls for urgent reform of the placement system. We need a system that prioritizes proximity to home, family unity, transparency and accountability, and South African children first. Anything less is a failure to protect the future of our nation. Thank you.

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Afrikaans:

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Voorsitter, agb Minister, en Adjunkminister, dubbelmedium of enkelmedium moedertaalonderrig in Suid-Afrika sal ernstig opgeneem word wanneer mense van hierdie podium af in hul eie tale praat, wanneer ons op 'n gereelde grondslag Sepedi en IsiZulu en Xitsonga van die sprekers van daardie tale hier hoor.

Kom ons praat 'n bietjie oor die verborge kurrikulum. In Engels praat hulle van die "hidden curriculum". Dit is die deel wat jy op skool leer wat nêrens in 'n dokument staan nie. Jy leer dit maar net, soos om vir 'n kind te sê: Weet jy jy as 'n individu is belangrik? Wat is jou naam nou weer? Jy leer die teenoorgestelde. Die ander kant daarvan is niemand sê ooit vir jou jy is belangrik nie, maar, as jy afwesig is, is die rugby- of die netbalspan nie vol nie. Jy weet jy is belangrik. Dit is die versteekte, die verborge kurrikulum.

Deel van die verborge kurrikulum is dat dit nie help om vir mense te sê jou eie taal is belangrik nie. Ons wil in jou taal skoolgee, maar jy gaan jou taal nooit buite die direkte gemeenskap van jou huis en jou omgewing hoor nie. Jy moet jou taal hoor in staatsdepartemente. Jy moet jou taal kan praat in

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die hof. Jy moet jou taal praat in die Parlement, nie net kan praat nie – praat.

Dit moet vir enige mens noodsaaklik wees om meer as een taal te kan praat, meer as twee tale te kan praat, om Afrikatale onder die knie te hê. Ek het as 'n skoolkind 'n verpligting gehad. Van st 3 tot st 7, huidige graad 5 tot graad 9, was Sepedi 'n verpligte vak in die Transvaalse skole. Dit is die waarheid, maar as ek probeer het om met Pedi moedertaalsprekers Sepedi te praat, het hulle vir my gelag en Afrikaans gepraat. Ek kon dit nooit leer nie. Ek kon nooit die taal aanleer nie, want dit was net iets wat ek in die skool geleer het, nooit iets wat 'n lewende deel geword het nie – anders as my pa wat 'n vorige geslag was wat dit as 'n moedertaal kon praat en baie goed daarin vlot was.

Die punt is dat moedertaalonderrig 'n fundamentele deel is van opvoedkundige beginsels en dat daar in 1994 wiskundehandboeke tot in matriek in IsiXhosa gedruk is. Die regering wat in 1994 aan bewind gekom het, het besluit dat dit nie nodig is nie. IsiXhosa wiskundehandboeke gaan nie uitgerol word na skole nie, want die mense kan mos maar in Engels skoolgaan. Hulle kan mos wiskunde in Engels leer. Daardie boeke, sonder dat

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hulle ooit gebruik is, is verpulp, is herwin. Ek weet nie. Daar is kartonbokse van hulle gemaak om perskes in te verkoop of iets.

Dit is die probleem as mense hul eie erfenis, hul eie taal, hul eie kultuur nie ernstig opneem nie. Dan moet daar nie druk op 'n mens wees as daar 'n ander groep is wat dit wel ernstig opneem en wat sê ons belê tyd, geld, moeite, ure in ons skole om dit so goed as moontlik te kry nie, as ons sê ons belê in ons eie taal en ons wil ons onderwys in ons eie taal hê nie. As ons dit doen met ons eie hulpbronne behoort daar geen druk te wees op ons, omdat daar ander mense is wat ideologies gedra word deur die Pan-Afrikanisme en die Afrikanasionalisme om slegs deur middel van die koloniale taal te werk nie. Ek dank u.

Ms L M NGOBENI: Hon House Chair, there is something deeply immoral about a government that speaks the language of freedom, while millions of poor children still learn in conditions many in this House would never tolerate for their own children. We are told that more than 30 years into democracy, we must celebrate progress. But progress for whom? Because a child in Sandhurst, or in the Minister's analogy,

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Lindiwe, the educational reality of Nelson's child in Khayelitsha, Lusikisiki, Giyani or Eldorado Park and Alexandra, one child enters a classroom with robotics, tablets, libraries and swimming pools, while another enters a broken container with no ceiling, no textbooks and a pit toilet waiting to become a grave. Then, this government has the audacity to speak of equality.

Biko warned us that the greatest weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Today, the South African education system has become a machine that reproduces inequality while pretending to liberate the poor. It teaches poor children to manage poverty instead of defeating it. It conditions them to accept mediocrity while elites purchase excellence privately. That is why the children of the political class never sit in the schools they govern.

Ministers know these schools are broken. MECs know these schools are broken. Officials know that these schools are broken. Yet, every year they come into this House with polished speeches and statistics that mean absolutely nothing to the scores of Grade 4 children who still cannot read for meaning. What kind of freedom produces millions of learners

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who leave school unable to compete, unable to find work and unable to escape the poverty they were born into. That is not liberation; that is betrayal wrapped up in democratic language.

There is violence more dangerous than guns. It is the violence of denying a child a quality education, because once you deny people education, you do not need chains to subjugate them; poverty will do the work for you. The evidence of this violence is everywhere: Overcrowded classrooms; schools ruled by gangs and drugs; teachers living in fear of learners; young girls violated inside places that are supposed to protect them; and children crossing rivers and walking kilometres to collapsing schools while politicians travel in blue light convoys.

South Africa cannot continue calling this a crisis because a crisis is temporary. This has become a culture of abandonment. Billions are allocated to education, yet the dignity of the majority of our children remains negotiable in the eyes of the state. They eat tenders. They loot nutrition schemes. They steal classrooms from children. When the poor people complain,

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the government tells them to be patient, but the children of the rich are never told to wait.

Action SA refuses to normalise this madness. We reject a South Africa where a child's future is determined by their race, geography and family income. We reject an education system that produces dependency instead of excellence. We reject a lie that children from poorer communities must forever survive on the leftovers of democracy. So, to be clear, discipline has collapsed in many schools because leadership has collapsed in society itself. You cannot build a nation when teachers are humiliated, parents are absent and criminality is allowed to enter our classrooms unchecked.

A school must once again become the centre of learning, order, dignity and ambition. Minister and Deputy Minister, let me leave you with this: That education must not merely produce job seekers; it must produce builders of industry, creators of wealth, scientists, engineers, innovators, and fearless thinkers because education is not charity; it is justice. I thank you.

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: House Chair, greetings to the Minister of Basic Education, Mme Siviwe Gwarube, greetings to the chairperson of the portfolio committee, Mme Joy, greetings to the members of the portfolio committee who are always present in the meetings to guide and support and greetings to all the hon members. The journey of education did not start yesterday, the journey to education started in 1955 in Kliptown, when the Freedom Charter was adopted as a vision for a nonracial, nonsexist and democratic South Africa. On 8 May 2026, we're all celebrating the birth of our constitution, which was adopted in 1996, a Constitution rooted in the values of the Freedom Charter, including the principle that outlines that the doors of learning and culture shall be opened.

These milestones remind us that the struggle for equality and justice continues. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the education sector was transformed from 19 fragmented and racially divided departments into one unified National Department of Education, which this year would have turned 32 years. In 1994, education comprised of Basic Education, Higher Education, Culture, Science and Technology. The Fourth Administration took a bold decision to separate the departments in order to ensure a stronger focus on the needs

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of basic education in our country. Though we felt challenges, today we reflect on the progress achieved.

The transformation of education required deliberate efforts to address historical inequalities affecting both girls and boys. I must indicate that the government continues to implement programmes that promote dignity, safety, and equal educational opportunities for all learners. Subsequently, the focus was more on the girl child due to the circumstances prevailed and which made them to be previously disadvantaged as girls. Girls were not allowed to do all subjects such as mathematics, science and technology. The adverse effects of that became detriment to the boy child who felt neglected and left behind, which led to the unintended consequences. So, as the country, we are correcting that, and we are bringing a boy child to be at par.

When you look at the statistics, they say that there are more girls than boys in schools, and when you look at the journey to matric, we expected that learner pregnancy would cause the girl child to drop out, but unfortunately, it is the other way around. It is a boy child that will leave school before reaching matric. We found out about this when we were

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addressing the previous events that affected the girl child. So, now, led by the Department of Basic Education and working with other departments, we are taking a boy child along to retrieve the boy child to where he was, as we are lifting up the girls.

Legislation remains central to the transformation of education in South Africa. Education is a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic, which guarantees every child the right to basic education. Through the SA Schools Act 84 of 1996, government gave effect to this constitutional obligation, by making schooling compulsory for all learners, from Grade 1 to 9, ensuring that every child has access to education regardless of their background or financial circumstances. Allow me to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, for his pronouncement in 2019 to migrate Early Childhood Development, ECD, from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education in order for the cycle of education to be complete.

The SA Schools Act 84 of 1996 left so many gabs that the sector had to fill with the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act in 2024, to bring total transformation of education in South

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Africa. The Basic Education Laws Amendment, BELA, Act, enforced Grade R to be compulsory. Some of the policies aiming at the access to education by all children of South Africa are the following among others: No fee schools. The Department of Education, in its quintiling system, categorized schools from Quintile 1 to 5, measured by the level of poverty per area. Hence, the focus was on rural villages and townships where unemployment is rife. This budget is aiming at servicing more than 20 000 schools which are benefiting from the no-fee schools. The Learning and Teaching Support Material, LTSM, remains central to improving the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.

The government continues to invest in the delivery of textbooks, workbooks, stationery, and other essential learning resources, to ensure that every learner and teacher have the necessary tools to support effective curriculum delivery. Since 1994, the government has prioritised education as a tool to confront poverty and inequality. The school transport programme was introduced to address the painful legacy of spatial inequality that forced many rural and township learners to walk long distances to school. In some provinces, the budget of scholar transport is attached to the Department

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of Transport, whilst in some schools is attached to the Department of Education. Today, the government continues to expand access to education through scholar transport support for qualifying learners, thereby removing barriers to education and promoting social justice.

As part of expanding access to education, the sector introduced the National School Nutrition Programme, NSNP, in 1994, under the leadership of the founding President, uBaba Rholihlahla Nelson Mandela, and as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, RDP. The programme has become a key pillar of government social protection and poverty alleviation efforts supporting over 2 000 service providers, 61 800 food handlers, and 420 provisional monitors nationwide. The National School Nutrition Program, therefore, continues to serve as an important bridge between health and education, improving school attendance, learner retention, and the overall well-being of children, particularly those from vulnerable communities.

The Funza Lushaka bursary programme remains critical in strengthening the learning profession and supporting curriculum delivery. During the 2025-26 financial year, more

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than 10 000 bursaries were awarded in priority areas such as foundation phase, teaching African languages, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to support mother tongue-based bilingual education. The Funza Lushaka programme now prioritises students specialising in African languages. These interventions strengthen reading for the meaning, learner comprehension, and educational outcomes. The department continues to strengthen learner support mechanism aiming at assisting learners in identifying suitable career pathways aligned to their interest.

Like social cohesion, school safety is co-ordinated in a multisectoral approach that brings together the Deputy Ministers from various government departments, law enforcement agencies, community, and key stakeholders to combat violence, bullying, crime and substance abuse in and around our school. The sector remains committed to strengthening teacher development to ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to deliver quality education. More than R1,5 billion has been allocated towards teacher education, human resource, and institutional development.

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The department remains committed to improving educational outcomes and ensuring that every learner has access to quality education. Education remains one of the most powerful tools to advance equality, dignity, and opportunity in our country. I want to thank the portfolio committee members who keep us as a department on our toes every time because they can see the blind spot. When we are facing this direction and they are facing that direction, they are able to see what we don't see. And we really appreciate the work done by our portfolio committee. I also want to thank also our officials led by the head of department for the good work they are doing for the department, thank you so much.

Mr W M THRING: Hon Chairperson, the ACDP notes the allocation of some R38,2 billion to this Budget Vote and asserts that education remains the single greatest instrument for breaking the cycle of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

However, budgets mean little if funds are not released effectively and transparently. The ACDP remains concerned that the R10 billion announced to strengthen access to early childhood development, ECD, in underresourced communities has still not reached many ECD centres. Delays in funding

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undermine the very foundation of learning and disadvantage children before they even enter formal schooling. Our first national education priority must be ensuring that every learner can read with meaning. Reading comprehension is the gateway to all learning, and learners who cannot read for understanding are likely to struggle across every subject. We therefore need targeted literacy interventions, stronger teacher support, properly resourced libraries, and measurable accountability in reading outcomes.

Equally urgent for the ACDP is the restoration of discipline in our classrooms. Educators cannot teach effectively in environments marked by violence, intimidation, and disruption. Schools must once again become safe spaces of learning, respect, and responsibility through stronger partnerships between parents, communities, and school governing bodies.

The ACDP believes that every educator must be properly equipped for the modern classroom. Teachers require ongoing professional development, adequate learning materials, and digital resources if we are serious about improving outcomes.

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At the same time, the ACDP calls for the expansion of vocational and technical schools to better align education with the needs of industry, manufacturing, agriculture, and the private sector. Not every learner will follow a path to university, but every learner deserves a pathway to meaningful employment and dignity.

The ACDP welcomes the Minister's referral of the Lighthouse Publishers textbook tender controversy to the Public Protector. We assert that corruption in education is a direct assault on our children's future.

As kingdom builders, the ACDP believes that, if we strengthen literacy, discipline, educator support, and vocational education, we can restore hope and unlock the full potential of South Africa's youth.

To our Minister, unless you keep your promise to assist young Joshua Peterson, about whom I spoke to you on at least four occasions, all your words will sound like an empty gong. I thank you.

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Ms C T NONTENJA: Chairperson, basic education remains one of the clearest reflections of the state of our nation. Whilst the department continues to promise equal opportunities for every child, the reality in many schools tells a very different story. Overcrowded classrooms, infrastructure backlogs, teacher shortages, unsafe learning environments, and poor learning outcomes continue to deny millions of learners the quality education they need and deserve.

The greatest inequality in South Africa today is not only income inequality but education inequality. This is evident in the growing gap between the department's promises and the lived realities of learners, teachers, and parents across the country. There is also inequality between schools. Those in wealthier communities generally have better resources than schools in poor and rural communities. This inequality affects the quality of education, learner outcomes, access to technology, and extracurricular opportunities. This results in many learners being unable to compete on an equal footing. Some schools experience delays in the delivery of textbooks, stationery, and digital materials. Weak accountability mechanisms continue to undermine the quality of education delivered to poor and working-class communities.

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It is disheartening to note that the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework reductions to the baseline and budget affect the most crucial sections, such as households, mathematics, science and technology grants, the early childhood development grant for infrastructure, the education infrastructure grant, and the HIV/Aids grant for life skills education.

The UDM believes that education remains the most powerful tool to break the cycle of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Yet far too many children are still being failed by the system. The department must prioritise the appointment of qualified teachers, especially in rural and township schools, whilst also strengthening teacher training and support programmes to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes. A budget must not only reflect numbers on paper but the lived realities. I thank you.

Xitsonga:

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu...

English:

Let us once again congratulate Orlando Pirates for the third time. They are the three-time, or treble, champions of South

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Africa. The institution that is Orlando Pirates is more than a football club; it is a way of life. We must equally congratulate your team, Minister, for being African champions. They are flying the flag very high.

The issue that I want to raise today is the issue of school curricula because they are political. They are political in the sense that they determine how the next generation thinks, what they are equipped to handle, and what type of people they will be. We all want our children to be critical thinkers who can and will challenge wrongdoing when they see it. We all want our children to be kind to one another, to think about how their actions will affect others, including the generations after them. We all want our children to understand where we come from, to recognise the injustices of our past, and to continue building a united, democratic, and prosperous South Africa for all. I wish this for my children. I want to see them thrive. I want our schools to give them the runway to fly.

Schools and curricula are political because their condition is informed by rooms such as these, and they determine the quality of these rooms in the future. It is a political choice

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for many schools to lack basic infrastructure. It is a political choice for many classrooms to be filled to the brim, with teachers unable to teach and learners unable to learn. It is a political choice to have left our teachers and principals without the necessary support and career development programmes.

It is also a choice, Minister, to leave our children behind in this fast-paced world. The world is changing before our eyes, and it is doing so exponentially. New technologies are emerging faster than we can regulate it. It is actually a Wild Wild West, and we are failing to prepare our children for it. For many in South Africa, the idea of a textbook on a tablet or an artificial intelligence, AI, mathematics tutor is a concept as far away as the moon. This department is still failing to provide many of our schools with basic computer resources. At the same time, we are not approaching new technologies with nearly enough caution. Many new technologies seem so exciting, but studies have now shown how much harm they can cause if not approached correctly. As we jump on the latest trend, AI will cripple the next generation's critical-thinking skills if we are not careful.

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Hon members, we live in new and exciting times, but we must not forget that the political choices made now will be the foundation of our children's, as well as our country's, future.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa, Mutshamaxitulu.

English:

Up the Bucs, once and always!

Dr M A MAIMANE: Chairperson and to our fellow South Africans, it is important to remind ourselves that the very purpose of education lies both in its intrinsic value, in allowing the dignity and ability of all learners to become critical thinkers, but the second and perhaps equally as important is its extrinsic value, which is how we align the economic potential of every South African citizen.

I would argue that, in many ways, the original sin of apartheid was the provision of Bantu education, which created duality in our systems, where ultimately some learners were set up to be able to achieve academically, and others, as

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Verwoerd pronounced, become workers on farms. Therefore, I think what we need to do is, when we reflect on this budget, to think strategically about how we reform education so that it achieves the future of South Africa that we want.

The first point I want to make to you, Minister, is that I would argue that we need to reform the federalisation of budgeting. The fundamentals are that, in respect of provinces where power is given to an MEC, they are able to determine where, in certain instances, they allocate their budgets. You end up with differentiated classroom sizes. You end up with, in certain instances, how teachers are then being deployed. You have profound challenges.

The second point, linked to the first, is that when I went to the Eastern Cape, it became quite clear that the Eastern Cape was not necessarily wanting to invest in infrastructure build, as far as they are concerned from an MEC's point of view. The net effect is that you end up with a disproportionate allocation of school libraries, where mathematics and science are taught, and where technology is being introduced. You end up with places where we can read today in statistics that more than 500 of our schools still do not offer mathematics, that

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only 5 853 of our 22 511 public schools have libraries. So, Minister, if we are going to achieve a space where all citizens have an opportunity to prosper, we need to work on how we do budgeting.

Thirdly, I want to support your complete view on ECDs, that it is important that a child starts off well and, as I have challenged other Ministries, we need to ask how we help child support in the first thousand days to ensure that every child is well fed and able to participate in school.

Minister, you and I would passionately fight against this. We cannot afford these reports on textbook tenders. We cannot afford corruption in education. It is the place where all citizens participate, and they know they feel the pressure behind it.

So, fellow South Africans, today's Budget Vote must be one that, when we look at the fact that basic education comprises 23% of our national Budget, we must think about how we enhance it so that the opportunity for education for all South Africans is equalised. It is our lodestar for freedom. If we fail at reforming this budget, we will end up with

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differentiated outcomes, where some are confined to the circumstances of their birth determining their educational outcomes, whilst others are not.

Lastly, Minister, let us scrap the 30%. It is not just a song; it is something we must fight for to make sure all learners can compete all over the world. I thank you very much. [Time expired.]

Mr I ISMAIL-MOOSA: Hon Chairperson, esteemed hon Ministers and beloved family of South Africans, in the name of Almighty, the most gracious and the most merciful, I greet all our beloved family of South Africans in the name and pray of peace.

IsiZulu:

Sanibonani ...

IsiXhosa:

... molweni.

English:

Al Jama-ah supports efforts aimed at improving the quality of basic education as education remains one of the most powerful

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tools to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and build a prosperous nation. While significant progress has been made in expanding access to education, serious challenges remain. Many learners continue to attend schools that lack adequate infrastructure, proper sanitation facilities, libraries, laboratories and access to modern technology. This disparity between schools in affluent and disadvantaged communities must be urgently addressed.

Al Jama-ah in particular is concerned about poor literacy and numeracy levels, school dropouts, bullying, substance abuse and violence in schools.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Moosa, will you just take a seat? There is a point of order on the virtual platform. Hon member on the virtual platform, please raise your point of order.

Mr M P MOTUBATSE: Hon Chairperson, on a point of order: Is it allowed that we wear our caps in the house? Am I audible?

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Yes, hon Motubatse, I will rule now. Hon members, order please. Yes, it is allowable to

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wear a cover in the House as we do represent various cultures. Thank you very much. Hon Moosa, you can continue.

Mr I ISMAIL-MOOSA: Thank you, Chairperson, for unity and diversity. Thank you, Chairperson. Al Jama-ah is particularly concerned about poor literacy and numeracy levels, school dropouts, bullying, substance abuse and violence in schools. A safe and conducive learning environment is essential if learners are to reach their full potential. Al Jama-ah calls for greater investment in teacher development, early childhood development and the integration of digital learning tools to prepare our children for the demands of the modern economy.

We further urge the Department to strengthen partnerships with parents, communities, faith-based organisations and civil society as education is a shared responsibility. Special attention must also be given to learners with disabilities to ensure that inclusive education becomes a practical reality and not merely a policy objective. At the same time, let us instil good moral and ethical behaviour amongst our beloved children. Let us guide them away from the harms of drugs. Let us remember that every classroom is an investment in our

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nation's future and every child deserves access to quality education regardless of their background or circumstances.

Let us be guided by the principle that quality education today, a prosperous South Africa tomorrow, no child left behind, no school left undeveloped, a nation that invests in education, invests in peace, prosperity, and justice.

IsiZulu:

Malibongwe!

English:

Mrs D VAN DER WALT: Hon House Chair and colleagues, our vision is a schooling system that prepares our children for life and the economic world, enabling them to live lives they value as contributing citizens, no matter who they are or where they come from. Important is that our Minister strongly advocates for mother-tongue-based bilingual education, correctly identifying it as a critical tool for cognitive development, deep comprehension and academic success. A child's home language is vital to learning.

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Literacy and numeracy are critical from foundational phase. If our children cannot read for meaning by the age of 10, we will not be able to grow our country's economy. On 12 January, Minister Siviwe Gwarube announced the results of the 2025 matric class. This was the best overall result in South Africa's history, achieving an unprecedented national pass rate of 88%. We should be able to measure success through quality alongside quantity, bachelor passes, throughput, and gateway subjects and ensure the system prepares our learners for meaningful post-school opportunities.

If the MK would listen, they can also listen for meaning at the end. The complete shift from simplistic matric pass rate politics is non-negotiable. It is important that a credible matric certificate must represent readiness for life after school and not simply survival within the system. A fundamental back to basic is that teachers should spend most of their time in class teaching. Taking them out of class for union meetings or administrative paperwork is taking time from our children's learning and their future. Some political parties should read the South African Schools Act for meaning as well. You cannot campaign while children should be in the class on school grounds.

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The recent foundation phase catalogue process has raised the question of procurement integrity in public education. It necessitates the urgent refocus on accountability and clean governance. The quick reaction and call for an independent investigation by the Minister were supported widely across the sector in the whole of our country. Any corruption in education is a direct theft from our children. Provincial allocations in this budget remind us to focus on the importance of fiscal discipline. It is the bulk of the budget but also confronts us with the reality of continuous provincial financial instability. The non- or late payments of school allocations can under no circumstances be allowed.

In Limpopo recently, the High Court in Polokwane issued judgement for payment to Spitskop Special Needs School. Did the province act immediately? No. Did they care? No. Who suffered? Our most vulnerable children who are in daily need for these allocations to be paid on time. Only after intervention from the national department some action started. This cannot be accepted.

Financial mismanagement in education is not abstract. Our children experience it directly. The Minister should be

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congratulated and supported for the bold reform strategy she initiated in her department. We must be honest and transparent about the challenges, serious about accountability and remain focused on long-term system improvements. South Africa's future will ultimately be determined by whether we build strong foundations for all our children early enough and effectively enough. I thank you.

Ms T E MAGAGULA: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, hon members and the people of South Africa, I greet you all. We situate this vital Budget Vote under the theme: "Addressing Infrastructural Quagmires and Bridging the Digital Divide for Learners of the Future."

The Budget Vote as reflected in the Annual Performance Plans, APPs, of the department and its entities, is not merely a fiscal instrument; it is moral contract, a promise made to the millions of South African children whose futures are shaped every single day by the conditions in which they learn. At the heart of this contract lies a persistent and deeply troubling reality. Far too many of our learners still learn in environments that are unsafe, undignified, and highly

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incompatible with aspirations of a free and democratic South Africa.

IsiZulu:

Ukuqedwa kwezingqalasizinda eziphandle ezikoleni kuyinto eseqhulwini kuHulumeni kazwelonke. Ukuqhubeka ukubakhona kwezindlu zangasese zemigodi, izakhiwo zodaka kanye nemiklamo yezingqalasizinda, ukuthuthwa kwendle, azikho ezingeni elifanele ngokwezinhlelo nokuziphendulela.

English:

Despite progress under programmes such as the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative, the pace has not matched the urgency. We cannot speak of quality education while learners risk their lives simply by attending school. The tragic incidents associated with unsafe sanitation facilities are a stain on a collective conscience and they demand more than consequences; they demand action.

The increased allocation for infrastructure signals that government is committed to resolving the backlogs. The ANC strongly calls on the department to set clear credible timeframes guided by reliable data, strict timelines and

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consequence management for noncompliance. Plans without accountability are not plans; they are promises waiting to be broken.

Because of the caring, listening government led by the ANC, additional funding was made available to rehabilitate schools affected by storm damages. Education remains an apex priority, not in words, but in action, while others are still theorising.

Equally critical to learner success is the strengthening of the National School Nutrition Programme, NSNP. The NSNP as outlined in the department's APP, continues to reach millions of learners daily, and its importance reaches far beyond numbers. For many of our children, this programme is the difference between hunger and hope, between disengagement and concentration. As a great scholar, Amartya Sen reminds us that "Development is fundamentally about expanding human capabilities." A hungry child cannot fully exercise their capability to learn.

Strengthening the NSNP requires not only sustained funding but improved supply chain management, community involvement and

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nutritional quality. It must be shielded actively and without compromise from the corruption and inefficiencies that have undermined it, particularly in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Limpopo, where there are serious discrepancies in the administration of the programme.

Education does not occur in a vacuum. Learners arrive at school carrying the weight of poverty, violence, and social instability.

IsiZulu:

Ukuhlinzekwa kwezithuthi zabafundi akulingani kuzo zonke izifundazwe, ikakhulukazi ezindaweni zasemakhaya, lapho abafundi behamba amabanga amade ngaphansi kwezimo ezingaphephile

English:

Psychosocial support services remain insufficient, leaving many learners without the emotional and mental health support they desperately need. School safety is equally alarming. Bullying, violence, and gender-based violence within our schools threaten not only individual learners, but they also threaten the integrity of the education system itself.

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The department's APP rightly prioritises safer schools, but implementation must be strengthened through genuine intersectoral collaboration with social development and law enforcement. The building of safer schools resonates with Paulo Freire, who argued that education should be a practice of freedom, not a site of fear. Our schools must be spaces where every learner feels safe, valued and empowered.

The ANC strongly believes that infrastructure is the physical foundation of education and digital access is its future. Yet, the digital divide remains one of the most significant barriers to educational equity in South Africa. While some learners benefit from connected classrooms, devices, and digital content, many others, particularly in rural and township schools, remain excluded from the digital world entirely.

Breaching this divide requires co-ordinated investment in connectivity, ICT infrastructure and device provision. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed with devastating clarity the depth of these inequalities. We cannot allow those inequalities to define the next generation. A digitally inclusive education

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system is not a luxury; it is a necessity for participation in a modern economy.

The ANC has emphasised the importance of the digital economy in its policy resolutions. Education must be the entry point into the economy for all learners, not just the privileged few. We advocate for the increased and sustained funding needed to make a reality.

People of South Africa, this Budget Vote also advances a critical conversation in addressing youth unemployment. We must also confront the limitations of a one-size-fits-all academic pathways. It advances the implementation of the three model and strengthening of technical and vocational pathways that are essential to diversifying opportunities for young people.

The introduction and expansion of technical subjects, skills-based curricula and industry partnerships must be accelerated. As the 2022 ANC conference resolved, our learners must be equipped not only with theoretical knowledge, but with practical skills that respond to the real demands of the labour market. This resonates with the work of Levi Vagoski,

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who reminded us that education must prepare learners for real world participation, not just examination success.

None of these priorities can be achieved without addressing a persistent and corrosive challenge. Corruption and financial mismanagement, procurement irregularities in infrastructure delivery and textbooks procurement continue to divert resources away from learners. Delays, cost overruns and substandard work are the predictable consequences of weak oversight and absent accountability. Every rand lost to corruption is a rand stolen from a child's strong governance transparency.

We say no to corruption, precisely because over the past two years, since the mother of Lindiwe and Nelson took over, we have seen bizarre occurrences, among others, like irregular recruitments and flawed textbook procurement of individuals and alliance benefits, but ...

IsiZulu:

... ngeke sithule uma inkohlakalo ibhidlanga kulo Mnyango Wezemfundo Oyisisekelo.

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English:

People of South Africa, this budget presents us with opportunity, not to tinker at the edges, but to act with boldness that this moment demands. It calls on us to move beyond incremental progress and embrace bold decisively. We must eradicate unsafe infrastructure with urgency, not excuses. We must nourish learners through a strengthened corruption-free NSNP. We must safeguard learner ... [Time expired.] ... The ANC supports this budget.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, allow me to begin by thanking members who constructively participated in this debate and those who recognise that the future of South Africa will ultimately be determined by the quality of education that we provide to our children. Many of these members raised issues around infrastructure, overcrowding, scholar transport and safety in schools. These are valid concerns and ones that we take very seriously and we prioritise them.

Hon Ngcobo talks about the issue of scholar transport. I want to assure him that while this is the responsibility of the provinces, we are working very hard to make sure that we

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revisit the model of scholar transport to make it safer and to make sure that learners are safely transported.

Today's debate also confirms something that I think is quite important. There are those who are serious about reforming education and those who are comfortable with performing outrage than confronting the reality. I think the most disappointing of them all is the hon Shikwambana who came here and spent five minutes opining about a phantom corruption in my office which, despite his best efforts with his friends, was proven untrue even in a political witch-hunt in the portfolio committee. He further went on and moaned about my accent which has nothing to do with education. My accent has nothing to do with ... [Interjections.]

Mr M SHIKWAMBANA: Chairperson, I don't know what the Minister is talking about. She knows very well that we have taken the matter to the Public Protector for investigation, and proves the matter to be wrong. She is lying. She is misleading the nation. The matter is under the Public Protector.

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The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Shivambu, that is not a point of order. You had your chance in the debate. That is not a point of order. Hon Minister, please continue.

Mr S T D LOUW: Hon Chairperson, I want to ask: Who are the friends of Mandla Shikwambana? We are colleagues and we are Members of Parliament. We are not friends.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, that is not a point of order. You may continue, Minister.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Hon Chairperson, hon Shikwambana knows who his little friends are and what they seek to do. But despite their efforts, none of this has proven to be true. Nonetheless, he also further started moaning about my accent instead of speaking about real issues facing real children in the education system. I want to make this very clear. No matter how much you yearn for it, I will never allow cadre deployment to happen under my watch. And that's it. No matter how... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon members, you cannot ... may I remind the House that you are all out of order. The

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Rule is that you cannot drown the speaker, please. Hon members, you cannot all yell together. That is unparliamentary. It shows more of your discipline than anything else ... [Interjections.] ... No, don't shout at me raise your hand up. Hon member, this is your third time shouting from your chair without raising up your hand. And you are doing it again. Please, refrain from that kind of behaviour. I will not tolerate it anymore. Put your hand up and do not interject. Do not drown the speaker.

The hon members from the ANC: Is there any point of order from this side?

Mr A NCHABELENG: House Chairperson, the Minister referred to the hon friends and his little friends. Such language is not parliamentary. It is not only that. The fact that we are debating in the House and find an issue that is heated, we will react with an emotion of passion to engage. We are not heckling or trying to drown. It is a point that we are raising. Hon Minisetr, please, give honour to the House. Thank you so much, Chair.

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The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, as far as I know, to refer in that terms is not unparliamentary. But we will hear from the Table and rule on that.

When it comes to emotions, everyone in this House in any debate become emotional at other stages. Unfortunately or fortunately, we have set of Rules. What is happening in this House from time to time is against these Rules. You cannot drown the speaker, you cannot speak all at once and you cannot start yelling as if you are at a rally because this is Parliament. Here, we have a code of conduct and you are here as hon Members of Parliament. I just wanted to remind you. Thank you very much. Minister, please continue.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Hon Chairperson, I just want to assure members of this House that no matter how much some may yearn for it I will never allow catered deployment under my watch. I will never allow theft to happen under my leadership. Those who wish to steal from the 13,7 million learners in our country will have to come through me first and they will find me ready.

This Budget Vote... [Interjections.]

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Mr T I GAMEDE: Hon Chairperson, there is a point of order that has been raised and you have not ruled on it and ...

IsiZulu:

... futhi uyaqhubeka uyakhuluma. [Ubuwelewele.]

English:

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): I have consulted the Table, and my ruling was correct. To refer to a person as a little friend is not unparliamentary. Hon Minister, you can continue.

Mr T I GAMEDE: We are Members of Parliament and we are hon members. We are Mr, Mrs or Ms. You cannot call us your little friends. Who is a little friend? She must apologise.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, I have made a ruling. I am not going to take any further points of order in this point. If you do not agree with the ruling you can write to the Rules committee.

Mr T I GAMEDE: We are Members of Parliament, and not little ones.

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The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, I have already ruled. I am not going to take any further points of order on the same point.

Ms K J MAIMELA: Hon Chairperson, I want to check if the hon little Minister is willing to take a question.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Minister, are you prepared to take a question?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: No, Chairperson. I have to go through the speech.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Please, take your seat as there is another point of order.

IsiZulu:

Mnu N M MHLONGO: Sihlalo weNdlu, ephuzwini lokukhalima okuphambukayo: Sihlalo, uyazi yini inkinga? Ilo mbhobho wakho une-echo. Awuzwakali uma ukhuluma. Bacele ukuthi bakulungisele yona. Ngoba noma uthatha izingqumo, asikhuzwa ukuthi uthini uma wethula isinqumo. Bacele ukuthi bakulungisele umbhobho wokukhuluma. Awukwazi ukwengamela uhlelo uma kade ukhiphe

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izingqumo singakuzwa uma ukhuluma. Akusizi ngalutho lokhu okwenzayo.

English:

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, that is not a point of order. Really, this is a frivolous point of order. We are in this plenary for the past one and half hour and never before had there been a problem.

Mr V G REDDY: Hon Chair, the members are referring to the Rule which states that hon members must be referred as hon, Mr, Mrs or Ms. That's what they are referring to. No one can refer to another member as little boys and girls. I think that's where the Rule need to apply.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Reddy, maybe you were not listening from the platform. I have already made a ruling and that ruling stand. Anyone in this plenary who is not happy with that ruling can write to the Rules committee. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: This Budget Vote is not built on slogans. It's built on measurable interventions. We want to expand early childhood development, ECD, and we want to

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strengthen literacy and numeracy. We want to support our teachers. We want to improve accountability and we want to stabilise provincial financing. These are not abstract ideas. These are reforms that are already underway.

What I also find particularly interesting is that some members spoke about the crisis in education as though it was something that arrived two years ago. They speak as though overcrowded classrooms, pit toilets, financial instability and weak learning outcomes emerged overnight. However, South Africans know better. The reality is that this administration is the one that is turning things around. The Seventh administration is committed on turning things around.

Hon Mkhize conveniently forgets that under the leadership of his hon leader and the nine wasted years people were couriering money in black bags, literally leaving homes for state money and from state coffers. You don't need to come and lecture us about what should be happening when your very own leader ... [Interjections.]... public funds in this country.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Minister, please take a chair. Hon members from the virtual platform, hon Reddy and

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any other members, if you are going to callout order, order, order or anything from the virtual platform without raising up your hands I will mute your mics.

Mr V G REDDY: But the hand is up!

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Reddy, I did not give you time for a point of order. I am still speaking. You are contributing to the chaos in this House, and I will not tolerate that. If you have a point of order state your point of order now.

Mr V G REDDY: House Chairperson, the Minister is bringing a topic which is unfounded. She is misleading the House. She needs to bring that as a substantive motion if she want to make allegations against any former administration and such serious allegations which are totally unfounded. She needs to bring that as a substantive motion before the House. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Hon Reddy, that is not a point of order. That is a point of debate. And you were not on the speakers' list. Hon Minister, you may continue.

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The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, I think the issue around black bags was ventilated and it is well documented in our South African history. I think if you can pick up the Zondo Commission report you will be able to read very clearly who was picking up the black bags, who was being bribed and where. So, you don't get to come and lecture us about what need to be done. You are literally the ones who were plundering the country for nine wasted years. That doesn't get a hell. What matters now is that we must confront reality.

Mr A NCHABELENG: Hon Chair, I think the Minister is confused. She keeps on referring to people as you were the ones who were plundering. And she is referring to us. We were not in government. The MKP was not existing. She also keeps on making all these references that do not make sense.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon members, can I address you all. Just make sure you know what is in the Rules. If any member speaks and refers to the Assembly in general and not referring to a person specifically by name, that is not unparliamentarily. If a Minister or a member speaking at the podium is referring directly to any member in this House, that

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is unparliamentary. If you refer to the friends of a member of this House, the Rules only cover the members in this House. Rule 25 covers the member of this House and nobody outside. That is in general. That covers the points of order you raised in the past 10 minutes. It covers them all and I have made a ruling. May we please continue.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: I think what matters now is to honestly confront these realities and continue to make sure that we are not relying on rhetoric. That's the commitment we have here as a department.

Some of the concrete criticisms that have been raised not only by members of the portfolio committee but also by members of this House, we are taking them seriously and we want to resolve them. Ultimately, and finally, the child must remain at the centre of this budget, and not political point-scoring, not ideological grandstanding and not social media outrage, but the child. The child must learn in safety. The child must eat at school. The child must read for meaning. The child must leave school with dignity, skills and opportunity. This is what this Budget Vote seeks to build. It seeks to build

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stronger foundations, it seeks to build stronger schools and it seeks to build stronger futures.

Some of us who are builders are committed to build that future. We are not committed to be the breakers in this country. So, we will continue building while you continue breaking. It's fine. Thank you.

Debate concluded

The mini plenary rose at 18:54.