

BUDGET VOTES

Vote 16: Basic Education

Hon. SL Ngcobo, MP

22 July 2020

Honourable Members, it is a grim reality that the Covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the deep inequalities in our education system.

This pandemic sharply brings into question our efforts - not only to protect the health of our children but also our Government's genuine efforts to ensure they are not left behind.

Honourable Members, before we turn to the Supplementary Budget, we wish to emphasise that the IFP has strongly spoken out about the manner in which schools were re-opened. We warned that schools were "hotspots" for this pandemic. It is with great sadness that we read this morning of the death of a teacher in KwaZulu-Natal who apparently had no co-morbidities.

Why is the Minister still being stubborn on this critical matter? The Minister apparently had various consultations with stakeholders - yet the schools are still open. The IFP demands urgent action from the Minister.

Honourable Members, despite the fact that Covid-19 has revealed the absolute desperation that certain schools - especially in rural areas - face to prepare for and manage the impact of this pandemic, the Supplementary Budget makes no additional funding available to Basic Education. Ultimately this heavy burden created in managing the impact of the pandemic will be absorbed by the Basic Education sector itself, and we will see its long-lasting impacts on key programmes of the Department of Basic Education.

The IFP in general supports the budgetary adjustments but remains highly concerned about this burden on the education sector - **especially since R600 million has been reprioritised from the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant for the procurement of water tanks.**

These adjustments will inevitably have a negative impact on school infrastructure projects, and we will see the postponement and suspension of projects at the expense of the education of those most in need.

Honourable Members, now, more than ever, we cannot allow any resources to be wasted.

According to the Department of Basic Education, in response to the pandemic, provinces are obliged to provide mobile classrooms and address the issue of vandalised schools. Hundreds of schools were vandalised in KwaZulu-Natal during the initial lockdown. This province can ill-afford this additional burden, and it is again at the expense of children's education. We understand that a task team has been set up to investigate the vandalism of these schools.

The IFP will monitor developments in this regard carefully and call for accountability.

In conclusion, the IFP strongly urges proper oversight in the financial management of the Department of Basic Education and of Provincial Education Departments in fulfilling their constitutional mandate.

As a country we cannot afford to have public resources being recklessly squandered.

The IFP supports the Budget.

I thank you.

Contact:

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