**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WEDNESDAY, 22 July 2020**

[Mini plenary- Vote 16: Basic Education](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whD70MbiMd4) **WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY 2020**

***MINI PLENARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY***

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 16:01.

House Chairperson Mr C T Frolick took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

(Virtual sitting Rules)

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, before we start this mini-plenary I wish to bring the following to your attention. I would like to remind you that the virtual mini- plenary is deemed to be in the precinct of Parliament and it constitute the meeting of the National Assembly for debating purposes only. In addition to the virtual sitting the Rules of the National Assembly including the rules of debates apply. Members

enjoy the same powers and privileges that apply in the sitting of the National Assembly. Members should equally not that anything said in the virtual platform is deemed to have been said in the House and may be ruled upon. All members who have logged on are considered to be present and are requested to mute their microphones and will only unmute when they are recognised to speak. This is because microphones are very sensitive and may constitute noise which may disturb the attention of other members.

When you are recognised to speak, please mute your microphone and connect to the video. Members may make use of icons on the bar on the bottom of their screens including an option that allows members to put a point of order. In this respect the secretariat will alerting the Chairperson about the member who request to speak.

When using the virtual system members are requested to refrain or desist from raising unnecessary points of order or interjections. Members who do not observe these will be asked to remove themselves from the virtual system or I may request the Sarjeant- at-arms to remove such member from the virtual system. We shall now proceed to the Order which is Debate on Vote No 16 – Basic Education Appropriation Bill.

**ADJUSTMENTS APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 16 – Basic Education:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, let me also acknowledge hon members in the House, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Let me on behalf of the entire Basic Education sector thank the National Assembly for inviting us to table the 2020-21 adjusted budget on Vote 16 – Basic Education. But before I get into the business of the day please allow me to recognise and give respect to the dearly departed, Seaparankwe, Baba Andrew Mlangeni. We do agree with the President Ramaphosa when he said that the passing of Baba Mlangeni does signifies the end of a generational history. His generation of leaders, was indeed a reservoir of knowledge, wisdom and sanity. We will surely miss their advice and counsel. And we want to say may his dear soul rest in eternal peace.

Chair, going to the budget you will recall that during the 2019-20 debate, we reported that the Council of Education Ministers had approved the sector priorities intended to lay a solid foundation for a quality and efficient education system as well as to

continue contributing towards providing permanent solutions to the architecture of the education system.

The 2020-21 adjusted budget allocation for Vote 16, while we were either piloting or busy implementing some of our strategies that we have committed to ourselves in the previous year, indeed, the world, and not only us as a country, find ourselves engulfed by the novel coronavirus pandemic which brought a new abnormal situation in our space. Part of this new normal environment had to be the adjustments that we made to budget allocations earlier appropriated in the year. The Department of Basic Education and its state organs endured budget cuts similarly to other departments and state and also organs of state. Hence, we are tabling the 2020-21 adjusted budget at today’s debate in the National Assembly.

Firstly, our initial budget for 2021 for the Department of Basic Education before adjustments stood at R25,3 billion. However, with the adjustments the budget has gone down to R23,2 billion, which is a decrease of 5,3%. Therefore, our reduction that we have to experience as the department comes to R2,1 billion, which is as I say a reduction of 8,3% from what we had originally had been allocated.

Secondly, the initial overall budget for 2020-21 for conditional grants stood at R19,6 billion, but with the reduction it has gone down to R17,2 billion. Therefore, the reduction also on conditional grants comes to R2,3 billion, which gives us a reduction of 11,7%.

The reduction from the general budget and the reduction from conditional grants of the earmarked funds comes 7,1%. However, after adjustments the overall allocation for 2020-21 earmarked funding in total, all of it combined is R3,5 billion. Therefore, the total decrease for the overall allocation of 2020-21 comes down with about 0,3%. Despite all the difficulties we want to reflect on what we have been doing in the meantime to ensure that we can keep the ship on track and can continue with their work.

Speaker and hon members, we wish to remind this House that our action plan to 2020, “Towards the realisation of schooling”, gives expression to our sector priorities anchored on the noble declaration that comes from our Constitution and also from our commitment from the National Development Plan, NDP, our commitment from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Unesco, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, especially the Sustainable Development Goal 4, SDG4.

We continue to roll-out some of our plans, some of our projects, programmes and interventions to ensure that the social justice principles which characterise the Basic Education system continue to be implemented. This, we must continue despite the challenges that we facing currently.

On our first priority, which is a strategic priority around early childhood development particularly the urgent implementation of the two-years of the early childhood development, ECD, before Grade - R and the relocation of 0-4 year-olds from the Department of Social Development to Basic Education. We want to report that in order to cater for the two years of ECD before Grade 1, we have submitted amendments to the Basic Education Amendment Laws, the Bela Bill, so that we can factor the necessary changes to accommodate the new changes.

We also want to report that the government technical advisory centre, GTAC, is supporting both the Department of Basic Education and Social Development to ensure a smooth and seamless relocation of ECD delivery from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education, firstly, by conducting the ECD function diagnostic assessment to determine the resources connected to ECD function in the Department of Social Development

but also to look at the readiness of the Department of Basic Education to receive the function. Regarding the team working on this transition, there is a team comprising a group of experts from government, academia, nongovernment organisations, NGOs, and civil society which is working with both the national Department of Education and Social Development to ensure that there is smooth transition.

Again, you will recall that we have also said that the second priority that we are looking at is to ready the curriculum with skills and competencies for a changing world in public schools. Despite all the challenges that we are facing under COVID-19 we can say that the Department of Basic Education has developed the coding and robotics curriculum for Grades R-9, which is currently been repackaged to ensure proper sequencing and seamless progression from one phase to the next. We are planning that the repackaging process will be completed by the end of July this year, after which this curriculum will be presented to Umalusi for approval. In the meantime training for teachers and subject advisors will be conducted online because of the current situation that we find ourselves in with COVID-19. But we are extremely grateful to the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, ETDPSETA, which has

assisted us with the necessary resources to be able to train our teachers.

On the other hand, we are also working very hard to strengthen our skills development initiatives through the three-stream curriculum model. Our partnership, for instance, with Ford Motor Company will see that even this year under COVID-19, 240 engines will be donated to technical schools offering automotive as a subject.

In the commitment we have made in our efforts to provide every school with information and communications technology, ICT, devices, loaded with digital content, the Department of Basic Education, with mobile network operators have completed now at this stage the audit of all 477 special schools. We have also finalised the implementation plan with the mobile network operators to provide all these schools with devices, connectivity, digital content as well as ICT integration training for teachers.

The department, in partnership with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, has identified 152 sites in 76 education districts to equip them with virtual classroom infrastructure. Through this initiative the sector will fully embrace the digital revolution of remote learning. Districts will

be able to benefit through curriculum specialists’ streamed

lessons on digital platforms.

Again we have committed ourselves around the development of History. I can report that the process that started in 2019 is at a very advanced stage and we are confident that by 2023 the process will have been completed.

Again, we have committed ourselves to introduce the KiSwahili, as the second language and the process of incrementally refocusing the teaching and learning of the previously marginalised to other committees which are not speaking both languages. This has led to the introduction of KiSwahili as a second language in Grades 4-12 in 90 schools. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Kiswahili for Grades 4-9 has been versioned and the Kiswahili toolkit has been developed for the respective grades.

Thirdly on our priorities, remember that we have also spoken about the standardisation or the General Education Certificate which did cause some misunderstandings amongst communities. I also wish to remind us this qualification has a White Paper of 1995. All that we have been doing was to implement what government had already agreed on. So we can report that the policy framework for the

introduction of the General Education Certificate, GEC, has been drafted and submitted to Umalusi for review and approval. Work has been commissioned on a blueprint for assessment options that will inform learners, teachers, parents and the system about the suitability of learners to undertake an academic, vocational or occupational stream. Again, we are looking forward that despite all the challenges the rollout of the GEC is scheduled for 20203.

We also committed ourselves around the national assessment framework. The department has already drafted a national assessment framework which will serve to co-ordinate all assessments conducted in the General and Further Education streams. A basket of purpose-driven assessments from school entry Grade R to Grade 9, has been designed for implementation during this administration. These assessment programmes and our participation in international benchmark assessments will be implemented and we will keep the nation informed at all times.

On systemic evaluation, a significant intervention of the National Assessment Framework is the roll-out of the systemic evaluation and the is initiative targeted at establishing key learner competencies in mathematics and languages at the end of Grades 3,

6 and 9, and finding out what are the enabling school and system

support factors that contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes, the first cycle of the systemic evaluation.

Chair, we continue to commit ourselves that despite the challenges that are confronting us we are working very hard to ensure that the commitments that we have made that we will implement during this current financial year but also within the financial Medium- Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, is realised as far as possible.

I really want to conclude by just saying the obvious that indeed as a sector like everybody else the COVID-19 has really created a very difficult situation for us as a sector, but we continued to say we will do whatever we can to protect the lives and the education of our children.

In fact, I want also to say as a sector we are a microcosm of our communities because we are located in communities. At this point I really want to give respect to the families of our school communities whose members had succumbed to the virus. And I really say may their souls rest in peace. We also wish those who are currently infected to improve and come back to work with us in the system.

Again, I want to remind ourselves about what the President has said in the 2019-20 budget when he said, we must reimagine and build the South Africa yearn for, South Africa of our dreama. And there is no doubts in our minds that our country has been ushered in the new dawn. A period characterised by selfless Public Service and open renewal despite the COVID-19 normal.

We wish to thank His Excellency, the President by the virus a speedy recovery. We implore everyone to strictly observe the health, safety and physical distancing protocols determined by the Department of Health.

We can report that we have escalated our consolidated report from the broad consultations we had conducted with all national stakeholders, partners, civil society organisations with a vested interest in our sector, to the interministerial disaster management committee, the National COVID-19 Command Council, NCCC, and Cabinet for consideration. We will soon come back to report on the recommendations and directives of Cabinet.

At all times, we must remind ourselves about what President Ramaphosa said in his 2019-20 state of the nation address that we must reimagine and build the South Africa we yearn for - a South

Africa of our dreams. There is no doubt in our minds that our country has indeed ushered in the new dawn, a period characterised by selfless public service, hope and renewal; despite the new COVID-19 normal.

We wish to thank his excellency, the President, the National Command Centre and the COVID-19 advisory committee led by Professor Karim for all the leadership they have been providing us during this very difficult times.

But we also want to thank the sister departments for all the support that they have given to our sector – the Department of Water and Sanitation, Development Bank of Southern Africa and in particular the SA National Defence Force, which has also come to our rescue at the different NGOs, and businesses that came up to support us, both private and even individuals. But in particular want to cite out the National Education Collaboration Trust, NECT, which has helped us in linking with communities that are active in education. For that we remain grateful.

Again during this period, we have enjoyed a normal support from the committee that deals with our sector, the Education committee.

It has really been supportive and has given us guidelines, and to that I want to thank the chair and all members of the committee.

Finally, I wish to thank my coleague, Dr Reginah Mhaule, to thank all colleagues from different provinces who have been very supportive throughout this time. I thank the director-general and all heads of departments who have pulled very hard during this difficult period to make sure that we can continue to provide what we can possibly provide under extremely difficult conditions. I also want to thank our partners in the sector, the school governing bodies, the teacher organisations, but also as I say the nongovernment organisations which have been of great support during these trying times. Chair, really want to stop here, and I really and thank you more sincerely for the opportunity to come here and present the budget before your committee. Thank you very much, Chair.

Ms B P MBINQO-GIGABA: Thank you very much hon Chair, and let me pass my greetings to the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and members of the House that are on the virtual platform. As the committee, we probably need to say that we are ... [Inaudible.] ... and we are sending condolences to the family of uBaba Mlangeni who has

passed on. We send our condolences to the ... [Inaudible.] [Interjections.] ... in general.

Minister, as the committee I think we also need to say to you that we are supporting you and we are behind you. A lot is on ... [Inaudible.] ... your name and we want you to stand firm and lead during this difficult period.

We just need to remind everybody that, at the 54th national conference of the ANC in 2017, we took stock of where we are as a nation with regard to the pedagogic development of our children. We recorded that progress has been made in providing scholar transport and the ongoing need for such services. We confronted the existing challenges of inequality between rural and urban schools, and ... that some schools in rural areas still face the challenge of a lack of basic services. We agreed on the need to digitalise learning and teaching support material as we welcomed the expansion of vocational, technical and ... [Inaudible.] ... education in schools, and noted that there is a lack of electricity, a lack of libraries and a lack of laboratories which is an indictment in the capacity of our schools to offer science and technology. The comprehensive position that emerged from the conference was underpinned by the need to ensure that pedagogic

development and teaching can take place in a supportive environment in which infrastructure and basic services are in place to provide a conducive learning environment.

As Members of Parliament, this is a time when what is expected of us goes beyond party affiliation. For the ANC, it is about uniting the people behind a risk adjusted strategy that will ultimately contribute towards saving lives, and out of adversity emerge more resilient and determined that we have a new nation to build which requires all our wisdom and foresight.

As the ANC, we have been mandated to lead and have a manifesto that was shaped by and speaks to the needs of our people. Our task today is to ensure that the needs of our children and the needs of our teachers, our support staff, school governing bodies and all the workers in the Basic Education sector are mobilised behind a common vision in dealing with the reality of what COVID-19 means for the sector and how best to respond to protect those who are vulnerable, those who teach and their families, and our children the students of the future who require a firm foundation of knowledge and skills best found in a structured education environment.

This is not a departmental matter alone as some try to make out of their own subjective ends. When the President pulled all parties together in March here in Parliament, his appeal was that we have to work together to limit the damage that the coronavirus can cause and that certain measures would have to be put in place to adjust the nation to the reality that the globe was going through. It was within this context that when schools were closed during the level 5 risk adjusted ... [Inaudible.] ... knew certain dangers would arise and that the closure, as has been the case in other countries, would have to be reassessed based on the balance of evidence. This balance of evidence is what has become contested in the phased return to school. It is understandable but we must address the facts and not allow our subjective prejudices, perceptions or attitudes to cloud decisions that need to be taken.

It needs to be stressed that the entire roll-out of the managed plan of the phased return to school has been done through comprehensive consultations with all key stakeholders.

Consultation means getting the views and opinions, and not necessarily agreeing on all opinions that are raised. Importantly, the plans ... have been implemented have been flexible in the context of the increase in the infection rate in our communities. These included options for parents who wish not to take their

children back to school and who have registered for home education. Parents have also been given an opportunity to enrol their children for online learning or even to partner with the school to keep the child registered whilst the parent or caregiver takes the responsibility of fetching and dropping off the child's schoolwork to and from home. The principle that has underpinned the approach has been a collaborative one between schools and parents to ensure that no child is left behind.

The ANC’s orientation is on an inclusive education at all levels of the basic system, facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable learners and reducing barriers to learning through targeted support structures and programmes that will improve the retention of learners in the education system. The active participation of organs of civil society in both formal and nonformal education has given us a healthy balance of rigorous engagement on policy issues.

The ANC government has driven a national curriculum which reflects the norms and values of a nonracial, nonsexist and democratic society which is relevant to both the needs of the individual as well as the social and economic needs of our society. The curriculum which has been developed is based on the principles,

critical thinking and social responsibility which empowers individuals to participate in all aspects of society. This provides a general education based on integrating academic, vocational and technical skills. As the governing party, we have the responsibility to ensure that education better prepares individuals to adapt to the needs of a changing and dynamic economy and ensure equality of opportunity for all our citizens. [Interjections.]

An HON MEMBER: Malibongwe!

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, you should have listened before the mini-plenary started. We said you cannot just switch on your microphone and do as you please. I will take you off the virtual platform. The next speaker is hon Tarabella Marchesi.

Ms N I TARABELLA MARCHESI: House Chairperson, if you had any doubt about inequality in South Africa, COVID-19 has unmasked these

inequalities. This outbreak could have been a catalyst to bridge the gaps and divide. But, instead the decisions of priorities taken by this government widened the inequality divide even further. Sorry, Chair. With just few options on how to deal with

this virus. The first was to close schools, based on the advice by World Health Organisation, WHO.

The second priority, was the delivery of teaching and learning during the lockdown. And right, there the widespread historical

problems which engulfed the sector from water sanitation overcrowded classrooms and ...[Inaudible.] ... out as hindrance

in reopening schools in a safe manner. Very few schools, embarking on e-learning, leaving millions of learners behind with not means

of learning whatsoever.

Whilst developing countries such as the Kenya offering free

learning for their learners at schools remain closed, because they could not compromise teaching and learning. To them, this is

non-negotiable. Basic education sector, when during that time, went into a slumber, during the hard lockdown, and therefore to an

extent that there was a movement to stop the Western Cape

Education Department, from feeding learners who desperately rely on nutrition programmes. But fortunately the Western Cape decision

was supported by a ruling was found all provinces to be in breach of the Constitution for not re-implementing the schools feeding scheme. That says a lot about the so called poor, poor government.

In addition, having the President not honouring his commitment to provide tablets for learning. The idea of learning was quickly abundant and left with no option but to open schools very much

aware of the shortcomings of our infrastructure. It soon became apparent that we are divided as a nation on this issue, and

understandably so, because lives are threatened, the virus does not discriminate. Yet we need the schools to reopen, so that we

can have some kind of normality, with the understanding that face to faced learning is ultimately our only option.

With a fragile economy like ours, and a potential of hunger and starvation amongst our learners, we could only forge through and

try to learn to live with the virus. The option to reopen schools, was further motivated by scientific data that showed low rate of

infection and transmission among young people. We gave many assurances that we could open schools, on condition that COVID-19

protocols are followed. And those schools that are noncompliant

must not reopen. Unfortunately, while promises were made to provide COVID-19 essentials, none of these commitments were met

with additional budget, instead the sector was dealt with budget cuts and reprioritisation, which meant our provinces would use their infrastructure grant, to meet their COVID-19 priorities.

This is a shame. It is a shame because efforts to address

sanitation inadequate and poor infrastructure, Information Technology, IT, infrastructure backlog, were now put on the back burner and therefore will not be addressed in a foreseeable

future.

Millions are spent on COVID-19 essentials, water tanks and transportation of the water. But very quickly we learn that,

certain provinces will not actually be able to [Inaudible.] ... school, especially the Eastern Cape, and therefore as we speak now

as well, is the fact that 16 168 teachers with commodities are

still not yet replaced.

Minister, you assured the nation that you will not compromise on these three essentials like masks, social distance and sanitisers,

but your own government decided to ease the taxi industrial relations by allowing hundred percent capacity load, which means

learners can travel in a taxi that is not complying with social

distance regulation, and end up at a school that has worked hard to control the infection, but could now put all at risk because of

these kinds of decisions.

And now, the unions are also up in arms for closing schools. Unions have been adamant and fighting and get reopening schools,

and yet not providing any innovative ways of continuing teaching and learning outside of the school environment. This is very disappointing to say the least.

The problem is that that we are faced with is the fact that

schools are closing for 14 days for quarantine or isolation, and sometimes for three days, for decontamination. Those are the

issues that we have to put on the table with the unions, to say what is it that they are doing to make sure that teaching does

continue? These are the discussions, not the discussions of just

shouting down schools and leaving our learners stranded and not receiving any kind of learning. Thank you House Chair.

Ms N R MASHABELA: House Chair, COVID-19 has further widened the

inequality gap and expose the elite nature of South African education system. The Department of Basic Education is in a

permanent state of crisis as a result with its obsession with

matric pass rate and saving the academic year at all cost.

Despite years and years of the department’s incompetence and failure to provide proper classrooms, basic like water and sanitation. And the budget adjustment is premised on the insistence of saving the academic year at all cost, while members

of Parliament are debating the budget adjustment from the comfort of their homes.

Since the so called, phase in reopening of schools by the department, at least 775 schools and over 1619 teachers contracted

COVID-19 with over 500 learners have tested positive.

The reopening of schools was allowed when all conditions for reopening were not met. Teachers were not training on COVID-19

protocols. Even to date this has not happened. We know that there

was no quality assurance of personal protective equipments sent to schools. Some schools received wrong face masks, and poor quality

sanitisers. As things stand, Makaula Senior Secondary School, 204 learners and staff tested positive were provided with ...

[Inaudible.] ... sanitisers.

Nine other schools in the Alfred Nzo district had shortage

sanitisers. Essentially the department seeks to engage in a dangerous experiment with learners and teachers, while politicians

work remotely in the comfort of their homes with heaters and fireplaces.

We are not confident that the R600 million for school infrastructure backlogs allocated, we will be used effectively since the Department of Basic Education has not been able to

adhere to its norms and standards for many years now. Many schools, particularly in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal,

remain in appalling conditions without water and sanitation.

The EFF, we will never forget the ANC-led government which killed Michael Komape, a grade R learner in Limpopo, who fell in a pit

toilet. We shall never forget the ANC-led government, which killed

Lumka Mthethwa, a grade R learner in the Eastern Cape, who fell in a pit toilet. May their souls continue to rest in peace?

It is an open secret that the supply of water tanks and water

delivery become a way for the politically connected, to despite political patronage, even when we warned that this is not the most

practical way to deliver water to schools, because schools need

permanent infrastructure.

Both South African Council for Educators SACE and Umalusi have included the adjustment budget allocation for travel and accommodation, while the Department of Basic Education stated that no travelling will be taking place.

The EFF, does not believe that the budget vote is in the best interests of learners or educators, but in the interest of saving the academic year at all costs, which widened the inequalities

that already exist in the education system. We have leaders who do not have the capacity of the political will to reimagine the

education of our children.

We must do away with the two-line system for the white and black people. We must train our teachers to use technology to teach and

assess learners. We must move the curriculum for all to online

television and radio channels. Every learner must get a locally manufactured tablet loaded with tutorial videos, assessment and

study material. We must do these so that we close schools until such time, we know that we are not sending our children to school

to die. We can always reopen schools, but the life of our children we cannot get back once lost. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr S L NGCOBO: House Chairperson and hon members, it is the grim reality that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown 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 that they are not left behind. Hon members, before we turn

to the supplementary budget which we are about today, we wish to emphasise that the IFP is strongly spoken out about the manner schools were reopened.

We warned that schools were hot spots for the pandemic. It is with great sadness that we read this morning of the death of a teacher in KwaZulu-Natal, who apparently had no comorbidities, but died due to COVID-19. I also wish to state that I live not far from where this teacher died. She dropped dead whilst on her way to school in the morning. Why is the Minister being stubborn on this critical matter? The matter apparently had various consultations with stakeholders, yet the schools are still open.

The IFP demands an urgent action from the Minister. Hon members, despite the fact that COVID-19 has revealed the absolute desperation, there are certain schools, especially from the 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 the manager, and many in managing the impact of the pandemic, will be absorbed by the basic education sector itself, and we will see its long-lasting impact on the key programmes of the Department of Basic Education.

The IFP in general, support 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 procurement of water tanks. These adjustments will inevitably have a negative impact on school infrastructure projects. We will see the postponement and suspension of projects at the expense of the education of those most in need.

Hon members, now more than ever before, 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 are vandalised in KwaZulu-Natal during the initial lockdown, and elsewhere, like in Limpopo. This province, can ill afford this additional burden, and it is again at the expense of children’s education. We understand that the task team has been set up to investigate the vandalism of these schools.

The IFP will monitor developments in this regard very carefully and call for accountability. And in conclusion, the IFP strongly urges profiles 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, while we support the budget as the IFP. Thank you very much, Chair.

*Afrikaans*:

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Agb Huisvoorsitter, ’n nood-aanpassingsbegroting is geen grap nie, veral as die oorspronklike begroting eintlik reeds ’n noodbegroting was. Sedert daardie begroting, het nie net ’n pandemie by ons voet aan wal gesit nie; die laaste internasionale kredietgraderingsagentskap wat die land nog op beleggingstatus gradeer het, het ons ook afgradeer. Verder, is die ekonomie tot stilstand gebring in ’n stap wat vir die eerste drie weeke geregverdig was maar wat sedertdien deur talle kundiges as irrasioneel bestempel is. Die gevolg is dat elke enkele begrotingspos meer geld nodig het maar daar is minder. Boonop is daar departemente wat aan die voorpunt van die stryd teen COVID-19 is waarvan die begrotings aangevul word. Daardie geld kan nêrens anders as by ander departemente gekry word nie; departemente wat ook meer geld nodig het.

*English*:

So, some collective decided that the Department of Basic Education is not in the forefront of its budget of COVID-19, and that the net amount of R2,1 billion had to be deducted from Basic Education. That must have been an oversight, as the school nutrition programme is essential in containing the economic and social fallout into the economic standstill. What would I ask them to do, is that the R25 billion budget is decreased to R23 billion.

We must keep in mind that the R1,8 billion which was earmarked for infrastructure must be cut, and about R600 million is added to supply water to all schools. The department made a remark in passing that an amount spent on water supply seemed excessive, but the engineer in charge of infrastructure, Mr David van der Westhuizen gave such an incredible account of the recount of expenses. It is indeed difficult to ascertain what the impact of delivery of education is, as the actual work is done in the provinces, with provincial budgets.

*Afrikaans*:

Wat ons wel weet is dat daar groot ongelykheid in skole is. Sommige skole is heeltemaal gereed om alle grade te ontvang. Ander is nie gereed om enigeen te ontvang nie.

*English:*

International comparison often brings notable insights. Cuba and

... [Inaudible.] ... are too widely different countries, but both the distinction that they have turn a backward education system into some of the best within a generation. Most extraordinary, is that non achieve through its lavish budget, but through a culture of communities keeping education in high regard, and teachers highly dedicated to their vocation.

*Afrikaans:*

En dit is die groot ongelykheid in Suid-Afrikaanse onderwys. Die Volmink verslag het aangedui dat daar grootskaalse geld vir poste korrupsie is en hy het ’n vakbond daarby betrek. Dit het nog nie tot vervolging gelei nie. Daar is ook ’n neiging by een van die vakbonde om te staak wanneer hulle nie hul sin kry nie, terwyl stakings in onderwys vir ander vakbonde ’n weersinswekkende gedagte is.

Daar is duisende onderwysers wat vir skoolbeheerliggame werk teen ’n breukdeel van die vergoeding wat onderwysers in die staat se diens ontvang. Hulle word met dieselfde eerbied en waardering beheer, want onderwys is nie net ’n beroep nie. Dit is ’n roeping. Waar onderwysers, vir wie dit ’n roeping is, werk, daar maak hulle

planne om skole oop te hou, al is dit op WhatsApp. Ander kyk of hulle skole kan toemaak en toehou.

Die ongelykheid gaan nie oor ras nie. Gaan kyk byvoorbeeld na die Baitiredi Technical en Commercial skool in Mothibistad daar in Kuruman in die Noord-Kaap. Dit gaan oor toewyding, waar die gemeenskap en onderwysers ’n eenheid vorm om onderwys aan hul kinders te bied, wat ook al die omstandighede. Daar sal nie eers die noodbegroting ’n krisis skep nie, maar waar onderwysers, soos NP van Wyk Louw dit in ’n ander konteks stel, soos loonwerkers sorgvuldig die ure ... [Onhoorbaar.] ... tel, daar heers ’n krisis, permanent. Baie dankie.

’n AGB LID: Hoor! Hoor!

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: House Chair, chairperson of the portfolio committee and hon members of the portfolio committee, Minister of Basic Education, Mme Angie Motshekga, members of the national executive that might be present, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, fellow South Africans, I greet you all.

Hon Chair, we woke up this morning to the sad news of the passing of Mr Andrew Mokete Mlangeni, the last of the Revonia trialist.

The recipient of the presidential order for meritorious service, first class and Isitwalandwe, Seaparankoe, the highest honour from his beloved organisation, the African National Congress, which recognised his outstanding contribution to the liberation struggle that led to the democratic dispensation in 1994. Let me join the Minister in sending condolences to the Mlangeni family, fellow comrades and the people of South Africa for this great loss.

Chair, education can enable humanity to make a better tomorrow. It is only through education that we can dream and go on to great achievements. We convene today, Chairperson, under the circumstances ... [Interjections.] ... I don’t know who is taking my time.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Deputy Minister, please switch on your microphone now, please. There was somebody there that disturbed you. May I ask the hon Tlou to mute the microphone. You may continue, hon Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you, Chair. I said we convene today under the circumstances not of our making, but

those imposed on us by the global health pandemic which has placed in us a new normal. Thus the reopening of schools offers a new frontier against the pandemic as there are repurposed epicentres of surveillance, screening and contact tracing and testing of cases that would otherwise have fallen through the cracks.

The Covid-19 storm threatens to engulf us but we are steadfast in our resolve that the pandemic will not be allowed to reverse the gains of the national democratic revolution. We insist that as headwinds threaten to stall our march to victory, no child should be left behind. We remain committed to the call of the National Development Plan, NDP, that basic education must play a greater role in building an inclusive society, providing equal opportunities and helping all South Africans to realise their full potential, in particular those who are previously disadvantaged.

Chair, this period of uncertainty offers us an opportunity to craft a post-Covid-19 basic education social impact. It must be built on the back of the solid success of the last 26 years. It was no surprise that the class of 2019 achieved the historic 81,3% pass rate, a record of 409 906 passed the 2019 National Senior Certificate, NCS, examination.

This achievement is no mean fit, considering the matric pass rate move from a low base of 53,4% in 1994 to around 60% in 2009 and to above 70% in the recent years. That is why now we say 81% is really a record.

Chair, let us recap the 2019 NSC passes for quintiles one to three where in people always say the education system is not pro-poor but when we look at the results from quintiles one to three, the no fee schools, when you look at the results combined they stood at 248 960. The Bachelor passes achieved by learners of no fee schools stood at 96 922. An increase of 14,4% from 2018.

This increase lies in what research tells us that in 2005 Bachelor passes came from the best performing 20% of schooling in the sector. However, with the introduction of pro-poor financing of the education system in 2015, the no fee schools produced 51% of Bachelor passes, which increased to 55% in 2019. Therefore, the significance of this is that the recap between the Bachelor passes produced by no fee schools versus those produced by fee paying schools have significantly and progressively increased from 2% in 2015 to 10% in 2019.

Hon House Chair, whereas from 2015 to date, greater equity and redress imperatives are systematically addressed, inequalities remain in the system. However, major strides have been recorded since the rollout of pro-poor policies such as no fee schools, school nutrition programme, scholar transport and health services, among others. These have shifted the balance of forces at school level in favour of the marginalised learners. All these interventions which are called the social wage by Statistics SA have improved access, retention of learners in schools, thus promoting equity and quality immeasurably.

House Chair, in this last decade of the NDP we are accelerating progress based on this solid foundation. Our vision of the post Covid-19 basic education is anchored on the immediate implementation of a curriculum with skills and competencies for a changing world. This is to meet the needs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution through ICT rollout, as well as the introduction of entrepreneurship and the building of focus schools.

At the heart of the post-Covid 19 basic education roadmap is the elimination of the digital divide by ensuring that all schools and education offices have access to the internet and free data.

During this financial year the Primary School Reading Improvement

Programme, through the DBE’s primary school reading improvement programme, direct curriculum support is provided to 30 000 English first additional language from Grade 1 to Grade 6 across all nine provinces.

The training of subject advisers and school managers has been moved to an online platform to specifically support teachers whose curriculum catch up, as well as psychosocial and health safety guidance associated with the Covid-19 pandemic curriculum support materials such as reading text for learners, and video clips for parents and teachers are being distributed via social media. In addition, reading has been packaged into the trimmed annual teaching plans, among others, as one of the fundamentals to be prioritised.

However, none of these plans will make a lasting impact if the envisioned new basic education doesn’t accelerate progress in the decolonisation of the curriculum. This shall be done through the teaching and promotion of African languages, South African and African history, as well as the national symbols to all learners up to Grade 12.

This decolonisation mantra is rooted in a recognition of the turbulent history of our country. I am happy to report that work on this fund is at the advanced stage. Under programme three, which is teacher, education, human resource will improve their professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire career. This will enhance our singular focus on improving fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy, especially reading for meaning. Our new national reading plan provides an excellent explanation of the various aspects of our reading.

As the national reading coalition works with partners to co- ordinate successful reading initiatives, both nationally and at circuit level, it is raising the profile of reading across 222 education circuits, which is 25%, through the provision of reading resources to schools and communities, and through the implementation of community based activities aimed at stimulating a culture of reading across the country.

Hon Chair and members, to ensure sustainable progress on quality, Cabinet has decided that Early Childhood Development, ECD, should shift from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Education. The newly revamped ECD sector is in the making. We

have made a conscious decision that the building blocks of our envision basic education post Covid-19 must strengthen the foundation of early learning. This calls for the institutional transformation of the early childhood development sector.

The function shift allows us to reimagine the whole concept meaning and delivery of the early childhood education. To assist us in realising the reimagined ECD sector, we have an Inter- Ministerial Committee, various work streams, a draft of an integrated national strategy for ECD sector, the ECD framework specifying the roles and responsibilities of basic education, and also developing a long-term financing strategy. These plans will succeed only if we craft a new human resource plan for the ECD.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Deputy Minister, your time has now expired. Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Oh! It has expired? Thank you so much. I want to thank you, Chair, and thank my Minister.

Ms M E SUKERS: Chair, we firstly wish to ignite our teachers who are at the frontline serving in the education sector and convey

our condolences for those families and school communities who are affected by the loss of a loved one or teacher during this period.

Hon Chair, the fault lines within our education system has been laid bare through this pandemic. It further deepens the social impact of poverty and inequality on the most vulnerable of our children. The hardest ... [Interjections.]

The COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON: Mr DYANTYI: Hon Sukers, go ahead.

Ms M E SUKERS: ... The hardest part of this lockdown period is witnessing the impact of inequality and poverty that eats away at the wellness of the majority of our children. The ACDP wish to acknowledge the support given by the department in meeting with parents via zoom. This meeting highlighted the need for grassroots engagements to address the uncertainty parents are facing.

Hopefully COVID-19 will result in improved collaboration in a nonpartisan manner to serve communities within the education sector.

The biggest challenge during this period has been communication on time and in time to address uncertainty and confusion. A large part of the uncertainty of parents faced is that options available

to them by Department of Basic Education, DBE, was not communicated or cross messaging between what the department states and the school communicates.

Many parents were initially not aware of options available to them and that they could keep their children at home should they deem it’s not safe. We received reports of threats of the registration communicated by schools and this lack of communication further drove the anxiety, uncertainty and anger in some communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic further emphasise the policy stance of the ACDP that ultimately parents are the primary authority in the education of their children. The role of the state is to support and play a facilitative role. In us addressing the inequality that is further exasperated by this pandemic, the ACDP notes the R2,1 billion has been cut from the departments education budget, reducing funds for longer term projects like school buildings and further support for maths science and technology. A further R4, 4billion has been reallocated from these grants to cover COVID-19 expenditure. It is our concern that due to the reprioritisation of these funds on these critical projects that it will further widened the inequality and lack of infrastructure in our poorest communities. These major adjustments require transparency and

accountability in how funds are spent especially for personal protection equipment. In the face of these budget cuts the only manner in which we can attend the inequality that will result is to look at civil society to assist in solving the education crisis which has been deepened by COVID-19. And the Minister in her address certainly spoke on that. This requires the removal of unnecessary regulation and empowerment of our communities. We wish to further bring to the attention of the department the need for financial concession for those parents whose children attend fee paying schools. Many parents are unable to pay school fees with many in areas especially women headed households, self-employed parents or contract workers. And we need to provide the necessary support to those who are affected in this manner. Thank you, Chair.

Mr E K SIWELA: Chairperson, thank you for the opportunity, hon Minister Deputy Ministers, hon members as well as guests, good afternoon, it would be remiss of me not to indicate right from the onset that the ANC-led government did not kill learners and never will not before not now and not in the near future, as suggested by the hon member from the EFF. The context of this budget vote debate on basic education is one of COVID-19, economic reconstruction and recovery and a reprioritised budget vote.

The provision of quality basic services and the delivery of infrastructure programme is a key component of school development and economic recovery. The ANC election manifesto directs government to replace inappropriate school infrastructures and sanitation facilities. This play a direct contribution towards creating a conducive learning environment as part of the focus shifts towards the provision of quality education. Quality education leads to higher learner progression through the grace and higher completion rates.

The building of infrastructure of the building of quality 21st schools in rural areas help improve the human development index. The provision of quality clean drinking water in rural areas and protect communities, bridging the digital divide by increasing spectrum in rural areas means increased access to internet. It is in this context that we amplify the President’s commitment to continue to invest in infrastructure in rural areas. The management of the health of learners and teachers as well as learner’s educational needs is a complex matter and each school has been advised to consider their specific conditions within a broad policy framework which caters for flexibility in a given situation. In this process a principle has emerged that of no child being left behind. The risk adjusted strategy and the

flexibility in the management approach has meant that where it has been necessary for a school to close for a period of time this has to happen so that tracking and tracing can place. They methodology that is being used is broad enough to deal with these challenges. As the virus picks ... [Interjections.]

... This budget vote takes place in the context of a supplementary budget impact upon the budget vote of basic education relate to the schools’ backlog infrastructure grant for water tanks that have to be procured to mitigate against COVID-19.

Chairperson, of concern is that the Education Infrastructure Grant has declined by R2,2 billion reprioritised to deal with setting up schools to be compliant with the risk adjusted strategy in dealing with the pandemic. Of this amount, R600 million rand has been reprioritised towards the school infrastructure backlogs grant for procurement of water tanks. Hovering above the planned and committed infrastructure projects, COVID-19 demands that provinces to provide mobile classrooms, address vandalised schools, provide emergency water supply, address storm damaged schools as well as basic hygiene packages. Provinces are in the process of revising their business plans for approval by the department to address all these matters. The reality is that this may result in the

postponement, suspension or even termination of some projects. While we would understand the objective and purpose of the supplementary budget, the October Medium Term Budget Policy statement as not to reflect the critical role and financing of infrastructure as a policy funded function over the medium terms expenditure framework.

The role of providing infrastructure investment and support services to our schools supports the reconstruction and development programme as announced by the ANC, designed to facilitate growth and job creation. The ANC supports the budget vote. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr A M SHAIK-EMAM: Hon Chair, let me start off by paying tribute to our baba Andrew Mlangeni who played a pivotal role. And as a result of the role that he played we are here today in a liberated South Africa.

Our condolences to his family and particularly to the ANC as well, may his soul rest in peace now. Hon Chairperson, allow me to start off with a quote by John F Kennedy, where he says and I quote:

All of us do not have equal talent but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents.

Having said that, I don’t think it is the quantity of students or learners that passed that should be important, what should be important is the quality of education that we provide to these learners. And we know that education in South Africa that some are in the privileged areas and having a better quality of education while others are being deprived of that.

Now let me start off by expressing my disappointment that this department decided - initially they said it was not in the interests of children to go to go back to school where infections were law. Then the infections are high and they decided that children must go back to school. The Minister said that the schools were 99% ready then she went to 98%, and 30% of the water was still not provided. We don’t know what happened to the savings on the nutrition programme and the scholar transport. Nobody seems to know what has actually happened in terms of that. Sixteen thousand teachers have comorbidities in South Africa, now we were told kids are not at risk. I will now accept that the Minister is not responsible for the death of so many children but can we ask the Minister to tell us how many lives could have been saved with

learners in South Africa that have died and educators that have died because of this reckless decision to allow learners to go back in the peak of the pandemic to let them go back to school.

We say to them they must socially distance at school but they must sit in the taxis 100% on top of each other but there is no social distancing but they must go back to the school. Is this the conduct of the department acceptable or not acceptable? And let me tell you hon Chairperson many structures – the governing bodies in the schools have been having a difficult time because MECS have been putting pressure on them that they must accept it otherwise they are going to be victimised.

It is not fair what we have done to the learners and what we have done to the parents because remember, we have accepted that the most of black children live with their grandparents and not even with their parents, so look at the risk that you put them at. And I think the decision by the department reckless as it is not accepting the guidance and advice on so many structures union governing bodies parents’ organisation is totally unacceptable for what they have done today and I think that they must take responsibility for where we are today in terms of education in this country. Thank you.

Mr L M NTSHAYISA: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson. Can you hear me, Chairperson? Chairperson, can you hear me? Hon Chairperson?

An HON MEMBER: Yes.

An HON MEMBER: Yes, we can.

Mr L M NTSHAYISA: Can you hear me?

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): I do not need assistance. Go ahead, hon Ntshayisa.

[Interjections.]

Mr L M NTSHAYISA: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson. Condolences to the family of the late tata Mlangeni who has just departed for the better world. May his soul rest in peace.

Greetings to the hon Minister my sister Angie Motshekga, the hon Deputy Minister Reginah Mhaule, my chairperson Bongiwe Mbinqo- Gigaba, hon members and everyone. Many people have been expecting a lot of announcements from this department regarding schooling. COVID-19 has just put people in two groups regarding the opening

of schools. It is a dilemma whether to open or not to open schools; a matter of to be or not to be. Therefore, a balance has got to be struck between the two in order to succeed.

[Inaudible.] ... education in terms of the Budget is always allocated better than most departments. Therefore, the reduction for education infrastructure ... [Inaudible.] This cut will further expose learners and teachers to the dangers of ... [Inaudible.] ... as many schools lack basic infrastructure. Most of the ... [Inaudible.] ... the issue of school infrastructure and personal protective equipment, PPE, is ... [Inaudible.] ... challenge. Up till today, most of these schools have not yet been provided with ... [Inaudible.] ... for the returning grades.

The PPE is not enough in most of the schools. Some schools are still waiting for additional teachers because there are few teachers for the learners in some of the schools. We are of the opinion that the available PPE, water, sanitation and infrastructure would be good only for Grade 12. Other grades cannot be accommodated as we have to follow COVID-19 protocols. [Inaudible.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Thank you, hon Ntshayisa. Your time has expired. Thank you, hon Ntshayisa. Your time has expired. There seems to be a problem with hon Ntshayisa. Hon Ntshayisa, your time has expired. Thank you, hon Ntshayisa.

*Afrikaans:*

Mev D VAN DER WALT: Voorsitter, my dank aan elke onderwyser, leerder, ouer en kollega wat in hierdie uitdagende tydperk werk om ons meer as 12,4 miljoen kinders se onderrig in die 23 076 openbare skole te verseker.

*English:*

Indeed, COVID-19 has a detrimental impact on the education of our learners and so does the budget cut of R2 billion. The opportunity for every learner to receive quality education should be non- negotiable; yet, in South Africa, the government prioritises bailing out state-owned entities with billions of rand instead of investing in proper infrastructure which will ensure adequate classrooms at every school in which every learner will be seated at his or her own desk, schools where learners and teachers will have decent ablution facilities built by accredited contractors as a prerequisite, and where every school is properly fenced to ensure safety during and after school hours. Plans in glossy

documents, colourful presentations, state of the nation, state of the province and Budget Speech promises seem to be forgotten as soon as it is presented.

*Afrikaans*:

Verskeie spesiale oudits en verslae, soos onder andere die National Education Infrastructure Management System, Neims, wat jaarliks inligting oor die stand van infrastruktuur verskaf, word skynbaar nie ernstig opgeneem nie, as dit ooit gelees word.

*English:*

If we did take such reports seriously and acted promptly on it, we would’ve been able to deal with the demands and protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the start of the pandemic.

In South Africa, COVID-19 is used now to make up for years of neglect. Suddenly, provinces, excluding the Western Cape, could identify 3 475 schools in need of critical water supply ... challenges; not before. The department could quickly sign a memorandum with the worst performing, Department of Water and Sanitation, and Rand Water as the implementing agent, and allocate R600 million to them to install water tanks and deliver portable water by water trucks to these tanks.

Suddenly also, we saw 1 960 schools with emergency sanitation needs on the department’s programme ... allocating two mobile toilets per school, with 1 507 schools in the Eastern Cape and 453 schools in Limpopo. Note that these two provinces also received lottery funds of R10 million each and we are still looking for the schools and the toilets.

Neither the critical water programme by the Department of Water and Sanitation nor the sanitation projects allocated to Mvula Trust have been completed for the reopening of schools, to date.

Since the start of the lockdown, more than 1 718 schools have been vandalised. This is a serious setback. The Minister is quite correct, but what are we doing to keep our schools and thus education safe? We will have to get funding to improve the security of our infrastructure and our equipment at schools.

As we know, 9,7 million children benefit from the school nutrition scheme. For many of them from our poorer communities, this is the only meal they will get. It is therefore commendable that the Western Cape department continued to provide meals to children during the lockdown in order to combat malnutrition. Hon Chantel King is quite correct. It is indeed a scandal that a court of law

had to force the Department of Basic Education to continue with the nutrition scheme, all the thanks to some unions trying to force their will without acknowledgement and understanding of any scientific facts. Threats, specifically by the Educators’ Union of SA, EUSA, to shut down schools by force, is unacceptable in a democracy and infringes on our children’s constitutional right to education and should be rejected by all.

Minister, you are the custodian of education, not the unions. Protect our children’s constitutional right. Their education is important to their future lives, their health and their food security. I thank you.

Ms N G ADOONS: Thank you, hon Chairperson. Let me greet the Minister, the Deputy Minister, the portfolio committee members and all the Members of Parliament that are present in this virtual meeting. Chair, let me also join by sending my condolences to the family of uTata Isithwalandwe Andrew Mlangeni. Chairperson, we assist in this debate with the need to control the coronavirus disease 2019, Covid-19, pandemic whilst at the same time ensure that the pedagogic development of our children, their safety and the safety of the teachers and staff are not compromised. All within the context of the Budget Vote that has been prioritised in

order to deal with the impact of the pandemic on schooling. The pandemic has impacted on public health, the economy and social cohesion, the devastating sequences for all sectors of the society, especially the most vulnerable.

The pandemic has exposed the persistent faults of poverty, inequality and unemployment in our society. As the nation, we must seize the opportunity effectively to fight both the public health and the pandemic, but also to embark on the programme of socioeconomic reconstruction, solidarity and common prosperity.

The ANC has in response considered a draft Covid-19 reconstruction growth, and development plan which will be finalised and released for public comment and inputs. A number of measures are in place to mitigate the social and economic impact of the pandemic. This includes swiftly providing water to communities, schools and other critical facilities who are without food relief, shelter to homeless increase of existing social grants, and the introduction of the Covid-19 grant for unemployed who do not receive any grant or benefits.

Chairperson, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, 2019 to 2024 emphasises the key outcomes that are expected from the Basic Education over the next five years. These are reflected as

follows: An improved school readiness of children, reading for meaning, children better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9, youth leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa as school, physical infrastructure environment and inspire learners to learn and teachers to teach. The theory of change tool in the department’s strategic plan maps out a process that facilitates educational change and the development of children. Scientifically, Chair, we have to look at the provision of basic education in an interconnected manner.

The threats that the department outlined in its strategic plan points to systemic experiences and internal pressures, including weak instructions, weak learning and weak school functionality. It points to imbalance development and reduce capability to withstand shocks. Covid-19 added to the shock and together with slowdown in economic growth and budget reprioritisation, all points towards the need to strengthen the interconnected perspective to deliver on the basic education programme responding to the Covid-19 that has exposed deeper elements of poverty and inequality, Chairperson. On the balance of evidence, which is determined through scanning the school environment and quantitative testing, not individual case stories that we hear on the hon members here

perpetuating that there are learners that are dying and teachers that have died. However, these are the scientifically proved that what has covered the phase return to schooling has been the management and provision of support and care for the infected affected and vulnerable. Considerable work has been done in this regard to make the learning environment safe and secure.

The preliminary assessment meant that the supplementary budget had a direct impact upon Budget Vote of the department over the

R2 billion in the redirection of funds and the grants for the establishment and functioning of the management system to deal with the reducing the possibility of the virus spreading. This is a conscious effort to balance the pedagogic need of the child, whilst at the same time providing a conducive environment that it is safe for staff, teachers and learners. The training and preparations of staff is safety and staggered approach to the reopening of schools has been conducted. The phase in return to school also address the reality that under Level 3, Chairperson, of the risk adjusted strategy working parents are able to be at work, whilst their children are in a structured environment of learning.

The approach of the department has reflected the President’s approach during which there has been and continues to be widespread consultation. This is not only the decision of the Minister as we see that she has been attacked all through, it was the decision that was taken by the collective of the National Command Council, NCC. One cannot allow a pandemic, not only to wreck human physical havoc, but to turn a response into a contested terrain in which we cannot find one another and we degenerate into fractions, all claiming to have the answer, yet weakening the effort to both protect and provide learners and teachers and staff.

It is this regard that the ANC supports the guidelines on schooling, sanitising, social distancing and screening. The provision of basic sanitation and hygiene packages to all schools, safety in scholar transport and provision of emergency water supplies to schools with inadequate water. It is in this regard that the ANC knows the proposed curriculum adjustment for all grades. What is required is close co-operation between education officials, other government departments and schools with principals, teachers, school governing bodies, to have a school functioning to the level ... [Interjections.] ... to have schools functioning to the level of capacity that provides a conducive

environment for learning, and at the same time, addressing the anxiety and fears of parents and grandparents. The ANC welcomes the dedicated SA Broadcasting Corporation, SABC, educational channel, which enable multiple platforms on radio, television, TV, YouTube, Facebook live, WhatsApp, etcetera, to support learners to catch up.

We appreciate the special attention being paid to make provision for learners in special schools. Getting our children back to school and back to learning safely will require a high level of leadership and communication from all stakeholders, the sectors social compact that the President has spoken of. Chairperson, let me talk to ... We support the budget, Chairperson. Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair. Let me again thank the committee and members ... [Interjections.] ... for the engagement and the input that they have given ... [Interjections.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Just pause there, Minister. Hon Mvana, I will not repeat this. Continue, Minister.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Okay. I hope that you have not taken my minutes because I am starting afresh, Chair. Therefore, I really want to thank the leadership of Parliament, but also thank members of the different parties for very helpful council advice and also, as I said as usual, we take seriously what members raise with us, and trying to follow up and implement as much as possible. However, as usual, Chair, you also have to really acknowledge that we have the antieverything repeating the old saying, all the time, and nothing constructive. But I guess that the ANC has delivered democracy to them, let them enjoyed it, but it’s very unfortunate that we can’t use opportunities to engage to be able to build a nation.

I won’t respond to most of the things as I said, we have taken counsel and taking advice from different members that have raised issues. But I thought just for the record, let me clarify this thing about the stubborn Minister. The Minister does not take decisions on her own, the sector belongs to members of the community and to the nation, and members should know better that the Minister takes decision in council with other members of the executive council, MECs. The other point I also wanted to raise is that I’m sure members should - I don’t want to sound arrogant - be really embarrassed of themselves, because I don’t know who are

they representing. I thought that they would be humble enough and say that let’s hear what the parents are saying and not speak for them.

Last week, Chair, I consulted all key stakeholders in the sector. I spoke to all governing bodies member from the Natural Language Processing, NLP, and all governing bodies without exception, supported the opening of schools. Therefore, I don’t know which parents you’re speaking for. All provinces supported the ongoing opening of schools. So, I don’t know what at least organisations, and the noise that you hear which we don’t know. I am talking about the legitimate structures that have the authority to decide on the lives and the future of South African children, which is your provinces, your parents and all the nongovernment organisations, NGOs, working in the sector, everybody else was supporting the opening of schools. Therefore, don’t speak for people like ...

*IsiZulu:*

... uyidlozi, bayaphila, bazikhulumele ...

*English:*

... they have spoken for themselves, so don’t speak for themselves. However, I also want to say, Chair, it’s sometimes very unfortunate and certainly because this debate is very helpful in terms of assisting us as the ruling party to hear divergent views from other parties. If I am going to then have to deal with opportunism and populism that is here, that we have leaders of parties invoking the death of children to try and be relevance is very sad. Let the Komape and the Eastern Cape children their souls rest in peace. Here what we are presenting is a Basic Education Vote for 2020-21. Let’s not invoke the lives of young people in the desperation of being relevant. And also, what I also find quite unfortunate, members write to you, ask for figures, take the platform and really play to the gallery and throw the figures at you, so they are not helping you. We want different views so that we can enrich the work that we are saying. And also now saying we are surprise about inequalities. I am surprised that you are surprised, but I really want to appeal to members to say that please, let’s tell no lies and claim easy victories.

Let’s be honest about who are representing, you’re not representing the popular view. Donor pretend that you are doing that. So, the decision ... [Inaudible.] ... not as I say that come out of that space if you don’t know what the debate is. But also,

Chair, as I said, I don’t want to answer all questions, but can assure that there is no school that has been reported to us that at this stage has water shortages. We acknowledge that there are major infrastructure problems, and we are the first one to upfront acknowledge that we have problems in that area. However, let not one big problem which, indeed, is infrastructure cloud the core business of government which is learning and teaching. I just once disappointed that all jumping to the bandwagon and agree, infrastructure is a problem, but we are also making lots of progress in areas which is our core responsibility, which is learning and teaching and I didn’t find members saying that and really helping us.

Therefore, I am sure other members as I close that, even if the DA, I was to repeat the things that they say should happen I’m sure they will reject it, because their mandate is to reject everything. Even if we were to agree, I don’t expect anything and if they were to agree then I will know that something is wrong because at one stage I think is their... [Interjections.] ... to reject everything and they will even reject things that they know

... [Inaudible.] ... so I don’t expect anything which is unfortunate ... [Inaudible.] ... big opposition party and they have a constituency. You expect them to bring constructive and all

they do is to find the mistake and reject everything, and they will reject even the things that ... Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

Debate concluded.