**TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2020**

***PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES***

The Council met at 14:00.

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

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon delegates, before we proceed I would like to remind you of the following.

That the virtual sitting constitutes a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

That the place of the sitting is deemed to be Cape Town where the City of the National Council of Provinces is.

Delegates in the virtual sitting enjoy the same powers and privileges that apply in a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

That for the purpose of the quorum all delegates who are logged on to the virtual platform shall be considered present.

That delegates must always switch on their videos and that delegates should ensure that the microphones of their gadgets are muted and must always remain muted.

And to note that the interpreting facility is active, and that any delegate who wishes to speak must use the ‘raise—your—hand function’ or ‘raise—your—hand’ icon.

Hon delegates, in accordance to Council Rule 2471, there will be no Notices of motion or Motions without notice.

We will then proceed to the question session. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

Further, I would like to make the following remarks, these are very important for noting, that the time for reply by a minister to a question is five minutes.

Secondly, that only four supplementary questions are allowed per questions.

Thirdly, that a member who has asked the initial question will the first to be afforded an opportunity to ask a supplementary question.

Fourthly, that the time for asking a supplementary question is two minutes.

Fifthly, that the time for reply to a supplementary question is four minutes.

And lastly, that the supplementary question must emanate from the initial question.

**QUESTIONS - SOCIAL SERVICES: CLUSTER 2B**

Question 98:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, my response to the question about the quality of teaching and learning under covid-19 is that, for us to ensure that there is quality of learning and teaching despite the

enormous challenges that teachers faced with reduced time and rotational timetable we had to put a number of measures in place amongst others was to trim our curriculum to make sure that we have a comprehensive curriculum recovery framework which then matches the qualms that are left with us.

We had to put plans in place to recover the loss time from when the lockdown started, the shortening of the midyear. We also had to make sure that we extend the year to the 15th of December to make sure that we can really claw back on the lost time.

Again, to assist our teachers we had a revised trimmed curriculum from Grade R to 11. The consideration was to make sure that we can match the curriculum to the time that we had. The director –general, DG, had to convene week on week meetings with provinces to make sure that we are aligned and we understand what is happening and can at all times respond to the reality on the ground.

We also have to make sure that we work with their districts and their circuits to make sure that there is

cohesion and coherence in the system and we understand on an ongoing basis what we need to do to save the academic year. That is what we had to put in place Chair. Thank you.

Ms N NDONGENI: Hon Chair, hon Minister, let me take this opportunity and thank the teachers specifically for the sacrifice and tremendous role they have played in preparing the students for assessment during this challenging year.

How important is the role of teachers union, school governing bodies, SGBs, and other stakeholders in ensuring that we emerge victorious when we are faced with such difficulty like the covid-19 pandemic and, what are the plans to recover the skills that the kids were not able to be taught in 2020?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, I can’t overstate the importance of teachers, teachers are actually the education system. The system rests on their shoulders and everything else that we can benefit or lose we lose it in the hands of teachers; they are very critical. But not

only critical in terms of making sure that we have learning and teaching, but in just the system under general. For instance, under covid-19, we had to quickly get regulations in place to manage the situation like how we deal with teacher comorbidities and many other challenges that for the first time we were confronted with.

Our teacher unions were very magnanimous in many respects that we were able – with their support – to conclude the Collective Agreement 1 of 2020**.** They were able to assist us through their structures to monitor compliance in schools and advise us were things were going wrong. But more than anything, they were part of the trimming of the curriculum and also most of the decisions that we had to take.

Teachers had been very instrumental in the learning and teaching, in the management of the curriculum, but in the management of the sector. Same with SGBs, we would not have survived the storm that confronted us had it not been of our parents. Your different SGBs were there to also make sure that they support the schools and they

also advice the department. But in times of difficulties we were also able to mediate between the tensions that often arose between the department and teacher unions and they were a very good stabilising factor in-between. On the other hand, through resources and different ways, our SGBs assisted us to make sure that things work very well.

So had it not been of civil society which was co- ordinated through the National Education Collaboration Trust, NECT, where at a time we would meet more two hundred nongovernmental organisations, NGOs, virtually, to manage the environment which was very difficult. We would not have succeeded to open the schools and really save the academic year of 2020. Thank you, Chair.

Ms L J BOTHA (Special delegate – Western Cape): Hon Chair, young children in rural areas have suffered the most during lockdown. They have suffered in every way including the area of teaching and learning. Most rural and township learners did not receive any teaching during the lockdown period. Rural areas experienced many challenges including transport, cold weather, lack of technology and devices and lack of internet.

I want to know how have these learners have caught up with learning when they eventually returned to school. Furthermore, should there be a high failure rate in schools this year, what plans does the department have in place to accommodate those learners, especially Grade 12s who have limited re-write options? What plans are in place to provide above to those learners to ensure that they do not become dropouts? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, indeed I will agree with the member that our learners from different areas – not only in rural areas – from your townships, informal settlements and farm areas and even from affluent areas it was very difficult. It was even difficult even for those communities which had access to your Information and Communication Technology Services, ICTs**,** to for the first time do what they had never done before to teach using ICTs. They had not planned for that, they had not prepared for that. So it was just a very difficult situation that we found ourselves in.

As I said when I was responding to hon Ndongeni, we had to trim the curriculum and we had to work very close with

our teacher unions and parents. We had to work with NGOs, to salvage the situation. In terms of failure rate, we have done all we could, we had asked parents to bring learners on time. Our teachers have been working that out to make sure that we can recover the limited curriculum that we could recover. Because, some of the parts of the curriculum have been taken over to the next year.

Those that will fail we will have to manage them the way we always manage failure rates. As for Grade 12 – Fortunately this year the supplementary is not in March, it is in June, which means there is enough time to also assist and support those that are not performing very well.

I can assure you Chair, monitoring business that we have been making with the department; I have been getting reports that the class of 2020 was motivated beyond any other class we have experienced. So we are expecting good news, but if there are difficulties we will help them to prepare for the June exams.

Ms S B LEHIHI: Chair, Minister, if indeed there are no negative ramification on the quality of teaching and learning [Inaudible]...

The challenges that this year has brought us then surely there needs to be cohesion between your department and the provincial education department. Currently, there are mixed messages and responses allowing Grade 12 learners with covid–19 to write exams. Once the department of basic education start it will make provisions ... The Western Cape Education Department says no consultation was made and they cannot accommodate those learners unless they have been in 10days isolation.

The matric finals are around the corner. How do you plan to ensure that no matric learner is left behind and everyone is afforded the opportunity to write? What measures will be put in place to accommodate those learners who were physically ill from covid-19 and did not allocate preparation time whilst in recovery? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, the member is correct that for us as a sector which is our policy, we work through and with provinces. The sector has concurrent functions and for us to be effective we have to make sure that at all times we are aligned. But there would be situations where as the national department we have to take decisions on our feet and not wait for consultations especially if the welfare of children is involved.

In this matter of exams there are no mixed messages. The initial position was that when children or young learners have been identified with covid-19, we would not allow them to write exams. But with lots of appeals that came from provinces and parents and everybody, as a Minister I have to think on my feet and quickly inform – not consult

– inform my colleagues that I have taken a decision that in the best interest of children we have to allow them to write. The Department of Health was very gracious and offered help and assistance where we had difficulties. I can assure you hon member that all learners who turned up even those who were in isolation, we have found places for them to write. Health has been assisting; other

teachers have volunteered to monitor them. And also outsiders. We have been trained on how to manage the environment. Doctors also had offered themselves and said please, this class of 2020 has suffered enough and there is no way you can turn back a learner who just presents a high temperature on the day of exams and say go back.

All the learners are writing and we get daily reports of the number on learners that are writing. The highest number was in the Free State of almost eleven kids and they wrote. The second highest number was in the Eastern Cape because there were children who were already in a quarantine site, so we were able to get them to write.

All learners have written.

Even in the Western Cape, we have put in measures to make sure that even learners in the Western Cape write because exams are a national competency. We co-operate with provinces but we have the last word when it comes to exams. Thank you.

Mr A B CLOETE: Chairperson, Minister, I also want to send our best of wishes to the matriculants who are now

writing their exams, and you basically said that we had a tough year for learners and especially matriculants.

Considering tremendous time and the work that was lost especially by matrics, who are under pressure now to perform without hindrance and obstacles, do you believe that protests such as the one we saw at Brackenfell yesterday are good for the moral and preparations of matric learners. Would you support legislation that prohibits protests at schools?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, the member will agree with me that protests around schools are just not very helpful. Because if violence erupts children could just be bystanders or be affected even being far from the scene. If you look at the scenes yesterday, there were teargases in the environment where there are children. We obviously would not support any violent protest in an area where there are children. If it’s peaceful indeed

... [Interjections.]

Mr A ARNOLDS: Chairperson, I rise on a point of order.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Minister, please hold on a just a second!

Mr A ARNOLDS: The member is saying that the EFF was ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: You can’t all talk at the same time. Mr Arnold you must await your turn. [Interjections.]

Mr A B CLOETE: If the shoe fits wear it.

Mr A ARNOLDS: Chairperson, is that member saying the EFF was violent?

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: What is your point of order?

AN HON MEMBER: There was no violence by the EFF.

Mr A ARNOLDS: He was interfering now when I was raising a point of order.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: That is a point of view hon member.

Mr A ARNOLDS: ... my point of order is that ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: You wait your turn. So I will rule that out of order. Please proceed, Minister.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: ... I am saying it is within people’s right to protests peacefully when they have issues. But we are saying when violence erupts where there are children and then it is quite problematic.

Indeed, we will condemn any violence that will erupt in the environment where there are children.

What legislation we will propose? We won’t propose any legislation but we will gladly respect the constitutional right of people to say if they have issues they can protest but at all times, whoever is an antagonist and the protagonist have to make sure that the place is kept safe. That is my point and thank you Chair.

Mr A ARNOLDS: You must answer the question, who was violent?

THE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Did you ask me a

question. If you want to ask me a question you can do so and don’t howl at me. Hamba [Go away!]

Question 92:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair. It is about violence in schools. We are saying that the department does respond to violence in schools and other social ills through its programme of care, support, teaching and learning. We have a national school safety framework which we are using to guide us. It is mainly our response because we believe that violence is really part of the ecosystem that is there in the areas and therefore we rely on collaboration and partnerships for more co-ordinated approaches against violence.

Through partnership with different agencies, for instance, Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute focuses on harassment that happen at schools especially sexual harassment. Within the framework look at the culture of ready respect for property that is being

fostered and make sure that our children have the culture and respect peace. There are also protocols in place that enforce consequence management timeously if there are incident of violence. We have a quality learning and teaching campaign which work with communities to have school safety committees which encourage schools and communities to work together. In most instances we encourage communities to protect schools from criminal elements, because through them we find that schools are safer in the hands of communities as compared to any other measures we can put in place. Hence we are investing most of our time in schooling communities to protect schools as part of community assets.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: The first supplementary question will come from hon Christians.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Chair, may I please come in? It’s hon Boshoff speaking. Hon Christian is struggling with connection so I will be doing the follow-up. Can I proceed?

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Please proceed.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Good afternoon to you, Minister. With reference to violence at schools, in schools and around schools, what trauma and counselling support is the department looking at in the future to be available to learners and violent-stricken areas - programmes that include debriefing and crisis situations and in-depth therapy for those affected? What does the department see as the role of the educators in stemming the scourge of violence in our schools? Thank you for that, hon Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair. We work with a number of nongovernment organisations, NGOs, like Teddy Bear and the rest of them to support us as a sector to help us with different ways of dealing with the different traumas that children experience whether be it sexual violation, physical traumas or other sorts of traumas. We also work with Social Development. Ourselves as a department we also have, at district levels, our psychologists and social workers who also become centres of reference when there are difficulties.

But the most successful partnership we have in the area of violence is with local police stations where different police stations will have trained officials who are able to work with children or to work with schools in different ways of how violence present itself. So they will nominate a police officer who will be the first point of reference and that police officer work with other agencies in the area to make sure that they support schools. When it is break-ins police help us to go and look for those goods which have been stolen. When it is gang stars they help us investigate the source of the gang starts and work with us and related officers. So our biggest support and strength that we have is with the police.

Obviously, teachers are your first call, so the first people who are going to either be confronted by violence when children fight at school or if schools are being attacked, but also when goods or schools themselves are being vandalised ... So, teachers will be the first ones who really have to deal ... and calm the situation before any outsider comes to the scene. So, they are very critical and key, and hence in every school there is also

a teacher whose responsibility it is to make sure that they can manage an environment in the event of violence or any other violent incident happening around the school. Thank you Chair.

Ms A D MALEKA: Thank you Chairperson. Good afternoon Minister and thank you for your response to the question. Hon Minister, one act of violence at any school is one act too many. Therefore, we support the endeavours of the department to deal with these acts of violence.

Hon Minister, my question is, are these acts of violence a general every day occurrence in our schools or are they an exception to the norm?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, it would sound like I’m underestimating the difficulties or the challenges of violence in a school environment. They rarely happen. As I say, we have more than 26 000 schools and I can tell you if I have to count schools which have been visited by violence it would not even be more than a thousand schools.

However, the member is right. One incident of violence is one too many. Since the school is a community, if it even affects one child it affects the entire community. It affects the school community and the community around. So they are rare but violence in schools, especially when there are children, is very, very serious. Hence, we put all the measures and all the resources ... to make sure that it doesn’t happen, because in some instances it even has a lifetime impact on children. Children who have been bullied ... who are told by psychologists, carry that into their lives. Children have been violated. It doesn’t end up with counselling. It could be a lifetime scar that happens to them. So, it is a problem. If it’s one child out of the 14 million children, it is a problem and ... [Inaudible.] ... that’s why we are invested. However, t’s not a common phenomenon where we can say there’s so much

... an outbreak of violence in our schools. It’s limited but it’s serious.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Yes, hon Chairperson. Hon Madam Minister, given the fact that children who are exposed to more risks than positive factors are more likely to use

violence ... whether the department has considered investigating in invitational education as a solution.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, I missed the last point from the member. He said, have we considered ... It says invitational ... I just didn’t get the last sentence. If the member doesn’t mind, can he just repeat that part for me ... [Inaudible.] I’m sorry about that.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Madam Minister, I want to know whether the department has considered investigating in invitational education as a solution.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, because violence is such ... and the member is quite correct that children who are really ... who experience violence, the likelihood is that they become dysfunctional people either by being extremely scared of the world and ... turn to different tendencies or they themselves become violent; where victims really become villains themselves. So, that’s the seriousness of violence.

What we do is to really look at other measures. In some instances, we took kids to prisons to make sure that they can see and be scared by prison visits. We were warned against it ... to say, they can actually see it as glamorous and not fear prison if they see people living normally in prison. So, we had to stop some of the activities.

So, we try different methods. We get people, like ex- convicts, to also come and speak to our children to really warn them against violence. We really do whatever we can to discourage or to really educate our children against violence because of the seriousness of violence. And, as the member said, they become violent adults or they become dysfunctional adults if nothing is done.

However, in some instances, even if something had been done the damage is so severe that you can’t remediate it and therefore you have to stop it before it happens.

Thank you Chair.

*IsiZulu*:

Nk S A LUTHULI: Sihlalo, Ngqongqoshe Wezemfundo Eyisisekelo, siyakuqonda ukuthi udlame la eNingizimu

Afrika luyinto ebucayi kangakanani futhi siyakuqonda ukuthi udlame esikhathini esiningi luqala emakhaya bese luthola indlela yokuthi likwazi ukuzofika ezikoleni kubantwana futhi indlela abantwana abazithola beyingxenye yodlame ngakhona kulolu dlame emakhaya yilo elenza ukuthi bafike nasezikoleni benze udlame.

Yiziphi izinhlelo umnyango wakho onazo ukuthi ukwazi ukufundisa abantwana, abazali kanye nothisha ukuthi bangaluvikela kanjani lolu dlame nanokuthi bakwazi ukubona umangabe umntwana ephuma ekhaya enodlame oluqhamuka ekhaya. Zinsiza zini onazo ukuthi sikwazi ukuthi sibaqwashise ikakhulukazi abazali emakhaya ukuthi kuyingozi kangakanani ukwenza lolu dlame phambi kwabantwana ngoba yilo oluletha ukuthi bafike ezikoleni sebekwazi nokulwa nabanye abantwana behlezi bediniwe ngazozonke izikhathi. Siyabonga.

UNGQONGQOSHE WEZOKUTHUTHUKISWA KOMPHAKATHI: Sihlalo,

ilungu likhuluma iqiniso uma ethi ikaningi lento, abantwana beza sebenalo udlame besuka nalo ekhaya kodwa hhayi ekhaya kuphela nasemphakathini. Ngoba uthola ukuthi abazali ngesinye isikhathi bayasebenza, umzali athuke nje

uma ezwa hhayibo umntwana wakhe ubamba inkunzi kanti yena akazi lutho usebenza umsebenzi omkhipha ekhaya isikhathi eside.

*English*:

I have an incident, for instance ...

*IsiZulu*:

... la e-Ivory lapho amaphoyisa abethungatha abantwana abantshontsha izitulo sonke izinsuku, babheme bahambe bayothengisa izinsimbi zezitulo. Sithe uma silandelela sathola ukuthi khona la e-Midrand iningi lomama lisebenza emakhishini, babuya ngoLwesihlanu ngakhoke izingane zisala zodwa ziziphethe.

Ngakhoke udlame olukhona emphakathini, ukuzilawula, nokungabi nabantu abazobaqondisa yikho futhi okubakhipha emiphakathini. Ngakhoke kubalulekile ukuthi yebo sisebenze nabazali, sisebenze nothisha kodwa sisebenze nomphakathi futhi ukubonisa ukuthi singazikhulisa izingane zonke singumphakathi ngoba besho ukuthi kuthathwa isizwe sonke ukukhulisa ingane ngoba omunye umntwana ubona engathi akahlaniphile yena uma kuwulowo

olungile emphakathini, izingane zihambele phezulu zizitshela ngakhoke ufuna ukufana nazo naye, angene futhi aze adlulele efuna ukubabonisa ukuthi uhlakaniphe ukdlula bona. Yingakhoke sizama konke ezingakwazi ukuzama ukuthi sisebenze nabazali, sisebenze nomphakathi kodwa sisebenzi namaphoyisa noMnyango Wezokuthuthukiswa Komphakathi,

nama-NGOs, nezazi ezikhona ngezodlame zisiluleke ukuthi, cha le eniyiqalayo izonixaka ngoba nayi imiphumela yakona engelungile. Ngakhoke ngiyabonga, Sihlalo.

Question 85:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: I really want to thank the Chair for the Question because the practice of just merging schools that are not viable sometimes puts us on a collision course with communities.

*Setswana*:

TONA YA LEFAPHA LA THUTO: ... fa gongwe o bona gore batsadi ga ba utlwisise gore ... e re ke bue ka sekgowa.

MODULASETILO WA NCOP: Ha kere ba e kwadile ka sekgowa.

TONA YA LEFAPHA LA THUTO: ... ke ne ke re ke e bua ka Setswana, jaanong go a pala. O tla ntshwarela gonne ke ne ke re ke e bua ka Setswana, mme e a pala.

[Interjections.]

*English*:

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: I suggest you just respond, Minister. Don’t worry about the interpretation in the background.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: I am very happy and grateful that the member raised the question. The practice of merging schools really creates a lot of difficulties for us in communities. You will find that a school is completely nonviable. For example, you might find that a school has 75 learners from grade 1 to 7.

According to norms and standards, that school is supposed to be staffed by only three teachers. So such a school is unviable. No-one, certainly not the learners, gain anything from it. Three teachers can’t teach all the subjects to all the grades. So we have to merge that

school with another to ensure that schools are rationalised.

But sometimes communities feel very strongly about a particular school because it was maybe built by them or named for a Chief. So merging a school brings with it lots of difficulties.

The bottom line, however, is that when we rationalise schools, the main concern is curriculum consideration. If you find that the number ... if it is less than 1:35, we are unable to provide adequate and proper tuition.

Sometimes the schools that have to be rationalised are situated on farm land. By law, we are not allowed to improve any infrastructure that exists on private land. So you might find that such schools are in a state of disrepair. The department pays rent, but is unable to go ahead and repair the school. In such cases, we have to move out of that building if we cannot provide proper infrastructure and access.

Sometimes a farmer might say that it is harvest time.

That’s why we have to rationalise schools and bring children out for their own good.

Therefore, I am grateful to the member for raising this Question because half of the time when we do this it brings us into conflict with communities who sometimes do not appreciate the fact that we say a school is unviable and has to close so that we can provide their children with a better form of education in a better place. Thank you.

Ms S B LEHIHI: Minister, when one looks at the state of basic education in this country, it is very clear which groups are prioritised when it comes to funding and resourcing. One can see who those schools belong to.

Learners who attend farm schools have to overcome a lot just to make it through high school and have a chance at a better life than that of their parents.

Is there any special provision being made or budget set aside specifically to cater for the needs of farms

schools in respect of boarding facilities, nutrition, and sports and recreation? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, government needs to admit that it is still lagging behind as far as equalising the playing fields across different communities is concerned. Not only at farm schools, but also at schools in informal settlements and in old townships, the department, especially in terms of infrastructure, has not been able to keep up with developments.

Because the ruling party said that education is a right, we had to deal with an explosion over the past 20 years of everybody coming in to the system. We had to provide for them. We spent time building new schools. As a consequence, we were not able to deal with the old infrastructure.

In relation to the member’s question about rural areas, children who attend farm school qualify for almost everything that every other learner in this country receives. In terms of school nutrition, there is nothing

that they do not receive that is provided to other learners. They receive free schooling, free books, free transport, and free nutrition.

Their major problem has to do with infrastructure. As I said before, if the school is built on private land, we are by law not allowed to spend government money on it.

We even have a full directorate tasked with working on rural education. It continuously advises the national department and the provincial departments of education on measures to be taken to ensure that we improve the lot of children who live in and attend schools in rural areas.

It is an area of special interest to us. It is an area into which we have invested time and resources. It is an area of which we acknowledge that the playing fields have not been levelled.

However, I must say that some of these rural schools outdo some of their urban counterparts and previously advantaged schools.

So, it is a mixed bag of fortunes for rural children. This is a bit unfortunate. Thank you.

Mr S F DU TOIT: Hon Minister, the questions that were supplied to us state “details furnished”. We were not furnished with such details.

So, my question has reference to the assistance the department renders to rural boarding schools. Has the Department of Basic Education launched any school garden projects for educational as well as subsistence purposes so as to enable these boarding schools to be self- sufficient and not dependent on the department. If yes, please provide details. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, I won’t imagine us having special garden projects to supplement schools in terms of food. Schools, on their own initiative and with the support of their district and provincial department, work on measures to supplement their provisions to meet their needs.

The national Department of Basic Education has norms and standards. These allow us to stipulate the level to which boarding schools are funded. Those norms and standards have been determined in such a way as to enable a school to be self-sufficient.

This means that boarding schools all over the country will receive preferential norms and standards.

Agriculture schools have many facilities. They have boreholes, they have water systems, they have tractors; they are able to supplement what they have. But ordinary boarding schools are just schools like other schools, after school they go and sleep, and our responsibility as government and their parents is to make sure that they are looked after.

Chair, I recently visited my own boarding school in Matatiele; it’s still the same thing, those children don’t go and work in gardens the way we used to work in gardens, from the school fees or from the subsidy from the department they have to look after the needs of the

children without making them go work in the gardens. That’s the situation, Chair.

Mr I NTSUBE: Chairperson, first and foremost I think it would have been really appropriate if the Minister of Basic Education would have actually condemned issues of alleged racism in Brackenfell High School in Cape Town; because it is a burning issue, she would have put the masses of our people into confidence that her department is really condemning whatever that has been happening in that school.

Chair, my question, appreciating as well the response by the Minister, it is very encouraging to hear that there is a long-term plan and budgeted for improvement on the conditions of the schools.

Hon Minister, the learners from this school come from small and nonviable farm schools, is it correct to assume that by transferring them to this school they are better education opportunities? Thank you very much, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, it’s logical that they are getting better education because – as I mentioned – a school with a very low number of learners it’s not able to get, by law, all the necessary facilities. I made an example of a school with

97 children from Grade R to Grade 7; and I said that school, the most you can give them is four teachers. There is no way four teachers can be able to look after all grades because Grade 1s, for instance, are not supposed to be left on their own; then you have Grade 12s which have multiple subjects, so, it is not only correct, it’s rational, it’s logical, that if you want to provide education to them ... because the member said that they are unviable, so, how do we say a school which is unviable will be able to provide good education? So, it’s not only fair, it’s also rational. Thank you, Chair.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Minister, we are 25 years down the line and the Department of Basic Education, DBE, is still struggling with infrastructural problems, it would appear as if there is just no care for our rural learners at these schools. We also know that you’ve closed down many of these nonviable schools and started the mega from

schools. But I can just give you one example of the Thaba Chweu Boarding School; the water there is insufficient for the number of children that have been enrolled from the schools that have closed down and this is creating a huge problem.

What I would like to know from you, Minister, is when will you and your department, once and for all, put a national plan in place for these rural schools to catch up on the backlog of not only school and boarding infrastructure but also the provision of water and sanitation that was found to be hugely lacking over the lockdown period and is still lacking? You can only visit

... I can speak from experience in Mpumalanga, go down to the northern areas in Blyde and those places, and you will see these people and the schools do not have running water.

Minister, will you, therefore, undertake to make sure that every learner in the country is taught at schools where the environment is conducive, for them to be able to be able to go to these rural schools? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, I can assure the member that the ruling party is a caring government, its focus is to make sure that it remedies the ills of the past that it inherited; because the ruling party,

23 years down the line, it’s still dealing with the

300 years or more of apartheid and its legacy. So, that’s what it is. So, the schools that we are with the lack of water, it’s what the ruling party has inherited, not what it brought with it.

Having said that, Chair, I can assure the member that the National School Plan is exactly meant to do that, on and on going basis improve the conditions that the ruling party in the past 22 years has been dealing with from the

300 years of apartheid rule which has created or left that legacy. So, the school plan is meant for that, we have the plan, we have a commitment, we are working on it on a daily basis, we are not sleeping on our laurels, and can assure the member that that’s what informs our infrastructure plans and that’s what we’re working on.

And also to remind the member that development is a journey. So, I can’t wake up here and say yes, tomorrow I

can say once and for all schools are going to be ready; we’ve been working on that, it’s a 300 years legacy, it’s clear that in 22 years it’s not been easy to deal with it but there is a commitment, member, I can assure you there is a plan. On an ongoing programme, the Deputy Minister, DM, every Friday meets all infrastructure implementing agencies to monitor the work, to support the work that is happening both at national and provincial because it is a process that we are ceased with and we are committed to. Thank you very much, Chair.

Question 100:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair, our response is that the Department of Basic Education has developed a comprehensive plan to roll out Information and Communications Technology, ICT, to all schools. The plan will adopt a phase in approach, like in all other programmes, because we can’t do everything overnight.

We first prioritised schools of learners with special needs because they are hard to teach schools, which needs

lots of support and I can assure you that we have done a lot of work already on specials schools.

The second priority is the multigrade schools farm schools. They are again hard to teach schools and that’s where we are also rolling out ICT. Thereafter, we are going to focus on quintile 1 and 3 schools in rural areas and townships. The last group which we are working with that will also benefit are quintile 4 and 5 schools. We are working from the bottom, also ensuring that the privileged part of the system also begins to look after itself.

As a department, we have partnered with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies and the private sector, which is rolling out virtual classes in the 76 districts where we work. Also, all the different companies that are working in the space of ICT have partnered with us, that’s why we have already finished work in schools of learners with special needs. All 427 have already been fully with ICT as the first phase of the work that we are doing. So, we are working together with the Department of Communications and Digital

Technologies and the private sector, including the resources that are there in the provinces and also in the national departments. Thank you, Chair.

Mr M E NCHABELENG: Thank you, hon Minister for your response to the question, it is encouraging to see that there is a plan and that it is intended to start with disadvantaged schools. Does the Minister have an idea as to when will this programme will finally start and how much will it cost to implement this programme? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, everything equal with the support that we are enjoying from ICT companies in the country, Post Office, Telkom, Vodacom, Cell C, etc, working with us. We hope that by the end of this current administration, we should have finalised the plans that we have at hand.

The estimations that we have worked out with the private sector and everybody in what we call the ICT Phakisa in Education gave us a figure of about R29 billion. For us to finish this project completely, we need about

R30 billion. That’s why I am saying funds and capacity permitting, we should be able to do that.

We are in some instances experiencing very serious setbacks. In some areas, we found that a school has been fully kitted with everything but the next morning the school has been broken into and all the equipment have been taken. There are major setbacks that we experience in the sector, but our plan, as I said, everything equal should be finished at the end of this administration at a cost of about R30 billion.

Mr C F B SMIT: Hon Chair, I believe that hon Labuschagne has sent information that I will handle the question on her behalf. Hon Minister, is it rational that 25 years after democracy, we still must ask questions about capacitating our public schools with the necessary technology to enable our learners to get the maximum experience of teaching and learning? It is true that COVID-19 has fast-tracked the Fourth Industrial Revolution, 4IR, in many countries and that South Africa has been left far behind with regards to most basic teaching necessities.

South African schools are still battling with basic needs such as ablution facilities, adequate water, overcrowded classrooms, people and teacher ratio that are too high and no database of substitute teachers. It is not surprising that we cannot adequately provide information and communication solutions in our public schools. What partnership or agreement does the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation have with Square Kilometre Array, SKA, in the Northern Cape to increase the bandwidth and internet connection for schools especially in the rural communities?

Furthermore, what are the plans to ensure that South African schools become more innovative and make a paradigm shift in assisting children in rural communities facing possible future pandemics? Would the department commit to ensuring that schools in rural areas and elsewhere are provided with Smart Boards, internet connection and remote learning with partnership schools? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: It is not only a question of ICT being rational, it is necessary and

important that’s why we are prioritising it. The challenges about the sector are well known as they are public. I don’t have to repeat them that, yes, we continue to experience them with regard to basic facilities, ablution or water because if there is no water provision in a community in a rural area, there won’t be reliable water provision in schools. The responsibility of the department starts at the gate. If there is no water outside the gate, the school is just a victim like all those communities. I really don’t want to dwell on that because it is a reality that in areas where water is scarce, as a sector, we will also be negatively affected. It is not the making of the Department of Basic Education and I don’t want to go back and compare 22 years with 300 years.

It is difficult to eradicate a deliberate policy that was meant to disadvantage people and try to reverse it as we can see from the work. We are extremely committed. If you read every manifesto of the ruling party, it would tell you our priority and commitment is around the poor. The poor don’t only live in rural areas. The majority of our kids are in urban and township schools. They are equally

negatively affected. They are in informal settlements and farming communities. The majority of our learners are in urban areas and they are equally affected and that’s why our focus, in addition to rural, is also the poor wherever they are.

You are quite right, it is not only rational, it is necessary and important and that’s why we are prioritising it. Thank you, Chair.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Yes, hon Chairperson, hon members, and hon Minister, I am partly covered by your response on the previous question. My question was: In light of the fact that in 2019 a number of schools experienced zero matric pass rate due to poor infrastructure, sanitation, no access to water or even textbooks, whether there has been any progress made to improve the situation and if the Minister and her department has any mechanism put in place to overturn the state of public education system especially in rural schools and to fulfil its constitutional mandate of providing equal basic education? I thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, hon Mfayela, by law, provinces are supposed to report to me quarterly on schools that performed below the national average, which they always do. That’s how we monitor. People who have to turn the fortunes of those schools are provinces and districts. All we do as the department is to support them.

I can assure you, hon Mfayela, that I also personally visit these schools to check what are the issues. It has nothing to do with infrastructure and books not arriving, it is just schools which are badly run or schools which are ... that’s why we are rationalising most of them.

They are schools which are not viable. Most of those schools which would have zero pass rate, when you go there, you realise that that school was not even supposed to have existed; it is a 75 learners school with four teachers and then they get zero results, for instance, it is a school I visited in Bela-Bela. They have 75 kids and are from Grade R to Grade 12. There is no way they could have been able to produce anything. It has nothing to do with infrastructure or books having arrived late, it is just an unviable and dysfunctional school.

People continue to take kids to schools which will not produce any different results, hence the priority to rationalise but also to help those schools which are dysfunctional to become functional where the head or senior management is unable to run the school adequately. You can teach kids under the tree if you have a good teacher and adequate resources, that school is bound to succeed.

Infrastructure is not always the only factor that determines the functionality of the school, it is leadership and management but also the functionality of the school basically. If it is dysfunctional, it will not be functional irrespective of how much you try. That’s why we keep on ensuring that we visit them, diagnose what the results are and then come with responses but that is mainly the responsibility of provinces. What I do is to monitor and get reports and determine whether interventions are going to be helpful or not or if we need to help them. Thank you, Chair.

Mr A ARNOLDS: Chairperson, hon member Zandamela is going to ask the question. Thank you.

Mr S ZANDAMELA: Yes, Chairperson, okay. Am I audible Chair? Hon Minister, year in, year out, we hear the reports of how the Department of Basic Education has failed learners yet again. With these failures, sometimes leading to loss of lives, which the department never wants to take accountability for. Schools lack proper toilets and basic infrastructure. Some don’t even have textbooks or proper learning material. How then do you foresee the department delivering ICT infrastructure when it consistently fails to provide the most basic of service delivery for schools especially those in townships and rural areas? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: No, Chair, members should just watch the space. I was in some deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, last week, at a 98-year-old school. It is an old school. They were able to integrate ICTs and reading in a very amazing manner.

The member should visit schools here in the Western Cape. They have ICTs back-to-back. He should visit Gauteng and see Gauteng online. I am not speculating about what could be done. I am talking about what is happening. The member

must watch the space and he will rejoice with me to say the revolution has arrived and that our children are in for good things.

*IsiZulu*:

... ungakathazeki wena lungu ...

*English*:

... just watch and see. You’ll be in awe like all of us. I think as an activist or a politician you’ll feel that the struggle was worth it. The black child at Grade 1 ...

*IsiZulu*:

... uyatofoza naye ...

*English*:

... and that’s what we are providing. Thanks, Chair.

Question 93:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair. Yes, the question as read is about the assistance with social welfare. Chair, our response is that the provincial Education Departments work with the Department

of Social Development and the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, referring learners who require social welfare assistance and not only welfare assistance, but a variety of support that they need. If a child is violated they are the first ones to assist us. When we identify problems and when a child is in a very difficult conditions, social development is the first call that goes to them.

Therefore, we want to say that in addition to the school itself identifying vulnerable learners, the Department of Social Development and Sassa have been extremely helpful in assisting us with referrals and protecting children from, indeed, dropping out of school and already be in complete distressful situations that could, as a member correctly mentioned, lead to drop out to juvenile delinquency and all sorts of social ills, but we work very close with them and they are very helpful.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Chair, once again hon Boshoff because Christians’ connection ... Thank you. Minister, thank you for the reply. However, the first step towards learner retention is definitely improve quality and access to

early childhood development as an intervention to improve the literacy and numeracy and it must be started early in the development of the child. This early childhood intervention is especially lacking in marginalised areas in South Africa. Minister, you must agree - even though it is not your department - that the Department of Social Development has consistently failed young children in the country before and during the pandemic, and has been a cause of many early childhood development, ECD, centres closing their doors permanently causing the drop out way to increase significantly.

The two departments, that is your department and Social Development, have delayed the integration of ECD from Social Development to Basic Education for several years now. Minister, can you today give us an exact timeline for the implementation and migration of ECD to Basic Education as we have seen that even during the lockdown this sector suffered tremendously because of the lack of support and direction. Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Thank you very much, Chair. I can assure the member that between ourselves and

social development we are working very well and very hard to make sure that, indeed, between those two departments we develop an integrated early childhood development programme. Therefore, the member is right that early investment in many instances determines the fortunes of the child. If your foundations for learning are weak, then the entire system becomes weak. Therefore, we agree with the member to say that you can only guarantee better outcomes if you have laid a solid foundation. It is like a house, if your foundation is weak it is going to be really experiencing problems all the time. That’s why the ruling party itself conference after conference has insisted on making sure that we have an ECD programme.

At the last conference we even took the resolution to say that social development must work with education, not because education is much better because we have a bigger footprint. However, internationally ECD in most countries falls under the Department of Education. In terms of the migration plan, Chair, we are quite willing to come to the NCOP and give you full details to say that between now and the end of the year 2021, but we anticipate that the full migration would have happened not even in 2021,

only in 2022, because of the disruptions that we’ve had with the lockdown, but just the inability to get things right because of the lockdown as a sector ourselves as educating had to withdraw to our sector and make sure that we pay attention to the phasing in of the opening of schools.

On the other hand, social development also had major things to look at questions of food of poverty and already helping people who were in desperate need at that time. So, we have reconvened and have restarted the plan and will be very grateful and very happy if you can give us an opportunity to really come and give a full presentation about the migration plans that we have around social development. I fully agree with the member that it is a very important programme if we are going to change the fortunes of our children in this country.

Ms S A LUTHULI: Chairperson, it’s hon Luthuli and I will take that question.

*IsiZulu:*

Mphathiswa Wemfundo Eyisekelo, kuyaziwa ukuthi i-EFF iyiqembu elishumayela ukuthi isikole nesikole asibe nosonhlalakahle ozokwazi ukusiza abantwana ezikoleni nokwazi ukuhlonza izinkinga ezihlangabezana nabantwana. Kwimpendulo yakho Mphathiswa uyachaza ukuthi akuzona nje kuphela zezenhlalakahle ezindingekayo kepha sithola nabantwana abanukubezekile abadinga labosonhlalakahle ezikoleni.

Yini umnyango ongase ukwenze ukuqinisekisa ukuthi isikole nesikole siyabathola labosonhlalakahle ikakhulukazi izikole ezisemalokishini nezikole ezisemaphandleni.

Ngiyabonga.

*English*:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair ...

*IsiZulu:*

... umbono wami uthi, yebo isikole nesikole siyazidinga izinsizakalo, hhayi usonhlalakahle kuphela, izinsizakalo zezenhlalakahle ngoba izidingo zezenhlalakahle ziningi. Osonhlalakahle asebenza imikhakha ekhethekile, abanye abantwana badinga i-educational psychology, omunye

umntwana ufuna usonhlalakahle esebenza nabantwana abahlukumeziwe, esinye isikole sidinga isazi sokusebenza kwengqondo esisebenza ngendlela ethize.

Ngakhoke, ngendlela izifundazwe ezisebenza ngakhona, kwisifunda nesifunda kukhona iqembu, likhona iqembu labantu elisebenza kwisifunda elizosebenzisana nezikole ngokuya kwezidingo zazo. Ngakhoke uma uzobeka usonhlalakahle oyedwa kuyefana nokuthi ubeke udokotela oyedwa, uma ngenza nje isilinganiso, uma uphethwe yikhanda usuke engekho udokotela wamehlo noma akekho udokotela wezindlebe noma owamadolo, ngakhoke, uma beyiqembu bayakwazi ukuthi basizane ezingeni lwezifunda, bakwazi ukusiza izikole.

Ngakhoke, angivumi ukuthi usonhlakahle oyedwa ingaze ikwazi ukusiza isikole ngezidingo zayo zonke zezengqondo nezenhlakahle. Kungakho kokunye sesidinga nama-NGOs aqoke imikhakha ethize njengo-Teddy Bear, abakwazi ukusebenzisana nabantwana abahlukunyeziwe, ngoba iqoke umkhakha okhethekile. Size siye kuma-NGOs uma osonhlalakahle bethu benganelanga. Kokunye size siye

kuma-NGOs afana noFairmed o-Families South Africa, Famsa,

uma mhlawumbe inkinga isemndenini kuya ngokuthi mhlawumbe ukuhlala komntwana ekhaya. Ngakhoke kudingeka ...

*English:*

... a very holistic team to help a school and not an individual social worker, Chair ...

*IsiZulu:*

... ngiyabonga.

*English:*

Mr A B CLOETE: Thank you, Chairperson and thank you, Minister. There is much more to the problem than there is part of the problem ... there is a problem. How should learners and even teachers be able to do their work if there is no running water and electricity? I will put it in this way, whose poor service delivery is in an equalizer, Minister. Recently, residence across Matjhabeng Local Municipality experienced both electricity and water outage a lot of being a result of debt owed to the city if you put it again everyone in Matjhabeng was affected, Minister, not just a few.

As a Cabinet member and a senior member of the ANC you need to attend to this. How should those learners continue to do their work if their local authorities can’t even ensure basic service. Put differently, Minister, how concerned are you that service delivery affects our learners?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: I’m obviously concerned when our learners are not able to access the basic needs. That is an obvious one and it is not even there to be debated. It is very concerning because the member is right that it does affect learning and teaching, but what we can’t do is that we will stop life and say that in Matjhabeng there is no water, therefore we close doors.

We are going to do everything in our power to make sure that once dealing with all the difficulties our children’s education is protected because education is an alienable right. That is why what we do we bring water tanks, we put very important person, VIP, toilets and we even dig pit holes to make sure that life continues because it has to continue, even in the facing of most severe difficulties.

I’m sure people have never lived through difficulties, they would think that they would die if they can see what sometimes people are subjected to which is not what we obviously happy about. But, what we know that education as an alienable right and under any circumstances cannot be denied those children, and that is why we will do anything possible, portable water, portable toilets, even trees and anything else to make sure that they go to school. So, we are concerned but we can’t stop living because of there are difficulties and we won’t stop teaching because there are difficulties. We will continue teaching them under those conditions because education is more important than anything else that we can give them as a nation. Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr M E NCHABELENG: Thank you, hon Minister, for the answer to the question. Has there been a significant number of kids that have not return since the lockdown?

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Member, we are monitoring quite closely the return of learners to schools. In the beginning when we were opening schools we had quite up to 20% of learners that had not returned,

but from September we have seen them trickling in where in most instances you will find that we are up to well at matric level we are up to 98% of return. So, we did not have too much of problems because we could account for some of the learners that were not there. They have been caught up in difficulties of either unplanned an unintended pregnancy - so, at least those we could account for the missing percentage in your matric.

With the internal grades, our estimation from the collection of records that we can’t account for almost 10% and in a sector as big as ours 10% could translate to about 1,4 million, which is a big number. However, it could be, and that is what we are following up, most parents have promised ... [Inaudible.] ... that they will not go to your independent schools, but your home schooling. Therefore, I think of the challenges around home schooling, we didn’t witness lots of registration of parents taking to home schooling. It could be that some parents that have already decided that they are going to wait for next year.

However, we are sure that as we write examinations, and the other thing which has been difficult is the timetable that we are using, because kids come this week and next week they are not coming and in other instances they have to rotate. They come on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, Thursday is another class. So, even then it is quite difficult to monitor. However, I can say, Chair, indeed, we estimated that between Grade 1 and Grade 11, there is 10% of learners that we cannot account for - it could be that they have been waiting to reregister. They thought that after waiting for too long they would have lost a lot of days, therefore, they will just repeat a grade or

... parents are home schooling on their own, we are not sure.

We will have definite number which we can also share with Members of Parliament now when we write exams, because for exams everybody has to present themselves. That’s when we will be able to keep definite statistics, but there are learners that we can’t account for, member, especially in the internal grades not Grade 12.

Question 101:

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Hon Chair, my response is that in terms of levels of provisioning of the norms and standards the average of learner educator ratio should be and is around 1:32. Thirty-two learners is to one teacher. This is far below of the ration of 1:35 per primary schools. For what has really happened is that despite that fact that we had difficulties even before the lockdown we are experiencing more difficulties with the need for social distancing that we need to do in some instances we have to break classes into two. When we had a class of 45, we can only accommodate 20. So, if there is 45 in a class and there are five hanging rooms.

However, there are other factors creating problems which is the space so even if we could bring substitute teachers you will not have spaces for them to do teaching. So, therefore we are just forced to rotate. The other things also are subject streaming at schools, which can actually create larger classes where you find subjects like languages are bigger.

In terms of the supply on average we produce 23 000 new teachers annually, as compared to 18 000 as demanded by educators. As a result, as a sector we experienced distributional supply challenges that continue to be the shortages in certain subjects. However, the main issue now currently affecting us is really your teacher supply, is your space and that is why as a sector we have three programmes that we are looking at to assist us that are Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative, Asidi, that will get us to help provinces because infrastructure is a provincial competency, but national has been given money to really assist provinces.

The second one, is the same again sanitation to the provincial competency, but again the President has really urged Treasury to give us money. So, we work hard to work with provinces. They have their own school programmes while others are struggling others are doing well. As I say as the Department of Basic education, we have what we call Asidi, that really accelerate schools’ delivery initiative in selected provinces. We do not work in every province. Your safe programmes.

We also looking at replacing schools and targeting to eradicate schools. We are reducing the teacher allocation or the teacher to learner allocation especially with the COVID-19. However, the major problem is your infrastructure.

Chair, I was told that if we were to adequately provide spaces under COVID-19, we will need 100 000 classrooms which we do not have and that is why we now all these difficulties having to get kids rotating and having timetables rotating differently. That is how we really being coping around the question of shortages of teachers. It is not the major problem; the major problem is inadequate school infrastructure that is really affecting us as a sector.

Ms M N GILLION: Hon Chairperson, let me take this opportunity to thank the hon Minister for the comprehensive and honest response to this question. Hon Minister, I am happy to hear the actual numbers that you have given us indicating the commitment to deal with the infrastructure backlog in our schools. I believe there is

a target of eradicating more than 3 000 pit latrines in schools.

Will this be the last batch of pit latrines and when will they be finally eradicated? Thank you, Minister.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, in line with the budget that Treasury gave us we were supposed to be done with them in the coming financial year, 2021-22. That is what the budget indicate, but if you recall, 2020 was almost a wasted year, because from March until June we could not work. Even now with the lockdown, under level one lockdown we are beginning to see problems emanate from the lockdown. I am told that we are running short of cement and your roofing material, so even if we have started the pace and the momentum is not as fast and as good as it could be because even the construction industry is experiencing its own problems from the manufacturing side of things.

So, the plan was to really complete by 2021-22, but I doubt that with the six months that we have lost, we will be able to finish in 2022. We might have to go and ask

for an extra year in view of the challenges that were brought by the lockdown, but current ongoing challenges with the availability of materials from the building sector and the building environment. The plan was for 2021-22, but I am not confident about it. I think the honest and the correct answer will be 2023 because of the challenges we met because of the lockdown and we are continuing to experience because of the problems in the industry.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Hon Chairperson, hon Khawula will take care of that question.

Mr M KHAWULA (KwaZulu-Natal): Hon Chairperson ... [Interjections.]

*English*:

AN HON MEMBER: Aw! The elephant!

*IsiZulu*:

Mnu Yebo. Sawubona wemhlonishwa Ngqongoshe ... [Ubuwelewele.]

*English*:

AN HON MEMBER: Yes! The elephant!

*IsiZulu*:

UNGQONGQOSHE WEMFUNDO EYISISEKELO: ... [Akuzwakali.]

Sawubona.

Mnu M KHAWULA: ... kuhle ukuba nawe emuva kwesikhathi eside kangaka.

*English*:

*IsiZulu*:

UNGQONGQOSHE WEMFUNDO EYISISEKELO: Yebo!

*English*:

Mr M KHAWULA: Hon Chairperson and hon Minister, I just want you to address the disparities in respect of what you said. You said your officials Primary Pupil Learner, PostProvisioning Norm, PPN, ratio is 1:32, but practically it is not so. When you go to schools, you find that in some schools 1:25 and sometimes 1:30 which is much better. There are worse scenarios where 1:35 or 1:40. Why are there so many disparities, hon Minister?

Also, in respect of the living standards there are also lot of disparities, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, your national norm is R1 466 per learner. However, in KwaZulu- Natal, the department pays only R955 per learner from Quintiles 1 to 5. So it is quite a lot of disparities which leaves a gap which also impacts on quality.

Lastly, hon Minister, in all these calculations Grade R is excluded. It excludes the numbers of Grade R. It starts from Grade 1 upwards. Grade R is paid very less. Actually in KwaZulu-Natal Grade R is paid at R191 per learner, whereas the other grades Quintiles 1 to 3 is R955. Now there are lots of disparities even in the allocation of the PPN, Grade R is not part of the school community, it is another calculation altogether. So, hon Minister can you please tell us. When are you going to attend to these disparities which impact on quality?

Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, firstly, in term of the learner to teacher he is quite correct that there are privileged schools where School Governing Bodies are able to reduce the class size by having what we call

School Governing Posts. They do it in townships where they feel that 1:35 which is the standard number is not good for them and then they supplement what government gives them to create posts. However, in some of the instances as I have said in the earlier question, our biggest problem Chair is the infrastructure. So, you might find that yes we have right sized number of teachers in terms of your leaner to teacher ratio, but you find that there are inadequate classrooms for us to break children to different classes. Infrastructure comes back again as a problem.

The other thing about the money that we give to schools per learner, and I think hon members are comparing urban schools to rural schools in the provinces. What will happen government in terms of the financial systems it funds per head so if there are million children in a province, they give you money for million children.

Provinces have to budget in terms of how they break that so there is no extra money that will come beyond how Financial and Fiscal Commission, FFC, would have calculated it.

Provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape would have the advantage of having money. That is why they will keep with the norms and standards because they would have a good number of your fee paying schools where they are able to give just R100 or R145 per learner and therefore are able to shift the money to poor schools whereas poor provinces which are predominantly rural they are not able to have extra money that comes from fee paying schools to give to poor schools. That is why you find that sometimes they are unable to balance their books. It is not lack of care, but it is really trying to live within the means that they have. Grade R, the hon member is right, that is why when we bring the Bella Bill to yourselves for the first time we are adding Grade R as part of basic education. All along we were not getting the budget for Grade R because Grade R up to now is not part of basic education so we are not getting money from Treasury for them.

This processes of an integrated Early Childhood Development, ECD, programme is going to help us also to ensure that Treasury begins to give the sector money for Grade R which legally up to now it is an arrangement that

we have as basic education, but it is not catered for in terms of the budget for basic education because legally in the Act, Grade R is not part of basic education, it would have started from Grade 1 to 12 and that is the money we are getting. And he is right it is unfortunate that we want the most qualified teachers to teach Grade R, but we do not have resources to maintain that quality that we want. So, we are working on it Chair ...

*IsiZulu*:

... baba uKhawula, iwona mcimbi esiwuphethe lowo, ukulungisa lonke lolu daba okhuluma ngalo.

Mr K MOTSAMAI: Hon Chairperson and hon Minister, if there is one thing that COVID-19 pandemic has reduced it is the need to build more schools so that learners are not packed into overcrowded classes. That creates an environment that they are not able to ... [Inaudible.]

... I thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, let me agree with Mr Motsamai to say COVID-19 has really sharpened the contradictions in the sector. For as I say when we had to

estimate how many classes we need more is R100 000 which we obviously will not be able to provide in order to have proper distancing in classrooms. It also brought to the fore the need for us to employ more teachers. However, fortunately it also taught all of us like even now that we can still do the work of Parliament virtually without necessarily being in the same space and be as effective as we could be. So the member is right when he says that there are a lot of lessons we are taking from the COVID-

19 experience. However, there is also new energy brought to the sector.

*Setswana:*

Rre K MOTSAMAI: Modulasetilo, nna ga ke utlwe sepe.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Minister, please proceed.

UNGQONGQOSHE WEMFUNDO EYISISEKELO: Sengiqedile.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Chair and hon Minister, I am happy to see that you have admitted and it was an honest reply that infrastructure backlog is the main cause of what is

currently happening at our schools. However, we also had to admit that this is not a provincial problem, but rather a national problem. We all know that government closed down all the training colleges, years ago which was the biggest mistake as South Africa produced many educators at teacher training institutions. We are then very much aware that South Africa has round about 25 000 schools that cater for more than 14,2 million learners, across all nine provinces with enrolments increasing annually and teacher shortage growing. We have to try and find out why people are not wanting to become teachers.

We see many learners migrating from provinces; from one province to another without the money following them, placing an extra burden on the already cash strapped provincial education departments. Infrastructure grants have also been cut placing another burden on schools to adhere to the teacher-learner ratio. Minister, in provinces like Mpumalanga prior to COVID-19, so you must now give me an answer I am going to ask you. We saw up a

100 Grade 8 learners in a class and up to a 72 Grade 1 learners the class. Now if we had a 100 prior to COVID- 19: How are you managing these 100 students if you are

only allowed 20 in a class because of social distancing? Then hon Minister, if you are not able to handle it and we carry on with these back classes a teacher cannot teach. It is quite control and then to top it all Minister Mboweni in his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, stated that budgets to certain departments of which education is one, will have to be cut to finance other struggling entities and he also mentioned something like withholding salaries to teachers for the next three years. Minister to address the shortage to teachers and enabling a more conducive teaching environment, education budgets cannot be cut and should rather be increased.

Will you Minister commit to writing to Minister Mboweni and requesting that teacher and teacher environments not bear the brunt of bad political decisions, but that education budgets as well as teacher salaries be increased. Thank you, hon Chair.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Hon Chair, thanks to the question. Just to remind the member that answering questions presented to me by a Member of Parliament is a responsibility. So the hon member does not even need to

patronise me and say I am asking a question and you will have to answer. It feels very condescending and very patronising. So, I am here to answer questions as part of my obligation not because the hon member is instructing me to answer. It is my responsibility.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Thank you so much, hon Minister. I really appreciate it.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: “Ja.” So that you do not condescend and patronise me. I just think it is a problem.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: It is not condescending or patronising.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon members, if you can just stop the dialog. Let us not have a dialog. Let us have the responses to the questions.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: In terms of the infrastructure and we have never hidden it. Every time we give honest reports. The hon member cannot tell me anything about the infrastructure and challenges which I

do not know. I meet every second month with MECs and infrastructure is part of our agenda. So, I know all the things the hon member is talking about. So, it is not as if we visited Mpumalanga and then she really has a bigger report I know it. We have been admitting and it has been repeatedly said here that infrastructure continues to be an albatross to the system and that is why we are putting all energies behind it.

In terms of budgets moving with learners, the hon member will remember that budgets are a three-year cycle. So, if the budget has been decided in this Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, you cannot change every year to say a 100 kids have gone there and therefore the money should follow them. So we are guided by the budgeting cycle of government to do that.

That I must write to my colleague, Minister Mboweni, I will not. Again I will answer questions respectfully, but I also will take instructions from hon members that now you write. It is patronising of thinking that you can tell people what to do when you do not the right and the power to tell them what to do. So, I will do what I have

to do to a colleague when the need arises guided by the Cabinet and what the needs are.

In terms of social distancing, again the hon member is out of touch. We are already in schools and complying with the regulations. There are no learners who are 100. That is why we have had to change our time tabling that has rotational work kits. Unfortunately, group a comes this week, and group b comes next week. In some instances, some provinces have decided to platoon that other learners come in the morning other learners in the afternoons to deal and to cope with the big numbers that are there. So, there are no classes that are above 20 or beyond the social distancing because we will not be allowed by law to be able to really bring more than 100 learners in one classroom. It is not allowed. Let alone having 50 learners in one class. It is not allowed. So, we are doing all these things in order to comply with the law to make sure that the social distancing, but also to comply with the cycling of the budget and the rest of the things. The hon member can be rest assured that is an ongoing basis Chair we are grappling with to make sure that we give the best to our learners, we can do whatever

we can do or we try to do whatever we can do to make sure that things work out for our children. We are as committed to our learners as she is and we are not less committed. Therefore, there is no need to patronise and condescend, send and give instructions. No, there is no need for that. We are just as committed as you are. Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMERSON OF THE NCOP: The next questions will be for the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation sector. I don’t know if the minister is in the platform because I do see the Deputy Minister, but I want to welcome the Ministry of Higher Education. Good afternoon, to all the members. I now want to request the Question 102 from hon Maleka to be responded to.

But before that, let me clarify that the response by the minister is five minutes, two minutes by members to ask any follow-up question and four minutes response by the Minister to the follow-up question. I just want members not to make speeches, but to ask questions. Over to the Minister or the Deputy Minister who is ready to respond to our questions.

Question 102:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chairperson, I will be responding to the questions on behalf of the Minister who has apologised because he is not well. The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation requested all the universities to adopt a multimodal teaching and learning approach that included, but is not limited to online learning.

The approach includes teaching and learning support through the delivery of print-based teaching and learning materials, and materials on USV memory sticks. The Department of Higher Education and Training worked with all the universities to develop multimodal teaching and learning plans, which were approved by the Minister and funded in cut through the allocation of rein fenced COVID-19 responsive grant, to be complemented by funding that universities could redirect from their own council controlled budgets.

All universities needed an allocation of data to students in their plans, and on average, over 90% of undergraduate

students have been receiving data for teaching and learning purposes and over the past months. Many universities also included the acquisition of laptops for students in their plans, and to date, the latest university report shows that, on average, 72% of university students indicated that they needed a device and have been supported to obtain one.

The remaining students may be supported to acquire devices through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, net process. The ministry and the department also negotiated with mobile network operators for teaching and learning sites of university to be zero rated, thereby, enabling students to access them without any data costs, as well as significantly reduce data packages for students to be supplied through their universities.

This enables high level of digital access to students through laptops, tablets and smartphones. It is however recognised that, some students, and particularly poor students, may be living in environments which are not conducive to effective online learning. The universities

have prioritised for students to return back to campuses lockdown alert levels, and catch up programmes that are implemented to support the students to successfully complete their teaching and learning programmes. That is the end of the response, hon Chair.

Ms A D MALEKA: Through you, Deputy Chairperson, let me thank the Deputy Minister for the reply. I want to check, in the event that students fail as a results of the disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic, will the department assist universities to build a system geared to avoid academic and financial exclusions? Thank you, Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Through you, Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Maleka for that follow-up question. I must say that we have done everything in our power to ensure that all students receive the necessary support before they sit for their examination. The reports that we have been receiving in our visits to institutions indicate that actually, a lot of students were participating in the

online platforms that the universities have devised, but also in catch up programmes.

Also, we must affirm that our intention is to ensure that all students who have put in their academic work, and who have also ensured that they prepare sufficiently for the examinations, should be able to pass. The students who felt strongly that their academic year has been severely affected, some of them have deregistered and will be registering next year. We are confident concerning the results for next year. Therefore, whichever students who may be facing challenges for the academic year 2021, will receive the necessary support that they require, for them to further their studies from the universities and also from the department.

Mr M R BARA: Through you, Deputy Chairperson, let me thank the Deputy Minister for his response. Deputy Minister, I think that my question is not far from what hon Malika has tried to enquire about. Deputy Minister, I think that some learners have chosen to stay at home because of the challenges that the pandemic has kind of

put them under, to an extend that some have not gone back to school.

But my main question is, what is the department doing to try and assist those who are at home, without any kind of hope for intervention from the government due to COVID- 19? Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Well, like I said, hon Deputy Chair and hon Bara that, we have put in resources to ensure that every student is supported, and that no student is left behind through sending them materials, devises and all of that. But I think what is also important is that I should use this opportunity to make a special plea to those students who are still at home, who do not have devise, who do not have connectivity or who do not have data to inquire with their universities, because those students were part of those who were prioritised to return back to campus so that they get the necessary support at campus.

So, I really want us to use this opportunity to make that call to those students. In that way, they will be able to

get necessary support that they require for them to be able to complete their academic year, 2020.

*Afrikaans*:

Mnr A B CLOETE: Voorsitter, die Noord-Kaap is mooi groen.

Die ADJUNKVOORSITTER VAN DIE NRVP: Inderdaad.

Mr A B CLOETE: I want to get back to the whole issue of the disadvantaged families whose reality does not equate to what we have seen. Let’s start off by saying that Covid has had an immense impact on everyone. But I’ve had an interesting discussion earlier this year with almost a straight A-student and all she has ever wanted to do all year, is to study medicine to become a doctor. But she knows that she won’t be accepted to study medicine because of the colour of her skin. That is also being disadvantaged.

To the Deputy Minister I would like to ask, if she was able to stand here today and ask you, “why am I being denied the opportunity to study medicine at the

university on the basis of the colour of my skin?” What would your answer be to her?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Hon Deputy Chairperson, although this is a completely new question, I will respond to it. I must emphasize that there are historical issues that we are trying to address, and those historical issues includes the fact that the majority of this country, mainly black people, were systematically excluded by the apartheid system through policies that disallowed them to study certain professions in the universities.

Therefore, based on the number of spaces that are available, the universities are encouraged to consider historically disadvantaged individuals when they accept students in the fields of medicine. Generally, we have seen an improvement over the year. Of course, in terms of the participation rates of the young, black South Africans, there is still a lot that has to be done in order to address the systematic nature of young people in the past in which they were ostracised and excluded from the education system under apartheid.

Our intention, is to ensure that we achieve equity. But, I must assure every South African that, in the implementation of our equity objections and goals, we will always endeavour to ensure that there is inclusivity, that there is representativity and that no one should be systematically excluded if there is a space for that person to go and study.

But we are quite firm in ensuring that there are implement policies that will help us address policies of the past, particularly, in the field of medicine in many of our institutions. We have expanded by offering new universities and various medicine and health academies, whose intention is to try and increase a number of spots that are available. We believe that into the future, there may be not necessarily these kind of policies because, we would have been able to achieve total equity, ultimately.

Mr S ZANDAMELA: Through you, Deputy Chairperson, Deputy Minister, COVID-19 has had devastating effects in the lives of the students from poor families, from inability

to learn, no access to learning tools and increased financial burden to those parents who lost their jobs.

What support mechanisms has the department put in place if there’s any, to identify and support the students in order to ensure that they stay in school and do not drop out as a result of these setbacks? Thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Zandamela for that follow-up question. Firstly, the Minister has issued regulations to guide all institutions to be able to negotiate with students who are unable to pay either for their accommodation or tuition, and for them to justify why are they unable to pay, particularly those students that are not covered by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS.

Secondly, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme has made commitments to cover the exertion of their academic year by giving allowances to students which will include their stay on campus and also other allowances that are

due to those students in those universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges, whose academic year would be extended beyond the year 2020.

Some universities will be closing around February or March, so, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme is finalising negotiations with Treasury in order to ensure that all of that is covered. So, I want to encourage parents who are facing difficulties not to let their children drop out, but to approach universities in order to make arrangements to be able to pay for their tuition fees and all other costs for the education of their children.

Question 95:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, has informed the department that there was no external interference in the procurement process in relation to the initial laptop tender. The NSFAS categorically denies any allegations of external supply chain interference in

the laptop procurement process. A comprehensive report was received from NSFAS on the procurement process followed in relation to the cancellation of the initial laptop tender. This report has also been submitted to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology. The NSFAS has reported that no staff member was involved in any allegations in relation to the cancellation of the laptop tender. The NSFAS categorically denies any allegations of staff members or any other party’s involvement in the cancellation of the laptop tender.

The abovementioned report provides the details of the end-to-end procurement process of the laptop tender which was cancelled on the basis that no acceptable bid was received. The tender was cancelled in accordance with regulation 13(1)(C) of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act: Regulations.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Ms S E Lucas): Thank

you very much, hon Deputy Minister. Due to the network challenges, we will now call on hon Labuschagne to ask the follow up question.

Ms C LABUSCHAGNE: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair. Hon Deputy Minister, NSFAS has been plagued by fraud and corruption for a number of years now and it seems even with the extension of the administrator’s contract, processes are still being manipulated and NSFAS is still in the bad state it was before the appointment of the administrator. The concern with these attempts to interfere in the tender processes is now even more concerning as tender processes are published and withdrawn without consultation or explanation; however, you gave the explanation with reference to the regulations. Thank you for that.

Deputy Minister, it is of grave concern that NSFAS advertised the tender for the information and communications technology, ICT, system for the disbursement of student funds and then withdrew it weeks later. The NSFAS cannot afford another procurement scandal.

Deputy Minister, can you assure us that the ICT system tender process will be dealt with appropriately and be above board, and furthermore, with the tender being

withdrawn, can you assure students that there will not be any delay in the payment of bursaries in 2021, as current systems have been plagued by system errors and delays?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP and hon Labuschagne. Firstly, I must say that if there are any allegations — and substantiated allegations

— in relation to any interference or corruption or alleged fraud that relates to this particular tender, hon members or anybody should submit all of that evidence to the relevant authorities for further investigation.

As far as we are concerned, from the report that we have received from NSFAS on this particular tender, there has not been any irregularities. There’s nothing untoward in terms of them issuing the tender, going through the process and also withdrawing the tender.

I would like to assure the hon member and students out there that, since the appointment of the administrator by the former Minister of Higher Education in August 2018, there has been significant improvement in the

disbursement of allowances and funds to students, compared to the period before the appointment of the administrator. Yes, there have been challenges, particularly in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and also as it relates to some of the systems challenges that some of the universities have been confronted with.

I have personally been going with the NSFAS administrator and the NSFAS team to some of the institutions that have been plagued by these challenges, together with the Minister, to try and ensure that we resolve whatever problems and challenges students have been confronted with as it relates to their allowances. The system may not be 100% ... proof but we believe that it has been able to deliver to the majority of students at universities and TVET colleges, and we are quite confident that in time this system will definitely ensure that the majority of students are able to get their allowances on time and without interference to the academic programme.

Mr A A ARNOLDS: Thank you Deputy Chairperson. Deputy Minister, thank you for reporting on the tender that was cancelled. However, the sole purpose for the procurement of laptops for students was so that no student would be left behind in the 2020 academic year. Let me also say that we can no longer stand by and see the further crippling of an entity that was plagued by political interference, mismanagement, irregular spending and lack of controls. The crisis at NSFAS threatens the functioning of the higher education sector.

Deputy Minister, has there been any ... and you have mentioned some but we need to hear from you so that we don’t come back and get the same mismanagement at NSFAS. What any other significant changes are there at NSFAS?

Can you give us more details in terms of those changes that are there to ensure that that entity is functioning the way it is supposed to, because students are struggling to get what is rightfully theirs?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson. The Ministry and the department are paying close and special

attention to NSFAS precisely because we believe not only that it is just too big to fail, but also secondly, that it affects hundreds of thousands of students who, you know, all that they want to do is to study and complete the academic year. And therefore, if there are any challenges that are brought to our attention by any South African, we hastily go on and try to resolve whatever the challenges are. We interact with the administrator and senior management at NSFAS on a consistent basis to make sure that we are alert to whatever the challenges are.

I want to assure South Africans that we have made it an ultimate priority to ensure that NSFAS does not fail. I also want to make a plea that if there are any students out there ... and we have had several inquiries which we have attended to. If there are any students or institutions out there that have been faced with massive nonpayment of allowances to students, the Ministry and the department, together with NSFAS, should be alerted and we will endeavour to attend to each of those cases so that students ultimately receive their allowances.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Yes, Madam Deputy Chairperson, I’m partly covered by the Deputy Minister’s answers but I just want to push my question further ... as to whether the department has launched an investigation into the normal recruitment procedures that were flouted by the NSFAS administrator and if the ... [Inaudible.] ... has any plans of appreciation of disciplinary action. If not, why not; if so, what is the relevant progress made, given the fact that NSFAS was placed under administration in 2018 due to mismanagement? Has the department since put any mechanism in place to improve management within NSFAS? I thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you. Well, firstly, the appointment of the administrator was in itself, you know, together with a team of experts in various fields that relates to the, you know, I mean, saving NSFAS. So, the appointment of the team and the administrator was in itself an intervention as a result of the crisis that NSFAS was facing at the time. That’s the first thing.

The second thing is that, as far as we are concerned as the Ministry and the department, there has not been substantive allegations that have been brought to our attention which would warrant any form of investigation into the administrator or into senior managers or the team that has been appointed at NSFAS.

There have been ongoing investigations into some of the employees at NSFAS as a result of corruption and other acts that have been committed over time, and we are confident that the systems ... that the team that the Minister has appointed at NSFAS is doing a good job in ensuring that the system is full proof from corruption, fraud and mismanagement. We are hoping that, from now onwards with the introduction of a new chief executive officer, CEO, management and board, it will hopefully be smooth sailing.

Question 88:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Yes, I am here, I am just looking for ... thank you, the 26 universities, including universities of technology are cognisant of needs to constantly review

their curricula responding to the changing context, including the changing nature of work due to imperatives such as Fourth Industrial Revolution,4IR. In Higher Education, curricula are being developed that are responsive to emerging areas such as data, science, artificial intelligence, robotics, nano materials and other 4IR related areas.

Twenty-two universities are already offering formal programme courses in Fourth Industrial Revolution technology studies, namely in block chain, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, robotics and other disciplines. Furthermore, all universities are participating in research collaboration and sharing of ideas and knowledge on the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In our Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges, much is being done to prepare for the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The TVET curriculum, although slower to adapt to the challenges of the 4IR addressing the type and quality of skills required for industry. This includes preservice training and industry experience for TVET college

lecturers, moving towards specialisation and new technologies and trades and upskilling and exposure toward is practically happening in the industry.

This is a second part of the question. Various initiatives are already being implemented by the department and the institutions such as universities, TVET colleges and entities of the department, including Sector Education and Training Authority, Seta. The department is also working closely with other government departments, to create an enabling environment for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, for example with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, Science and Innovation, Employment and Labour, Trade and Industry and also Basic Education.

The department is continuously advocating for change in all institution curricula, which includes the career development, stakeholder’s conference that is currently taking place, is focussing on the digital divide, realities for the public education and training, and youth of South Africa, with the main conference in November 2020 on career learning and management for

sustainable livelihoods. Secondly, the department 2019 research colloquium forecast on the Fourth Industrial Revolution as it deemed. Thirdly, the department research programme on labour market intelligence includes a research element on Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Finally, the Ministerial Task Team was established to on the implication of the Fourth Industrial Revolution for postschool education and training. The task team has finalised and submitted its report and recommendations to the Minister. The report revision a postschool education and training, PSET, a system that is able to deliver a strong core of education and training programme that is aligned to the changing needs of South African society and the world of work in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The department will use the report and its recommendation to engage the sector and support it, to respond appropriately to the recommendations including through a curriculum response.

*IsiZulu:*

Nk S A LUTHULI: Ngibonge Sekela Sihlalo, Sekela Ngqongqoshe siyaqonda ukuthi uMnyango Wezemfundo

Eyisisekelo uyahluleka ukubambisana noMnyango wakho. Sikusho lokho ngenxa yokuthi izikole zethu emaphandleni nasemalokishini azikakwazi ukuthi zithole izinsizakusebenza ezifana namalebhu ekhompyutha, ukuze ukuthi umntwana uma ngabe efika emazingeni aphezulu ebe enalo ulwazi lokusebenzisa amakhompyutha.

Umbuzo wethu Sekela uthi: Yini eniyenzayo ukuthi nikwazi ukusebenzisana noMnyango wezemfundo Eyisisekelo ukuthi lo mbono eninawo ikakhulukazi kule- Fourth Industrial Revolution ukuthi abantwana baqambe befika emabangeni aphezulu bebe benalo ulwazi ukuze bakwazi ukusebenzisana nanokuthi bakwazi ukufikelela kahle ukusebenzisa izinsiza eninazo? Noma mhlawumbe nisebenza nodwa nje anikwazi ukusebenzisana nezemfundo Eyisisekelo? Phela udaba luqala phansi kuthi kuqambe kufika phezulu fanele umuntu ebe esenalo ulwazi lokuthi yini le nto esikhuluma ngayo ikakhulukazi ezikoleni zasemalokishini nasemaphandleni.

Ngiyabonga.

*IsiZulu:*

USEKELA NGQONGQOSHE WEZEMFUNDO EPHAKEME, ISAYENSI,

NOKUSUNGULA: Ngiyabonga kakhulu ngalo mbuzo lungu

elihloniphekile uLuthuli, ngifuna ukusho ukuthi empenduleni yami besengibonisile ukuthi siyasebenzisana noMnyango Wezemfundo Eyisisekelo kulo mcimbi we-Fourth Industrial Revolution.

*IsiZulu:*

Yebo, kunezinselelo la esizohlangana nazo ngoba le nto ye- Fourth Industrial Revolution ...

*English:*

... we have just started as a country, particularly the education sector.

*IsiZulu:*

Sibona nokuthi umsebezi lo osiwenzayo njengoMnyango weMfundo Ephakame Nokuqeqesha, iSayensi nokuSungula nokubenzisana noMnyango weMfundo Eyisisekelo ...

*English:*

... will be able to help us to ensure that all children, who are studying in the basic education are exposed to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We may not be where we want to be, but we believe we have the proper vision to

be able to achieve that which the country intends, as it relates to integrating education with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Ms M GILLION: Thank you, Deputy Chairperson, and thank you, hon Deputy Minister for the response. I am convinced that Deputy Minister is aware that information technology and ICTs are broadly not ...[Inaudible.] ... disciplines can be taught to students overnight. Taking economies have one thing in common, it is IT training, especially coding of PSET and early age. My question to the Deputy Minister is: Have you considered initiating joint programmes with the Department of Basic Education with the view to streamlining training in IT and ICTs in schools at an early stage? Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson, and also to the hon member for that question. I must emphasise as I said to my response that we are working with the Department of Basic Education on this area of Fourth Industrial Revolution. Obviously, part of the things that we might have to consider as part of working

together with them is the training of facilitators or teachers, but also in ensuring that ... part of the curriculum in Basic Education integrates the concept of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Ms M BARA: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and to Deputy Minister, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed exactly what is wrong with our entire education system from primary school to higher education. The truth is that Higher Education is battling to full implement and roll out the Fourth Industrial Revolution in institutions of higher learning.

Now, the reason why so many people in the country lost their jobs during the lockdown. It is because education has not bridged the boundaries between physical, digital and biological worlds. In fact, the country still battles with the basic internet availability and speed. Deputy Minister, what lessons has your department learnt from the pandemic, to fast-track the implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution? How will you be making any adjustments to ensure that these weaknesses are resolved? Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and also to hon Bara. I mean in my response, I’ve already indicated that all our universities and the universities of technology are integrating Fourth Industrial Revolution, as part of their curriculum changes. We are doing our utmost best to ensure that also this is integrated at the level of the TVET colleges curriculum.

I agree with hon Bara, as a country, we have been exposed in terms of COVID-19 ... that certain challenges which have always been there, even preCOVID-19 were laid to bare. This has obviously called on urgency. That is why the Minister will be looking at the report from the task team that we’ve received on some of the interventions that we need to do urgently. We also believe that working together with ... government but with specific department and the private sector.

We should be able to deal with issues around internet roll-out ... and the whole range of other interventions, which will necessitate the integration of the Fourth Industrial Revolution into people’s lives. This is one

thing that we have made a major priority that will be working on. We believe that the focus of many of our universities into ... jobs of the future is one of the things that will help us as a country to be able to transcend some of the challenges that we were confronted with during the COVID-19 pandemic period. We hope that all of these will extend to our TVET colleges and some of the training that are being provided by the sector education and training and authority.

Resources are going to be a major challenge and we believe that if this remains a priority the commitment of our government will be to make sure that we dedicate resources towards the roll out of the Fourth Industrial Revolution into all facets of our society and of our lives. Thank you.

Mr F DU TOIT: Thank you, hon Chair, and to hon Minister, we take note of the learning of the institutions that currently offers specialised courses, but seeing all the connectivity, electronics, telecommunications and computer challenges that we have been experiencing during the COVID period and even now during this meeting, with

the Minister saying that South Africa is on the same level as the first world countries, are we ready to compete in the Fourth Industrial Revolution arena?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you very much for that question and thank you, Deputy Chairperson, ... our approach as a country and as government is, to ensure that we are able to meet the basic needs of our people using the Fourth Industrial Revolution. I think, we need to demystify the approach that is up there, that Fourth Industrial Revolution is about some grand innovations and designs. It will be of no use and of no meaning, if we begin to benchmark ourselves only with first world or developed countries, who may not have the conditions which we have in our country.

We believe that a successful Fourth Industrial Revolution strategy will have to address basic issues such as education, health, security and so forth. That is a kind of approach we are dealing with. Whether this will enable us to compete with the first world countries or that countries within the same economic range, as South Africa

that we are able to compete with those countries - that is something else. As long as, our implementation and rollout of the Fourth Industrial Revolution reaches each and every home in this country, we believe that we would have been able to do our work, as government. Thank you.

Question 91:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chairperson, the Heher Commission which was the commission of inquiry that was appointed by former President, Jacob Zuma, in August 2017 made a number of recommendations to the government about the sustainable funding of higher education and training.

The commission did explore, in part, the use of public in public invested funds in providing funding for students in higher education and training which are universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and community education and training colleges.

At the time, government’s response to the report of the Heher Commission was to introduce significant additional funding to support students from poor and working class backgrounds, in public universities and TVET colleges,

through the introduction of a phase-in of a new fully subsidised bursary scheme.

Despite the significant additional funding, it is acknowledged that there are categories of students who struggle to access funding for higher education and are not covered by the bursary scheme. This includes students in the so called ‘missing middle’ — those who do not qualify for support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, and are unable to afford bank loans, and also postgraduate students.

The department, in consultation with the National Treasury and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, believes that it is necessary to revisit the findings of the Heher Commission in order to find ways to address the funding needs in the post school education and training system. This could include an examination of the feasibility of various possible funding sources including private pension funds as raised by the question from hon Cloete.

Mr A B CLOETE: Deputy Chairperson, this question also relates to the discussion document named, ‘Economic Reconstruction’ endorsed by the ANC and its alliance partners. So, it outlines *inter alia* the use of pension funds to rebuild the economy. The document was also verified by Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU.

The Minister earlier this year indicated that pensions should even be used to provide financial assistance to needy students. That is what the Deputy Minister just said now. So, he is taking that pensions could be used to finance the missing middle students. It appears that the Deputy Minister is also speaking in that direction that it is being considered.

Now, Deputy Minister, our economy is under pressure. Minister Mboweni did not beat around the bush about this. Given state capture, the Auditor-General’s, AG’s, reports of our government institutions and yes, even the Transnet Pension Fund that was a disgrace for the ANC, do you honestly believe that South Africans should trust the government with our pension funds?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Well, the government whom I am speaking on behalf of and representing here and responding to questions, has no discussion document yet that relates to the kind of interventions that needs to be made as it relates to resolving those students who are not necessarily covered by the NSFAS. I think as and when we finalise our approach as government, Ministry and the Department of Higher Education and Training, we will issue all of that for public discussions.

What I did say in my original response is that we are examining various feasible ways of funding sources and if part of those sources may include pension funds, then let it be. Some of the things which are funded by pension funds are extremely ridiculous and we believe that if pension funds are going to be redirected to the development of the human resource of our country by funding needy students, whose parents are contributing to this pension funds, then we do not see anything wrong with that.

All I am saying is that we have not finalised our thoughts in this particular matter and if we do, we will open that for discussions. I believe that all South Africans want to contribute towards the education of their children, and if it includes them contributing through their pension funds then let it be.

Mr M R BARA: Deputy Chair, to the Deputy Minister, during your webinar last week, the NSFAS administrator indicated that bursary applications for the next academic year were higher than usual as some more people or learners have lost their jobs due to the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown.

The National Financial Aid Scheme is experiencing an increased demand for funding, 400 000 students have already applied, and it is six weeks to the cut-off date. According to Mr Carolissen, this is way above prior years. The National Financial Aid Scheme had a budget of R34,5 billion this year and many students who were previously funded by their parents are now reaching out to the scheme.

How will the additional funding be sourced to accommodate these students as well as those students who have extended their studies due to the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown? Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Hon Deputy Chairperson, thank you to the hon Bara. We have asked the National Student Financial Aid Scheme to make projections of what will be required for funding students for the 2021 academic year. I must say that we are quite hopeful that we should be able to cover all the students who are deserving, who qualify and who

... [Inaudible.] in the academic year 2021 in all our universities and in our TVET collages.

It is obviously a concern that is why we asked them to do the projections and all of that and we are hoping that from those projections we may be able to ensure that we fund all the students and raise whatever money that may be required.

Mr A ARNOLDS: Deputy Chairperson, to the Deputy Minister, there is no freedom without free quality decolonised

education. The sustainability of freedom depends on free quality decolonised educational system that does not reproduce the racist history of black people.

The post-secondary education and training capacity in South Africa presently does not respond to the quantities of aspiring students produced by the general education system. Empowering poor black South Africans with free quality education will ensure that people have sustainable solutions to poverty.

Now, your government promised in 1994 free education and it has taken a long time in terms of what you have promised. Why are students still, today, not getting what they deserve? Will it take another 300 years for you because students are out there struggling in terms of funding their education? So, will it take another 300 years for you to implement what students are looking for? Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chairperson, we have never promised free higher education as the ANC-led government — not in

1994 and not ever. What we have always maintained was that further education should be progressively made available, and what the government has done over the last few years is a result of the Heher Commission and the announcement made by the former President.

We have, firstly, converted the NSFAS loans into bursaries meaning that deserving students based on the criteria that we have set, are studying for free in our universities and in our TVET colleges. This constitute close to 90% of all the students who are studying in our TVET colleges. Meaning that more than 600 000 students in our TVET colleges are studying for free. This is also very important, more than 60% of students who are studying in our universities are studying for free and are fully funded by government.

We remain committed to ensure that the doors of learning and teaching remain open for the majority of South Africans who are deserving and who are from families that earn less than R350 000 whose grades are good and therefore qualify to all these institutions.

What I must also emphasise is that there is a continuous engagement in the higher education sector about what the concept of decolonisation of higher education means, and I hope that the hon member was not merely repeating slogans that are being thrown out there and that there is, or should be, at least some substantive contribution in what it means ... [Interjections.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Order, order!

Conclude, hon Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: I was done. Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

Ms N NDONGENI: Deputy Chair, afternoon Deputy Minister. My question is: Has the department applied itself sufficiently on the implication this new funding model has on graduates whose studies were funded by NSFAS but ordinarily are unable to repay the debt? Could we possibly witness a resolve to cancel this historical debt to allow poor graduates, majority of which is black, a debt free future? Thank you, Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chair, to the hon Ndongeni, the then Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Naledi Pandor, announced a reprieve of close to R1,9 billion in 2018 early 2019, whose intention was to deal with the question of the historic debts.

We have also instructed institutions to look into this matter of historic debts and also for students to renegotiate the payments of their study loans to or with those institutions.

We want to encourage those students who had taken out loans with the NSFAS or Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa, TEFSA, who are now working and have an income, to repay their debt as it is an important contribution towards the future education of many of the kids who will be joining the higher education sector in the coming years.

Of course, for now there has not been any solid consideration as it relates to students who owe institutions and were not necessarily covered by the

NSFAS or its preceding agencies, but we believe we must emphasise that all students who benefitted through the student loans in the past should contribute.

There are also those students who have been exempted, particularly those students who were studying from the academic year 2016. Their historic debt has been dealt with by the NSFAS and also by government’s allocation directly to the universities.

Question 96:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP and to hon Christians thank you for your question. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the department’s recess process inevitably. There have been delays in collecting data from institutions. For some research projects, time frames had to extended. Researchers have tried to overcome this by conducting interviews virtually and sending electronic surveys to institutions. The pandemic also had a similar impact on post-graduate students, undertaking research. Challenges include; changes in research design and methodology, social distancing has

changed the ways in which data collection takes place and interviews are now done via online platform and video calls.

In terms of international collaborations, shift national priorities by countries has affected the funding of scholarship...[Inaudible.] by development partners. This has also affected research programmes and students and staff mobility. Some research cannot be conducted by a desktop. International students also had to return to their home countries as we announced earlier in the year when universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges were going on early recess and ultimately a much longer recess.

The sector has adjusted to working virtually. Number of events has taken place successfully over on online platforms, including three career development service conference. We have been asked the National Skills Authority also hosted a three part webinars entitled *Skills Development and the Future of Learning During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic*. There has been improved

attendance at virtual events compared to face-to-face or physical events.

Across the sector, there are reports of the successful utilisation of virtual platforms. The monitoring reports from universities show that vast majority of students or 96% have been able to engage on university learning management system, utilising a variety of electronic devices.

Well, there have been difficulties, we must admit. This work shows the potential of such platforms for future development. Universities will only be able to indicate their preliminary graduation data, after the completion of the academic year, including the writing of supplementary examinations. They will submit through their high education management information system. The 2020 student’s data submission is at the end of April 2021.

Universities will be completing their academic year in March 2021 will only be able to provide graduation data later in 2021, once they have finished to identify their

graduates, after the completion of their final examination and supplementary examinations. It is therefore expected that when the university submit their final audited harness data for the 2020 academic year at the end of July 2021. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on graduation for the 2020 academic year will thereafter become clear. There are no reported dropout rates in community education and training colleges for the core of student who are registered for exit level qualification.

The department has put in place a curriculum recovery plan to support the city college and students’ readiness for examinations in November 2020. Technical and vocational education and training colleges students started returning in June 2020. The arrangements did not create an untenable situation. The core students [Inaudible.] the department does have a clear indication of proper statistics due the COVID-19 pandemic [Inaudible.]. Normally in order to track the dropouts for the particular year, the department require data from the following year through the tracking process using a current methodology data for the 2021 [Inaudible.] will

be required [Inaudible.] dropouts for the 2020 academic year. Thank you Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON: Hon Nana, can you please mute your mic. We will now...hon Christians is there any follow up question?

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Deputy Chairperson, I will take the follow up question on behalf of hon Christians, thank you very much. Good afternoon Deputy Minister. [Interjection.]

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Good afternoon.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: We know that hiring has been curtailed, laboratory and field work has been interrupted, infrastructure delayed and the flow of international students reduced, all of which will affect the ability of the countries to increase the skill work force but also much needed is financial import for universities from private sectors and the department. In the longer term, how are universities best support remote learning, to

ensure that the research work force is resilient and to ensure that the supply chain and funding is not curtailed. Finally, how would be expected financial stringency affect universities as many students will extended degrees and funding and will therefore also be delayed? Thank you Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chairperson, firstly I must say that, you know, on a yearly basis whether we have the COVID-19 pandemic or not, we have students who are, you know, become unsuccessful in their academic project.

Universities know how to deal with all of those students based on the cases as presented and similarly TVET colleges and continuing education and training institutions. So, if there is a need for a special dispensation in this particular case because of COVID-19, that could obviously, probably be considered, but there are systems and mechanisms to ensure that if there is are students who are unsuccessful for a particular academic year, you know, various policies keep in place to ensure we are able to help the students to succeed and complete their degrees. So thus the first thing.

The second thing, is that, you know, I mean the hon member has conducted any particular research on any particular subject should know that, you design, you know, your research methodology beforehand as part of your proposal and if something like COVID-19 pandemic happens and you were meant conduct interview, also travel abroad or even travel locally, that all of those are obviously going to have an impact on the kind of research that you want to do. You know, I am certain that students all over the country who are post-graduates who have been doing their post graduate-studies may have entered into discussions and negotiations with their institutions and their supervisors in terms of ensuring that they modify the way in which they want to conduct research. As I indicated that the sector has really geared themselves up in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as it relates to post-graduates students.

If you remember when the Minister announced the early recess, part of the students that we prioritised should remain on campus included post-graduate students particularly those whose work is going to contribute towards COVID-19 and similarly with all the other

relaxation of the lockdown regulations. Prioritise post-graduate students because we believe that the

development and production of knowledge remains a crucial function of the university and therefore this required our support.

Universities will have to ensure that they renegotiate whatever funding that they had from international sponsors and similarly, we will obviously look at the kind of work and challenges that they are confronted with and in the same manner that we supported universities throughout the with COVID-19 pandemic we will continue to provide that support. Thank you.

Mr S E MFAYELA: Deputy Chairperson my friend, hon Deputy Minister good afternoon.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Good afternoon.

Mr S E MFAYELA: The graduation and certification in most tertiary institutions have been affected by this situation. I am not talking about certification in

Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges because the backlog there is historical. In some universities graduation have not taken place and for those students who completed their academic year in 2019, were supposed to graduate in May, graduation did not take place, but what is bad is that they have not receive their certificates, specifically the University of KwaZulu-Natal, UKZN. Up to now students who were supposed to have graduated in May, they have not received their certificates. Now, the students who were supposed to have graduated in September, surely that also has impacted upon them, the backlog is escalating. It’s a very simple thing Deputy Minister, just giving a paper to a person to say he has completed the academic year, which to me is inefficiency. Now, this has affected students in a very bad way, especially those who wanted to secure opportunities outside the country. Most areas outside the country do not accept academic records but they would accept certificates not academic records. What is the department going to do to deal with this mediocrity, because it’s not interference, it’s a question of dealing with operation where students for the whole year are

waiting for their certificates? Thank you very much Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chair, hon Khawula I think we will specifically look at the of the University of Zululand, I think that’s the university the hon member has mentioned. [Interjection.]

Mr S E MFAYELA: Deputy Chair, correction UKZN.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: UKZN, yes we will specifically look at case, what are the challenges and so forth. What I must emphasize is that, we obviously did not anticipate that we will have this kind of a situation. You know and obviously students are required to be physically present for them to have their qualifications given to them and all of that. Now that most if not all universities are fully operational, opened up and all of that, we want to encourage students to approach their universities in order to get their certificates of transcripts of

results, so that they are able to apply for jobs or do whatever they want to do with their qualification.

It’s quiet unfortunate – and really sympathise with you know, hundreds of thousands of students who were supposed to graduate as in the ceremony this year. It’s quiet unfortunate – the feeling of stepping on the stage and be hit on your head by a professor and you are conferred a degree, is such a wonderful feeling and we really wanted all students, you know, to have that kind of experience. Unfortunately, this couldn’t happen. I have seen a lot of innovative ways, wherein students were having graduation ceremonies in their homes and take videos and post on social media and so forth – you know, because they already bought the dresses and they couldn’t do anything with that. It’s quiet unfortunate that we had COVID-19 in the year that these students were graduating. Hopefully by next year all things will be in order and that student will have again with their parents and their community have the pleasure of celebrating their graduation. I had a friend who this weekend was supposed to be, you know, graduating, having a party and all of that and unfortunately that couldn’t happen. I am sure many

families affected by this and quite unfortunate, we really sympathise with them. Thank you.

Mr A ARNOLDS: Deputy Chairperson, Deputy Minister, yes indeed the pandemic has exposed the shortcoming of the current higher education system. Universities and TVETs need to pay serious attention to have educators trained and equipped with digital technology for smooth teaching learning processes. Now, in terms of the long lasting challenges in the higher education sector, your response in terms of the sectors now, do they have the human and financial capacity to respond to these long term challenges? Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chair and hon Arnolds we are working overtime to make sure that the higher education sector and any institution that is related to higher education should have learned their lessons from this process. Look at some of the challenges we are faced with throughout this pandemic and find ways in which they can respond to

– you know, this process. Our process of the annual performance plans, our process of budgeting and all of

that – has been restructured in such a way that it responds to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

We believe that we are responding adequately to the new normal and we will be to ensure that we gear the country and our higher education and training system to effectively respond to some of the challenges and implement some of the lessons that we have learned in this period. Thank you.

Ms N NDONGENI: Deputy Chair...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

Ms N NDONGENI: ...it’s hon Ndongeni. Can I take the question?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON: Yes, please.

Ms N NDONGENI: Good afternoon again.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Good afternoon.

Ms N NDONGENI: Thank you for your detailed response, it is appreciated. There is a universal agreement that universities and TVET colleges could anticipate a pandemic of this nature and certainly could not have prepared for it. However, the department has done tremendously well in salvaging what would otherwise have been a lost academic year. My question is, whether the department working together with universities, has conduct a study on the impact of COVID-19 on poor students, majority of whom leave in communities, where there is poor infrastructure to accommodate virtual learning? If not why not, if so yes what are the relevant details? Thank you Deputy Minister, DM, thank Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Deputy Chair and hon Ndongeni, the first thing that we did as a department through the task team that was appointed by the Minister, was to look at the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic is going to affect students, who particularly who come from disadvantaged and rural areas. The Minister asked the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and some of its

agent to conduct junor-spatial study in terms of issues around connectivity, devices and all of that.

Institutions themselves together with the University South Africa Forum which is the forum of universities’ vice chancellors. Also did conduct, you know, a similar research and our responds as the department and ministry was informed by these particular studies. That’s why our intervention did not only rely on – as many people believe, you know, investing online learning devices. We have also looked at possibilities and actually rolling out of connectivity. For instance, in all our TVET colleges we looked at ways and means within which we can get those students from poor disadvantage communities back on campus so that they’ve got access to all these facilities. So, it was a whole range of interventions which was in responds of the evidence that we have received, based on the various studies that we have conducted. Thank you.

Question 104:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Hon Gillion and Deputy Chair, a number of

interventions have been put in place to support students who are firstly facing personal challenges and secondly, are struggling with psychosocial challenges. These interventions are implemented through Higher Health which is an implementing agency of the Department of Higher Education and Training to provide accessible health, wellness and psychosocial screening, testing, linkages to treatment care and support to students facing personal health, wellness and psychosocial challenges at universities and TVET College campuses within the post- school education and training system. Higher Health addresses student challenges relating to HIV, Tuberculosis, sexually-transmitted infections, sexual reproductive health rights, unplanned pregnancies,

gender-based violence, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, gender and disability stigmatisation, and - as of earlier this year - Covid-19.

The department also has a dedicated unit focusing on issues of support services of students in TVET colleges. This unit is responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the 2008 Framework for Student Support Services which provides a guide to TVET

colleges in integrating student support issues in a practical set of guiding principles, procedures and strategies for the provision of an integrated student support services. Thank you.

Ms M N GILLION: Hon Deputy Minister, thank you for the answer to the question. Considering the fact that teaching and learning is generally occasioned by anxieties induced by both academic and financial pressure even outside Covid-19, what interventions has the department put in place to ensure that these students are not excluded, should they fail as a result of the lack of support in their communities?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Firstly, like I said in my response, the intention is for Higher Health, our implementing agency, to give support. I went to a number of these institutions together with Higher Health. The kind of work that is being done by Higher Health is quite impressive. What’s even more impressive is that it is the students who are in the lead with peer-to-peer patient monitoring and all of that. But more importantly, there are professionals

who are dedicated – psychologists for instance – to help support institutions which have students who have these kinds of challenges. Thirdly, the student support services in our universities and TVET colleges are geared and fully equipped to be able to support these particular students. Any students who feel that they are anxious, depressed and so on, should be able to speak to someone at their university or TVET college who should be able to help them in that regard. Obviously, if you couldn’t pass your examination precisely because of mental health- related issues, there are procedures that institutions have, which will be able to help those students to be able to rewrite so that they are not academically excluded. Thank you.

Mr M S MOLETSANE: Deputy Minister, on 21 April 2020 during a virtual sitting of the NA and the NCOP committee tasked with higher education, together with the officials from the Ministry of Higher Education, the Deputy-General for University Education at the Department of Higher Education and Training said it was possible that the end of 2020 academic year might be extended. The Minister confirmed that the universities have extended their

academic year to 2021. Now, my question is: Has any consideration been made as to how this extension further exacerbates the personal and psychosocial challenges of students from disadvantaged communities in as far as the NSFAS funding and psychological well-being is concerned? Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: All those students who are firstly going to be covered by NSFAS and those whose programmes or institutions have extended their academic year, some of them up to March 2021, will continue to receive allowances from the NSFAS. That’s the first thing.

Secondly, the established support systems in universities and TVET colleges, yes, have their own challenges but they are there to provide psychosocial support to students in case they need all of that support. Even beyond that, there are a whole range of programmes that government runs, whose intention is to deal with the question of mental health in institutions. Higher Health is working on ensuring that there is an all-round available service for students who need psychosocial

support. So, that’s something we are already attending to. Thank you for the question.

Mr F DU TOIT: Hon Deputy Minister, your answers were comprehensive. I want to know what measures are in place to assist educators to identify psychosocial challenges in the learning environment. And if possible, what is the estimated expenditure per year on the assistance that is given to these learners?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Look, we are dealing with young adults – young people from the ages of 17, 18 and up to 25 or 27. Obviously it is not automatic that they will be able to diagnose themselves as having challenges around mental health-related issues. Therefore, the infrastructure and the personnel that is available at our higher education institutions are properly equipped for them to be able to help those kinds of students. Friends, peers, lectures and everyone on our campuses are encouraged to help those students who are in need - they may be depressed, anxious or any form of mental health-related issues. They should

therefore refer them to the relevant professionals for them to get the necessary help. Thank you.

Mr M R BARA: Deputy Minister, we know that most TVET colleges and universities have student support centres where they can go for psychological, emotional and academic assistance. However, these centres are severely constrained in terms of numbers and staff as well as suitably-qualified staff. Yearly, students still drop out or worse commit suicide due to the pressure of studies and being away from home. This indicates a lack of social and emotional support at higher learning institutions.

What plans are in place to capacitate student support centres with enough as well as qualified staff members to assist learners in their time of need? Thank you, Deputy Chair and Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Hon Bara, as I said, the student support services in our institutions have or take responsibility for responding to mental health-related issues on our campuses for students. As and when there is a need for us to make an intervention, obviously we’ll be able to do

that. We do not take the question of mental health of our students lightly. We believe that this is a serious issue. Students committing suicide and all of that on our campuses is actually a big challenge. We are hoping that institutions and student leadership, for instance, who have an important role to play, will continue to guide us in terms of the kind of challenges that they are confronted with, and the kind of resources that are needed for these interventions to be made. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Deputy Minister, I didn’t ask the question but I have realised that the issue of mental health, not only in institutions but also in society, is not really understood or taken seriously enough. So, the fact that there is an agency in the higher education system is quite commendable and needs to be mentioned because I was thinking it is part of our responsibility as Parliament to think how we can assist communities to understand the issue of mental health much better. Therefore, the action you’ve taken - of having an agency responsible for dealing with issues of mental health at our campuses - is quite commendable.

With that said, hon delegates, let me also thank the hon Deputy Minister for the comprehensive and honest way he responded. Your responses were also very educational – I’m sure - for all of us as members. So, we want to express our appreciation Buti. Buti ka bafana, we express our appreciation and we miss you in your work with the boys. You must remember that so that you can continue.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND

INNOVATION: Thank you.

Question Session concluded.

The Council adjourned at 17:09