**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (VIRTUAL) THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2021**

***PROCEEDINGS OF EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMITTEE – NATIONAL ASSEMBLY***

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 14:00.

The House Chairperson (Mr M L D Ntombela) took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M L D Ntombela): Hon members, before we proceed, I would like to remind you that the virtual mini- plenary is deemed to be in the pricint of Parliament, and constitute a meeting of the National Assembly for debating purposes only. In addition to the Rules of virtual sittings, the Rules of the National Assembly including the Rules of the debate applies.

Members enjoys the same powers and privileges that apply in a sitting of the National Assembly. Members shouls equally note that anything said in the virtual platform, is deemed said in

the House, and may be ruled upon. All members who have logged in, shall be considered to be present, and I will request them to mute their microphones, and unmute when recognised to speak. This is because the mics are very sensitive, and might pick up noise which is very disturbing to the attention of other members.

When recognised to speak, please unmute your microphone and connect your video. Members may make use of the icons on the bar and bottom of their screens, which is an option that allows a member to put up his or her hand to raise a point of order. The secretariat will assist in alerting the Chairperson the members requesting to speak. When using the virtual system, members are urged or refrain from unneccessary points of order or interjections.

We shall now proceed with the order of this mini-plenary session which is a Subject for Discussion in the name of the hon B B Nodada, on the systemic failures of our basic education system that contributed to a real National Senior Certificate pass rate of 44% for the 2020 academic year, and steps that need to be taken to confront these challenges in the 2021 academic year and beyond. Hon members, I now recognise hon B B Nodada on the virtual platform.

**THE SYSTEMIC FAILURES OF OUR BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT CONTRIBUTED TO A REAL NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE PASS RATE OF 44% FOR THE 2020 ACADEMIC YEAR, AND STEPS THAT NEED TO BE TAKEN TO CONFRONT THESE CHALLENGES IN THE 2021 ACADEMIC YEAR AND BEYOND.**

(Subject for Discussion)

*IsiXhosa:*

Mr B B NODADA: Sihlalo weNdlu, malungu ahloniphekileyo, ndiyanibulisa ngale njikalanga, molweni.

*English:*

As the DA we would like to congratulate every martic class of 2020, for a pass under such difficult year, and sympathise with those who are not successful, as the conditions were indeed unique. We draw hope from the sheer grit and determination shown by learners like Siphokuhle Ndamase from Mount Ayliff who overcame crossing rivers and pit toilets all his school life to passing matric with seven distinctions, and Shandre Isaacs from Alexandra, whom despite witnessing gang violence all her life managed to complete her matric and now enrolled to study medicine.

This indeed, could only been made possible because of many dedicated teachers teachers like Ms Munonde from Tzaneen, whom despite her circumstances, goes the extra mile to produce excellence. These pockets of excellence in basic education must be appreciated and protected so we can build on them.

However, Minister Motshekga relies on the above unique success stories to mask her failures, coupled with her manipulative metrics to get a good headlines for matric results, until the media finds the a new focal point.

We understandably caught up under the euphoria of celebrating when the department announces the results and celebrates top achievers to musk the grim reality of the state of our basic education system. The Minister claimed that the matric pass rate is 76,2%, and that there is an improvement on the quality of South Africa’s basic education, which is simply not true, especially when the subject pass rate is lowered to a mere 30% and 40%.

It is our view as the DA, that these results are essentially misleading, and paint an idealistic picture of our learning environment, which is in direct contrast to the reality we have seen on the ground. The reality is, the real matric pass rate, is a mere 44,1%, and not 76,2% as claimed by Minister

Motshekga. As the DA, we’ve used the grade 10 registrations for the particular matric year, in this case, the year 2018, where there were over 997 000 learners registered, and we compared this number with the number of the matrics that passed the examination, which is just over 440 000.

Our calculation takes into consideration those who dropped out between grade 10 and matric. This leaves us with a staggering over 557 000 learners who did not make it to the matric examination. Minister Motshekga’s calculation deliberately excludes this over 50% dropout rate. Learners drop out for reasons often beyond their control, and are excluded from the economy, contributing to 3,5 million youth not in education, employment or training, who also forms part of over 60% youth unemployment rate.

We must understand, however, drop outs are not a representation of poor character or inability to learn, but rather, the representation of the system that fails to sufficiently support learners throughout their schooling years. It is interesting to see how many are attempting to discredit the DA’s real matric pass rate, by making numerous comments such as some learners have failed, some learners have passed away and some learners have gone to private schools.

These comments come from those who are in denial of the realities within basic education. The DA’s calculation of the real matric pass rate, is a national pass rate. Those who moved or changed schools are still within the public system are still within this calculation. Additionally, it is unrealistic to assume that over half a million have been lost since grade 10, now all of a sudden, can afford private schooling nor could all of them have died, failed or study part time.

For as long as we have a Minister and officials like the Director-General who are comfortable with mediocre performances at the cost of half a million of the learners who never make it to matric, we will continue to produce another generation who will live a lifetime of poverty, inequality and unemployment, simply depending on the ANC government for a grant to survive. This past month, the DA conducted oversight to six different provinces, and will be continuing to the Northern Cape tomorrow.

What we discovered on the ground is a direct contrast to the beautiful pictures the Minister and Director-General always paints in air-conditioned boardrooms and to the nation. The reality looks more like this: For years, the South African

basic education system, suffered from an irrelevant, poor quality and overburdened curriculum. Schools do not have the infrastructure to cater to the needs and safety of their learners, with many overcrowded mud and asbestos classrooms like E T Tabane, a school in my constituency of Ugie, where there are over 1 800 learners, studying in dilapidated asbestos, that’s crafty.

I don’t even want to mention the heartbreaking Nkalweni Primary School, where learners are studying under mud structures, even some of them studying outside, because teachers go extra mile, schools like Madikitsha Primary in Limpopo, still use unsafe pit toilets, while provinces like Gauteng spend over R431 million on deep cleaning schools and Eastern Cape, wasting over R500 million on overpriced Personal

Protective Equipment, PPE.

There are 3 500 schools with continued water supply challenges, a contrast to the 22 schools that were mentioned by the Minister and the Director-General, in their presentation to the nation on school readiness. Yet, over

R1 billion has been cut from the schools infrastructure budget to fund the failing entity like SA Airways, SAA. Teachers struggle to get the correct equipment to teach and there is a

serious lack of mathematics and science teachers, as we have seen in Mpumalanga at Loding Primary, where a school has been built with a maths and science lab equipment.

Yet, the department is failing just to equip those particular labs, to advance our maths and science. No, let alone to provide library books at the library. There are 18 schools where there is 0% matric pass rate. There’s a drop out of over half a million learners, and these things are nothing to be proud of, and we need to be concerned about them. A gradual decline in the government’s spending per learner, it has dropped to under 2,3% since 2009. This means that each year South Africa invests less and less money on learners despite the overwhelming challenges and inequalities they face.

This is another reality, with the economy crashing and burning as we speak, even hard work is not a golden ticket to success. These are not problems that arose with the COVID-19 pandemic. These problems have been ignored for years, in favor of whitewashing matric results to mask the severe systemic failures of the Department of Basic Education. As the DA, we believe that the largest obstacle to redressing the legacies of the past and creating a society of opportunity, is by

repairing our failing education system and replacing its failing leaders.

To change our economic trajectory we have to offer these young people pathways to upward social mobility, and education is the only tool that we can use to create this reality.

Minister, we don’t just give these constructive criticism to you, but here are the solutions that you can use immediately. Firstly, we must accept that there is a need to change the leadership in the Department of Education, which is a team that got us in this mess, to begin with.

They lack the vision, creativity and capacity to accomplish the needed changes in the system. Very mediocre in my view, and it shows with the comments that the Minister made, that educated men don’t play, yet we live with our system that has been made by educated men. I think that you should be part of that, Minister. Secondly, we must prioritise school infrastructure and increase the infrastructure budgets, to maintain what we have and to build new schools.

We need to fully eradicate pit latrines in our schools and ensure that all learners have access to water supplies. Our main aim must be to create an environment conducive to

learning to avoid dropouts. We need to fix the curriculum to focus on specialisation schools and accelerate vocational learning to produce meaningful skills relevant for industry, entrepreneurship, innovation and the SA job market. In the Western Cape, we have established a School Evaluation Authority, that independently evaluates schools, as a quality control measure. We must consider implementing such an authority for all provinces, to monitor the quality of schools, to ensure adherence to the minimum norms and standards.

To bridge the gap, we must aggressively headhunt excellent maths and science educators, which must begin in earnest, so that we offer quality learning. We need to focus investment on the development of distant, blended learning approaches in schools so that all have access to education under these stringent conditions, by ensuring access to broad band network

and Information and Communications Technology, ICT. Lastly, we need to launch a massive safety and security campaign, to protect existing schools from vandalism to avoid spending more money on repairs, and maybe we need to consider that.

President Ramaphosa, continuously places a focus on his grand economic recovery plans, of which the foundation is education.

Yet, he leaves the educational environment with continued budget cuts. No doubt, your ANC government will continue to blame its failures on colonialism and apartheid. Although colonialism and apartheid placed South Africans in a state of economic disempowerment, it is the ANC government that has kept us there. Without a decent education, any form of economic empowerment opportunities for South Africans, will remain simply elusive.

We must consider this real matric pass rate, and consider it today, work on collaborative solutions that has been presented, to lower the dropout rate. For it was Madiba who said that, “No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated,” and that it is “through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the President of its great nation.”

*IsiXhosa:*

Ndiyabulela Sihlalo, ndisatshaya.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chairperson, hon members, Minister of Basic Education uMama Motshega, members of the national executive present and fellow South Africans, “

sanibonani” [greetings]. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I must state at the outset that this is a necessary debate in an open and democratic society though we disagree with the DA at a political level. Still, our collective responsibility as elected public representatives is to put our various viewpoints in front of this august House.

Nonetheless, it is disappointing that every year we debate the same thing. I don’t know how our counterparts in the DA count the years and count the percentage of learners that start schooling from Grade R to Grade 12 because human beings are not like stones. They are not static that when you put them in a particular situation you will come back and count them and find them as they are. Human beings are dynamic. They move from one point to one another. The world has become so small that South Africans are now moving even from South Africa to other parts of the world. We cannot keep on saying every year that it is only 44% of those that did Grade 1 in whatever year until now. We cannot say that information is a true reflection of what is happening in South Africa because people are dynamic – people are moving.

What I can say about the class of 2020 is that this class represents the capacity of the department that the system is now stable. That’s why even under circumstances the class of 2020 showed the world that South Africa’s education system is at a higher level. So I don’t know whose work is to criticise and not appreciate what is at hand. We had so many challenges this year. We had challenges of COVID-19 where we all expected our learners not to perform. But they did perform.

We did not only had the challenges of COVID-19 other challenges that we had is that the progress learners, the multiple examination opportunity, MEO. We have stopped writing the MEO. All learners, even those that are progressed where moved to Grade 12 and they were given an opportunity to write the entire examination. These learners did not pass Grade 11, but they were progressed to Grade 12 and they still made it with flying colours. They obtained distinctions and they obtained bachelors. It tells that the system is growing; the system is stronger. So we are making an appeal to those that regard themselves as opposition that let us face to the same direction. This is our country. We cannot play politics to the education of our learners. Basic Education works together with Higher Education. That’s why some learners don’t go the matric route, but they go to Technical Vocational Education and

Training, TVET, after passing Grade 9. They go straight to , TVET, colleges. I don’t know how do they count those learners as to where did they go to. There are other programmes of skills development which those learners, who feel that they cannot reach the academic route, they opt for skills development. We have those statistics and figure together with Higher Education.

We are saying let’s see things the same way as South Africa, and not other people believe that they operate in another land that they will only criticise, criticise and criticise. That’s why as Basic Education we felt that we should not allow learners to be trapped by matric. That’s why we have opened the three-stream model that those who want to go vocational, go vocational and those who want to go technical, go technical, and those who want to go the academic route they go. But I know that people will criticise that only 30% reach Grade 12. It’s not about Grade 12. We have seen that we need to allow our learners to opt other terrain. I urge you to please view our improvements in Grade 12 and other evidence of progress in grades below Grade 12. What the system is doing now is that we are strengthening the Foundation Phase so that when they arrive at Grade 12 they don’t need those unnecessary

devices that we put on them, but they come to Grade 12 being strong.

Let me just give an illustration. We are not yet where we want to be as required by the National Development Plan. That we accept and we know, but we need to work together as South Africans. The increase in the number of youths obtaining maths reflects real quality gains and is underpinned by a proven upward trend in the skills of those learners who enter Grade

12. This is a fact, and not an opinion. Let me illustrate, hon members, for the past ten years, we have noted that the National Senior Certificate pass rate has consistently been improving from 60% in 2009 to the record of above 80% in 2019. The Class of 2020 must be commended for maintaining this trend. The 2020 matric pass rate, which includes progressed learners, stands at 76.2%. It is not something tat the Minister is bragging about it , but it’s a fact. Thos learners obtained 76,2% with a decline of 5,1%. But when you exclude the progressed learners, they maintained the pass rate of exceeding 80% which the sector has never achieved since inception. The pass rate is still at 81,2% as things stands. We want to thank the Minister for giving the progressed learners an opportunity to write the examination and be able

to pass. That shows that indeed they deserve this opportunity by obtaining distinctions.

Chair, we celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2020, taking into account the Covid-19 pandemic’s induced losses. These include the teaching and learning time due to the lockdown periods, phased-in reopening of schools, alternating time tabling models and the related health and safety protocols. All these took time of the learners. Revising the school calendar and the intermittent closure of many schools due to COVID-19 infections negatively impacted on available teaching time. This led to learning losses defined as content, concepts and skills from the 2020 revised annual teaching plans which could not be learned during the 2020 academic year.

As we know, the learning losses may lead to poor academic performance, which is a very strong predictor of school drop- out. To mediate the negative impact and support teachers in managing teaching, assessment and learning within the reduced time occasioned by the COVID-19 lockdown, we implemented several interventions, including revised annual teaching plans from Grade 1 to Grades 1-11 ; no curriculum trimming was done for Grade 12 because their paper was ready from day one; the

guidance was given to schools to strengthen the implementation of the revised annual teaching plans, ATPs to conduct context-specific subject trimming; reduction in the number of school-based assessment tasks, including the scraping of the June examinations to create additional time for teaching; and adherence to lockdown and social distancing protocols

disrupted most of the planned face-to-face interventions, such as the autumn and winter vacation classes. The Class of 2020 benefitted from spring vacation classes in October and weekend classes during August and September, where physical revision classes were offered.

Due to the lockdown, remote learning applications, such as radio, websites, social media and television took centre stage. We are so proud that we always spoke about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and little did we know that it will push us. And now it has pushed us. I hear some people aee complaining about rural areas saying what about the learners in rural areas who can access. We communicate with learners in rural areas as the sector from time to time and we know their challenges, we know what they are facing and we have a way of making sure that they do get tuition through distance learning.

I want to tell people of South Africa that they must not listen to people who keep on criticising and not coming with an alternative solution. I am calling upon all opposition parties in Parliament to bring solutions and not to criticise. When you criticise it means you have a solution. We are waiting for them to bring solutions. We are ready to incorporate those solutions into the plans of the department. I thank you, Chair.

Ms N R MASHABELA: House Chairperson, let us first begin by congratulating all the matriculants, who were successful in their examinations in a difficult and disruptive COVID-19 year. To the learners who did not pass the matric examination, we say to you this may have been a setback, but in the words of Maya Angelou:

You may encounter many defeats but you must not be defeated, in fact it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.

COVID-19 has highlighted the inequality of the South African education system between the rich learner and the poor learner, between the white and black learner and between the

learner in the urban area and the rural area, which is clearly evident in the pass rate, if we compare public and independent schools’ results. Despite the socioeconomic challenges, with many leaners not having the necessary infrastructure to conduct learning in a safe and technological manner. The Matric Class of 2020 managed to react an impressive 76,2% pass rate.

The EFF will not be drawn into a debate on the so called “real pass rate” by a political party that refuses to acknowledge the inequalities caused by colonialism and apartheid which permeates into every sphere of society, including education.

The matric results should be an important lesson about the urgent need to deal with poverty and inequality in our society, which also affects our education system.

Now, let us compare the 98,7% pass rate of independent schools, which is less than one degree when compared to the 2019 academic with the 76,2 % in the public schools.

Independent schools declined, it’s not when you compared 2019 with 2020 because teaching and learning was minimally disrupted.

We cannot hide from the fact that poverty also plays a role in the outcomes of the results – apparently in the fact that the top seven performing districts were all in and around cities in Tshwane, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Cape Town.

In his 2019 state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that government will provide every school child in South Africa with the digital workbook and textbook on the tablet device. Minister Angie Motshekga also claimed during her presentation on 08 March 2019, that basic education was on track to provide each learner and teacher with information and communications technology, ICT, device with access to digitalised learning and teaching support materials.

This empty promises of tablets were made before the first case of COVID-19 was reported. Even when it was no longer safe for the teachers and learners to continue with contact learning, the department squandered millions in personal protection equipment, PPEs and sanitizers’ tenders instead of facilitating for poor and black learners to learn remotely.

South Africa ranks 143 out of 230 countries when it comes to affordable data cost, which means even if parents could somehow have managed to buy devices for their children the

cost of data is still out of reach for majority of South African learners in public schools. Lower data cosy will only make the life easier for communication but would also benefit basic education. Thank you, House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M L D NTOMBELA): Baba [Mr] Mapholoba

from the IFP, hon Ngcobo.

Mr M N NXUMALO: House Chair, I believe that hon Ngcobo is having technicalities, I will take the debate on his behalf.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M L D NTOMBELA): Baba Nxumalo [Mr

Nxumalo]

Mr M N NXUMALO: House Chairperson, hon members, the Matric Class of 2020 has accomplished an enormous fit in preparing and sitting for their final exams under the most unique and challenging circumstances. Now, the IFP applause them for obtaining their national senior certificates.

The Minister of Basic Education announced that the 2020 matric pass rate was at 76,2 % which is a decline of 5,1% from 2019. We saw then an 81,3% pass rate. However, the IFP notes the assertion that has been made by the DA regarding the actual

pass rate being 44,1%. This 44,1% is based on the number of learners that enrolled in the 2018, the number that wrote and those that passed matric in 2020.

This is an indictment on our education system and an indication of the perennial problems in the Department of Basic Education has faced before the pandemic.

Now, these issues were exacerbated by the pandemic in August 2020. The department published a revised school calendar, leaving learners with 156 days versus 199 school days in 2019. We know that for many learners even fewer school’s days were experienced due to the various reasons. According to the research of the Socioeconomic Policy Group, in Stellenbosch, by the end of the second term of 2020, South African children likely... mostly between 25 and 57% of the normal school days due to schools’ closures. This means that the quality of education received due to educators trying to finish curriculum under extreme pressure declined.

The department owes a debt to a South African learner, one that they know must work very hard to repay for the incoming matriculants and those that follow.

The IFP supports the DA’ call for an urgent intervention and an overhaul of our education system for the sake of our children and the future of our country. I thank you House Chair.

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair, education is not all about numbers. Chasing numbers means that schools are assessed as they assess only looking at the numbers. That would mean that in the school situation, we are not concerned whether the learners actually understand what they are learning, what the relevance is of what they are learning or what they have to do about it and with it. We only look whether they pass and with which mark they pass regardless of the educational significance of what they learn.

That gives rise to a whole culture of examination readiness coaching; sourcing old papers, working through old papers again and again and again as many papers as possible just in order to get the best possible mark. That indeed succeed in bringing high marks but it does not add to the educational value of the work which is done. That is an increasing trend in education that the numbers are chased to such an extent that the numbers are more important than the education. And as that is done in schools it is also done with schools with the

department and other commentators only looking at the numbers and not looking or seeking what is behind the numbers.

Education is in fact about people who want to learn and also people who want to educate people who want to be educated. In that regard, mother tongue inevitably gives an advantage to any leaner. Therefore, it is such a waste that in South Africa a very high number of our learners and their parents prefer not to learn in their mother tongue.

Afrikaans:

Dit is die rede hoekom Afrikatale vandag op skool in ’n swakker toestand is as 30 jaar of 40 jaar gelede. Toe ek op skool was was Sepedi ’n verpligte vak vir die hele laerskool tot in Standerd 7. Daar was nie ’n kwessie van daaroor nie. Elke Afrikaanse kind moes ook Sepedi op skool leer. Dit is vandag nie meer die geval nie. Dit beteken meertaligheid lei daaronder, maar moedertaal-ondeerrig lei ook daaronder.

*English:*

If we talk about rectifying the imbalances of the past, then we have to look at the imbalances of the past. We started with a culture in 1976 in a numerical important number of ... [Inaudible.] ... that liberation comes before education.

Schools were burnt if they were deemed inadequate. It would also mean that teachers were regarded as sell-outs as they were part of the system and they would react by being even more activist than the learners themselves who were revolutionary. Bad habits about burning schools rather than building them. Bad habits about burning books, staying at home and demonstrating when one should be in class learning.

Once these bad habits are learned it is very difficult to unlearn them as we see about 40 years now after 1976. If we look at the schools, there are many comparisons made between urban and countryside, between white and black and that leads you to which union the educators are members. You will find that the South African Democratic Teachers Union ... [Time expired.] Thank you, Mr Chair.

Ms M E SUKERS: Hon Chair, the ACDP wish to congratulate the matrics of 2020. You have exceeded our expectations of what was possible. Hon Chair, in this debate, only two things really matter: What is going to happen to those who have completed the journey of education; and what happens to those left behind.

Many of those who have matric will not be getting employment. Even many of those who go on to tertiary education face a future of joblessness. We need an urgent reform of the basic education system to ensure that matrics can get jobs and to change our higher education system to ensure graduates get jobs.

The question, however, is: What about those learners who have been left behind on the platform? The millions who got on the train as hopeful Grade Rs and were thrown off the train before they reached matric. They join more than 8 million young South Africans who are not in training, employment or education.

What are we going to do for them? This alone calls on us to transcend politics to make sure that no child is left behind.

We call on government to finally implement the long delayed National Senior Certificate for adults. The national senior certificate for adults was gazetted in 2014. We made this call repeatedly in 2020. We were promised action in 2021, we now demand it.

The department must urgently research the reason our children are left behind. No Grade R goes to school with the intention of not completing their schooling. Our people value and love

learning. In 1976 our youth laid down their lives for learning. In 2020 children have not dropped off from the learning train but they have been thrown off. They are not dropouts but ‘thrownoffs’. Thrown off because of not enough space in school, because they saw no value to the education they receive, because of poverty and because of having special needs.

We offer to assist the department in immediately commissioning research to find out why learners do not complete the journey and how to make sure they do. We cannot wait; we must take actions. We know enough from research that has been done that we need close co-operation between the department and the Department of Social Development to ensure that our learners stay in school.

We call on the chairpersons of both portfolio committees to hold an urgent joint session to launch this initiative. We need to develop and implement an integrated plan that draws on the strengths of both departments to ensure that our children stay in school. I thank you.

*Afrikaans:*

Me D VAN DER WALT: Voorsitter, ons gelukwense ook van my kant af aan elke leerling wat sy of haar graad in 2020 geslaag het, veral ons matrikulante. Dit was ’n besonderse moeilike jaar vir ons kinders, ons onderwysers, die ouers, families en natuurlik, almal in die onderwyssektor.

*English:*

Towards the end of 2014, after the Ministerial Team’s report on the National Senior Certificate, the department’s spokesperson said, and I quote: “The theme for this administration is quality and efficiency”, which means that we no longer focus on the numbers, but the quality we need to produce. Quality must define the constitutional right to a basic education for everyone. There is no doubt that poor quality limits our children’s capacity to exploit further training opportunities. What does quality mean? It means that only teachers that are qualified for the subjects they teach are appointed, and that these teachers are remunerated appropriately that temporary teachers cannot be temporary forever, they must become permanent within the prescribed timeframes.

However, our teachers are supported in any further development training as and when required, and that the class and school

environment they have to teach our children in is safe, well equipped and resources are available on time all the time.

Urgent attention must immediately be given to the teacher- learner ratio in all our classrooms. It is well-known and well-researched that overcrowding has a huge negative impact on the quality of education. All schools must have continuous access to water. Providing water only when a pandemic occurs is not all the time, and providing water tankers which has no guarantee that it will be filled with water daily. Learners and teachers or a school without water, if it is not guaranteed, that is not acceptable and do not deserve a tick in the department’s tick-box of completed activity.

All schools should have properties which will for our teachers and our learners at all times. Not only acting, suddenly when a learner falls into a pit toilet and tragically dies before we act. This tick-box is a misrepresentation of the real situation. For several years ... [Inaudible.] ... is our children with special needs and their schools and hostels.

Last week we visited Masinakane Special School in Mpumalanga, a school for the intellectual challenge children, a school the member of the executive council, MEC, of the province every year comes and promises to build a hostel, proper classes, toilets and showers. It remains just that, promises.

The principal, teachers and parents are nevertheless very dedicated to make a difference to the children’s lives. First, they used classrooms for teaching during day time, turned into bedrooms at night because they had no other space. When they received few mobile classrooms, they divided the buildings into classes and others into accommodation facilities. Even the boardroom today still serves as a bedroom. What a shocking example of the nine-year children proper education in a dignified manner. They urgently need toilets and showers and a hostel on their own property right next to their school buildings.

Whilst we applaud the department for IsiXhosa language pilot project of which we await progress report, we do need to know and do a lot more on mother tongue education. The MEC Lesufi is a very poor example of enriching enhancing other languages. He must stop attacking Afrikaans. Athlone Primary School a very well disciplined school ... [Interjections.]

Mr A H M PAPO: House Chair, I wanted to check if it is parliamentary for a member to bastardise an official language of South Africa by calling it “Xhosa”.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M L D Ntombela): Hon member, there is no violation there.

Ms D VAN DER WALT: House Chair, I continue, IsiXhosa.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M L D Ntombela): You can continue, hon Van der Walt.

Ms D VAN DER WALT: Some of us must listen “IsiXhosa” where Athlone Primary School, House Chairperson, we enrolled learners in Sepedi and IsiNdebele. The library is beautiful stuck with books from these languages, but still no teacher in for IsiNdebele learners. Numbers do matter after all and play an important role in the reporting system if, of course, done factually as well as in the long term planning for a better education. For example, number of learners in Grade 1 versus the number completing Grade 12. Number of learners in Grade 10 after the exit of Grade 9, completing Grade 12, and the number of learners that dropout in the 12-year school circle. The number of days to complete the lesson during Covid regulation due to balloon orientation classes in every grade. The number of days to complete a curriculum successfully. The number of schools with zero pass rate every year. House Chair, I thank you. Can the Minister and the Deputy Minister please

concentrate, and listen to our inputs that will be valuable? [Time expired.]

Mr T MALATJI: Thank you very much, House Chair. Today we are entertaining a motion raised by the DA-led, by a Grade 9 dropout. Hon members and the people of South Africa, this debate sponsored by the DA council by the time when we celebrate the resilience of our children and youth who fought against all odds in the midst of global coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has not only taken lives of many of our country and the world at large, but it also led to the loss of livelihoods. The past schooling years of ... [Inaudible.] ... as the results of the coronavirus disease 2019, Covid-19.

It is also highlighted the deep inequalities with the basic education system. The inequalities between public and private schools cleared the entire nation in the face as poor children sit months and ... [Inaudible.] ... without any form of education due to hard level 5 lockdown period. Throughout the various levels of the lockdown, the private schools were verily affected as they continued with the remote teaching because they had the resources to do so, a direct contradicts of what is happening at the public schools. In the midst of the circumstances, the class of 2020 performed well.

The ANC salutes those young people for determination and resilience. The spirit reminds me of the generation of 1976, that stood against the violent apartheid system which impeached that development and a schooling of a black African majority. The apartheid government did this systematically through the Bantu Education Act that saw a private school system on the base of race. This was done to sub-judicare a black child so that they amount to nothing.

Education has always been in the ... [Inaudible.] ... of priority of the ANC in order to empower our people for self- liberation. Government’s largest spending is on education, and the access to education has always been expanded with major investments in building of schools, capacitating of teachers to improve the learning outcomes. The matric pass rate has always been or ... [Inaudible.] ... rate. Today children of the poor rural areas from Tafelkop in Limpopo and the townships like Katlehong and Soweto are becoming doctors, engineers, pilots and scientists. All these careers that were previously only reserved for the white counterparts.

The basis of this motion by the DA ... [Inaudible.] ... reminds of the philosophy of apartheid system which the DA continues to harbour. The DA continues to betray the successes

and the progress of a black African people as illegitimate and failure. The DA has brought a motion which seeks to undermine the successes of the democratic government through a baseless unscientific accession that the pass rate of class of 2020 is 44%. Through and logic formula that the DA seeks to create impression which undermines the efforts of our education system and the efforts of the children by ... [Inaudible.] ... that the majority of the learners have not achieved while the opposite is true.

What the DA does tells the nation is that class of 2020 learning outcomes have performed better than the class of 2019. What the DA has not to tell the nation is that according to the ... [Inaudible.] ... international mathematics and science study of 2019, which is the international assessment indicates improvement and performance on learning outcomes contrary to the baseless accession in the motion of the DA. The province with the highest progress learners who struggle is in the DA-led Western Cape. This comes as a concern for the African National Congress. The Department of Education must intervene in the Western Cape. This is a nature of an opportunist Democratic Alliance which only celebrate matric results while themselves are number one or number two.

House Chairperson, we applaud the Free State has taken a number one as successful basis led by the MEC of Free State, and Gauteng that has taken number two, led by MEC Panyaza Lesufi what have continued to excel in demonstrating the improvement of our education system. A ... [Inaudible.] ... province with minimum resources such as the Free state has demonstrated how the commitment of the ANC-led government in education has an ... [Inaudible.] ... of priority to bring an improvement of education outcomes to address the ... [Inaudible.] ... of the past.

As the school continues to the teaching and learning under the pandemic and the current level 1, we urge all guardians, civil society and communities to support our learners to continue during ... [Inaudible.] ... under education in the current conditions. It is our ... [Inaudible.] ... duty to ensure that we encourage all school children going in our schools. As African say “It takes a village to raise a child.” It is within the understanding we urge our people to support our learners to create a better future and a better life for all. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION: Chair, let me also take this opportunity to thank members who participated in the debate

and join my colleague, the Deputy Minister, to say this issue that the ... DA always raises, at all times, it’s the same matter, it doesn’t matter how much you try to explain, it’s the same matter raised by different members of the DA; and it just is a very frivolous debate.

But I think member Malatji is right to say the objective is to undermine the achievements of the ruling party in ensuring that we address the legacy of the past where black children had to be drawers of water and hewers of wood. And I think the ANC, by declaring education a priority, has disappointed many, many other people, including members in the DA.

As I say, it doesn’t matter how much we argue this point, but let me quote what Prof Michael le Cordeur from the University of Stellenbosch had to say about these results, he said, “Matric results highlight an unequal education system in the country and a dedication of teaching corps” which he published on 28 February and he further said:

The pass rate of 76,2% is still an excellent achievement and every successful matriculant in the class of 2020 deserves praise, not did they only an exam in difficult circumstances

but it also proves that even in a pandemic our children say

‘they can’t be let down’ and they are congratulated.

And I’m of the view that professor and others know the difference between pass rate and through-put rate, and I think that’s what the Deputy Minister spoke about.

At the outset I must say, unapologetically, the national pass rate for the class of 2020 stands at 76%. And when you speak about passes, you speak about people who wrote; you can’t say people have not sat for exams and say they have failed to pass; you can only fail that which you have written.

So, to come with all this frivolous calculations of saying the pass rate ... counting kids from Grade 10, who have not sat for exams, and say they have failed; you only fail if you have written, and I think that must quite clear.

I wish to respond on what other members have said and really try and straighten the incorrect and misleading statistics that come from the DA. Member Nodada, that 44% of cohorts of 2009 who started Grade 1, now you’re calculating from Grade 10 when there’s now diversion, where kids are going to Technical

and Vocational Education and Training, Tvet, colleges; and how you really think you get it right, I don’t know.

But let me start from the outset. Government is committed to have every South African child to successfully complete 12 years of education, which is not matric; to be in a school or a Tvet college. And this is very clear in the National Development Plan, NDP. As explained in the National Senior Certificate results, the schooling system has made steady progress in contributing towards this goal. We are saying, we want 100% completion of schooling after 12 years and schooling does not necessarily say all learners have to go through matric, but we are saying there are other channels that we have opened as this government that will allow us to really account for these 12 years of schooling.

Now, the confusion that you have about the numbers, member Nodada, and the real pass of 27 that it was 37%. And I remember member Mashetsi also accused me of covering up dropout rates before Grade 12. I must say I come from an organisation where integrity is one of the key issues, so, for you all the time to say we create euphoria and other things; I find it very unfortunate coming from yourselves. Why would I want to mask if I want the nation to join hands with us? We’ve

always been very transparent, very honest about dropout rates, though-put rates. So, to really say we have euphoria of results, what for? We have no reason to do it. So, don’t even cast aspersions on our personalities that we want euphoria or we’re masking things.

So, Madam Speaker, I think the member should really talk about participation, repetition and dropout rates in the system so that you don’t confuse people who sit for exams and link it up to your repetition and progress rates.

What we have done, for instance, and which I will quickly go through, is to even indicate the retention rates because he’s talking about this, to say at this level how many children stayed? But just not confuse people who sat for exams or who didn’t sit for exams and say they have failed, you only fail if you’ve written exams; and the 76% is calculated on the basis of people who wrote exams, not people who were in school and did not write exams.

So, if he wants to talk about dropout rates let’s talk about that, if you want to talk about through-put rates let’s talk about that, if you want to talk about retention rates let’s

talk about that; but don’t confuse those because they are very

unrelated.

If you really look at our 2017 household surveys, which is conducted by Stats SA, and using indicators in terms of access and retention in the school system, because I think that’s what member Nodada wants to talk about, to say of the learners who were in Grade 10 how many wrote? Not how many passed exams they didn’t sit for. And it says that in 2017, when we look at age-specific enrolments, as a more reliable indicator, we know that the age-specific enrolments as an indicator provides a more accurate and reliable data than the through-put ratio mistakenly interpreted, for instance, by member Nodada as pass rates. It reports that for the zero to four, because education again tat’uNodada [Mr Nodada] doesn’t start in Grade 12, so, you can’t even start assessing a system right at the end of the system where now you have your Further Education and Training, FET phase, we start form zero; and it says, that household survey, that for the zero to four-year-olds in the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative, ASIDI, programmes it has increased from 8% in 2002 to 42% in 2017.

It says in 2009 that 90% in Grade 1 had already participated or had already been to Grade R; and this is very key because

if you look at our repetition rates of Grade 1s, it shows that most learners come to school not school ready and that’s why we are investing lots of resources and time into education to make sure that we can stem out also the failure rates at Grade 1s and ensure that when children come to school they come to school, school ready. And that’s where you should be starting with the system, because if you talk about the system you’re not talking about Grade 10 and Matric passes, that’s not the system, the system starts from zero up to the end of it all.

But it also says the participation of your 14 to 18-year-olds, which is a group that you’re talking about tat’uNodada, has remained around 90% since 2011 and 86% of the 16 to 18-year- olds were attending Further education and Training institutions. Further education and Training institutions are your schools, are your Tvet colleges, but there are also other training programmes that kids go into. So, you actually start counting, unfortunately, from the wrong part where there’s also career pathing, there’s also diversion and children are going to different directions. So, to start at 10 is even a wrong start statistically.

The general household survey reports the fluctuation repetition rates, which I think should also look into the

system, to say kids who were in Grade 10 did they all pass, when they were in Grade did they all pass, for you to be able to calculate them as having passed of failed? They haven’t, and they didn’t sit for exams.

As I say, our repetition rates were high in Grade R, that’s why we’re really working very hard to make sure that we have

... were high in Grade 1, we also working very hard to make sure that we have Grade R to prepare learners for schooling.

But now at the Grade where you started talking about, indeed between Grade 11 and 12 we experienced, for instance in Grade

1. we start experiencing high dropout rates not failure rates, dropout rates of about 22% and there are a number of reasons. The member said we should also go and do surveys around what the dropout rates, it is there; Stats SA has done it, it has given us reasons why learners’ dropout. Indeed, some of them are your curriculum challenges, issues of poverty, issues of youth delinquency and issue of risky behaviours amongst children; which is what all of us as society have to confront. If children really get into risky behaviours, it’s not the responsibility of the Education Department alone, but it is a societal problem that we have to all confront.

So, indeed the dropout, the repetition rates start deteriorating after Grade 10, where you are starting to do your arithmetic tat’uNodada, and you must not overlook and say there are no challenges with teenagers in the country, there are no challenges with households, there are no challenges in society, challenges which include crime, risky behaviours, risky sexual conduct, but also a number of factors that are contributing.

The dropout rates, you calculate well, that’s why I say start at Grade 1, the dropout rates are 31%, but by the time we reach Grade 12 or from Grade 10 they start rising for all the reasons that I’ve given and they are not given by me, they are there in your Stats SA report to say what are the things. So, we don’t need to go and do research because somebody said we must go and do research and say why are kids dropping, we know why they are dropping and that’s why some of our responses are responses to react to some of the reasons that are there.

Some of the programmes that we’re putting in place, of your three-stream curriculum, to make sure that indeed when children become teenagers they are given different options. The whole question – as I say – putting more pressure on Grade R is also what we are being informed. The pro-poor package we

put in schools is a response of what we know are the reasons that make children not to finish the 12 years that are there.

The critical questions that become what is government doing to improve retention rates internally and efficiency, so, no pass rates in Grade 12. That’s a very wrong indicator to say ... as if ... as the Deputy Minister has said that these kids are bricks, you put 10 bricks, at the end of the pipe you expect

1. bricks. No, there are quite a number of factors that we have to address. And indeed – as I say – our target is 100% but a through-put rates.

It will also be interesting for members of this group to look at what are the through-put rates internationally. There are very few countries that even have 90% retention rates. Most of your middle-income countries stand at 56% in terms of your retention rate. So, South Africa is not unique in losing the children in the pipeline. But what they have to do is to continuously look at the reasons why kids don’t finish their

12 years of schooling and deal with that; and don’t mistaken them for pass rates but it’s your dropout rates, your retention rates and what are the things that affect young people which make it difficult for them to complete.

That’s why, for instance, we participate in all assessment programmes, your teams, your pills, we are one of the few countries in the world, especially in the continent, that are brave enough to even benchmark ourselves against international countries. Half the time we are two or three countries from the continent which go for these international benchmarks, because indeed we want, as a country, to address the issues of retention, of quality but also of equity, and that’s why we are brave enough as a country; very few countries do it.

We also say [Time expired.] in most of the inputs we are making about your school nutrition programme

*IsiXhosa*:

Hayi bo! Ndingekabaphenduli?

*Sesotho*:

Ke kopa tshwarelo. Ke ne ke re ke tlo ba araba ka bonngwe, ka bonngwe. Ke felletswe ke nako. Ho lokile. Ke kopa tshwarelo hle!

Ms C V KING: Chairperson, to the class of 2020, whether you were successful and achieved your goals or you feel despondent for not passing, congratulations are in order. You have

thrashed through a difficult pandemic year, many cannot boast about this.

The challenges experienced in basic education, as exposed by this pandemic, is creating a 10 to 12-year problem in higher education.

The number of learners choosing subjects which are vital for the economy such as accounting, mathematics and physical science is on a steady decline since 2015. This decline signals the closing of doors of opportunity to venture into university programmes of engineering, science, Information and Communications Technology, ICT, and commerce. If there’s one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted is the vital importance of these fields of study.

Higher education further exacerbates the problem in universities and Tvet colleges by producing graduates with irrelevant qualifications for the demand of the labour market.

The recently released list of occupations in high demand and a technical report for critical skills list highlights the misalignment of basic and higher education curricula which do not produce the supply needed for in-demand occupations.

More than a 100 000 students graduate from university yearly with 40% lucky enough to find employment; most taking employment in areas not aligned to the qualifications, that has led to graduates sitting at home, begging for jobs at robots with the vast majority ending up as youth not in employment, education and training.

The reality starring us in the face is that our education system is the feeder to over 60% of the youth unemployment.

Ministers, Motshega and Nzimande, the situation is salvageable. This is how can give real hope and real change now. The basic education sector must speed up the roll-out of coding and robotics curriculum and adapt to new technologies. Serious commitment to invest in ICT infrastructure and access to broadband connectivity, resource vocational schools, upgrade this curriculum for entry into Tvet colleges or the world of work.

The higher education sector should upgrade Tvet colleges’ curriculum to align with the demands of the labour market and entrepreneurship development. Foster public/private agreements for an internship programme for skills enhancement at all

institutions of higher learning and under the new normal invest in the blended model of teaching and learning.

Minister, 76,2% pass rate with most passing on 30 and 40% just add to the unemployment rate.

If we want to have real peace in this world we should start by educating our children; for education is not preparing them for life, Minister, but education is life. Thank you.

The Mini-Plenary rose at 15:10