**16:30 – 18:15**

**Vote 16: Basic Education**

**Hon. SL Ngcobo, MP**

Hon. Speaker,

It is widely known that the Covid-19 pandemic exacted a heavy toll on the Basic Education sector in South Africa. We lost educators, support staff and learners during the past two years, and we would like to take a moment to remember them; may they rest in peace.

In addition to this, the business of teaching was severely interrupted, particularly in under-resourced schools, and communities where educators and learners did not have access to online tools to continue teaching, and learning.

The Report reflects these realities, and the massive inequalities that prevail in this sector, informing us that “In historically disadvantaged schools, around 70% of a year’s worth of learning was lost in 2020.”

How are young people who have only had access to 30% of the schoolwork supposed to progress, and be expected to write – and pass – the same exams as their more advantaged counterparts?

As the IFP, we are in agreement with the priorities listed in the Report, as approved by the Council of Education Ministers, but we are concerned about the realisation of these goals. For example, they call for “Immediate implementation of a curriculum with skills and competencies for a changing world in all public schools”, listing the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. Will a child that has only received 30% schooling on the current curriculum be equipped to meaningfully engage with this proposed new and more complex curriculum?

We further feel that there should be a greater focus on literacy.

According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2016, a shocking “78% of Grade 4 children cannot read for meaning in any language.”

Further, Professor Nic Spaull, an education economist at Stellenbosch University and the secretary of the 2030 Reading Panel revealed that “the current trajectory indicates that it will be 2098 before all the country’s Grade 4 children can read for meaning”.

Based on these terrifying statistics, it seems that as far as monitoring goes, the DBE’s goal relating to the number of schools monitored on the implementation of the reading norms, is unacceptably low. The Report reveals that **“**The Department’s target is set at 18 schools.”

According to international research organisation, Statista, “As of 2019, the total number of schools in South Africa amounted to nearly 25 thousand.”

How can 18 out of 25 000 be a reasonable sample size?

When it comes to school infrastructure, the annual targets are also worryingly low. For example, the Department’s target for providing sanitation facilities is set at 450 schools per year.

According to a July 2021 South African Human Rights Commission Report, “in KZN, 349 826 learners and 12 978 teachers are **at 983 schools** which are reliant on pit toilets”.

This is one province out of nine; this means that there are thousands of other schools that also rely on pit latrines.

As the IFP, we want to appeal to the DBE: get back to basics! We need to get our learners reading with understanding, in schools that are fit-for-purpose, with proper water, sanitation and other infrastructure.

We further take note of and support the Committee’s Recommendations.

The IFP supports the Budget Vote.