# BUDGET DEBATE VOTE SPEECH – HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**By Hon. SL Nqcobo MP  
Spokesperson on Higher Education and Training**

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### Vote 15: Higher Education and Training

Honourable Chairperson,

In the words of former Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru – Facts are facts and will not disappear on account of your likes.”

Urban millennials and the likes of the Twitter-Brigades will tell you, that they do everything for the “gram” – to look good, despite the fact that behind their masks there are deep rooted issues which they don’t report.

It is important, that facts drive policy in this department and that facts come first before we amend targets to reflect that we look good and so that we can meet them.

The fact is that this department has on a number of occasions dropped the bar and its standards to do better on paper. The APP reflects this.

Chairperson, facts are critical in ensuring that government knows where exactly the gaps are and how to address them.

We do live in an era of “fake-news” and fiction, but government and this department must be the leaders in facts.

Higher Education, Science and Technology, leads in discovery, research and advice.

Chairperson,

A couple of hard facts which we must hear and we must listen to should shape the way forward over the medium term for this department.

It is fact that this department has been unable to ensure that students are accommodated in affordable, dignified dwellings on campuses across the country.

It is a dreadful fact that students are found squatting, living on top of each other’s in one-bedroom facilities. Some are housed within townships and are subjected to fear, intimidation and crime as they walk to their respective classes.

It certainly will become a fact of life on campuses when students are ill-treated, disrespected and not provided with at least the minimum tools of trade to accomplish graduation.

It is also fact that a majority of students graduating from tertiary institutions will be stepping out into a workplace that is virtually not ready to accommodate them.

Because chairperson, it is also a fact that far too many students, specifically, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are falling through the cracks and we are failing them when do not prioritize their needs and assist them to prosper.

Another sad fact we face, is that when government fails in streamlining the quality of education from ECD level to further education and training – the task at hand becomes increasingly difficulty when higher education must pick up where government has failed in the system.

Furthermore, it is fact, that we continue to fail black academics and that we have not met the much needed targets for transformation within the Higher Education Sector.

From the top down, it is imperative that we address this over the next few years in order to structurally transform centres of higher education.

The promotion of research output, the publication of data and more importantly the job opportunities offered to artisans, apprentices and graduates of TVET colleges, must take centre stage.

We need to ensure that we place all our learners who are in training, who are studying and who are essentially our future at the forefront of what we do. We must speak more of the knowledge economy in order to grow.

Honourable Minister, let us work together to build and capacitate the state with the scare skills we require so we do not have to knock on other’s doors to fill the employment gaps.

Indeed, those who successfully graduate will be stepping out of a world-class higher education system to be failed by another system, and that Chairperson – is the fact that our economy is growing at such a rate that it is limiting the creation of jobs for graduates, specialist, artisans and experts.

It feels like a punch in the gut when our experts leave the country to seek greener pastures.

Honourbale Minister we must address the retention of our highly skilled individuals in order to lead in the knowledge economy.

However, honourable members, let us remember that fact always trumps fiction. Let’s say things how they are actually are and work on them.

We all want to be proud of our continent, Africa, led by South Africa – in discovering and breaking new ground in all fields, from Humanities and Social Sciences, hospitality, the green economy to technology and engineering.

We must ensure a diversity of output and we must fund them accordingly, it is unfortunate that within the constraints of resources and austerity that we are not able to achieve the best outcomes in most disciplines, with what we have.

Chairperson, Honourable Minister, the IFP will support this budget.

I thank you.