

BUDGET VOTES

Vote 17: Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology

Hon. SL Ngcobo, MP

22 July 2020

Honourable Members, despite the fact that Higher Education contributes directly to higher productivity and a more “knowledge-intensive economy”, this sector has seen no support in managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Supplementary Budget’s failure to provide additional funding to this important sector to support their efforts to manage the impact of the pandemic is a glaring omission.

The country’s vision of embracing the fourth industrial revolution rings hollow in the face of the Supplementary Budget. The Covid-19 pandemic has also undeniably shown the need to invest in higher education, science and technology - not only to advance our society but also to ensure we can adapt to future pandemics of this scale.

Honourable Members, the IFP fully acknowledges the burden of Covid-19 on this sector.

In general, the IFP supports the Department’s budgetary adjustments but undeniably the budget cuts amounting to **R9.85 billion** will have a long-lasting impact on the quality of Higher Education.

South Africans invest a huge amount of their own income on Higher Education in the hope of a better future for their children and yet government does not share the same sentiment.

We can obviously see how detached government is from the people of this nation as they disinvest in an area where South Africans are investing.

We are concerned about the impact that the reprioritisation of funds will have on the abilities of the National Skills Fund and the Sector Education and Training Authorities’ activities.

Considering the mass unemployment our country faces, we need now more than ever, to ensure that we are investing in skills.

The IFP also remains concerned about the loss of over **R8 billion** due to the reduced collection of skills levies. Covid-19 demands infrastructure investment for distance learning, so how does government rationalise the **R739.39 million budget cut** in the Infrastructure and Efficiency Development Grant.

Honourable Members, if we want to ensure that the youth of today have a fighting chance to compete in the global economy, we need to invest much more in their skills development, and embrace new technologies.

We cannot allow the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to rob our youth of their opportunities to compete and contribute to our society.

The IFP supports the Budget.

I thank you.

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