**National Assembly**

**Debate On Vote 17: Higher Education and Training**

**Hon. Mr SS Zondo**

**24 May 2023**

**Honourable Chairperson, as a nation, we ought to always keep these words of Former President Nelson Mandela with us whenever we take important decisions such as the one we’re taking here today.**

**“Education is the great engine of personal development. 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 a great nation.”**

**It is through quality education that the social and economic justice struggles of this generation can be achieved but we seem to be very far from doing so. The department had set 47 targets for itself for the 2022\2023 Third-Quarter, but out of these, only 21 were achieved, albeit poorly.**

**There is a dire need to develop and coordinate policy and regulatory frameworks which encourage and allow an effective and efficient university education system whilst providing financial support to universities, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and national higher education institutions.**

**This department continues to fail dismally at fulfilling its own set objectives, such as, amongst other, failing to reach its minimum quota of students annually enrolled at public universities; the number of graduates in the STEM field, as well the number of masters graduates.**

**We have noted some contributing factors to the department’s failures in delivering its plans such as delays in the finalization of the comprehensive student funding policy for higher education whilst the lack of strong dedicated financial assistance to meet the learning needs of the missing middle students has a significant impact on their success or the lack thereof.**

**Community Education and Training (CET) remains under-resourced which, in turn, hinders its ability to expand and remain relevant despite the growing demand for short-term skills in our communities. The department in allocating only two percent of its budget towards this programme does not inspire much confidence that this will change in the next academic year and beyond.**

**It also remains concerning that poor planning has led to more than 12 per cent of the department's planned targets not being met and a figure as high as 76 per cent of targets not being achieved due to process and external factors.**

**As a party, we believe that all hope is not lost because willingness from the government to implement actionable solutions can turn things around, but this requires political will. The filling of vacant and critical posts in TVET colleges should be fast-tracked-tracked understaffed institutions attempting to fully reach their performance plans timeously is a near impossible and sometimes even a futile exercise. We also encourage universities and TVET colleges to open and utilize their Community Learning Centres (CLCs) to promote a teaching and learning environment in the sector.**

**Unfortunately, consequence management is one aspect that cannot be ignored. It is necessary because its implementation is needed against officials that fail to meet their targets in accordance with their job descriptions.**

**Over the years, we have seen the government failing to address issues that are affecting students. In turn, this has caused disruptive and consistent student protests in institutions of higher learning throughout the country which has several impacts such as the delay in the commencement and conclusion of the academic year, destruction of infrastructure, teaching and learning disruptions and subsequent underperformance.**

**Having considered this and the fact that the lives of millions of young people are dependent on this budget, the IFP supports the Budget Vote.**

**Chairperson, I thank you.**