

SPEECH BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL EDUCATION MEC, HON. KWAZI MSHENGU, ON THE OCCASSION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE SPECIAL ADJUSTED ESTIMATES FOR THE 2020/21 FINANCIAL YEAR

Speaker of the Legislature, Hon. Nontembeko Boyce

KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Hon. Sihle Zikalala

Chairperson and Members of the Education Portfolio Committee

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Members of the Legislature

Mayors, Councillors and Amakhosi who have joined us

Head of Department of Education, Dr E. V Nzama

Senior Management of the various Departments in attendance

Our Social Partners

Labour Movement

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

We rise, yet again, in the midst of the global pandemic, the Coronavirus, which has threatened to bring the entire world to its knees, to present the Special Adjustments Budget for the 2020/21 financial year.

Just like all other departments, it is no secret that we also started this financial year on a very bad note where we found ourselves having to work around the clock trying to deploy all the strategies and resources at our disposal to a vigorous fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we present this Special Adjustments Budget, we are guided by the timeless counsel from **Amilcar Cabral** who once said *“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes [and] failures. Claim no easy victories”*

This has indeed been the most difficult period we have had to live in since the advent of democracy. In the quest to save the future our learners, we have encountered many difficulties

and have suffered setbacks. That our schools are now operating for all grades has not really been an easy victory.

Even today we continue to manage difficulties and challenges on daily basis. The fact that the Covid-19 hit us when our system is still grappling with the historical challenges of water, dilapidating schools building in rural areas and absence of proper ablution facilities in some parts of our schools compounded our interventions.

Whilst dealing with the impact of closing our schools on the curriculum, we also found ourselves having another huge task on our shoulders of saving the lives of our learners and teachers as the need to reopen the grades in the phased-in approach was deemed necessary after very extensive consultations with all the stakeholders.

However, as South Africans we have history of emerging victorious in all the most difficult and dangerous battles like we did when we faced the brutality meted out by the apartheid government and we have no doubt that we will also defeat the Covid-19.

Our mental fitness has always enabled us to be better prepared to deal with anything that is thrown in our direction. As former Chinese General and military strategist **Sun Tzu** says in his book, **The Art of War**, that “*victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win*”. We will also win this battle because we won it mentally before we even fired our first salvo in a form of taking all the precautionary measures that are needed to deal with Covid-19.

IMPACT OF COVID19 ON THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM

The Covid-19 has completely altered the schooling system in a manner never anticipated. With the return of all grades in schools, it became practically impossible to accommodate all of them at once and still maintain social distancing. Consequently, we had to adopt a differentiated time-tabling and embark on grades rotation. This means that we still are unable to have all the learners in class at least for 5 days a week.

The provision of mobile classrooms in schools with large enrolment was also a necessary intervention. However, the lack of funds and space in some schools meant that we could not provide for all the requests. In some schools, we had to opt for desk shields in order to make sure that learners are accommodated.

TEACHERS WITH COMORBIDITIES AND REPLACEMENTS

The department has had to contend with protection of teachers aged 60 and above and those who have comorbidities as they remain at high risk if infected by the coronavirus. The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) entered into a Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2020 to regulate concessions for high-risk employees.

The Department received 5 970 applications for concessions in line with the Collective Agreement. In terms of the Collective Agreement, those employees who had applied for concessions were further required to make arrangements with their principals (supervisors) on how they would be utilised during the period of the concession. School principals and their management teams were required to reconfigure their time tables and as an outcome of the reconfiguration of time timetables by school management team, 2015 substitute educators were allocated to schools to replace educators whose applications for concessions were approved.

APPOINTMENT OF SCREENERS AND CLEANERS

In terms of the non-negotiables set by the Department of Basic Education and stakeholders, the department had to ensure the provision of cleaners and screeners in all schools. As a result the department provided cleaners in 3877 schools that did not have state-appointed cleaners. This was initially for 3 months ending in August 2020 which has since been extended to 31 December 2020. Moving forward the department will be recruiting these cleaners through the EPWP Programme in view of budgetary constraints.

The department also appointed 6000 screeners in partnership with the Department of Public Works, who assisted with the payment of stipends. This partnership was initially for 3 months ending 31 August 2020 but has since been extended to 31 December 2020. The appointment and payment of these screeners was initially done by the Department of Public Works who

have since indicated that they are no longer able to fund this programme beyond August. As at September, the department has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement which will result in screeners being paid their stipends on a recurring basis through Persal to avoid complaints of non-payment or late payments.

CREATING LEGACY PROJECT OUT OF COVID-19

Honourable members, beyond this valley of darkness we should be able to emerge with legacy project that will change the environment in our schools. Covid-19 has taught us value of focused, deliberate and prioritized interventions.

Our schools have had a problem of water provision for the longest time. However, today all deserving schools have static water tanks to harvest and store water. Over and above this, to alleviate the costs of providing water to schools we have embarked on the programme of drilling boreholes in some schools. This will also ensure that water is available on a constant basis. Over 1000 schools have been identified to benefit through this programme of boreholes and studies are continuing on other schools to check the availability of underground water.

There are schools across the province that have improper structures for National School Nutrition Programme. Some have had to convert classrooms into kitchens and thereby reducing space for teaching and learning. To address this challenge, the Department has procured 300 kitchens and these will be distributed in schools that are in dire need. The intention is to ensure that we eradicate all improper NSNP structures in our schools. Where the space and resources permit, we will build brick and mortar structures.

The existence of improper ablution facilities in some of our schools continues to undermine the dignity of our teachers and learners. This state of ablution facilities has meant that we incur more costs in providing chemical toilets as part of the fight against Covid-19 and this is not sustainable. To address this challenge, the department has doubled its efforts in the programme of the eradication of pit latrines. As it stands, 229 new structures have been completed; 435 currently on site; 220 on tender and 440 on design.

THE RE-PURPOSING OF FUNDS WITHIN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES

Honourable Members, it is public knowledge that the main appropriation of the Department of Education was R57.247 billion in 2020/21. However, during the year, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the department having to re-purpose its budget internally in response to the pandemic.

The following accounts on the re-purposing of the 2020/21 budget towards procurement of Covid19 essentials:

- A total R558.586 million was re-purposed to fund Covid-19 pressures mainly in respect of Programme 2 which is Public Ordinary School Education.
- R550 million was within the equitable share funding from compensation of employees in respect of vacant funded substitute and temporary educator posts.
- R8.586 million was re-purposed in respect of conditional grants mainly from compensation of employees in respect of vacant budgeted posts. It should be noted that some grant frameworks were amended by National Treasury to allow provinces to utilise a portion of the funds toward the provincial Covid-19 response.
- R32 million that was within goods and services across and within programmes. In this regard, R8 million was from bursaries for employees in Programme 2 to consumable supplies in the same programme.
- R8 million was from the sub-programme: Sport and Culture to the sub-programme: Public Primary Level for consumables supplies.
- R6 million was within inventory and other supplies from the procurement of other Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM).
- R5 million was from the sub-programme: Human Resource Development in Programme 4 which is Public Special School and Programme 5 dealing with Early Childhood Development to advertising in Programme 1 which is Administration.
- In Programme 1 under the sub-programme Human Resource Development, R5 million was towards advertising for broadcasting of the curriculum in various media platforms during the nationwide lockdown to ensure curriculum delivery was not affected, especially for matriculants.

- R80 million was within transfers and subsidies to non-profit institutions in Programme 2. These were funds which were not allocated to specific schools as per the gazette. This will now be utilised to comply with Covid-19 regulations by ensuring that schools have cleaning and grass cutting services. To this end, these funds are transferred to schools for this purpose.
- Department of Public Works undertook to identify R38 million from within their budget to provide funding for 6 000 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers to be placed in schools to conduct screening in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

BUDGET CUTS EFFECTED AGAINST CONDITIONAL GRANTS

Honourable Members, I wish to indicate that the department's conditional grant allocation was decreased by R517.375 million. Of this amount, R497.218 million was reduced from the Education Infrastructure grant (EIG). It should be noted that R197 million of the funds cut from the EIG was utilized by DBE to provide water in 1 125 schools in the province through Rand Water. It should also be noted that R15.088 million was reduced from the HIV and AIDS (Life Skills Education) grant and an amount of R5.069 million was reduced from the Maths, Science and Technology (MST) grant.

ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The department's equitable share budget was increased by R1 billion to fund Covid-19 spending pressures. The funds were allocated to three programmes, largely to provide for the purchase of PPE, provision of water, desk shields, the broadcasting of curriculum in various media platforms during the nationwide lockdown, additional costs for examination administration including venues, catering, markers, hired vehicles and other essentials.

The entire additional funding was allocated as follows:

Programme 1: Administration	Allocation of funds
Distribution of PPE to districts and schools	4 200 000
Procurement of PPE for office-based staff	7 800 000
Fumigation of buildings	3 000 000
Total	15 000 000

Programme 2 : Public Ordinary School Education	Allocation of funds
Compensation for substitute educators	52 500 000
Procurement of PPE for school-based staff	458 000 000
Leasing of chemical toilets	100 000 000
Provision of water to schools / fumigation	250 000 000
Screeners and cleaning	82 500 000
Total	943 000 000

Programme 7 : Examination and Education Related Services	Allocation of funds
Compensation for additional markers and checkers	17 850 000
Provision of admin, catering and travel costs for additional venues	15 850 000
Provision of security for additional venues	7 100 000
Provision of additional venues	1 200 000
Total	42 000 000

Total Additional funding provided	1 000 000 000
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It is worth indicating, however, that given the budget cuts accounted for above, the main adjustments resulted in the department's budget increasing by a net amount of R482.625 million.

CONCLUSION

Honorable Members, whilst the declining numbers of infections give a sense of hope and relief, the virus still exist and remain dangerous. This, therefore, means our efforts to fight it with all we have should not stop. We must continue fighting it until it is defeated. For us to successfully defeat it, we all need to unite, close ranks and ensure that it has no space to survive.

The hard work and commitment that we have seen from many of our employees during this difficult time is really commendable. I have no doubt that if we continue working as hard as we had in the past couple of months, a lot will be achieved.

The leadership and support of the Premier, Mr Sihle Zikalala and our colleagues in the Executive has been unwavering. It is such kind of support that makes us realize the power of working together. Similarly, our MPLs led by the Speaker, honorable Boyce, members of the Education Portfolio Committee led by honorable Sibiyi as well as all the organized labor have also played a huge role in making us successfully navigate this difficult path up until now. The monitoring visits that many of you continue to undertake to various schools across the province have really yielded a number of positive spinoffs. We remain hopeful that you will continue taking the education of our children as a national duty beyond political lines.

I wish to pay homage to the educators and other office-based staff who regrettably succumbed to the Covid-19. The role you played in the education of the national assets will forever be etched in the annals of history.

Let's all rise up and put our best foot forward and fight this invisible enemy until it surrenders.

I thank you.